

LS POLLS 2024

ECI To Announce Poll Dates Today



KO Web Desk

New Delhi: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has said that the schedule for the 2024 general elections to Lok Sabha and some state assemblies would be announced on Saturday, March 16, at 3 p.m. The ECI will hold a press conference in New Delhi, which will be live-streamed on social media.

The ECI had completed its national survey of poll preparedness in every State, ending its survey with a tour of Jammu and Kashmir this week.

The term of the present Lok Sabha ends on June 16 and a new House has to be

constituted before that.

The term of the assemblies in Andhra Pradesh, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Odisha is coming to an end on various dates in June.

Last time the Lok Sabha polls were announced on March 10 and held in seven phases beginning April 11. Votes were counted on May 23.

In 2014 also, the EC had sent invites for its poll schedule press conference a day in advance. The invite was sent in the evening for the presser to be held early the next day.

Nearly 97 crore people are eligible to cast vote in the upcoming polls at over 12 lakh polling stations.

In the last | [More on P11](#)

Two New ECs Assume Charge

Newly appointed election commissioners Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu assumed charge on Friday. The former bureaucrats were appointed as election commissioners on Thursday. They are the first ones to have been appointed as members of the poll panel after the new law on appointment of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and ECs came into force recently. Welcoming them, CEC Rajiv Kumar spoke about the | [More on P11](#)

THE ECI ON MARCH 14 MADE PUBLIC THE DATA on electoral bonds it received from the State Bank of India and has also sought the return of the electoral bonds' documents handed over to the Supreme Court in sealed cover/sealed boxes

Days Not Far When India Will Have 'Ram Rajya': DM

Says Defence Exports Have Crossed Rs 20,000 Crore

Press Trust Of India

Jharkhand: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday asserted that the days were not far when 'Ram Rajya' will be established in India, which would be among the top three economies in the world by 2027.

He also hit out at those branding the BJP communal over the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act or CAA and demanded



to know under what circumstances the population of Hindus in Pakistan dwindled to about 3 per cent from about 23 per cent.

Addressing a rally at Itkhor, around 160 km from state capital Ranchi, Singh said, "Ram Rajya will be established in India with the consecration of Ayodhya temple... Ram Lalla has reached his palace from his hut."

"India will be 'vishwaguru' (world leader) under Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the back of development work undertaken by him and it is God's wish that he remains the PM not only for the third time but for the fourth time as well," he said.

India is being taken seriously at international platforms now, he said, citing the instance of "halt in hostilities during the Russia-Ukraine War for | [More on P11](#)

'Art 370 Abrogation Our Key Achievement'

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday termed the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir as its biggest achievement, emphasizing that the removal of the special status paved the way for the integration of erstwhile state with the country. In an address at the party headquarters in Trikuta Nagar, Jammu, State BJP General Secretary Ashok Kaul hailed the removal of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir as a monumental achievement for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). He emphasized that this move has paved the way for the region's integration with India and accelerated its development trajectory. | [More on P11](#)



Women offer prayers at Khanqah-e-Maula in Srinagar on the first Friday of Ramazan. KO Photo Abid Bhat

'ECI Must Restore Democracy In J&K' Announce Dates For Assembly Polls: Omar

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: The Election Commission of India (ECI) should play its role in restoring democracy in Jammu and Kashmir and announce dates for both Parliament as well as assembly polls in the Union Territory, National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah said here on Friday.

"We have no expectations from the Election Commission. The EC should play its role as part of its mission of maintaining democracy. It has been 10 years that J-K has not seen an assembly election," Abdullah told reporters here.

Referring to the submission



of a report by former President Ram Nath Kovind-led committee on 'one nation one election, the former chief minister said it was a golden opportunity to start the polity from J&K.

"The former president has submitted a report on 'one nation, one election'. | [More on P11](#)

Govt Okays Amendments In J&K Reservation Rules, 2005

Observer News Service

Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir administration has approved the amendments in Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Rules, 2005.

The Administrative Council which met here under Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha approved the proposal of Social Welfare Department to amend the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Rules, 2005 in light of Jammu & Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Act, 2023 dated 15.12.2023, Constitution (Jammu & Kashmir) Scheduled Castes Order (Amendment) Act, 2024, Constitution



(Jammu & Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Act, 2024 and recommendations of Jammu and Kashmir Social and Educationally Backward Classes Commission constituted vide Government Order No. 2030-JK (LD) of 2020 dated 19.03.2020.

In light of addition of four new tribes i.e. Pahari Ethnic

Group, Paddari Tribe, Kolis and Gadda Brahmins, to the Scheduled Tribes Order as applicable to the J&K by the Parliament, the Administrative Council approved 10% reservation in favour of newly added tribes taking the overall reservation for STs to 20%. In order to ensure that both already notified and now | [More on P11](#)

ACB Arrests JE RDD On Graft Charges

Agencies

Srinagar: Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Friday said to have trapped and arrested J.E of Rural development department for demanding and accepting bribe of Rs 5000 from complainant for processing and preparing bill of the work executed by the complainant.

As per a statement issued to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), an information was received by Anti Corruption Bureau J&K on ACB Helpline Number 9419678060 from one complainant resident of village Kunnul

Qaziabad, Handwara District Kupwara alleging that he has executed some work under MG-NREGA and for preparing & processing the Bill of said work & for preparing labour demand J.E Arshid Ayoub Marazi & GR Suboor Mir are demanding bribe of Rs 5000 & Rs 3000 from him as their commission etc.

"On receipt of this information a discreet verification into the matter was conducted by ACB to ascertain the veracity of allegations during which it was found that the complainant, a resident of village Kunnul Panchayat Halqa Rangpath B Dist. | [More on P11](#)

Terror Conspiracy Case SIA Raids 7 Locations in Jammu

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: The State Investigation Agency (SIA) on Friday raided seven locations in different districts of the Jammu province as part of its probe into a Pakistan-backed terror conspiracy case, an official said.

After obtaining search warrants from the designated court in Jammu, SIA teams carried out searches simultaneously at three places in Doda district, two places in Reasi district and one place each in Ramban and Jammu districts in the morning, a spokesperson of the anti-terror agency said.

The raids were conducted at the residential premises of Hasan Babar Nehru and | [More on P11](#)

'Contempt Petition' KU VC Appears In-person Before HC Bench

Agencies

Srinagar: Vice-Chancellor of the University of Kashmir (KU) Professor Neelofar Khan on Friday appeared in-person before a division bench of the High Court which is hearing a contempt petition against the top varsity officers.

Petitioner Zahoor Hussain has moved the court seeking regularisation of his services as Junior Professional Assistant (JPA) in the Kashmir University, along with other service and financial benefits, retrospectively.

The petitioner had accused the KU authorities of flouting the previous Court orders which directed for his regularisation retrospectively, leading to the contempt petition

6 HOW DID THIS PARTICULAR CASE REACH THE POINT of contempt petition which led to VC's personal appearance is a big question which needs thorough investigation,"

which was Friday heard by the division bench of Justice Atul Sreedharan and Justice Moksha Kazmi Khajuria. Notably, this is for the first

time in Kashmir University's history that a Vice-Chancellor had to appear before the Court in-person, raising questions about the functioning of the University's Legal Cell which has now come under sharp criticism for "causing a dent to the image and reputation of the VC's chair."

Two days ago, the High Court had sought the personal appearance of all respondents (including VC KU, Registrar KU and In-Charge Officer Legal Cell, KU). However the Varsity pleaded that the VC and Registrar were "out of station" following which the Court directed their personal appearance on March 15 in the Srinagar High Court at 11am. Senior academicians, meanwhile, slammed | [More on P11](#)

Srinagar Smart City Project HC Closes PIL On 'Traffic Congestion, Pollution'

M Ahmad

Srinagar: The High Court of J&K and Ladakh has disposed of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL), seeking its directions regarding "serious traffic congestion and pollution" due to various works being undertaken under the Smart City Project in Srinagar.

A division bench of Chief Justice N. Kotiswar Singh and Justice M A Chowdhary closed the PIL by directing the authorities to examine a representation filed by the petitioners—residents of Peerbagh and Hyderpora, in

which they stated constructions undertaken under the Smart City Project whereby Cycle Tracks, Walkways and Link Roads are being constructed are creating serious traffic congestion and pollution.

"In this regard, the petitioners have submitted a representation to the Government authorities on 07.12.2023 projecting therein the issues and seeking redressal of the grievances," the court said, adding, "We are of the view that since the petitioners have submitted a representation to | [More on P11](#)

IAF Airlifts 348 Stranded Ladakh Passengers

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: The Indian Air Force (IAF) carried 348 passengers in its aircraft between Ladakh and the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir in view of the closure of the Srinagar-Leh national highway owing to heavy snowfall, an official said.

The IAF's AN-32 aircraft, also known as Kargil Courier, was operated to airlift 171 passengers between Jammu and Kargil and 177 more between Srinagar and Kargil, officials said.

He said 152 passengers were airlifted from Jammu to Kargil and 19 from Kargil to Jammu, while 141 passengers were airlifted from Srinagar to Kargil and 36 from Kargil to Srinagar.

The IAF | [More on P11](#)



THE MAGNIFICENT



Years of UP emerging as an investment hub

Unified by a common mission and being led under the 'double-engine' growth model, UP's new Industrial Investment and Employment Promotion Policy 2022 is opening new doors for investments and revenue.

UP has been able to deliver an exceptional 'Ease of Doing Business' environment for industries and has been ranked as an 'Achiever' state in the country. Uttar Pradesh's new industrial policy aims to bolster the conducive business-friendly environment in the state by ensuring simplification of procedures, leveraging digital systems to promote timely and transparent working, and timely clearances benchmarked with the best and most responsive facilitation services. Single Window Portal (SWP) of Uttar Pradesh — Nivesh Mitra — is currently one of the largest single window portals among SWPs of states/UTs (offering more than 454 services of 37 departments).

In 2018, Yogi Adityanath's action-driven government green flagged investment projects worth more than Rs 4.28 lakh crore through the Investors Summit, while in 2023 the Global Investment Summit saw a proposed investment of over Rs 40 lakh crore, out of which Rs 10 lakh crore has already come on ground as witnessed in the Ground Breaking Ceremony in February 2024. In the last seven years, the state's image has changed as a result of good governance, infrastructure development, and policy reforms, making UP the top destination for businesses and investments. A fresh budgetary provision of Rs 250 crore has been made to attract FDI as well as investments from Fortune Global 500 and Fortune India 500 companies in the state.

Years powered by 'double-engine' government in Uttar Pradesh



Struggle For Life's Basics In Rafah, Palestinians Rely On Luck Amidst Ongoing War

Bilal Shbair, Ben Hubbard
The Telegraph

Rafah: The fear has been building for weeks.

More than 1 million Palestinians fled into Rafah, the southernmost region of the Gaza Strip, hoping to escape the war. Now, Israel has threatened to extend its invasion there, too.

Amid days filled with struggles to secure food, water and shelter, uncertainty has dominated people's conversations, said Khalid Shurrah, a charity worker staying with his family in a leaky tent in Rafah.

"We have two options, ei-

ple have ended up, multiplying the area's population and exhausting its limited resources.

