



2nd Ramazaan
Iftaar | 06:39 pm
3rd Ramadhan
Sehri | 05:20 pm
Fikkah Jaffaria
Iftaar | 06:46 pm
Sehri | 05:18 pm

the 27th year OF PUBLICATION

KASHMIR OBSERVER

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J&K Leads India In Job Creation Under PMEGP

Generates Over 3 Lakh Job Opportunities



Agencies

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir has topped for generating maximum employment under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) at the national level. As per the figures, the union territory received the highest assistance for projects under the scheme and even surpassed states like Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu for generating maximum employment under PMEGP. Figures suggest that Jammu and Kashmir saw 44,542 projects assisted between 2021-22 and 2023-24 (until Jan 30, 2024), receiving a margin money subsidy of Rs 921.38 crore. This has led to an estimated 3,56,336 employment opportunities, the highest among all states and accounting for 18 per cent of the total employment generated nationwide under the scheme during this period. Uttar Pradesh, India's largest state, has seen 32,629 projects assisted with a margin money subsidy utilisation of Rs 1,107.4 crore, leading to an estimated 2,61,032 employment opportunities.

Tamil Nadu, on the other hand, witnessed 17,337 assisted projects with a margin money subsidy of Rs 500.56 crore, resulting in an estimated 1,38,696 jobs. Overall, the PMEGP has assisted 2,53,710 projects with a margin money subsidy of Rs 8,099 crore, generating an estimated 20,29,680 jobs over the past three years. Since its inception in 2008-09, the PMEGP has assisted a total of 9.35 lakh enterprises, creating employment for 76.35 lakh persons. The scheme, implemented by the Ministry of MSME through Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), aims to provide employment opportunities to traditional artisans and unemployed youth, particularly in rural areas. The UT government has also enhanced the financial support through various schemes to the youth to generate employment for themselves and others. As per the figures given during the UT Level Bankers Committee Meeting, banks operating in J&K have sanctioned Rs 1,213.60 crore in favour of 25,875 beneficiaries. [| More on PII](#)

J&K National Front Banned By Govt Under UAPA

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: The government on Tuesday banned the Jammu Kashmir National Front led by Nayeem Ahmad Khan under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. In an order, the Ministry of Home Affairs declared the JKNF, a constituent of the hardline Hurriyat Conference, an "unlawful association" with immediate effect. The government said the JKNF has been "indulging in unlawful activities, which are prejudicial to the integrity, sovereignty, and security of

the country." It said members of the JKNF have remained involved in supporting terrorist activities and anti-India propaganda for fuelling secessionism in Jammu and Kashmir and providing logistic support to terrorists in the Union territory. It also said JKNF members "have been involved in mobilising violent protesters in various parts of Kashmir for perpetrating unlawful activities, including supporting terrorist activities, sustained stone pelting on security forces." The order will have effect for a period of five years.

PM Inaugurates New Railway Facilities in Kashmir

- » PMBJK at Srinagar
- » OSOP Stalls at 17 Stations
- » Gati Shakti Terminal at SAMBA
- » Dedicates Rail Coach Restaurant at Katra

Observer News Service

Jammu: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday laid the foundation stone and dedicated Railway projects worth over Rs 85,000 crores in Jammu and Kashmir. The PM inaugurated Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendra at Srinagar railway station and Gati Shakti Terminal at Samba. Prime Minister also dedicated 'One Station One Product' (OSOP) stalls at Anantnag, Awantipora, Banihal, Baramulla, Budgam, Jammu, Qazigund, Katra, Srinagar, Bijbehara, Kathua, Pampore, Pattan, Kakapora, Panzgam, Sadoor, Mazhom railway stations and Rail Coach Restaurant at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra railway station.



Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for revolutionising rail infrastructure and connectivity in J&K and dedicating a number of railway projects to the people of the Union Territory today. In a Tweet, the Lt Governor

said, "A significant day for railway connectivity & infrastructure in the country. Hon'ble PM Sh Narendra Modi Ji laid foundation stone, dedicated Railway projects worth over Rs 85,000 crores that will shape the economic trajectory of various states and UTs." "Grateful to Hon'ble PM for

revolutionising rail infra & connectivity in J&K. The opening of Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendra (PMBJK) at Srinagar railway station will ensure quality medicines at affordable prices to passengers & livelihood opportunities to many," he added. [| More on PII](#)

224.44 Cr Sanctioned For Shopian Bypass

The Union Road Transport and Highways Ministry has sanctioned Rs 224.44 crore to construct a bypass on the national highway in the Shopian district. The announcement was made by Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari. "In Jammu & Kashmir, an allocation of Rs 224.44 crore has been sanctioned for the construction of the Shopian Bypass on National Highway-444, transforming it into a 2-lane configuration with a paved shoulder. This development, spanning 8.925 Km in the Shopian district, will be executed using the EPC Mode," Gadkari said in a post on X on Tuesday. He said linking Shopian District with Pulwama on one side and Kulgam

Committed To Provide Land Title, Ownership Rights To Displaced Persons: LG

Says Long Pending Demand Of Displaced Persons Of PoJK, WP Fulfilled



Observer News Service

Jammu: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha laid the foundation stone of PoJK Bhawan at Suketar Jammu on Tuesday. The Lt Governor congratulated the displaced persons of PoJK and Western Pakistan on fulfilling their long pending demand. The Bhawan will be constructed in 40 Kanal, 17 Marla in the honour of the martyrs.

It will consist of a Balidan Stambh and an Amphitheatre besides other infrastructure to showcase the rich cultural heritage and provide the community office space for meeting and to run the operations for the welfare of displaced persons, he added. PoJK Bhawan is the testament to the government's unwavering commitment to provide dignity and rights to displaced persons. [| More on PII](#)

'Education Should Be Driven By Creativity'

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday inaugurated the three-day capacity building programme on 'leadership development of academic administrators' and said that education should be driven by creativity rather than by curriculum in order to develop the capacities of young people to be creative. He said the union territory is committed to reform and revamp higher education with the objective of giving our students the best curriculum and providing them knowledge and skills to compete with the best in the world. [| More on PII](#)

6 THE DISPLACED PERSONS CAN NOT ONLY CAST THEIR VOTE, CONTEST an election but also fulfill their aspirations of receiving professional education and government jobs."

Are Watermelons In The Market Safe?

Food Safety Dept Ramps Up Inspections

Auqib Javeed

Srinagar: Amid the social media reports of early-ripened fruits, especially watermelon being flooded into the markets of the valley, the Food Safety Drugs & Food Control Organization, Kashmir Division have directed the concerned officials to undertake rigorous market inspections of fresh fruits and vegetables and other food items along with the sampling. Natably, during the holy month of Ramazan, people prefer watermelon during Iftari to quench their thirst. However, rumors have been going around for the past few days that chemicals are being used to expedite the coloring of fruits, raising concerns about food safety and consumer health. Although the government denied reports of an influx of artificially ripened fruits into



the market and appealed to people not to panic, the department ordered its men to take samples of watermelon in all districts of the valley. "In light of the viral message circulating in social media regarding artificial ripening of watermelons and other fruits, you are hereby directed to undertake rigorous market inspections of fresh fruits and vegetables and other food items along with the sampling thereof with intimation to this office," reads an [| More on PII](#)

CAA Implementation

Govt Launches Portal For Citizenship Seekers

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The Ministry of Home Affairs on Tuesday launched a portal for people eligible to apply for Indian citizenship under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019, an official spokesperson said. The move came a day after the government notified the rules for implementation of the CAA 2019. "The Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024 under the CAA-2019 have been notified. A new portal has been launched, persons eligible under CAA-2019 can apply for citizenship on this portal [indiancitizenshiponline.nic.in](#)," the spokesperson said. A mobile app 'CAA-2019' will also be launched shortly to facilitate applications through mobile app.