And now, with Israel signaling its intent to go after Hamas militants in Rafah, and Egypt blocking most Palestinians in Gaza from crossing its border to the south, families fear they are trapped.

In Rafah Governorate, home to fewer than 300,000 people before the war, space has become a rare commodity. Displaced families pack schools, tent camps sprawl across empty lots and pedestrians crowd streets.

Cooking gas is so scarce that the air is acrid with



ther to stay as we are or face our destiny — death," said Shurrah, 36. "People literally have no other safe place to go."

Rafah, which so far has been spared the brunt of Israel's onslaught, has become a new focal point of a war now in its sixth month. It is where most of Gaza's 2.2 million peo-

smoke from fires burning salvaged wood and chopped-up furniture. Fuel is expensive, so people walk, ride bicycles, or take carts drawn by donkeys and horses. Since Rafah sits along the Egyptian border, where most of the aid enters from, it receives more supplies than other parts of Gaza.

Mamata Banerjee Pushed From The Back? Doctor Explains What He Really Meant

Press Trust Of India

Kolkata: A day after stating that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had a fall at her Kalighat residence "due to some push from behind" leading to injuries on forehead and nose, state-run SSKM Hospital director Manimoy Bandyopadhyay today clarified that all he meant was that the Chief Minister may have felt "a sensation of push".

Mamata Banerjee, 69, suffered a serious injury on her forehead and nose during a fall inside her Kalighat residence in South Kolkata on Thursday evening.

"This is a sensation of pushing from behind which led to the fall (of Ms Banerjee). Our job is to treat and we have done that. There was a misinterpretation of what I said last evening," Dr Bandyopadhyay said.

The SSKM director on Thursday evening said that Banerjee had "a fall within the vicinity of her home due to some push from behind".

Dr Bandyopadhyay's "push from behind" theory sparked large-scale confusion and speculations over the cause of the Trinamool Congress supremo's fall.

She underwent three stitches on her forehead and one on her nose and was dis-

charged following necessary medical tests, including radio imaging of her brain and ECG, at the hospital.

Mamata Banerjee, who has been advised bed rest, was reported to be clinically "stable" this morning as doctors said they were planning to carry out a few routine checks



during the day, a senior official of the SSKM hospital said.

"The CM's health condition is stable. She had a good sleep in the night as senior doctors kept a close watch on her throughout the period. There will be another assessment of her condition," the official told news agency PTI on Friday.

Asked about the speculations over the chief minister's fall, a police officer told Press Trust of India, "As of now, there has been no complaint lodged in connection with her fall. We have increased the security around the CM's residence."



Electoral Bonds Case SC Raps SBI For Not Disclosing Bond Numbers, Issues Notice To Bank

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The Supreme Court said on Friday that the State Bank of India (SBI) should have disclosed the unique alpha-numeric numbers of the electoral bonds received by political parties and sought the bank's response.

A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, which was hearing an application filed by the Election Commission (EC) seeking a modification of the operative portion of its March 11 order in the electoral bonds

case, directed its registrar (judicial) to ensure that the data filed earlier by the poll panel before it in a sealed cover be scanned and digitised.

It said this be preferably carried out by 5 pm on Saturday and once the exercise is completed, the original documents be returned to the EC.

During the hearing, the bench, also comprising justices Sanjiv Khanna, B R Gavai, J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, took note of the submissions made by senior advocate Kapil Sibal and lawyer Prashant Bhushan, who appeared in the matter on behalf of the petitioner,

that the alpha-numeric numbers of the electoral bonds have not been disclosed by the SBI.

It issued a notice to the bank and posted the matter for hearing on March 18.

In its application filed in the apex court, the poll panel said the March 11 order had noted that the copies of the documents submitted by it to the court in a sealed cover during the course of the hearing be maintained at the office of the EC.

The EC said it did not keep any copy of the documents and added that those may be returned so that it can comply

SC Says SBI 'Duty Bound' To Disclose Electoral Bond Number, Issues Notice To Bank

Press Trust Of India

The State Bank of India is "duty bound" and has to disclose the unique alpha numeric numbers of the electoral bonds received by political parties, the Supreme Court said on Friday while seeking a response from the bank for not doing so.

A five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said the apex court in its verdict on electoral bonds case had directed the disclosure of all the details of bonds, including the purchaser, amount and date of purchase.

All details have to be furnished by the SBI, the CJ observed a day after the Election Commission put out the entire list of entities that have purchased electoral bonds for making political donations.

The bench, also comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna, B R Gavai, J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, issued notice to the SBI and posted the matter for hearing on March 18.

"Who is appearing for the SBI? Because in our judgement, we had directed disclosure specifically of all details of the bonds including the purchaser, the amount and the date of purchase. They have not disclosed the bond numbers. That has to be disclosed by the SBI," the CJ said, pulling up the bank. The



unique alpha numeric numbers would match those who had purchased the electoral bonds to the parties they were donating to.

"They (SBI) have not disclosed the bond numbers. That has to be disclosed by the SBI," the CJ said. "But really speaking, we can take exception to what they have disclosed because they were duty bound," he added.

The apex court was hearing an application filed by the Election Commission seeking a modification of the operative portion of its March 11 order in the electoral bonds case. It directed the registrar (judicial) to ensure that the data filed earlier by the poll panel before it in a sealed cover be scanned and digitised.

The EC's counsel said they have filed an application for a minor modification of the March 11 order, which also directed that the poll panel shall

upload on its website the data furnished to the court.

He said the EC had not retained any copy of the data which was earlier filed in the court since it was placed in sealed cover.

"While issuing this direction, the court had presumed that a copy of the data which was lodged before the registry of this court would be available with the EC," the bench said.

In its application, the EC requested the apex court that the documents be returned to it so as to enable it to comply with the March 11 order for uploading the documents.

"The registrar (judicial) of this court shall ensure that the data which has been filed by the ECI in pursuance of interim orders of this court is scanned and digitised," the bench said. It added that this exercise may preferably be carried out by 5 pm on Saturday.

Farmers Resolve To Intensify Protest, Continue It During Lok Sabha Polls

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Thousands of farmers on Thursday participated in the 'Kisan Mazdoor Mahapanchayat' at Delhi's Ramlila Maidan where a resolution was passed to intensify the protest against the Centre's policies regarding the farming sector and to continue the stir during the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

This was perhaps the biggest gathering of farmers in the national capital after their agitation at Delhi's borders ended in 2021 following the repeal of the three contentious farm laws by the Centre.

leader Rakesh Tikait told reporters, "We held a meeting here and a message has gone to the government that farmers of our country are united. The government should talk to us to resolve the issue. This agitation is not going to stop anytime soon and it will spread from Kashmir to Kan-yakumari."

Mr Tikait said the government wants to destroy the country by turning the farmers into labourers.

"They have already ended the 'mandi' system in Bihar and now they want to do it across the country. This way,



The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of farmer organisations that spearheaded the 2021 protest, adopted the resolution to "intensify the fight against the policies of the Union government to save farming, food security, land and livelihoods of the people".

It also vowed to continue its stir during the upcoming Lok Sabha polls if its demands are not met, according to the resolution.

Bharatiya Kisan Union

they want the farmers to become labourers," he said.

He also said the government wants to break the unity of farmers by forming different farmers' unions. "They want to divide us based on caste, religion, regionalism and language," he charged.

Krantikari Kisan Union leader Darshan Pal, who also participated in the mahapanchayat, said the demands of the farmers have been neglected for years.

RSS Changes Content, Curriculum And Format Of Training

Press Trust Of India

Nagpur: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has brought about changes in the content and nomenclature of its yearly training programmes and the revisions will be implemented from this year itself, RSS joint general secretary Manmohan Vaidya said today.

He was addressing a press conference during the Sangh's annual 'Akhil Bharatiya Pratidinidhi Sabha' conclave, starting in Nagpur today.

Mr Vaidya said slight changes have been introduced in their 7-day 'Prathamik Shiksha Varg', 20-day 'Sangh Shiksha Varg-Pratham Varsh', 20-day 'Sangh Shiksha Varg-Dvitya Varsh' and 25-day 'Sangh Shiksha Varg-Tritiya Varsh' training programmes.

According to Mr Vaidya, they now have a 3-day 'Prarambhik Varg' programme for new Sangh workers. The new recruits will then take part in the 'Prathamik Shiksha Varg' followed by a 15-day 'Sangh Shiksha Varg', which was earlier called 'Sangh Shiksha Varg-Pratham Varsh' and had a duration of 20 days.

Mr Vaidya said that youth in large numbers are attending the Sangh training programmes. Every year, 15,000 to 17,000 young individuals participate in the 'Pratham Shiksha Varg' (Pratham Varsh class) and about 1 lakh in the 'Prathamik Shiksha Varg', he said.

"Henceforth, the 'Sangh Shiksha Varg' (Pratham Varsh) will be for 15 days," Mr Vaidya said.

The earlier training classes of 'Dvitya Varsha' and 'Tritiya Varsh' will now be called 'Karyakarta Vikas Varg-1' and 'Karyakarta Vikas Varg-2', respectively, said the RSS leader.

NEWS MAKERS

Ex-Navy Chief Ramdas Was Proponent Of 'Much More With Much Less'

New Delhi, Mar 15 (PTI) Former Navy Chief Admiral Laxminarayan Ramdas, who passed away on Friday, was one of the architects of making the Indian Navy a preeminent regional force as he fiercely believed that greater maritime power was key for India to make a claim at the global high-table.

Known for his sharp tactical acumen and farsightedness, Admiral Ramdas played a very crucial role in the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war in his capacity as commander of the gunnery ship INS Beas.

The INS Beas had blocked the strategic sea lanes from the Pakistani Navy with aggressive maneuvering and foiled Islamabad's attempts to evacuate over 90,000 troops from then East Pakistan.

A communication specialist, Ramdas became the 13th chief of the Indian Navy on December 1, 1990 and retired from service on September 30, 1993.



Admiral (retired) Ramdas passed away on Friday at the age of 90. He is survived by his wife Lalita Ramdas and three daughters. "Admiral L Ramdas was a strong proponent of the philosophy of 'much more with much less' as under his leadership, the Indian Navy achieved a lot with limited resources," former Navy spokesperson Capt D K Sharma told PTI.

POCSO Case Against Former Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa Handed Over To CID For Probe

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) case registered against former Chief Minister and BJP stalwart B S Yediyurappa was on Friday handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for further probe.

According to Sadashivanagar police, the 81-year-old Yediyurappa has been booked under section 8 of the POCSO Act and Section 354 A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) based on a complaint by the mother of a 17-year-old girl.

The complainant alleged that the incident took place on February two when her daughter went with her to meet Yediyurappa at his residence.



The Director General of Police Alok Mohan in his message to the Bengaluru police said the case has been transferred to CID

for further investigation with immediate effect.

Denying the charge, Yediyurappa said the woman had been

trying to meet him but was never allowed to enter his house.

"Once when she was crying, I called her inside my house and spoke to the Police Commissioner B Dayananda, that some injustice had happened to her. However, when she started speaking something against me in front of me, I concluded that this woman is not proper," he said.