The Centre on Monday implemented the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, notifying the rules four years after the law was passed by Parliament to fast-track citizenship for undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who came to India before December 31, 2014. With the unveiling of the rules, the Modi government will now start granting Indian nationality to persecuted non-Muslim migrants -- Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, [| More on PII](#)

LS Poll Preparedness In J&K

EC Begins Consultation With Political Parties

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: Political parties here on Tuesday urged the Election Commission to hold assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir simultaneously with the Lok Sabha polls as the panel started two-day consultations with stakeholders to review preparedness for the upcoming general elections. The BJP too has expressed its readiness for simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and the Jammu and Kashmir assembly. Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar and other officials of the poll panel, who arrived here on Monday for a three-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir, held interactions with delegations from the National Conference (NC), PDP, BJP, CPI(M), Congress, and the Aam



Admi Party, officials said here. National Conference leader Nasir Aslam Wani, who led his party's delegation, said they impressed upon the Election Commission the need for holding assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir together with the Lok Sabha polls. "We told the commission that it has been 10 years that the people of [| More on PII](#)

J&K To Procure Helicopter Ambulance

The election department will procure three helicopters, including air-ambulance for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir, and has floated request for proposals (RFP) recently. These steps have been taken in the run up to the preparation for the forthcoming Lok Sabha in Jammu and Kashmir. As per the RFP, the [| More on PII](#)



Devotees offering prayers inside Jamia Masjid Srinagar on the first day of the holy month of Ramazan. KO Pix Abid Bhat.

....T20 World Cup

Kashmir Bat Manufacturers Eye 'Big Players'

Agencies

Srinagar: Kashmiri bat manufacturers have set their sights on prominent players from renowned cricketing nations to play with Kashmiri bats in the upcoming T20 World Cup. Representatives of bat manufacturers said that there has been a surge in demand for Kashmir Willow bats in global markets following their use by international cricket players in the last two World Cups. Fawzul Kabir, spokesperson of the Bat Manufacturers Association Kashmir, said that this will mark the third consecutive occasion where players will use Kashmiri bats in the world cup. He said that during the previous two World Cups, athletes from lesser-known countries played with Kashmiri bats, but this year, discussions are underway with several prominent cricketers.



UAE's star cricketer Junaid Siddiqui smashed the biggest six of the ICC T20 World Cup against Sri Lanka in Australia last year using a Kashmir Willow Bat from GR8 Sports, he said. Kabir, owner of the unit established by his late father in 1974, further said, "We are engaging with renowned cricketing nations and players and are optimistic that famous players from famous [| More on PII](#)



New Uttar Pradesh of New India



A network of Maximum Expressways

6

Operational

7

Under Construction

- Boasting 5 international airports: Operational in Kushinagar, Lucknow, Varanasi and Ayodhya, with ongoing construction of Jewar Airport
- 15 operational airports and 6 under construction
- Extensive Metro rail services: Operational in Lucknow, Kanpur, Noida, Greater Noida, Ghaziabad and Agra.
- Establishment of the Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor, spanning 6 nodes: Aligarh, Agra, Lucknow, Kanpur, Chitrakoot and Jhansi
- Rapid Rail Service from Meerut to New Delhi
- Construction of ropeway project in Varanasi
- Cruise service operational from Varanasi to Haldia



Connectivity Se Badhi Raftaar

Double Engine Ki Sarkar





Srinagar Fruit Mandi Stocked Up On Fresh Fruits For Ramazan

Observer News Service
SRINAGAR: Despite the closure of the national highway, Srinagar's mandi stands stocked with an abundance of vegetables and fruits, President of the Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers Cum Dealers Union said on Tuesday.
"As the month of Ramadan has arrived, preparations are in full swing to meet the increased demand for fresh produce. The Srinagar mandi has been well-prepared to cater to the needs of the people during this auspicious period," the union president Bashir Ahmad

Bashir said. He said watermelons, melons, papayas and various other fruits are available in good quantities. Asked about concerns raised regarding the consumption of early-ripened fruits, Bashir said only the experts could provide accurate insights on the matter. He assured the public of the quality and freshness of the available produce, saying the mandi is fully stocked with a wide range of fruits and vegetables to meet the needs of consumers. "With the spirit of Ramadan, Srinagar's Mandi is stocked up," he added.



TUESDAY MARKS THE FIRST day of the holy month of Ramadan, with worshippers reciting the holy Quran at Srinagar's central Jamia Masjid. KO Photo, Abid Bhat. KO PHOTO, ABID BHAT

'Ladies Special Bus' Goes Missing In Srinagar, Female Commuters Aghast

Observer News Service
SRINAGAR: Female commuters, specially college going students in Srinagar, have expressed disappointment over the absence of "Ladies Special" service, stating that the specialized service by Jammu and Kashmir Road Transport Corporation (JKRTC) for female commuters has vanished from the roads. Several female commuters, especially college students, have rarely seen buses dedicated specifically for female commuters in the city by the Jammu and Kashmir Road Transport Corporation. "Since colleges reopened, I haven't spotted the ladies' special bus. Firstly, the route doesn't even directly connect to my college, so I have to change buses multiple times," said Insha, a student at MA Road College. She mentioned that in the absence of the ladies' special bus on Srinagar roads, many students like her are forced to board overcrowded public transport buses to reach their colleges or other educational institutions. Miss Shaheen, a banker, expressed the inconvenience of



standing among males in overloaded buses daily for her commute to the office, stating that having a ladies' special bus would have been more comfortable. Several students from Women's College MA Road Srinagar and other colleges shared that reaching their colleges through public transport was often challenging due to overcrowded buses. "Ladies' special bus service should be reinstated to provide commuting relief for females. These buses should have direct access to areas dominated by educa-

tional institutions, government or private offices, and workplaces," suggested a group of women. According to JKRTC officials, the "Ladies Special Bus" service has a seat capacity of 32 in each bus, previously the service used to operate from Lal Chowk to four routes. On Soura route the bus would make four singles in a day, two specials to Kashmir University, also with four singles, and to downtown areas passing through Nalla Amir Khan Road, with two singles in a day. Meanwhile, a senior official

Refusing Chalo App E-Tickets On Smart Buses Irk Commuters

SRINAGAR: Passengers travelling Smart City Srinagar's e-buses have expressed concerns with the conductors' refusal to accept e-tickets generated via the Chalo App. These buses, which are already referred to as smart buses, are not taking tickets purchased through the Chalo App, which poses difficulties in this cashless and digital era, they said. "I recently travelled in a Smart City bus and obtained a ticket through the Chalo App. However, when I presented the e-ticket to the conductor, he flatly rejected it," Mohammad Yousuf, a passenger complained. "To my dismay, I had no choice but to pay the fare again," he lamented. The incident has raised concerns among passengers who have em-

braced the convenience of digital ticketing but now face hurdles in the form of conductors unwilling to acknowledge the Chalo App-generated e-tickets. Another passenger said he recently travelled in one of these buses from Srinagar to Chadoora and realized he was low on cash. "I generated an e-ticket using the Chalo App and made the payment online. I feel ashamed because the conductor didn't accept my ticket when I showed it to him," he said. In December 2023, Srinagar Smart City Ltd announced a partnership with the free Chalo App to help passenger's access e-bus facilities, such as the ability to view bus schedules, track the real-time location of e-buses, or pay conductors directly through a smart wallet.

from the JKRTC told KNO that post Covid-19 pandemic the regular ladies special bus service was hampered, but that they would resume the services soon. "We are on it, modalities are being discussed, in next 10-15 days we will resume the Ladies Special Bus Service", the senior official said.