After meeting the Police Commissioner, she gave a twist to the matter, Yediyurappa alleged. "I heard that an FIR has been registered against me. I will do whatever has to be done legally but this also happens when one tries to help somebody," the BJP Parliamentary Board member said.

Sagar Calls For Effective Arrangements On Navroz-e-Aalam

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference General Secretary Ali Muhammad Sagar Friday urged the administration to ensure all basic civic amenities to people on Navroz-e-Aalam.

In a statement released from the party headquarters Nawa-e-Subha, Sagar urged the administration to ensure all basic civic amenities to people on Navroz. "All essential services and supplies should be supervised so that people do not face any problem on the auspicious occasion."

"All wings of the administration should work in sync with each other so that no inconvenience is caused to the people on Navroz. It is expected that the divisional administration will dole out the added consignments of ration that includes sugar, wheat, and rice to the people following ahead of the auspicious occasion," he said.

Sagar impressed upon the municipal authorities to ensure proper parking, sanitation, and ample lighting arrangements at all Imam Bargahs.

He urged the concerned departments to ensure round-the-clock water and electric supply and transport facility to people on the auspicious occasion.

NC MPs Muhammad Akbar Lone and Hasnain Masoodi, senior leaders Shameema Firdous, Irfan Shah, and Tanvir Sadiq also sought effective and basic civic amenities to the people on Navroz across Kashmir and sought uninterrupted supply of drinking water and electricity.



LARGE NUMBER OF FEMALE WORSHIPPERS offering congregational prayers at the hallowed shrine of Syed Mir Ali Hamadani (R.A.) at Khanqah area in the old city on the first Friday of Ramadan. KO PHOTO, ABID BHAT

Hundreds Throng Jamia Masjid, Hazratbal On First Friday Of Ramadan

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The historic Jamia Masjid in Old city here and Dargah Hazratbal shrine witnessed a massive rush of devotees as the people from different parts thronged the religious places to participate in the congregational prayers on the first Friday of Ramadan.

Emotional scenes were witnessed during the prayers as the devotees were seen seeking mercy from Almighty during the sacred month of Ramadan.

The biggest congregational prayers were witnessed at the two religious places where special arrangements were made by the authorities to ensure better facilities to the devotees. Special prayers were made on the occasion at both the places.

Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who delivered sermons for the first time in the month of Ramadan after the scrapping of Article 370 on August 05, 2019, highlighted the teachings of Islam and also the significance of the sacred month of Ramadan.

Mirwaiz appealed to all sects and

organizations -religious, social or political to rise above personal and sectarian interests and ensure unity and brotherhood among the people of Jammu and Kashmir to preserve and protect its collective identity. He said that the best way to ensure collectivism is by following basic human, moral and religious principles and values. Otherwise in fighting and one-upmanship will make us perish.

Addressing the youth, Mirwaiz said that they are the future of this place and through pursuance of education and awareness that will bring out their inner capabilities and consciousness they can help shape a just and prosperous community.

Appealing to the authorities Mirwaiz said that they should listen to the voice of people's collective conscience and unconditionally release prisoners who are in jails in Jammu and Kashmir and all over India, as a gesture of good will in the holy month of Ramadan.

Mirwaiz said that it is incumbent upon authorities to address the issues of people including the lack of

electricity, which has increased the hardships for people especially in the holy month of Ramzan, particularly for the poor who don't have alternative means.

Mirwaiz said that authorities should address this issue at the earliest, as they have the means to do so. He said the condition of roads is pathetic making commuting a nightmare.

Meanwhile, the devotees sought forgiveness from the Almighty.

Moreover, the markets in and around the twin religious places wore festive looks today as the devotees after participating in the prayers, were seen buying essentials, clothes and other stuff.

At Jamia Masjid as well as at Dargah Hazratbal, the markets remained abuzz with the shoppers throughout the day.

Pertinently, Waqf Board and Anjuman-e-Auqaf Jamia Masjid had made elaborate arrangements for the holy month of Ramadan to ensure that the devotees visiting the places will not face any hardships.

Mirwaiz Delivers Ramadan Sermon At Jama Masjid

SRINAGAR: For the first time in almost five years since August 2019, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq was allowed to lead prayers at historic Jama Masjid Srinagar in the holy month of Ramadan.

During his address, as per a statement issued to KNS, Mirwaiz appealed to all sects and organizations - religious, social or political to rise above personal and sectarian interests and ensure unity and brotherhood among the people of Jammu and Kashmir to preserve and protect its collective identity.

He said that the best way to ensure collectivism is by following basic human, moral and religious principles and values, otherwise in fighting and one-upmanship will make us perish.

He also said that the youth are the future of this place and through pursuance of education and awareness that will bring out their inner capabilities and consciousness they can help shape a just and prosperous community.

Appealing to the authorities, he said that they should listen to the voice of people's conscience and unconditionally release thousands of Kashmiri political prisoners who are in jails in Jammu and Kashmir and all over India, as a goodwill gesture in Ramadan.

He said the condition of many prisoners who are in jails for years on end is very bad causing great distress to people.

Formula-4 Car Run To Be Held In Srinagar On Sunday

Div Com Kashmir Reviews Arrangements



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In a first, a roaring show of Formula-4 Car run from Lalit Ghat to Nehru Park shall be held in Srinagar on Sunday in which renowned Formula drivers will enthrall spectators. This would be a thrilling show to witness on the boulevard road while drivers shall engage in the race and stunts over a distance of 1.7Km route from 10:00Am to 2:00Pm.

In this regard, Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Vijay Kumar Bidhuri today chaired a meeting to ensure the arrangements for the successful conduct of the event.

Addressing the meeting, Div Com stated that this first of its kind event will be a major attraction for youth and will instill passion among them for Formula-4 sport.

Terming the hosting of Formula-4 car race in Srinagar as one of the major achievements, Div Com said the occasion will open the spectrum of options for sports lovers of Kashmir and will be the beginning of a new career option for enthusiasts of the valley.

This 'adrenaline rushing' car race will be very exciting and enthralling for people, he said and added that such shows will also leverage adventure tourism of Kashmir.

While reviewing the arrangements, Div Com directed concerned officers to ensure leveling of the said road and black-topping of potholes on the route.

To ensure safety of drivers, Div Com instructed installation of C-type 2-tier barricades including red barricades at both the ends of the route besides deployment of a medical team with two critical care ambulances and fire extinguishers.

Moreover, Div Com directed for proper security arrangements for the event and other requirements for event management including drone permission.

The meeting was attended by VC, LCMA; Director Tourism; Joint Commissioner SMC; officers of PWD, Health Department, Traffic, police, Fire & Emergency and representatives of Racing Promotions Private Ltd.

GOVERNMENT OF UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE TANGMARG GULMARG

Subject: Auction of Entry Fee of Municipal Public Park Contract for the W.e.f 01/04/2024 to 31/03/2025.

AUCTION NOTICE NO: MC/TG/02/ of 2024
DATED: - 13/03/2024

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K e-tenders (in single cover system) are invited from the approved and eligible contractors registered with state/ central government for Auction of Entry Fee of Municipal Public Park Contract of Municipal Committee Tangmarg/Gulmarg, W.e.f. 01/04/2024 to 31/03/2025. Minimum reserved bid is fixed as Rs. 400000/- (Rupees Four Lac only) as per the tax schedule and Terms & Conditions Annexured with this notice as Annexure "A" & "B".

S. No	Name of contract	Reserved bid fixed (In Lacs)	Cost of tender document fee	Contract period
01	Collection of Entry Fee of Municipal Public Park W.e.f.01/04/2024 to 31/03/2025	Rs. 400000/-	1000/-	12 months (W.e.f.01/04/2024 to 31/03/2025)

- The bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, bill of quantities (BOQ) set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen / downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in, as per the schedule of dates given below:

1	Date of issue of Tender Notice	14/03/2024
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 14/03/2024 to 22/03/2024
3	Bid submission Start Date	14/03/2024 from 12.00 AM
4	Bid submission End Date	22/03/2024 up to 4.00 PM
5	Date & Time of opening of Bids (Online)	23/03/2024 at 11.00 AM in the office of the Executive Officer, Municipal Committee Tangmarg/Gulmarg.
- Mode of Deposition of Bid amount: 10% of the total bid amount as token money to be deposited on spot at the finalization of the bid. 65% to be deposited before taking over the possession. 25% to be deposited within three months from the date of taking over the possession.
- Bids must be accompanied with the cost of tender document in the shape of Bank Challan / Receipt (A/c No. 013904100001295 in favour of Executive Officer Municipal Committee Tangmarg/Gulmarg (Tender inviting Authority) and Bid security declaration as per format Annexured to this Auction Notice.
- Bid must be accompanied with the earnest money @ 2% of the advertised cost in the shape of CDR in favour of the Executive Officer MC Tangmarg/Gulmarg (Tendering authority), which shall be released after the successful completion of the performance security.
- The highest bidder has to produce an amount equal to 6% of Contract as performance security in shape of CDR/FDR within two days before fixation of the contract and shall be released after successful completion of the Contract.
- The date and time of opening of bids shall be notified on website www.jktenders.gov.in. The bids of the responsive bidders shall be opened online on the same website in the office of the Executive Officer, Municipal Committee Tangmarg/Gulmarg.
- The bids for the contract shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of bids.
- Bid security.**
 - Bid Security Declaration; If the successful bidder fails to sign the contract or to submit the performance security before the deadline defined in the request for the bid documents, the bidder will be suspended for the participation in the tendering process for the contract / tenders for a period of one year from the bid due date of this Auction. The bid security declaration shall be submitted as per the Format appendix - 2 (format for the bid security declaration).
 - Any bid not accompanied by the BID security declaration shall be summarily rejected by the Authority as non responsive.
- Instructions to Bidders regarding 15- Tendering process:**
 - Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "Downloads" option as well as from "Bidders Manual Kit" on website www.jktenders.gov.in acquaint bid submission process.
 - To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get 'Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)' as per Information Technology Act-2000. Bidders can get digital certificate from any approved vendor.
 - The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with digital Signature. No financial bid will be accepted in physical form.
 - Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned above.
- Note: - Scan all the documents on 100 dpi with black and white option.**
 - Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents with the bid.
 - The department will not be responsible for delay in online submission due to any reasons.
 - Scanned copy of cost of tender document in shape of Bank Receipt/challan in favour of Executive Officer, Municipal Committee Tangmarg/Gulmarg and bid securing declaration must be uploaded with the bid.
 - The Bidder must have to upload (soft copies) of the following documents (Photostat/Original should be clearly seen in all respect with Ink Signed and Seal):-
 - Valid original Bank Challan/Receipt
 - BID Securing Declaration on stamp paper duly attested by Notary.
 - Valid GSTIN/PAN Card No.
 - The Bidder should upload the Tender Document form attached below (Not Mandatory).
 - Bidder must ensure to upload scanned copies of all necessary documents including:- BID security Declaration and tender documents fee in terms of soft copies with technical bid. No document (s) which has /have not been uploaded shall not be entertained in the form of hard copy. However, in case of any clarification the bidders shall have to produce original documents in support of soft copies if need arises.
 - The Highest Bidder will have to submit hard copies of all document uploaded on e-tending portal before fixation of contract.