Amar Singh College Celebrates International Women's Day

Observer News Service
SRINAGAR: Amar Singh College, Cluster University Srinagar observed International Women's Day in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare and Directorate of Mission Shakti J&K. Dr Sheikh Ajaz Bashir, the nodal principal of Kashmir division colleges and Principal of Amar Singh College Srinagar delivered the presidential address. He emphasized that gender equality is a significant marker of a healthy society. He also pointed out that the equality and empowerment of women must be focused both in the education sector and entrepreneurship. Earlier, Dr Bazigha Badar Head, Department of Environmental Science, Amar Singh College delivered the inaugural address. She apprised the audience about this year's Women's Day celebration theme and stressed the need for women's empowerment. Hafiz Abdul Bari, Tehsil Social Welfare Officer North,

also spoke on the occasion and highlighted the importance of women in society. Dr. Sabina Rasool, Head Department of Education, Amar Singh College also delivered a detailed lecture on the significance of the Women's Day celebration. Prof. (Dr.) Syed Ajaz Farid, Head Department of Geography also shared his views on the day. The event saw massive participation by the students and other stakeholders. Day-long celebration was observed with artists performing Skits and cultural songs. The Chess event was also organized exclusively for women, along with self-defense training camp for women, and a singing competition. Eleven stalls showcasing different skills and crafts by the women were displayed in the Taseer Hall. The stalls witnessed an encouraging footfall of visitors. The day-long celebration concluded with the certificate distribution and a brief felicitation ceremony.

Government of Jammu and Kashmir
GOVERNMENT MEDICAL COLLEGE SRINAGAR
10-KARAN NAGAR, SRINAGAR, J&K-190010

Subject: Appointment of candidates as X-ray Assistant(s) in Govt. Medical College and Its Associated Hospitals Srinagar, advertised vide JKSSB Notification No. 02 of 2021 dated 26-03-2021.
Ref(s): Administrative Department (H&ME) communication No: ME-NG/59/2024-02 Dated: 13-02-2024.

ORDER NO: 1216 -AH OF 2024
DATED: 09-03-2024

On the basis of recommendation made by J&K Service Selection Board vide their communication No: JKSSB-SD0SECY(UT)/1/2023-01 (E-7099079), Dated: 25-01-2024 conveyed to this office by the Health and Medical Education Department, J&K vide No. ME-NG/59/2024-02 Dated: 13-02-2024, sanction is hereby accorded to the temporary appointment of following two (02) candidates as "X-Ray Assistant(s)" in the pay level-4 (25500-81100) in Government Medical

S. No.	Name of the candidate	Parentage	Address	Date of Birth	Total Score	Selection Category
1.	Fayaz Ahmad Chohan (ST)	Mohd Ismail Chohan	Nawa Gabra Moori Mohalla Karnah Kupwara	03-08-1995	97.2014	ST
2.	Abrar Amin Khan	Muhammad Amin Khan	Sheerwanipora Lachipora-B, Boniyar, Baramulla	31-03-1996	63.3447	PSP

The appointee(s) shall report to the office of the Principal/ Dean Govt. Medical College Srinagar within a period of twenty one (21) days from the date of issuance of this order, failing which they shall forego their right to appointment and the same shall be deemed to have been cancelled ab-initio without any further notice. The appointee(s) shall be allowed to join only after the production of following certificates (In Original) to be verified subsequently:
I. Date of Birth certificate.
II. Qualification certificate(s).
III. Domicile certificate.
IV. Medical Fitness certificate from Chief Medical Officer (CMO), concerned.
V. No Objection Certificate (NOC) from District Industries Centre (DIC) and District Employment & Counseling Centre of the Domicile District. If the candidate has taken loan for self employment from DIC/Employment Counseling Centre, they shall relinquish the proprietorship of the unit enterprise and also stakes, if any, in such self employment unit/enterprise before joining the Government service. He/She shall be required to repay the entire liability in suitable EMI's to be worked out by the DDO concerned from his/her salary, DDO concerned shall obtain an affidavit from the concerned appointee(s) regarding both relinquishment of the proprietorship and stakes, if any, in such self-employment unit enterprise and recovery to be made and also personally monitor its recovery.
VI. Relevant category certificate, wherever applicable.
VII. Any other document(s) as requires under rules.

The appointment of the above candidates shall further be subject to the following terms and conditions:-
1. The salary of the appointee(s) shall not be drawn and disbursed to them unless and until, satisfactory reports in respect of genuineness of Qualification certificate/ Date of Birth certificate/ relevant category certificate (if any), is received from the concerned authorities/ agency.
2. The appointment of the candidates shall be governed by the "New Pension Scheme" as notified vide SR0400 of 2009 dated: 24-12-2009.
3. The appointee(s) shall be on probation for a period of two (02) years.
4. The interim arrangement, if any, made against the above posts shall be deemed to have been terminated forthwith.
5. The appointment in Divisional Cadre is non-transferable from one Division to another or from one Medical College to another.
6. The appointment of the appointee(s) shall be subject to outcome of writ petition(s), if any, pending on the subject in any court of competent jurisdiction.
7. The inter-seniority of the above appointee(s) shall be as per the merit secured by them in selection process as indicated against them in the selection list furnished by the J&K Services Selection Board.
8. The appointee(s) shall give an undertaking in the shape of an affidavit duly attested by 1st Class Judicial Magistrate to the effect that if on verification, their Qualification/Date of Birth/Reserved category certificate(s) from the concerned issuing authorities are found fake/forged, his/her appointment as "X-Ray Assistant" in Govt. Medical College & Its Associated Hospitals Srinagar shall be deemed to have been cancelled ab-initio and the legal action as warranted under rules shall be initiated against them. They in that case will not claim for any dues from Govt. Medical College Srinagar.