No: MC/TG/G/2023-24/2782-85
Dated:- 13-03-2024

Executive Officer
Municipal Committee
Tangmarg/Gulmarg

DIPK-NB-6049-23
DT: 15/03/2024

- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,2452222,2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081
- Ambulance: Kashmir EMS Service: +91 94841 00200

AIRPORTS
SHIEKH UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

RAILWAYS

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

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

PRAYERS

HIJRI CALENDAR
05 - Ramadan
1445

FAJR	5:18
ZUHR	12:40
ASR	4:56
Magrib	6:42
ISHA	8:02

This Day In History

- 1527 - Battle of Khanua: Mughal Emperor Babur defeats Rajput forces led by Rana Sanga consolidating Mughal power
- 1731 - Treaty of Vienna signed by Prince Eugene of Savoy, Count Sinzendorf and Count Gundacker, Thomas Stahremberg and the British envoy to Vienna, Sir Thomas Robinson.
- Assassination of King Gustav III
- 1862 - Battle at Pound Gap, Kentucky: Confederates separate battles
- 1865 - Battle of Averasboro North Carolina (1,500 casualties)
- 1867 - First publication of an article by Joseph Lister outlining the discovery of antiseptic surgery, in "The Lancet"
- 1871 - 1st fertilizer law enacted
- rediscovered the bronze age city of Knossos in Crete, home of the legendary Minotaur
- 1917 - Russian Grand Duke Michael, brother of Tsar Nicholas II declines the Russian throne
- 1921 - Britain signs a trade agreement with the USSR and sends a trade mission to Moscow; this goes against the US, who in the same month refused to sign a trade agreement

From KO Archives

Vajpayee Is The Prime Minister

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The soft spoken and moderate face of the right wing Bhartiya Janata Party, Atal Behari Vajpayee is the next prime minister of India. The president K Narayanan, late tonight formally appointed Vajpayee as the prime minister, after Congress president Sonia Gandhi expressed her inability to stake claim to the power as the party didn't have the requisite number to form a government on its own, though "informal consultations" were going on with the like-minded parties. However what seems to have prompted the president to invite Vajpayee to form the government was the statement made by United Front leader and president of Tamil Nadu Congress (TMC) GK Moopanar, that the UF had "no role to play in the formation of the government at the center" as the Congress decided against staking the claim for the same.

"Right now OF has virtually no role" Moopanar told newsmen after an hour long meeting of the OF leaders held at prime minister I K Gujral's residence, 7, Race Course Road.

The swearing in ceremony of Vajpayee led government is scheduled to take place on Thursday, March, 19, the prime minister designate told reporters after his meeting with the president. The president has asked Vajpayee to prove his majority within 10 days of being sworn in. Last time Vajpayee was given 13 days' time to prove his majority, which he failed to do and had to resign in a huff. Vajpayee said he would consult his party colleagues and allies on composition of his cabinet and its size.

The number of MPs supporting BJP led coalition comes to just 264, which is short of the half way mark in the house of 539. However when seen in the context of the decision taken by Telugu Desam Party (TDP), to remain neutral when the heads will be counted, the number of 264 does cross that limit required for a simple majority for the BJP led coalition.

Meanwhile, in a volte-face, AIADMK and two of its allies today decided to join a BJP-led coalition ministry at the Centre clearing any last minute hitch which may come in the way of President K.R. Narayanan inviting A.B. Vajpayee to head the next government.

BJP prime ministerial candidate Vajpayee's special emissary Jaswant Singh, who air dashed to Chennai successfully persuaded AIADMK general secretary Jayalalitha to change her mind about not joining the government and extending unconditional support to the BJP.

Congress tonight "accepted" President K.R. Narayanan's decision to invite BJP leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee to form the government but made it clear that it would attempt to defeat the coalition during the confidence motion.

Asked to comment on the development, party spokesman V.N. Gadgil said the president has gone by the text-book and as per Supreme Court judgement of inviting the single largest party to form the government.

"We accept the president's decision. But we will try to defeat the government during the confidence motion."

Meanwhile CPM has charged BJP with going to "any extent" for the sake of power and said it would be difficult for BJP to run a government with its allies laying down various conditions.

Reacting to AIADMK supreme Jayalalitha's decision to join a BJP-led government, CPIM general secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet said "it is clear that BJP is going to any extent for grabbing power."

(Kashmir Observer, 16 March, 1998)

Nurturing Knowledge

The Vital Role of Mother Tongue in School Education and at Home

Peerzada Tariq Ahmad



Parents play a pivotal role in shaping their children's linguistic identity. Efforts should be made to create a language-rich environment at home by incorporating Kashmiri into everyday conversations, storytelling, and activities

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2022-23 underscore the critical importance of a child's mother tongue or first language (L1) in school education. Recognizing the pivotal role that language plays in cognitive development, these educational frameworks emphasize the need to promote and preserve native languages. In the context of Kashmir, the preservation of the Kashmiri language at home becomes imperative to secure the cultural heritage and linguistic identity of the region.

Role of Mother Tongue in School Education:

NEP 2020 and NCF 2022-23 advocate for a strong foundation in the mother tongue during the early years of schooling. Research indicates that a solid grounding in the mother tongue enhances cognitive abilities, accelerates learning, and facilitates a smoother transition to other languages. By integrating the mother tongue in the curriculum, students can develop a deeper understanding of concepts and strengthen their communication skills.

Promoting Kashmiri Language

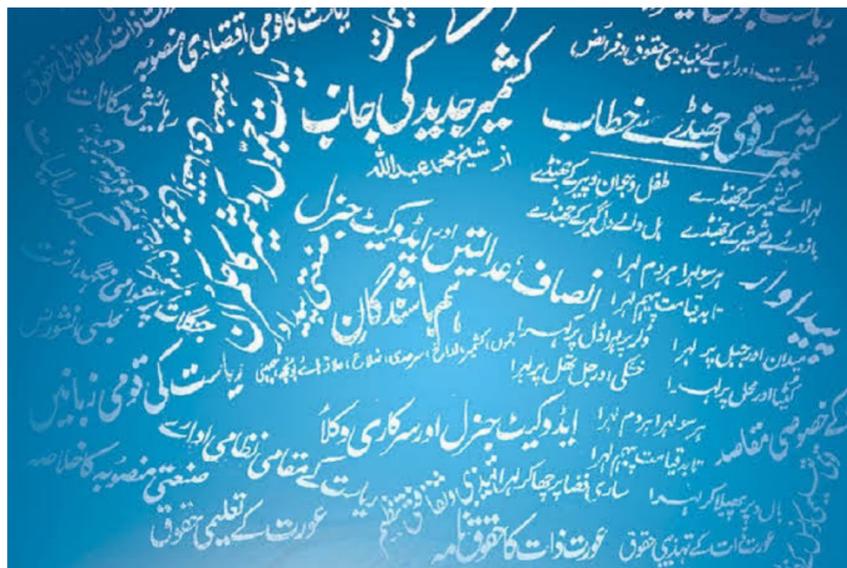
The Kashmiri language, with its rich cultural and historical significance, is an integral part of the region's identity. However, the language faces challenges, including a decline in usage within households. To ensure the preservation of the Kashmiri language, it is crucial for parents to actively promote its use at home.

Importance of Kashmiri Language for the Young Generation

Fostering the Kashmiri language at home is vital for instilling a sense of pride and connection to one's roots among the younger generation. The language serves as a carrier of cultural heritage, folklore, and traditions. Embracing Kashmiri in daily interactions not only enriches linguistic skills but also strengthens the bond between generations and reinforces a sense of belonging.

Challenges in Language Usage at Home

Despite the cultural and emotional importance of the Kashmiri language, there is a trend of parents



using languages other than Kashmiri at home. This shift can be attributed to various factors, such as the influence of media, the perception of certain languages as more prestigious, and the desire for children to be proficient in widely spoken languages for future opportunities.

Encouraging the Use of Kashmiri at Home

Parents play a pivotal role in shaping their children's linguistic identity. Efforts should be made to create a language-rich environment at home by incorporating Kashmiri into everyday conversations, storytelling, and activities. Educational initiatives and community programs can also contribute to raising awareness about the importance of preserving the Kashmiri language.

Conclusion

The integration of mother tongue in school education, as emphasized by NEP 2020 and NCF 2022-23, aligns with the broader goal of preserving linguistic diversity and cultural heritage. In the context of Kashmir, nurturing the Kashmiri language at home is not only a means of linguistic enrichment but also a way to safeguard the unique identity of the region. Parents, educators, and policymakers must collaborate to ensure that future generations continue to embrace and celebrate the linguistic diversity that forms the bedrock of our cultural tapestry.

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

ECI bonds' disclosure

Why transparency isn't enough to fix crisis of party funding in India

Aradhya Sethia

The Supreme Court has directed SBI to disclose the Electoral Bond numbers, crucial to matching donations to the political party that received them, giving the bank time till Monday to file a response.

With the release of electoral bonds data, the Supreme Court's task may be concluded (for now), but the journalists' job has just begun. The Supreme Court has directed SBI to disclose the Electoral Bond numbers, crucial to matching donations to the political party that received them, giving the bank time till Monday to file a response. At the moment, the data does not provide a clear link between the donors and the donee parties. Even if we can connect all the donations to the corresponding parties, it is likely to produce an incomplete picture of Indian parties' sources of income. This is because parties do not disclose the amount (let alone the identity of donors) of a large portion of their total income, of which, electoral bonds are likely to be a relatively small part. The end of electoral bonds, therefore, should not be seen as the solution to the crisis of party financing in India. Doing so would be like missing the forest for the trees.

Instead, the story of electoral bonds should be the excuse to look into questions about the present and future of the relationship between money, business, and arguably, the most important institution of Indian democracy – po-

litical parties. Three issues merit attention.

The first problem is the financial arms race caused by the eye-wateringly expensive elections in India. You may not know anything else about Indian politics, but you are likely to notice the obnoxiously large sums parties spend on elections. It should not be surprising, then, that from the day the party comes into power at the centre or any state, it needs to start raising money for subsequent elections.

In India, there is no limit on how much a party can spend on its propaganda as long as it does not spend that money on the campaigning of any specific candidate. An immediate response may be to introduce a national/state expenditure limit on parties. We can go further by restricting (or even banning) highly expensive campaign methods. Such regulation should be accompanied by an independent audit of political party accounts. Whatever the specific form of regulation, the bottom line should be to address the demand-side issue of expensive elections, even if it comes at the cost of reducing the temperature of the much-romanticised Indian electoral campaigns.

Curbing expenditure may go a long way, but it is no magic bullet. The second underlying problem in India is the unfair and targeted extortion of businesses. The fundamental motivation behind the schemes of Electoral Bonds and Electoral Trusts (recognised by the UPA government in 2013) was to enable large businesses to make any-



onymous donations to parties. In 2012, M V Rajeev Gowda and E Sridharan conducted confidential interviews with various CEOs. These revealed that the government's discretionary powers often become "pressure points for extorting payments from businesses". Often, it takes the form of withholding discretionary permits or using police or investigating agencies. It is not surprising, then, that the immediate response of many after the release of electoral bonds data was to match the dates of bonds purchased with the dates of the ED raids on those donors. Businesses that feel vulnerable to such discretionary "extortion" perceive confidentiality as the most important safeguard against reprisals from political parties, even if such secrecy comes

at the cost of giving up tax exemptions. The solution to the pathology of secret corporate donations, then, is unlikely to emerge from a political funding framework. It may require broader reforms that undo the abuse of discretion against businesses — a remnant of the license-permit raj.