No. AH-09/Est-1/2024/8817-24
Dated: 09/03/2024

DIPK-17773-23
DT: 12/03/2024

Prof. (Dr.) Masood Tanvir
Principal/Dean
Medical College Srinagar

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PDD: 0194-2450213
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AIRPORTS
SHIEKH UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

RAILWAYS
SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259
ANANTNAG: 01932-228243
BARAMULLA: 0194-102029
BIJBERA: 01932-228243
PAMPORE: 01933-294132
PATTAN: 01954-293507
QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

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

PRAYERS

FAJR 5:23
ZUHR 12:41
ASR 4:56
Magrib 6:39
ISHA 8:00

HIJRI CALENDAR
02 - Ramazan
1445

This Day In History

- 1567 - Battle at Oosterweel: Spanish troops destroy Geuzenleger
- 1569 - Battle of Jarnac, Count of Anjou defeats Huguenots
- 1591 - Battle at Tondibi: Moroccan army under Judar defeats Sultan Askia Ishaq II of Songhai
- 1865 - Confederate President Jefferson Davis signs bill authorizing use of slaves as soldiers (US Civil War)
- 1881 - Alexander II of Russia is assassinated by members of far-left terror group 'People's Will' who throw a bomb at him in the city of St. Petersburg
- 1884 - Siege of Khartoum, Sudan begins by Mahdist forces, lasts 10 months
- 1900 - British troops occupy Bloemfontein, capital of the Orange Free State (Boer War)
- 1911 - The Colonial-Born and Settlers Indian Association is formed at a meeting in Durban, South Africa, and has as its aim to fight the infamous 3 poll tax
- 1912 - Bulgaria and Serbia conclude an alliance pact ostensibly against Austria, but it secretly provides for a possible war against Turkey
- 1918 - Trotsky gains control of the Red Army
- 1920 - After the German government is forced to cut its army to 10,000 men, military groups plot an unsuccessful coup - a revolt ended by a general strike
- 1921 - Mongolia (formerly Outer Mongolia) declares independence from China
- 1922 - George Bernard Shaw's "Back to Methuselah V" premieres in NYC
- 1935 - Driving tests introduced in Great Britain
- 1938 - In a process known as Anschluss, Austria is annexed into Nazi Germany
- 1938 - World News Roundup is broadcast for the first time on CBS Radio in the United States.
- 1943 - Failed assassin attempt on Hitler during Smolensk-Rastenburg flight
- 1963 - Indonesia & Netherlands reinstate diplomatic relations
- 1964 - Turkey threatens Cyprus with armed attack
- 1969 - Apollo 9 returns to Earth
- 1970 - Digital Equipment Corp introduces PDP-11 minicomputer
- 1973 - Syria adopts constitution
- 1986 - Soyuz T-15 carries 2 cosmonauts to Soviet space station Mir
- 1986 - Microsoft has its Initial public offering.
- 1989 - 27th shuttle, Discovery 8, launched, 1st woman to do the countdown

From KO Archives

Musharraf Accepts Cricket Invitation

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has accepted an offer to travel to India to watch the cricket series between the two countries. A Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesman said Gen Musharraf had yet to decide which matches he would be attending. It will be his first trip to India since a tense summit meeting between the two countries in Agra in 2001. "We are looking at the schedule of the president," foreign office spokesman Jalil Abbas Jilani told foreign news agency. "It depends on the convenience of the president," he added. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told parliament he hoped the president and his family would enjoy their visit. (Kashmir Observer, 13 March, 2005)

Jammu & Kashmir Bank Limited
Central Stationary Department
Nowgam, Bypass
Srinagar 190015 J&K

On-Line Request for Quotes (e-RFQ)
for
Supply of Table Stationery Items
(File Covers/ Envelopes etc)

RFQ Notice along with Complete RFQ document outlining the minimum requirements can be downloaded from and Bids can be submitted on the Banks' e-Tendering Portal <https://jkbank.abcprocure.com> w.e.f. March 13, 2024, 16.00 Hrs. RFQ Document can also be downloaded from Bank's Official Website www.jkbank.com. Last date for submission of Bids is April 03, 2024, 17.00 Hrs.

e-RFQ Ref. No.: JKB/CSD/Table-Stationery-P178/2024-1011
Dated: 11-03-2024

DIPK-NB-6001-23
DT: 12/03/2024

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KASHMIR OBSERVERTM

Wednesday | 13-03-2024

Return Of Heatwaves

As we head into the spring of 2024, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has cast a spotlight on the impending summer, forecasting above-normal maximum temperatures and prolonged heat waves from March to May. The heat is set to grip Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, north interior Karnataka, and southern Maharashtra, with El Nino conditions persisting until May, amplifying the intensity of the forecast. The weather experts have drawn attention to the historical correlation between El Nino and heightened heatwave conditions, signaling an extended duration of scorching temperatures.

Amidst the concerning summer forecast, an anomaly has emerged in Kashmir Valley, typically known for its cold winters. The region witnessed an unusually warm winter from November through January - including the 40-day harshest period of Chillai Kalan - marked by an absence of snowfall and day temperatures hovering above 15 degrees Celsius, comparable to New Delhi. This uncharacteristic warmth raised alarms, hinting at potential repercussions for the year ahead. This, in turn, has triggered concerns about the depletion of glaciers, which could impact water bodies and pose challenges for agriculture and hydropower facilities. As one of India's coldest places experiencing a deviation from its winter norms, Kashmir's situation highlights the broader impact of climate change on diverse regions.

The southern part of the country has already experienced an early onset of warm weather, with February 2024 being the warmest on record since 1901. South peninsular India saw a mean temperature of 27.13 degrees Celsius, surpassing the normal of 25.93 degrees Celsius by 1.2 degrees.

True, the warming winters are one of the most conspicuous signs of climate change. Sadly, this troubling state of affairs is not going to end anytime soon. As things stand, climate change looms large as the leading global challenge over the next ten years. The World Economic Forum's latest Global Risks Report lists climate change at the top in its four structural forces "that will shape the materialization and management of global risks over the next decade." More alarmingly, climate change dominates the risks landscape across all three timeframes outlined in the report - 2024, 2023-2024, and the ten-year time horizon.

The convergence of El Nino, prolonged heatwaves, and unexpected winter warmth, particularly in Kashmir, highlights the need for proactive measures in water resource management, agriculture, and energy planning. As we navigate the complexities of a changing climate in 2024, staying vigilant and adaptive becomes paramount, especially in regions seeing unexpected deviations from their traditional weather patterns.

OTHER OPINION

Names and bonds

The Supreme Court's refusal to grant any further time to the State Bank of India (SBI) to furnish details of those who purchased and parties that encashed electoral bonds since April 2019 has foiled an ill-advised attempt to seek postponement of the disclosure until after the general election. The SBI has now been asked to disclose to the Election Commission of India (ECI), by the end of March 12, the names of details of the purchasers of the bonds, the dates on which these were bought, and denominations. The bank should also disclose the names of parties that redeemed the bonds, along with dates and denominations. The ECI has to host the information on its website by March 15. The upshot of the bank's application for time until June 30 is that it is now quite clear that it must disclose the data available to it, and need not try and match the names of the donors with the parties. It appears that the initial directions of the Constitution Bench, as part of its February 15 judgment invalidating the electoral bonds scheme, had been construed to mean that the SBI was required to match with exactitude all the purchasers with the recipients. The bank deemed this a "time-consuming" exercise, as the details were in separate silos and not stored in digital format.

In rejecting the bank's application for time and keeping the threat of contempt action alive, the Court has sent a message that it will not brook any further delay. The Bench has also rightly questioned the bank's silence on what had been done to comply with the order until the filing of an application for extension of time, just two days before the March 6 deadline. It is now quite apparent that even manually matching the two datasets could not have taken as long as the four months the SBI wanted. A question may arise as to whether the voters' right to information, the very basis for the Court finding the anonymous donation scheme unconstitutional, will be fulfilled by mere disclosure of the names of bond purchasers and the parties that received the funds, without authentic data on who donated what amount to which party. Given that the bonds have to be redeemed within a 15-day window, it may still be possible for a diligent civil society to use the disclosures to match donors and parties based on the proximity between dates of purchase and redemption. The data may also help unravel whether corporate houses or individuals benefited from their donations to ruling parties at the Centre and in the States, or if the contributions were made in response to any threat of investigation and prosecution.