The third problem is the prevalence of "cash" donations. While electoral bonds made it legal to make opaque donations, they did not introduce opacity to the Indian party funding regime. In India, cash may still be the best disclosure-proof technology. Even if we design a regulatory framework that institutes complete transparency, donation limits, and expenditure limits, enforcing those rules requires money to be traceable. The prevalence of cash

undermines the ability to trace the flow of money. Whatever formal rules we may frame, a cash-based system makes it easier to subvert formal regulation. Since we are still far from adequate formalisation of the Indian economy, even a progressive regulatory framework, if it does not address the predominance of cash, is likely to yield unsatisfactory results.

While the Supreme Court rightly recognised the value of transparency, the legal disclosure requirement does not, by itself, translate into actual transparency. In any case, transparency only reveals the pathologies of the relationship between money and politics; it does not resolve the deeper causes. The financial arms race between parties, the prevalence of cash in the Indian economy and the heightened anxieties of government retribution among large businesses are the underlying causes of the pathologies of party funding in India. Political finance is, almost always, rooted in the deeper forces of the political economy. If so, the party funding framework cannot be fixed in a vacuum. It is time to enlarge the conversation from party-funding laws to these larger themes if we want to achieve a fair and workable relationship between money, business and politics.

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

Fasting or Feasting

Amir Suhail Wani

It is often seen in the month of Ramadan that South Asian countries, the Muslim majority countries in particular, witness the ripples of surcharging, shortage, money minting and excessive profit gains. "It is common that during the festive seasons, prices of daily commodities, from onion to beef, cosmetics and accessories, clothing items etc rise exceptionally taking these out of the reach of lower-middle income groups of people. We observe this trend the most in the month of Ramadan. Even the government struggles to control the skyrocketing prices. We often generalise that this is due to maleficent intentions of merchants and businessmen who try to make more profit during this month. Although this explanation seems fit to the general eye, there exist other explanations may sound more logical". This is one of the many issues faced by people in the holy month of Ramadan forcing people to economic bottlenecks, food insecurity and people's inability to meet their basic ends. But this lack of access to basic amenities by the majoritarian poor population is followed by the ironic trend of food wastage in Ramadan and the amount of food wasted is both unprecedented and enough to cater to the needs of the starving lot. "A major factor in the amount of food waste being produced is the mindset of diners, who expect nothing less than a tanta-



lizing feast-like iftar – the meal taken by Muslims after sunset to break their daily fast during Ramadan. But much of this food goes uneaten. Around 25-50% of the food prepared in the Arab world during Ramadan is wasted, according to the United Nations Environment Programme's 'The State of Food Waste in West Asia' 2021" report.

The basic problem with our understanding of Ramadan is to think of it as the month of feasting instead of fasting. While we continue to observe the scruples of Shariah during

the day, our Suhoor and iftars are literally the singular events of gluttony, hyper-consumerism and acrobatics of show off and the race of spendthrift to leave others behind. Lavish iftar parties being thrown open and the means and methods followed are very much antithetical to the spirit of Ramadan, inverting its purpose and creating an opposite binary. These praxis need to be amended to bring them in accordance with the spirit of Ramadan and the larger vision of Islam to avert the ills being incurred and to make Rama-

dan what has been truly defined as the month of blessings, healing and balance. The fact needs to be emphasised that our excess at Suhoor and iftar not only undo the physical and medical benefits of Ramadan earned during the day but these activities in excess also undo the spiritual merits of fasting and instead of bringing us any good heighten the chances of being caught in divine wrath for our conduct and unbridled consumption.

The problem of inflation and scarcity of goods and food items pitched

up above also bounces back on the face of people on deeper scrutiny. It is observed that the demand for food items and other goods soars up and the items which are otherwise scarcely used are seen to be in huge demand during the month of Ramadan. This reinforces our premise that people, instead of harvesting the month of Ramadan for physical and spiritual control, let themselves loose upon eatables and the daily food intake and the diversity of food items increases without reason and rhyme. This is not to say that people aren't allowed to eat whatever is permissible, but to caution ourselves and the readers of the threat of gluttony and stomach worship in an otherwise month of fasting. This month, as scholars have pointed out, raises our consciousness to the plight and misery of those who can't otherwise afford two square meals a day. But can this end be achieved when we indulge in gluttony and excess at dawn and the time of fast breaking at dusk? What petrifies religion is the danger of transformation of living religious practices into rituals lacking meaning and rationale – and in this case with Ramadan, the threat of ossifying a living religious praxis into a dead ritual is at hand. What is needed is to reclaim Ramadan, consciously and conscientiously and to shred away the false accretions attached to it to realise its spirit and to wake up to its true call.

The author is a Srinagar based columnist

ENSURING ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The Imperative of Transparency and Accountability in Zakah Distribution

WAQAS HAQUE AND MOHAMMED ADAM

The Prophet ﷺ not only empathized with the poor; he "loved the poor and sat with them," and taught us the prayer: "Lord God, grant us love for the poor [hubb al-masakin]."¹ While today we may question whether the Ummah is doing enough for the oppressed, it is commendable that our willingness to support the impoverished with Sadaqah persists. A report published by the Muslim Philanthropy Initiative in 2021 found that although Muslim-Americans account for 1.1% of the population, they account for 1.4% (nearly 4.3 billion dollars) of charity.² Despite common stereotypes about where Muslims put their money, the same report notes that a sizable portion of charity goes towards domestic non-faith causes, including the COVID-19 pandemic response.

In his book *Traveling Home*, a treatise on Muslim integration in Europe (reviewed here), Shaykh Abdal Hakim Murad ends with a chapter discussing the power of charity in reviving Muslim consciousness.¹ While Murad marvelously details the potential of those in a position to give donations, from the high net-worth Muslims in London to the Emirati billionaires living off of petrodollars, the recipients remain conspicuously unaddressed, particularly in the case of zakah.

There is no doubt that we live in a predatory financial system, where banks and institutions salivate at the prospect of exploiting those on the lower rungs of society so they may further perpetuate and maintain the imbalance of societal wealth. Riba (here we are loosely referring to interest and usurious practices) is explicitly prohibited in Islam, due to its exploitative nature and end result of vampirically usurping the financially desperate to fill the pockets of the increasingly rich. Allah warns us that engaging in usury is a loss-making proposition on the cosmic scale, as is stated in the Quran:

Whatever loans you give, only seeking interest at the expense of people's wealth will not increase with Allah. But whatever zakah you give, only seeking the pleasure of Allah – it is they whose reward will be multiplied.

Qur'an, 30:39
This ayah beautifully contrasts the parasitic nature of riba with the beautiful justice of zakah. The institution of zakah is the antonym of riba, in that it serves as redistributive economic justice, creating harmony within the socio-economic system. Allah informs us that zakah is a positive-sum game: We purify our wealth,



the poor are empowered, and on the cosmic scale our reward is multiplied exponentially with Allah.

There is also a deeper meaning to this ayah that further reveals the justice of Allah. Even though zakah is the wealth of Allah and does not belong to us in principle, Allah rewards us in a multiplicative manner, in direct contrast to how riba works – a true positive-sum game instead of a zero-sum rat race. The importance of zakah in Islam and as an institution for Muslims should not be underestimated; it is an ummah-centric system that forces wealthy Muslims to empathize with the plight of their less wealthy brethren.

Zakah is a foundational pillar of Islam, considered integral to the foundation of Islamic civilization to such an extent that the first Caliph Abu Bakr رضي الله عنه waged wars against those who rejected giving zakah. It is a grave mistake to consider zakah as merely another form of charity; zakah is an institution and a system, unlike Sadaqah, which is a form of spontaneous charity.³ It is so fundamental to a Muslim that Allah mentions within the Qur'an. As the great Hanafi scholar Badr ad-Din al-Ayni wrote, "Zakah is the partner of Salah." ⁴ Mulla Ali al-Qari states, "Salah and zakah are the foundations of all worship."⁵

To this end, Shaykh Yusef Wahn has written an essay, "The Use and Misuse of Zakah Funds by Religious Institutions in North America," discussing how North

American practices regarding zakah distribution depart from the rules of Fiqh (Islamic law).⁶ While a fiqh analysis of Wahn's essay is beyond the scope of this article, in brief, he highlights how contemporary fatawa and practices expand zakah eligibility to an unprecedented and almost dubious level. In addition to detailing equitable distribution among the eight specified categories of recipients in the Shafi school, Wahn spends time breaking down three specific categories where modern-day distribution proves inconsistent: fi sabilillah or "In the path of Allah"; zakah workers; and "mending of the hearts."

O, believers! Indeed, many rabbis and monks consume people's wealth wrongfully and hinder others from the Way of Allah. Give good news of a painful torment to those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah's cause.

Qur'an, 9:34-35
The lack of transparency in zakah allocation is dire, an issue plaguing many popular Muslim-American non-profit and advocacy organizations. As Wahn writes, "The European Council of Fatwa and Research allows zakah-focused organizations to take up to one-eighth of the collected zakah for 'operational fees' without explicating what these fees entail."⁶ Ahmed Shaikh, an Islamic estate planning attorney, runs the "Working Towards Ehsan" newsletter that regularly provides overviews of such institutes, including Engage, IR-USA, and Launchgood. In one post, he notes, "The practi-

cal effect of much zakah in the United States is the affluent recirculating wealth amongst themselves." Without delving into the legal minutiae of zakah, he provides practical examples where Muslims paradoxically stand to benefit directly from the very zakah they give, such as giving to local masjid, political advocacy organizations, and certain da'wah groups. He also highlights a concerning example of an Islamic scholar being prominently featured on a nonprofit's website without a corresponding explanation of the scholars' role (beyond branding) and if said Alim actually vets the organization's zakah policies.

Wahn's article underscores the dangerous lack of consistent boundaries or vetting mechanisms available for categories of eligible zakah recipients in the United States. It is imperative that Muslim nonprofits collectively raise the bar in how they develop zakah policies and work with qualified Islamic finance experts and scholars to ensure respect for a pillar of our religion that necessitates absolute diligence.

Beyond the obvious spiritual importance of zakah, expecting a high degree of transparency is a reasonable ask, standard for any modern organization. One can simply go online to find out the salary of any professor or football coach at a public university, the dollar amount and frequency of political donations (and party recipient) made by ordinary individuals, the exact value of food and travel payments shelled out by pharmaceutical

companies to all physicians since 2016, and even the minimally and maximally negotiated-price of any hospital service, lab or procedure on a hospital website due to a relatively recent law. Even with inevitable legal differences on who is qualified to receive zakah, the average Muslim should know if his or her zakah is footing the bill for a speaker's business class flight and hotel, the election financing for a Muslim-sympathizing non-Muslim candidate running for office, administrative overhead, flashy influencer endorsements, the local masjid's basketball court and multi-purpose hall, or "intellectual efforts" (as legitimized by the Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America).

In his article, Wahn aptly remarks, "[throughout] history, classical fiqh has never been viewed as impeding dawah but seems to be perceived as one in today's community work."⁶ He goes on to provide a creative example of how zakah can potentially be utilized for debt relief among refugees, two-thirds of whom come from Muslim countries.⁷ Wahn's work makes abundantly clear that zakah is not to be conflated with charity and that the zakah you pay may be utilized for different purposes based on which organization you give it to. While the scope of zakah is fuzzy in the modern world, it does not legitimize a free-for-all within the Muslim nonprofit industry where organizations can make a blanket claim of "zakah eligibility" without strictly defining what that entails (and who signed off on that claim).

A Muslim who entrusts an organization with zakah effectively makes that organization his agent. While the duty of fulfilling zakah ultimately rests with the individual, the agent is given a trust and accepts it on behalf of the individual. Given the importance of zakah, there is a duty of transparency not only for the sake of the recipients and economic justice but for the afterlife, where we will all be held to account. Muslims must be able to place conviction and trust in the agent, reassured by the knowledge that their zakah is not misused, and is righteously delivered to the legitimate categories Allah prescribes for us. The Muslim community is well within its right to demand accountability and transparency from its agents. After all, zakah is not just charity, it is an Ummatic institution that creates positive sum games for all, paving the way for success in this world and the next.

The article was originally published by Traversing Tradition

Indian Market Has Maintained Certain Level Of Sanity, Says FM

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said despite huge fluctuations globally, the Indian stock market has maintained "a certain level of sanity" and the market should be allowed to play on its own.

The statement from the Finance minister comes days after Sebi chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch had said that there are pockets of froth in the small and midcap stocks and the regulator is looking into the same to come out with a possible consultation paper.

Speaking at India Today Conclave, Sitharaman said, "I allow the markets to play on their own...we should leave it to the wisdom of the market because all of us have seen that despite huge fluctuations globally, the Indian market has maintained a certain level of sanity. It hasn't really gone too violent this way or that way. So, I place a lot of trust in the market."

Earlier this week, the capital



markets regulator had raised concerns about over valuations of small and midcap stocks, indicating possible market manipulation and the risk of a market bubble.

"There are pockets of froth in the small and midcap space in the equity markets that have the potential to become a bubble and burst affecting investors," Buch had said.

On Crypto assets, Sitharaman

said, they cannot be currencies and that's the government of India position.

Currencies are to be issued by the government or the central bank of the day, she said.

Crypto assets are technology-driven and have a bearing on cross-border payment, she said, adding that a comprehensive regulatory framework around such assets has

been considered at the G20 level. "If one country regulates and others don't, it will be an easy way of moving money, round-tripping or funding drugs or even terrorism



"If one country regulates and others don't, it will be an easy way of moving money, round-tripping or funding drugs or even terrorism and so on. So we wanted to create a framework by taking it to the level of G20. It has been very well received, and I'm sure there will be some framework emerging," FM added.

and so on. So we wanted to create a framework by taking it to the level of G20. It has been very well received, and I'm sure there will be some framework emerging," FM added.

Domestic Air Traffic Rises 4.8 Pc To 126.48 Lakh In Feb

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Domestic air traffic rose 4.8 per cent on an annual basis to 126.48 lakh in February, while more than 1.55 lakh passengers were affected by flight delays during the same period, according to official data released on Friday.

In February, Air India's market share rose to 12.8 per cent from 12.2 per cent while that of IndiGo marginally dipped to 60.1 per cent from 60.2 per cent in January.

The domestic air traffic climbed to 126.48 lakh in February compared to 120.69 lakh in the year-ago period, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said.

However, the traffic was less than 1.31 crore reported in January.

"Passengers carried by domestic airlines during January - February 2024 were 257.78 lakh, as against 246.11 lakh during the corresponding period of the previous year thereby registering an annual growth of 4.74 per cent and monthly growth of 4.80 per cent," DGCA said.



As many as 1,55,387 passengers were affected due to flight delays in February and scheduled carriers shelled out Rs 222.11 lakh towards facilitation.

The DGCA also said that 29,143 passengers were impacted by cancellations and airlines spent Rs 99.96 lakh towards compensation and facilities.

Last month, a total of 917 passengers were affected due to denied boarding and the amount spent by the airlines for compensation and facilities in this regard was Rs 78.19 lakh.

A total of 791 passenger-related complaints were received by the scheduled domestic airlines in February and the number of complaints per 10,000 passengers

carried was around 0.63.

The data showed that 37.8 per cent of the passenger complaints were about flight problems, followed by baggage (19 per cent), refund (16.3 per cent) and customer service (11.1 per cent), as per the data.

Last month, the domestic market share of Spicejet dropped to 5.2 per cent from 5.6 per cent, Vistara and Akasa Air managed to maintain their share at 9.9 per cent and 4.5 per cent, respectively.

AIX Connect (formerly AirAsia India) cornered a market share of 6.1 per cent in February, unchanged from the previous month, and similarly Alliance Air's share remained the same as the previous month at 1 per cent.

Bankers In India To Get Higher Salary Increases Than Singapore, Hong Kong

Preeti Singh, Bloomberg

NEW DELHI: Finance professionals in India are in line for higher salary hikes than those in Hong Kong and Singapore this year, underscoring how firms are tapping the nation's economic boom as China slows, according to Bloomberg Intelligence.

Salaries in India could rise by 10% in 2024, analyst Sarah Jane Mahmud wrote in a note Friday, citing survey data from consulting firm Aon. That compares with 4% in the two financial hubs.

HSBC Holdings Plc and Julius Baer Group Ltd. are ramping up their client advisory in the world's most populous country as they seek to manage a greater share of the nation's wealth. Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group Inc. is also expanding and DBS Group Holdings Ltd. continues to grow, the analyst wrote.

Investment bankers can already earn more in India's major urban centers such as Mumbai and GIFT city, the nation's free market zone, than in Singapore and Hong Kong. The average base salary is 4.5% higher than in Hong Kong and 7.7% more than in Singapore, according to Bloomberg Intelligence's analysis of a survey by recruiter Michael Page. Private bankers' pay, however, lags behind by 50% to 78% in non-executive roles. As India's wealth industry grows, that gap will narrow.

"Salaries will continue to rise given the large demand-supply gap at senior levels, as will talent for compliance, risk assessment and technology," in India, said Amit Agarwal, managing partner at search firm Stanton Chase. Banks are paying more for heads of businesses, and salaries of over \$1 million are common for senior leaders, he said.

While India has higher income tax rates and weaker infrastructure than Singapore and Hong Kong, the lower cost of living is a benefit, according to the report. The average monthly rent in upscale Bandra, Mumbai is \$1.76 per square foot, compared with \$5.29 in Hong Kong and \$5.09 in Singapore, according to government statistics, the report found.



Paytm Gets Five Handles To Continue UPI Transactions, Existing One To Continue

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: Fintech firm One97 Communications, owner of the Paytm brand, has got five handles in partnership with four banks to continue UPI transactions, as per an update on the NPCI website.

The company's existing

handle @paytm is among the five handles that users can continue using without the need to make any changes at their end.

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has approved @paytm and a closed user group UPI handle @ptyes for Paytm in partnership with Yes Bank.

NPCI has also approved @pthdfc with HDFC bank and @ptsbi with State Bank of India as a partner. However, these two handles are not active immediately.

Paytm spokesperson said users can continue to use @paytm handle seamlessly without the need to make any changes at their end.

Mahindra Encash Automotive Unveils Earth Edition of All-New Thar in Srinagar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Mahindra Encash Automotive proudly introduced the Earth Edition of the highly anticipated All-New Thar at its dealership situated at Hyderpora Bypass, Srinagar. The unveiling ceremony was graced by distinguished guests Muzaffar Branch Head of SBI, and Umar Shamas, Senior Relationship Manager of SBI, who together unveiled the SUV. The event was also attended by Ms. Maham Rouf, CEO of Mahindra Encash Automotive, and Viqar Lone, Sales Head.

The Earth Edition of the All-New Thar represents a fusion of ruggedness and sustainability, catering to the discerning needs of adventure enthusiasts while maintaining an eco-conscious approach. With its robust design and eco-friendly features, the Earth Edition embodies Mahindra's commitment to innovation and environmental responsibility.

"We are thrilled to introduce the Earth Edition of the All-New Thar to our customers in Srinagar," said Ms. Maham Rouf, CEO of Mahindra Encash



Automotive. "This edition exemplifies our dedication to providing cutting-edge automotive solutions that align with the evolving preferences of our customers while ensuring sustainability."

The All-New Thar Earth Edition promises to deliver an unparalleled driving experience, blending style, performance, and eco-consciousness. Interested customers are invited to visit the Mahindra Encash Automotive dealership at Hyderpora Bypass, Srinagar, to explore and experience the Earth Edition firsthand.

The special edition is inspired by the infinite expanse

of the Thar Desert and the ability of the Thar to allow one to explore it with ease. With a palette inspired by the desert geography, promoting a sense of oneness with the environment, it doesn't just symbolize adventure—it epitomises it.

The Thar Earth Edition builds upon the Mahindra Thar's legacy of adventure and exploration, aiming to captivate and expand the community of Thar enthusiasts. This special edition, with its unique satin matte 'Desert Fury' finish, is designed to make this iconic SUV more distinctive, with a promise to inspire a new wave of adventurers to embrace the 'Thar Life.'

GDC Kathua, JKEDI Collaborate To Promote Entrepreneurship Among Students

Observer News Service

KATHUA: The Department of Business Administration Government Degree College (GDC) Kathua, in collaboration with the Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI), on Friday organized an Awareness Programme on the New Jammu and Kashmir Start-Up Policy 2024-27. The event aimed to inspire students towards entrepreneurship, innovation, and self-starting initiatives.

Under the guidance of the College Principal Prof. Seema Mir, the program was designed to encourage young minds to explore the realm of entrepreneurship and innovation. She appreciated the organizing team for their efforts in promoting such initiatives for the holistic development of the students.

The chief guest of the event Dr. Sanjay Kurupia, highlighted the crucial role of startups in job creation and emphasized the need for raising awareness about entrepreneurship among the youth.

Speaking at the event, Dr. R. K Pandita motivated the students to transform their innovative ideas into viable ventures with the support of JKEDI, which plays a pivotal role in the implementation of the new startup policy.

AI Increases Cybersecurity Challenges Manifold For Financial Institutions: RBI Gov

Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI: Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Friday said that with the advent of artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity challenges can rise manifold, and called upon financial institutions to dedicate substantial efforts to protect customer information. Regulated entities serve as repositories of data on financial transactions, customer interactions, and



operational activities, the governor said in his inaugural address at the Annual Conference of RBI Ombudsman here.

"Within this extensive

repository lies a unique opportunity to enhance customer service through robust data analysis," he said.

By harnessing the power of data analytics, Das said regulated entities can proactively anticipate customer needs, address issues promptly, and streamline processes. A data-driven approach would not only optimise operational efficiency but also reinforce the commitment to providing exemplary customer service.