The Hindu

New Railway Lines Would Severely Impact Kashmir's Apple Industry

Sacrificing 5500 Kanals of agriculture land will be disastrous as our valley has very small landholdings



Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually inaugurated the Banihal-Sangaldan Railway Line in J&K. He flagged off the first electric train in the Kashmir Valley running from Baramulla station on February 20th 2024.

The Banihal-Sangaldan Railway Line has been constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 15,863 crore and is expected to revolutionize the railway transportation system in J&K. Sangaldan is located in Reasi district and this is around 48 kms from Banihal. Very soon Sangaldan will be further connected with Katra railway station.

The work on the 63 kms Katra Sangaldan section is going at a fast pace and is in an advanced stage of completion. This section includes 14 main tunnels and 5 escape tunnels. The mining work on all these tunnels has been completed. Out of a total scope of 67 kms, 59 kms track lining has been completed.

Out of 33 bridges, 32 bridges are complete and work on the last bridge is also in the advanced stage. Within coming months Srinagar would get connected with Jammu through this railway line. All this is part of the 272 Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Line (USBRL) project which is likely to be completed in July-August 2024. However, the Baramulla to Banihal rail line was already operational, a stretch of 48 km was added to this line last month (Banihal Sangaldan).

The Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla railway project (USBRL project) also includes the world's highest railway bridge over the Chenab River. The deck height above the river bed of the Chenab Bridge is 359 meters and the length of the bridge is 1315 meters. The cost of the bridge is Rs 1486 crore. However, the estimated cost of the entire project is Rs 41,119 crore

New Railway Lines in Kashmir

Some more railway lines have been sanctioned by the Ministry of Railways for Kashmir valley for which a survey was recently started. Last year, during the winter session of parliament, the Minister for Railways Ashwani Vaishnav while responding to some Members of Parliament gave a detailed report on the extension of the Indian railways network to Jammu & Kashmir. In a written reply given to joint questions put forward by Lok Sabha MPs Jugal Kishore, Jamyang T Namgyal, Bidyut Mahato the Union Railway Minister said that Udhampur Srinagar Baramulla Railway Line -USBRL project is, perhaps, the most difficult new railway line project undertaken in the country post-independence, but within coming months the work would finally be completed. The Minister in his reply said:

"The terrain passes through the young Himalayas, which are full of geological surprises and numerous problems. This section predominantly involves tunnelling i.e. 97.42 Km out of 111 Km (i.e. 87%) of length of Katra-Banihal section is in tunnels and maximum length of tunnel T-49 is 12.77 Km, which will be the longest transportation railway tunnel in the country. Railway has made the world's highest Railway Bridge over Chenab river in Reasi District of Jammu & Kashmir. The iconic Chenab Bridge is 1315 m long having Arch span of 467 m and height of 359 m above river bed. Indian Railways first cable-stayed bridge has been constructed over Anjikkhad. Its bridge deck is 331m above the river bed level and height of its Main pylon is 193m."

He said that another track of 135 kms would be laid on the Banihal Baramulla. He also said that new railway lines on Baramulla-Uri section (50km), Sopore-Kupwara (33.7km), Awantipora-Shopian (27.6km), Anantnag-Bijbehara-Pahalgam (77.5km) would also be laid in the coming years

Apple farmers not happy

Traveling by train from Kashmir to Udhampur -Jammu and then to New Delhi has been a dream of Kashmiri people. The railway line laid between Banihal and Baramulla has given a great boost not only to the economy but every day thousands of people travel between Banihal and Baramulla via Kulgam, Anantnag, Pulwama, Srinagar, Budgam and Baramulla districts at very minimal cost. People from Srinagar or Budgam who worked in Baramulla, Kupwara, Anantnag or Kulgam many years back would



People will get good money but they will lose their livelihood as well and more land where new apple farms can be developed isn't available at all

usually stay in rented accommodation in these places as travelling to and fro daily was not possible. But for the last many years they travel these long distances by train as Banihal - Baramulla rail link has made this possible. The train journey is not only cheap but it takes very less time as well and there are no traffic jams at all.

These are the positive aspects of the Railways in Kashmir. As the Govt of India is planning to further connect different areas in Kashmir valley via railway network, this might indeed give a relief to commuters but it would severely impact our agriculture especially the apple industry. It is important to note that very less agricultural land was acquired while laying railway lines between Udhampur - Banihal section via Katra and Sangaldan as most of the land acquired was forest land located in rugged mountains. On the contrary, when a railway line was laid between Qazigund to Baramulla in Kashmir valley during late 1990s or early 2000, 90% of the land that was acquired was agricultural land. As the project was first of its kind in Kashmir valley, people welcomed it and sacrificed their land as well. In fact Govt of India compensated the affected landowners and even many were given jobs also in the railways. This Railway line was further extended to Banihal from Qazigund via an 11 kms long tunnel and for this purpose not much agricultural land was acquired. But as the Govt is planning to further expand railway connectivity to other areas within Kashmir valley, this will definitely impact the agriculture land especially the apple orchards in north and South Kashmir.

During expansion of NH 44 Srinagar Jammu and construction of Srinagar Ring Road already we have lost almost 10,000 kanals of farmland in Anantnag, Pulwama, Budgam and Srinagar districts in last 6 to 7 years and now if more and more land is acquired for highways and railways it would have severe consequences in the years to come.

The Government is planning to connect Baramulla-Uri (50km), Sopore-Kupwara (33.7km), Awantipora-Shopian (27.6km), Anantnag-Bijbehara-Pahalgam (77.5km) with a railway network but are we aware how much farmland we would have to sacrifice for it?

In total, over 190 km long railway line would be laid in these areas which are located in North and South Kashmir. Unfortunately, in all these areas 100% land that would be acquired is highly fertile and has fully grown apple trees on it. In the Baramulla-Uri section a lot of forest land with wildlife would get impacted if the railway line is laid. As the Railway Ministry started a survey in Bijbehara Pahalgam section people were seen protesting and the videos went viral on social media. In Shopian Zainapora also people protested after survey teams went to some villages. A local news portal The Kashmiririyat had filed a detailed report on this.

The report published by The Kashmiririyat on its website had quoted a 56 year old Bashir Ahmed Bhat an apple grower from Rehsipora Zainapora in Shopian district. The poor farmer is completely disturbed as his apple orchard would get impacted with the proposed railway line and he has no other source of income.

"I was informed that the government is taking our land up for a vital railway line project. We rely on apple orchards for our livelihood and the railway line is not much needed in our area and it will impact our bread and butter. We do not understand who is seeking the construction of the project. Not a single person, political

party or representative has sought this project. Our apple industry will take a major hit, if the project is not stopped," said Bashir Ahmed Bhat while talking to The Kashmiririyat

Are new railway lines feasible in Kashmir?