Continued from previous page

10 THE GAZETTE OF INDIA: EXTRAORDINARY [PART II—SEC. 3(1)]

- (i) One SIMI activist has been sentenced ten years rigorous imprisonment and fine of rupees ten thousand under section 307 of Indian Penal Code, three years rigorous imprisonment and fine of rupees two thousand under section 25(1-B) A, 27 of Arms Act, 1959;
 - (ii) One SIMI activist has been sentenced ten years rigorous imprisonment and fine of rupees ten thousand under section 307 of Indian Penal Code, three years rigorous imprisonment and fine of rupees two thousand under section 25(1-B) A, 27 of Arms Act, 1959, seven-year rigorous imprisonment and fine of rupees five thousand under section 468 of the Indian Penal Code;
 - (iii) One SIMI activist has been sentenced life imprisonment and fine of rupees ten thousand under section 120B of Indian Penal Code read with section 4(B) of Explosive Substances Act, 1908, life imprisonment and fine of rupees ten thousand under section 120B of Indian Penal Code read with section 5(B) of Explosive Substances Act, 1908, seven years rigorous imprisonment and fine of rupees five thousand under section 468 of Indian Penal Code, life imprisonment and fine of rupees ten thousand under section 16 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967; and
 - (iv) One SIMI activist has been sentenced life imprisonment and fine of rupees ten thousand, separately under both section 4 and 5(B) of Explosive Substances Act, 1908, life imprisonment and fine of rupees ten thousand under section 16 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967;
28. Five SIMI activists have been sentenced rigorous life imprisonment and fine of rupees two thousand under section 16B, 18 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 along with Section 25 of Arms Act 1959 by the Special Judge, MIA, Bhopal in Case Crime No. 01/2014 registered at STF/ATS, Police Station, Bhopal under section 307, 34, 120B, 107, 115 of Indian Penal Code and section 10, 13(1), 13(2), 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 26, 29 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 and section 3, 4, 5, 6 of the Explosive Substances Act, 1908 and section 25 of Arms Act, 1959.

And whereas, the State Governments of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh have recommended for declaration of SIMI as an 'unlawful association' under the provisions of the Act:

And whereas, the Central Government is further of the opinion that if the unlawful activities of the SIMI are not curbed and controlled immediately, it will take the opportunity to -

- (i) continue its subversive activities and re-organise its activists who are still absconding;
- (ii) disrupt the secular fabric of the country by polluting the minds of the people by creating communal disharmony;
- (iii) propagate anti-national sentiments;
- (iv) escalate secessionism by supporting militancy; and
- (v) undertake activities which are prejudicial to the integrity and security of the country;

And whereas, the Central Government for the above-mentioned reasons is firmly of the opinion that having regard to the activities of the SIMI, it is necessary to declare the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) as an 'unlawful association' with immediate effect:

Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of the section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (37 of 1967), the Central Government hereby declares the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) as an unlawful association:

The Central Government, having regard to the above circumstances, is of firm opinion that it is necessary to declare the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) as an 'unlawful association' with immediate effect, and accordingly, in exercise of the powers conferred by the proviso to sub-section (3) of section 3 of the said Act, the Central Government hereby directs that this notification shall, subject in any order that may be made under section 4 of the said Act, have effect for a period of five years from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

[F. No.14017/R/2023-NI-MFO]

PRAVEEN VASHISTA, Adl. Secy.

Uploaded by Div. of Printing at Government of India Press, Ring Road, Mayapuri, New Delhi-110062 and Published by the Controller of Publications, Delhi-110054. 15/03/24

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR,
UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES (PREVENTION) TRIBUNAL, ROOM NO. 15, GROUND FLOOR,
BLOCK 'A', DELHI HIGH COURT, NEW DELHI - 110053

RE: Notification No. S.O. 354 (E) dated 29th January, 2024 issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, under Section 3(1) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, declaring the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) as an Unlawful Association.

To,

Students Islamic Movement of India

WHEREAS the Central Government in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-sections (1) and (3) of Section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (37 of 1967) (hereinafter referred to as "the Act") has declared Students Islamic Movement of India (for short "SIMI") to be an "Unlawful Association" vide Notification No. S.O. 354 (E) dated 28th January, 2024 [published in the Gazette of India Extraordinary Part II Section 3 (ii)].

AND WHEREAS by Gazette Notification No. S.O. 722 (E) dated 16th February, 2024 [published in the Gazette of India Extraordinary Part II, Section 3 (ii)], in exercise of powers under sub-section (1) of Section 5 read with sub-section (1) of Section 4 of the Act, the Central Government has constituted a Tribunal comprising Hon'ble Mr. Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav, Judge of the High Court of Delhi, for adjudicating as to whether or not there is sufficient cause for declaring Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) as an "Unlawful Association" as required by sub-section (1) of Section 4 of the said Act.

NOW THEREFORE, a notice is hereby given under sub-section (2) of Section 4 of the Act and you are hereby called upon to show cause, within 30 days from the date of service of notice, as to why your Association, declared as unlawful, be not adjudicated to be so and why an order confirming such declaration be not made under Section 4(3) of the Act.

The objections/reply affidavits, if any may be filed/delivered before the next date of hearing of the Tribunal, to the undersigned at his office in Room No. 15 Ground Floor, 'A' Block Delhi High Court, Sher Shah Road, New Delhi-110053 in case the objections / reply and documents are in regional language, true English Translation thereof be also attached

You may appear through a duly authorized person before the Tribunal on 08.04.2024 at 04:30 pm in Court Room No. 16, Delhi High Court, Sher Shah Road, New Delhi-110053 for further proceedings

Contd. Page/2



REGISTRAR
Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal
Delhi High Court Building
Sher Shah Road, New Delhi

Given under my hand and the seal of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal, High Court of Delhi, New Delhi this the 29th February, 2024

(Jitendra Pratap Singh)
Registrar,

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal



REGISTRAR
Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Tribunal
Delhi High Court Building
Sher Shah Road, New Delhi

DIPK-17967/23
dated: 15-03-2024

COMBATING KASHMIR'S DIABETES SURGE

Ramazan Can Be A Turning Point For Health: Expert

Augib Javeed

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir is witnessing an alarming rise in diabetic cases, posing a significant health concern for its residents.

According to figures, over the past three years, more than 2 lakh cases of diabetes have been detected in the valley, with men, women, and even children falling prey to the disease.

Health experts attribute diabetes to sedentary lifestyle, obesity and peculiar food habits that fuel the diseases.

However, a benefit emerges in Ramazan. Doctors say that the holy

month of fasting presents a favorable chance to manage diabetes and modify lifestyle habits that worsen health conditions.

Kashmir Observer engaged in a candid chat with Dr. Mohammad Ashraf Ganaie, Professor of Endocrinology & Metabolism at Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences, Soura. The endocrinologist asserted that the diabetes can be better managed during the

Ramazan, if the patients follow the precautions of their doctors and modify their lifestyle.

"Fasting is feasible for some diabetic patients," Dr. Ganaie explained, "de-

pending on the severity and type of diabetes.

"There are patients who require frequent insulin injections or those with hypertension, kidney and liver issues, it's not possible for them to go for fasting," Dr. Ganaie said, adding, "however those patients who conditions aren't severe, they can go for fasting but with precautions."

Dr. Ganaie who was awarded "Subhash Mukherjee Memorial" Oration-2023 by the Endocrine Society of India (ESI) in 2023, said that the patients need to check the sugar level continuously and be in touch with their doctors.

He said fasting is beneficial for those with mild diabetes severity.

"They will lose weight, their sugar level will be normal and the fatty liver will also come to normal level," he added.

Dr. Ganaie, however, cautioned those patients not to take oily and junk food while

breaking the fast.

"They should avoid heavy meals and take more fluids," he said. Adding "Patients should do regular testing of blood glucose."

Regarding fruits suitable for diabetic patients during Ramadan, he said, "Patients can take every fresh fruit including dates. Avoid dried fruits as they can cause sugar spikes."

Dr. Ganaie advised people to increase their physical activity during the month in order to remain fit.

"People can do regular exercises including, jumping, indoor aerobics, yoga, climbing the stairs a few times and light housework can provide the desired benefit," he added.

The expert further said that overall around 11 percent of the population in the country are diabetic and 15 percent are pre-diabetic.

"We are compiling the data for J&K but it's a little higher here," he added.

CS Reviews Key Developmental Projects Of Housing Deptt

KO NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: In a significant step towards addressing the burgeoning issues of Housing and Urban Development Department (H&UDD) in the UT, a high-level meeting was on Friday chaired by Chief Secretary, Atul Dulloo and attended by the Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD; Commissioner Secretary, Tourism besides other HoDs of the Housing and Rural Development Departments here.

While speaking in this meeting the Chief Secretary remarked that the city infrastructure is the hallmark of development process anywhere. He emphasized on the importance of timely completion of all the utility and developmental projects for making the mobility and city dwelling more safer, easier and faster as per the modern standards of urban development world over.

The Chief Secretary directed that all the urban development projects, currently in the pipeline be expedited, placing public welfare as the foremost priority. This directive underlines the government's commitment to not only enhancing the urban infrastructure, but also ensuring that, these



developments translate into tangible benefits for the residents of Jammu and Kashmir.

During this meeting the Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD, Mandeep Kaur briefed the chair on a spectrum of pivotal developments and upcoming initiatives aimed at transforming the urban landscape of J&K.

Among the crucial topics discussed were - strategies to leverage land as a resource to fuel further urban development, ensuring sustainable and efficient use of urban land. The meeting also discussed the introduction of a streamlined and transparent system for obtaining building permissions, aimed at reducing delays and promoting ease of doing business.

The status of water transport service in river Jhelum, in Srinagar, enhancing connectivity and providing eco-friendly transportation alternatives to the peo-

ple there. It was also made out that this would be an added attraction for tourists visiting this place in greater numbers.

The progress updates and future plans concerning the Jammu Metropolitan Region Development Authority (JMRDA) and the Srinagar Metropolitan Region Development Authority (SMRDA), focusing on comprehensive urban development and planning were deliberated upon. It was given out that these projects would bring in futuristic mobility services to our cities bringing lot of ease to the commuters here.

The meeting also took note of the status of the newly built state-of-the-art, multi-tier parking at Bus Stand in Jammu. It emphasised upon its optimum utilization for bringing ease and employment to public besides realizing revenue for government also.

Children's Park, Open Gym Inaugurated For Kashmiri Pandits In Budgam



KO NEWS SERVICE

BUDGAM: The Deputy Commissioner (DC), Budgam, Akshay Labroo on Friday inaugurated a children's park, a senior citizen's park and open gym facility at Migrant Pandit Colony, Sheikhpora.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC said that the District Administration Budgam, under the directions of Hon'ble LG Administration has contributed and developed twin Parks within the Sheikhpora Colony to ensure better facilities to the residents here.

The DC said that the same was demanded by the members during the last interaction with them.

He complimented officers of the concerned executing agency for completing the development of these parks in a short span of time and dedicating the

same to the families residing at the Migrant Pandit Colony.

He said that under the directions of Hon'ble LG Administration, the District Administration is focusing on creation of various other infrastructure projects to provide better facilities to the Kashmiri pandits, Kashmiri migrants and PM-package employees at Sheikhpora.

During his visit to Kashmiri Pandit Colony, the DC met members of the Pandit community and listened to them.