More than 90% of farmers in Jammu & Kashmir are marginal farmers as per official figures. The size of small agricultural landholdings in J&K was estimated at 0.55 hectares by the Agriculture Census 2015-16, but unofficial sources say they are much smaller, 0.35 hectares or six (6) kanals we can say. In Kashmir Valley, the size is even smaller. During the 2010-2011 Agriculture Census, the average size of operational land holdings in India was 1.15 hectares. This figure was also lower, at 0.62 hectares, for Jammu and Kashmir. Districts in Kashmir Valley had even lower landholding sizes than the state as a whole: Anantnag 0.39 hectares, Kulgam 0.39, Shopian 0.56, Pulwama 0.48, Srinagar 0.31, Budgam 0.43, Baramulla 0.51, Ganderbal 0.37, Bandipora 0.48, and Kupwara 0.51. This figure fell during the 2015-16 Agriculture Census. In the Valley, where most farmers own less than an acre of land, any government policy related to land acquisition, especially for "development projects", needs to take into account the fragile mountainous environment and climatic conditions as well.

One understands the importance of Baramulla-Srinagar-Udhampur Railway project but to take railway lines to Pahalgam and Kupwara or Uri by sacrificing so many apple orchards and green forests would prove to be disastrous. Kashmiri people would have loved to give their land for this project had their landholdings been huge like we see in states like Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat or Rajasthan. If someone loses his half acres (4 kanals) of apple farm will he be able to buy a new one or set up a new farm? No, because there is hardly any land availability in the apple producing areas of South and North Kashmir. In fact under the Right to Fair Compensation Act 2013 the affected people would get good compensation but they won't be able to set up new apple farms as Kashmir valley has meager landholding and our agricultural land is shrinking at a very fast rate.

Conclusion

To make a 1 km highway or Railway line in India, around 1.50 hectares of land is required i.e. 30 kanals of land. This means Govt requires around 1000 kanals of land for Baramulla Kupwara rail line (33.7 kms). Similarly for Anantnag Bijbehara Pahalgam railway line 2340 kanals of land is required and most of this land is under apple cultivation. On the proposed Awantipora-Shopian railway line which is estimated to be 27.6 kms long, more than 840 kanals of land would be required but most of the land is under apple cultivation. Baramulla Uri rail line will require 1500 kanals of land. In total, this amounts to more than 5500 kanals (278 hectares). Will the Govt prefer local economy over development? People will get good money but they will lose their livelihood as well and more land where new apple farms can be developed isn't available at all. In such a scenario will the Govt revisit their policy on further expansion of railway lines in Kashmir valley?

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

Compassion is Divine

Mushtaq Hurra

Compassion is a divine attribute which erases the boundaries of religion and faith and liberates man from the shackles of duality and division. Compassion stations humans substantially high above the celestial creatures. Allama Iqbal had said, "The reason for creation of humans is for love and compassion, else, for obedience, the angels did not have a match."

Compassion and empathy undoubtedly bestow prominence to humans in the animal kingdom. Had worship, prostration and Godly adoration been the sole purpose behind the creation of man, then angels were more than sufficient to carry out the assignment. Allah's prophet (peace be upon him) has categorically admonished believers to not be callous and fiendish. The beloved prophet PBUH has said, "A man can be anything, but can't be pious if he does not possess a compassionate heart."

Mother nature is a paragon of compassion and epitome of empathy. She produces thousands of instances of altruistic love and compassion. Borrowing nectar to tiny honeybees is an act of compassion by polychromatic blooms, transformation of a flower into a fruit is a similitude of selfless compassion, allofeeding a brood of young ones by a parent bird is the truest manifestation of compassion, self abandonment by clouds to rain to the call of the parched soil is a beautiful way to be compassionate, restoring smile on a melancholic face is certainly a gesture of considerate compassion, a pat of empathy on a weak shoulder is a generous move of compassion, solidarity with a hap-



less soul is the noblest form of compassion, extending helping hand to a needy pauper is the angelic exhibition of compassion, feeding hungry and thirsty is the divinely compassion. Compassion is the crown which places man on the throne of the world as its king. It adds grace and elegance to the viceroy of Allah SWT, and elevates his stature among all the creatures of the universe.

Compassion softens human hearts, and grants divine proximity and propinquity to those who possess great virtue. It earns people the pleasure of Allah SWT. Blessed are the compassionate and cursed are the cruel. Souls with treasures full of empathy and compassion are actually the avatars and incarnations of God on the

earth. But, cessation of the virtue sinks the man to the lowest of low.

Compassionate people are the ambassadors of Allah SWT on the planet earth, because Allah SWT loves compassion and admires compassionate hearts. Our beloved prophet Muhammad PBUH was the embodiment of compassion. He (PBUH) set unprecedented examples of compassion, empathy and love. Pages of history bear witness to His (PBUH) exceptional and prodigious character which melted even stony hearts and his (PBUH) rigid foes. The entire world has failed to produce such unblemished and unmatched personal disposition.

Once, an old lady was waiting on the threshold of her house with all her belongings packed in a sack. It

was the time when the proclamation of prophet-hood had ceased all sorts of pampering and admiration for the prophet PBUH. Well, the old lady was too weak to lift the sack on her shoulders.

Rehmatallil-Aalameen PBUH happened to pass by, and saw the old mother in distress. He (PBUH) stopped and went to the old lady and said, "Mother, you seem to be worried. Can I extend any kind of help to you?" The old lady sobbed and replied, "My son, I am leaving the place for some unknown enchanter and conjurer of Mekkah, whose black magic breaches blood relationships. He allegedly is the enemy of our Gods (Idols). His preaching has created chaos and confusion in the entire

Mekkah. He is a merchant of hatred and antagonism. He instigates people to kill each other. He incites trouble and frenzied mayhem in our peaceful city. He beguiles innocents to follow his new religion.

"I am leaving my homeland to escape his charm and influence. Keep away from him." Beloved prophet PBUH didn't reciprocate, rather kept mum, took the belongings on his own shoulders and asked the old lady about her destination. The old lady and the beloved prophet PBUH hit the road by foot. The old lady continued her advice throughout the journey, and repeatedly warned the young man to elude the treachery of the new preacher.

Meanwhile, the old lady asked the young man to stop. "Drop the sack here, I have reached my new home." Said the mother. She thanked the young man for his extraordinary patience, character and behaviour. "My son, I have forgotten to ask your name. Who are you? What is your name? Thank God, we have great sons like in our city." She added. Our beloved prophet PBUH smiled and said, "Old mother, I am the magician who is the perpetual eyesore for the respected tribesmen of Quraish. I am the preacher who is being castigated in Mekkah. My name is Mohammad PBUH."

The old lady broke down into sighs and sobs. She at once begged for a pardon and recited Kalima Shahadah. Subhanallah! An epitome of patience, compassion and sympathy is our beloved prophet PBUH.

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7 Ways to Engage With the Quran if You Can't Read or Understand Arabic

Ramadan will be here in less than a week. The most special month of the year filled with Allah SWT's blessings, mercy and forgiveness. It is also special because it is the month of the Qur'an - it was during Ramadan that it was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through Angel Jibreel (AS). One of the main goals of this month is to reconnect with the Qur'an - to read it, understand it and live it. Allah, with His Infinite Wisdom, revealed the Qur'an in Arabic and made it easy for us to understand in any language. In this piece, we cover seven ways to engage with the Qur'an this Ramadan if you do not read or understand Arabic.

"We did not send any messenger but (speaking) in the language of his people, so that he might clearly convey the message to them." [Surah Ibrahim 14:4]

"And thus have We revealed to you an Arabic Qur'an, that you may warn the mother city (Makkah) and those around it, and that you may give warning of the day of gathering together wherein is no doubt; a party shall be in the garden and (another) party in the burning fire." [Surah Ash-Shuraa 42:7]

"And if We had made it a non-Arabic Qur'an, they would have said, 'Why are its verses not explained in detail [in our language]? Is it a foreign [recitation] and an Arab [messenger]?' Say, 'It is, for those who believe, a guidance and cure.' And those who do not believe - in their ears is deafness, and it is upon them blindness. Those are being called from a distant place.'" [Surah Fussilat 41:44]

"Indeed, We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand." [Surah Az-Zukhruf 43:3]

Arabic is a rich, highly developed language and the words of Allah in the Qur'an not only stunned the people of Makkah at the time, but the many layers of meaning continue to surprise scholars even to this day.

"And We did not give Prophet Muhammad, knowledge of poetry, nor is it befitting for him. It is not but a message and a clear Qur'an" [Surah Ya-Sin 36:69]

We hope that these tips will be of benefit and help you connect with the Qur'an this month and beyond.

1. Find a good translation that works for you:

Do some research on the top translations in your native language and take some time to read through them to find one that works for you; we

all learn differently and what works for others may not work for you. Use a word-to-word translation to understand the definitions of specific words and to remember the meanings of frequently used words in the Qur'an. Also, use several different translations to truly grasp the meanings of each verse. Many websites allow you to choose between different translations or include the different translations side by side.

Quran Online
Quran Explorer
Recite Quran
Corpus Quran
Legacy Quran
Quranio
Quran Hive

2. Listen to the audio recitation:

Whether you fully understand the verses being recited or not, there are benefits in listening to the Qur'an mindfully:

There is healing in listening to the recitation of the Qur'an:

"And We send down of the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe (in Islamic Monotheism and act on it), and it increases the Zalimoon (polytheists and wrongdoers) nothing but loss." [Surah Al-Isra 17:82]

Listening to the Qur'an serves as a reminder: "Truly there is a reminder in this for anyone who has a heart, or who listens attentively with presence of mind." [Surah Qaf 50:37]

Listening to the Qur'an envelopes us in blessings and mercy:

"When the Qur'an is read, listen attentively, and fall silent, so that you may be blessed with mercy." [Surah Al-A'raf 7:204]

Listening to the Qur'an is a sign that guidance and understanding has been bestowed on us by Allah:

"Those who listen to what is said and follow what is best. These are the ones whom Allah has guided; these are the people of understanding." [Surah Az-Zumar 39:18]

As you listen to the audio recitation, follow along with the transliteration to familiarise yourself with the Arabic words.

3. Recite anyway

While it is truly a struggle to recite words that

look and sound foreign to you, there is a blessing even in that struggle. Prophet Muhammad said, "Verily the one who recites the Qur'an beautifully, smoothly, and precisely, he will be in the company of the noble and obedient angels. And as for the one who recites with difficulty, stammering or stumbling through its verses, then he will have twice that reward."

Prophet Muhammad said, "Whoever recites a letter from the Book of Allah, he will receive one good deed as ten good deeds like it. I do not say that Alif Lam Mim is one letter, but rather Alif is a letter, Lam is a letter, and Mim is a letter." [Tirmidhi]

Prophet Muhammad said, "It is imperative for you to have Taqwa (fear/consciousness of Allah) for this is the accumulation of all good. Upon you is Jihad in the path of Allah for it is the monasticism of the Muslims and upon you is the Remembrance of Allah and the recitation of His Book, for it is light for you on earth and (a means by which) you will be mentioned in the Heavens."

Find a Youtube series that works best for you to learn to recite the Qur'an at your pace, maybe pair up with a friend to compare notes and help each other through the tough spots. Also use the transliteration as you follow along with a recorded recitation and enrol in a class where you can get feedback from a teacher.

It is also recommended to memorize Surah Al-Fatihah through the repeated recitation of the transliteration and listening to the audio as it is most repeated in the five daily prayers. One of the miracles of the Qur'an is that it is easy to understand and remember. This is not to say that the journey to learning it will be an easy one but that just like with anything, with some focus and good instruction, it can be done. As Allah says:

"And We have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember, then is there any that will remember (or receive admonition)?" [Surah Al-Qamar 54:17]

If you learn how to recite, you can slow down Youtube videos of reciters to follow along too.

4. Get a Kids Qur'an

One of the blessings of being in a time where we have access to a range of resources for both adults and children is that when we seek a simpler breakdown we can often find this in children's resources as they are intended to ensure communication

is clear. I have often looked to children's books to remind myself of the Prophets in a particular story or remind myself of the sequence of the stories in the Qur'an. It allows you to strip down and reminds us that the Qur'an has many stories about Prophets and Sahabah we can learn from InshaAllah.

5. Use a Qur'an pen reader

For some, an investment in a Qur'an pen reader can help you recognise and learn the letters. As you point the pen onto the text, the pen reads it out for you and whether you want to learn the letters and how to pronounce them or you are trying to memorize a surah, this is an excellent tool! You can choose from 27 different voices and multiple languages!

6. Listen to lectures with tafseer (explanation of the Qur'an) explaining linguistic nuances:

Listen to tafseer lectures from your favourite scholars as they explain the translation of the Qur'an, including the linguistic nuances of the Arabic text. The words of Allah are truly miraculous and understanding the subtleties makes reading the Qur'an a wholesome experience.

Al-Qurtubi says in his tafsir, "The metaphor of those who recite the Qur'an without knowing its tafsir is that of some people to whom a letter comes from their king at night when they have no lamp. They are alarmed, not knowing what the letter contains. The metaphor of the one who knows the tafsir is that of a man who brings [with] them a lamp so that they can read what the letter says."

7. Live the Qur'an

At the end of the day, the best thing you can do with what you learn from the Qur'an is to live it. Whether you know one line or more, when you come across knowledge from the Qur'an work towards implementing it and applying it to your life. The Qur'an has been sent as a guide for our time on this earth: learn the Qur'an, live what it teaches and teach ahead.

The Prophet said, "The best among you (Muslims) are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it." [Bukhari]

The article was originally published by Amaliah

China, Iran and Russia stage joint naval drills in Gulf of Oman



Agenceis

The navies of China, Iran and Russia have begun joint drills in the Gulf of Oman, their fifth common military exercise in recent years.

The war games starting on Tuesday coincide with heightened tensions in the region as Israel's war on Gaza rages for a sixth month and Yemen's Houthi rebels have launched attacks on ships in the Red Sea in response.

Russia's defence ministry said the exercises that will run through Friday and involve warships and aviation would focus on the protection of "maritime economic activity".

State media reported that a grouping of ships from Russia's Pacific Fleet, led by the Varyag cruiser, arrived at the Iranian port of Chabahar on Monday ahead of the drills that will see representatives from the navies of Azerbaijan, India, Kazakhstan, Oman, Pakistan and South Africa act as observers.

For its part, China's defence ministry said the drills - called "Maritime Security Belt - 2024" - were aimed at "jointly maintaining regional maritime security".

"China will send ... guided-missile destroyer Urumqi, guided-missile frigate Linyi and comprehensive supply ship Dongpinghu to participate in the exercise," the ministry added in a statement, without providing further details.

Iranian state media, meanwhile, reported that the exercise's goal is to strengthen "the security of international maritime trade, combating piracy and maritime terrorism", among others.

The drills come as a United States-led naval coalition has been operating in Red Sea waters since December 2023 trying to counter the Houthi attacks.

Separately, some 20,000 troops from 13 NATO members are conducting drills in the north of new member Sweden as well as its neighbours Finland and Norway.

The Nordic exercise is part of wider exercises called Steadfast Defender 24, the largest in decades for the US-led military alliance, with up to 90,000 troops taking part over several months. The alliance says the intention is "to demonstrate NATO's ability to defend every inch of its territory" - widely seen as a signal to Russia.

US Intelligence Warns Of Mounting Challenges To Current World Order

United States intelligence agencies have warned that the country faces an "increasingly fragile world order".

The alarm was sent through the 2024 Annual Threat Assessment report issued on Monday. The document on worldwide threats to US national security cautions that China, Iran and Russia are challenging the current international rules-based order.

The report, outlining the collective insights of the US intelligence community, says the country "faces an increasingly fragile global order, strained by great power competition, transnational challenges and regional conflicts".

Focusing on threats from China and Russia, the report notes the latter's invasion of Ukraine. It also points at the risk of broader conflict related to Israel's campaign against Hamas in Gaza since the October 7 attacks by the Iran-aligned movement that governs the enclave.

"An ambitious but anxious China, a confrontational Russia, some regional powers, such as Iran, and more capable non-state actors are challenging longstanding rules of the international system as well as US primacy within it," the report reads.

Chinese war support China is providing economic and security assistance to Russia as it wages war in Ukraine, supporting Russia's industrial base, the report said.

The report notes that trade between China and Russia has been increasing and that Chinese exports of goods with potential military use have risen more than threefold since 2022.

In a testimony to the Senate Intelligence Committee in Washington, DC, Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines urged lawmakers to approve more military assistance for Ukraine.

It was "hard to imagine how Ukraine" could hold territory it has recaptured from Russia without more assistance from Washington, she said.

The report also warned that China could use technology to try to destabilise the US directly.

"[China] may attempt to influ-



ence the US elections in 2024 at some level because of its desire to sideline critics of China and magnify US societal divisions," it reads.

Republican House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson, an ally of former President Donald Trump, has so far refused to call a vote on a bill that would provide \$60bn more for Ukraine. The measure has passed the Democratic-run Senate.

Central Intelligence Agency Director William Burns told the upper house that continuing support for Ukraine would also send a message to China about aggression towards Taiwan or in the South China Sea.

"Generational impact on terrorism"

Haines noted concern that the conflict in Gaza between Israel and Hamas threatens to spread global insecurity.

"The crisis in Gaza is a stark example of how regional developments have the potential of broader and even global implications," she said.

"While it is too early to tell, it is likely that the Gaza conflict will have a generational impact on terrorism. Both al-Qaeda and ISIL [ISIS], inspired by Hamas, have directed supporters to conduct attacks against Israeli and US interests," she added, also noting the attacks by Yemen's Houthis on shipping.

Haines, who will also report to Congress on Tuesday, added that US intelligence assesses that Hezbollah and Iran "do not want to cause an escalation of the conflict that pulls us or them into a full-

out war".

After a protester interrupted the hearing with shouts about the need to protect civilians in Gaza, Burns was asked about children in the Palestinian enclave.

"The reality is that there are children who are starving. They're malnourished as a result of the fact that humanitarian assistance can't get to them. It's very difficult to distribute humanitarian assistance effectively unless you have a ceasefire," he said.

Regarding Israel, the report noted that "Netanyahu's viability as leader as well as his governing coalition of far-right and ultraorthodox parties that pursued hardline policies on Palestinian and security issues may be in jeopardy."

"Distrust of Netanyahu's ability to rule has deepened and broadened across the public from its already high levels before the war, and we expect large protests demanding his resignation and new elections. A different, more moderate government is a possibility," it said.

Emotions rose in the hearing as some senators discussed immigration across the US border with Mexico, which Trump has made a focus of his campaign to defeat Democratic President Joe Biden in the November election.

FBI Director Christopher Wray expressed concern about the "terrorism implications from potential targeting of vulnerabilities at the border", noting rising threats from US nationals inspired by armed groups and other foreign fighters since Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7.

Global life expectancy declines by 1.6 years during COVID-19 pandemic, reveals Lancet study

Agenceis

Global life expectancy dropped by 1.6 years between 2019 and 2021, a sharp reversal from past improvements, according to a research published in The Lancet journal.

One of the first to fully evaluate demographic trends in the context of the first two years of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, the study has published findings, which researchers said, could have implications for health systems, economies and societies around the world.

The findings also included those of an ageing worldwide population. The study found that life expectancy declined in 84 per cent of countries and territories during this time. This demonstrated the "devastating potential impacts of novel pathogens", the researchers said.

Places such as Mexico City, Peru and Bolivia experienced some of the largest drops, the study found.

The researchers also found a marked increase in adult mortality rates globally during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, reversing past decreasing trends.

However, child mortality continued to drop amid the COVID-19 pandemic, albeit more slowly than in earlier years, with half a million fewer deaths among children under five years in 2021 compared to 2019, they found.

The researchers said stark differences in child mortality persisted regionally, with one in every four children who died globally living in South Asia and two in every four children who died living in sub-Saharan Africa.

The estimates reported here will enable key stakeholders to better understand and address the profound changes that have occurred in the global health landscape following the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic and longer-term trends in the future, they said.

The research, coordinated by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), University of Washington (UW), US, presented updated estimates from the Global Burden of Disease Study (GBD) 2021.

GBD 2021, the newly pub-

lished most recent round of GBD results, is one of the first studies to fully evaluate demographic trends in the context of the first two years of the pandemic.

Measuring mortality, excess mortality from the COVID-19 pandemic, life expectancy and population, the researchers estimated that global death rate jumped among people aged over 15 years - by 22 per cent in men and 17 per cent in women - from 2019 to 2021.

Roughly 131 million people died globally from all causes in 2020 and 2021 combined, of which the pandemic caused about 16 million, either directly by infecting or indirectly by bringing about social, economic or behavioural changes, they estimated.

The team identified high mortality during the pandemic in places previously less recognised or reported such as Jordan and Nicaragua. The high pandemic-related excess deaths in these countries were not apparent in previous all-age excess mortality estimates, they said.

Conversely, they found Barbados, New Zealand and Antigua and Barbuda to be among those places experiencing some of the lowest excess mortality from the pandemic.

The pandemic did not, however, completely erase historic progress made in enhancing life expectancy at birth, which rose by nearly 23 years between 1950 and 2021, they said. Assessing population trends, the researchers found that in 2021, the global population almost touched 7.9 billion, with 56 of 204 countries and territories peaking and subsequently shrinking.

The decline in global population was observed to begin in 2017 following years of stagnation, which accelerated during the pandemic. Many lower-income countries, however, continued to see rapid population growth, with the largest share coming from Sub-Saharan Africa (39.5 per cent) and South Asia (26.3 per cent), they said.

The researchers said that further, the global population is ageing with the number of people aged 65 years and older now increasing faster than the number of people younger than 15 years in 188 of 204 countries and territories.




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