He said the parks with the open gym facility, swings for the kids, benches, have the best possible recreational infrastructure available for the children and senior citizens of the colony.

He said that he was happy to inaugurate these parks, which he said were constructed and thrown open in a very short span of time.

DG PIB Chairs Meeting Of IMPPC At Doordarshan Kendra Srinagar

KO NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: A meeting of the Inter-Media Publicity Coordination Committee (IMPPC) was organized today by the Press Information Bureau (PIB), Srinagar at the conference hall, Doordarshan Kendra Srinagar. The meeting was chaired by Director General, PIB Srinagar, Yogesh Baweja.

While welcoming the guests to the IMPPC meeting, Yogesh Baweja emphasized that IMPPC is the best platform where communication needs of various Central Government Departments can be discussed and properly addressed in a time bound manner.

Baweja further said that IMPPC meeting is a good opportunity to synergise our efforts and to inform people about the achievements of the government, as the ultimate objective of every department is to inform people, improve their lives, motivate them so that the goals of progress and development of the government are achieved.

Baweja also said that PIB Fact Check acts as a deterrent to the creators and disseminators of fake news. He asked the departments to contact PIB to check the credibility of a news especially during upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Baweja further stressed upon the cooperation between the departments in giving meaningful information and data and better media integration and synergy in achieving better media coverage.

During the meeting, Qazi Salman, Joint Director, Press Information Bureau, Srinagar and RNU, DDK Srinagar highlighted the working of PIB Srinagar and RNU DDK Srinagar.



A STREET VENDOR BRINGS the flavors of Wazwan Anchar to the bustling streets of Srinagar.

KO PHOTO, ABID BHAT

JKAEA Pays Gratitude To Principal Secretary Finance



KO NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: The Jammu & Kashmir Subordinate Accounts Service and J&K Accounts Employees Association (JKAEA) conveyed sincere appreciation to the Principal Secretary of Finance for authorizing the promotion orders.

The promotion was done, upon the placement of 62 Assistant Accounts Officers as Junior Scale Accounts Officers with Charge Allowance as per regulations. The employees also thanked Director General Accounts and Treasuries.

"It is indeed a first gift of its kind from the chair and is actually the fulfillment of the commitment which Dr. Vadiya made with the members of JKAEA in the recent past," a statement reads.

It further says "Once again special thanks to the chair, Mahesh Das, DGAT & Sh S.L.P., Advisor in Finance for their collective & strenuous efforts taken towards clearing the backlogs removing stagnation in the J&K Accounts Services,"

NEP-2020 Will Foster Creativity, Innovation: CUK VC

KO NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: Central University of Kashmir Vice-Chancellor, Prof. A Ravinder Nath Friday said the National Education Policy-2020 represents a bold vision for transforming the country's education system, by focusing on fostering creativity, knowledge creation, innovation, and excellence to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

"NEP-2020 seeks to empower learners with adequate knowledge, skills, and values necessary to thrive in a rapidly changing global landscape and contribute to the socio-economic development of the nation," Prof. A Ravinder Nath said, while inaugurating a one-day National Level



workshop on "NEP-2020: A Workshop for Educators", organised by the Department of English at varsity's Tulmulla campus.

Head Deptt of Management Studies and former Dean (I/c), School of Languages, Prof. Abdul Gani, Dean School of Legal Studies and Registrar I/c, Prof. Farooq Ahmad Mir, Dean School of Business Studies, Prof. Fayaz Ahmad Nikka, Dean School of Physical and Chemical Sciences, Prof. Mohammad Yousuf, Dean, School of Languages,

Head, Deptt. of English, and workshop Convenor, Prof. Sandhya Tiwari, Heads of departments, faculty members, research scholars and students were present.

CUK Vice-Chancellor further advocated for a curriculum that integrates international, national, and regional dimensions and aspirations, emphasising the adoption of these three distinct approaches to ensure that students do not remain confined to a single direction in their educational journey.

Enhanced MGNREGA To Boost Critical Rural Infrastructure:Govt

KO NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Chief Secretary, Atul Dulloo today chaired the UT level Empowered Committee Meeting on the schemes of Rural Development Department (RDD) to discuss their annual plans for 2024-25 besides reviewing the performance made so far.

Besides the Secretary RDD the meeting was attended by several Administrative Secretaries, HoDs of RDD and other concerned officers of the Department.

While speaking in this meeting the Chief Secretary remarked that the Department has a vital function of raising the critical infrastructure in rural areas that has a bearing on the lives of the population there. He called on having a greater coordination between the departments to prioritize works that are most emergent in nature and in demand by the locals of the area.

Dulloo further stressed on carrying out studies by the reputed institutions verifying the social impact of such projects on the lives of people there. He asked for carrying out third-party evaluation of such works to get the actual outcomes and benefits accruing to public on ground.

As far as the working of J&K Rural Livelihood Mission (JKRLM)

is concerned, the Chief Secretary impressed on providing the quality handholding to the SHGs immediately after their registration. He called on providing them the desirable counselling through social mobilization besides enhancing their capacity to enlarge their enterprises on commercial lines.

The Chief Secretary also took stock of the performance made by the Department in PMAY(G), IWMP and Himayat schemes. He enjoined upon the concerned to meet the targets set under each scheme. He asked them to cover all the beneficiaries eligible under such housing and livelihood generation schemes.

In his presentation the Secretary, RDD, Shahid Iqbal Choudhary gave out the gist of the performance made by the Department under different schemes during the ensuing financial year. He also threw light on the action plans proposed by the Department for the year 2024-25.

The Secretary apprised the meeting that till now around 3.31 crore person days of work had been generated under MGNREGA which is 114% of the target set for the year. It was added that the fund utilization stands at an impressive rate of 97% this year. He further gave out that this year around 1,16,295 works had been

completed and 2,95,834 works still going on at different stages of completion.

Regarding the annual action plan 2024-25 for MGNREGA it was revealed that the Department is going to augment the critical infrastructure in rural areas in convergence with this scheme. It was given out that the Department is going to accomplish around 195000 works with around 12000 works under convergence mode.

Moreover the plan will lay focus on District Convergence Plans with extension of providing support to Departments either in augmenting their infrastructure. In addition focus on provisioning of common infrastructure for NRLM complaint SHGs besides empowering CLFs of JKRLM as PIAs in the FY 2024-25 aiming for holistic rural development.

Among other features this year's plan is aiming at allocating 44% of AAP to natural resources management works with an objective of sustainable development and environmental conservation.

Under PMAY (G) the Department has completed 38,440 works and registered an expenditure of over Rs 1344 Cr this year. It was said the Department has completed 62,777 houses under both SECC and Awasplus this financial year aiming to complete 2,00,500 houses cumulatively.

Kind Attention Rail Passengers

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of Rail Passengers that due to operational requirements Northern Railway has decided to change the Time-Table of following Vande Bharat Express train with effect from 18.03.2024 onwards:

Train No. 22440 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - New Delhi Vande Bharat Express

Station	Existing Timings		Revised Timings	
	ARRIVAL	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	DEPARTURE
Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	---	15:00	---	14:55
Jammu Tawi	16:13	16:15	16:08	16:10

Rest of information notified will hold good.

For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table and stations en route etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTESS App.

Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in

Download RailMadad app.

RailMadad Helpline No.: 139

Please join us on

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Your Convenience - Our Concern
Visit us at: www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in

"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

LG Releases Books Written By ID Soni, Dr KC Verma



Observer News Service

Jammu: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha released a book titled "How to Live A Peaceful Life" authored by I.D Soni, President of Home for the Aged and Infirm, Jammu.

Meanwhile, the LG released a book titled "Essentials of Learning in Modern Educational System" written by eminent cardiologist Dr KC Verma, today at Raj Bhawan. The LG congratulated and extended his best wishes to the authors.

NEP-2020 will foster creativity and innovation: CUKashmir VC

Ganderbal, Mar 15: Central University of Kashmir (CUKashmir) Vice-Chancellor, Prof. A Ravinder Nath Friday said the National Education Policy-2020 represents a bold vision for transforming the country's education system, by focusing on fostering creativity, knowledge creation, innovation, and excellence to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

"NEP-2020 seeks to empower learners with adequate knowledge, skills, and values necessary to thrive in a rapidly changing global landscape and contribute to the socio-economic development of the nation," Prof. A Ravinder Nath said, while inaugurating a one-day National Level workshop on "NEP-2020: A Workshop for Educators", organised by the Department of English at varsity's Tulmulla campus.

Head Deptt of Management Studies and former Dean (I/c), School of Languages, Prof. Abdul Gani, Dean School of Legal Studies and Registrar I/c, Prof. Farooq Ahmad Mir, Dean School

of Business Studies, Prof. Fayaz Ahmad Nikka, Dean School of Physical and Chemical Sciences, Prof. Mohammad Yusuf, Dean, School of Languages, Head, Deptt. of English, and workshop Convenor, Prof. Sandhya Tiwari, Heads of departments, faculty members, research scholars and students were present.

CUK Vice-Chancellor further advocated for a curriculum that integrates international, national, and regional dimensions and aspirations, emphasising the adoption of these three distinct approaches to ensure that students do not remain confined to a single direction in their educational journey.

Addressing the participants, Prof. Abdul Gani, described NEP-2020 as a landmark reform in the field of education, emphasizing holistic development, flexible learning pathways, and integration of technology in education. He underscored the significance of adopting multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches in education, positioning the

NEP as a medium towards achieving the goal of a developed India (Viksit Bharat). He highlighted the pivotal role of educators in realising the objectives of the NEP.

I/c Registrar, Prof. Farooq Ahmad Mir gave insights into the shortcomings of the previous education system, particularly the Choice Based Credit System, attributing its failure to factors such as lack of awareness among both faculty and students. He elucidated on the preamble of the NEP 2020, which pledges to uphold equality and accountability in the education system, while also accentuating the indispensable role of teachers as collaborators and mentors in guiding students.

In her welcome address, Prof. Sandhya Tiwari emphasised the importance of conducting workshops on NEP 2020 and said the event will provide a suitable platform for educators to connect with like-minded peers, establish professional connections, and form collaborations for future initiatives in education reform.

She highlighted the critical roles of the government, technology, and faculty in effectively implementing the NEP, while also delineating the workshop's objectives and agendas.

Associate Prof. Deptt. of English, Dr Krishna Chaitanya E. conducted the programme proceedings and Asst. Professor, (SG) Dr. Ihsan Ur Rahim Malik proposed the vote of thanks.

Later, during the technical sessions, Prof. Anil Kumar Aneja, Head, Deptt of English, Director, Centre for Disability Studies, University of Delhi, Prof. Zahoor Ahmad Geelani, Dean, School of Education, CUKashmir, Prof. Vanaja M. Dean, School of Education and Training Director, Directorate of Admissions MANUU and Dr Rafi Mohammad, Associate professor, Deptt of Education and Training Deputy Director, Directorate of Admissions MANUU, spoke on various aspects of the NEP-2020. Ms Sheenam and Mr Basit were the rapporteurs of the inaugural session.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

ECI To Announce

parliamentary polls, the BJP had won 303 seats while the Congress got 52 seats. It could not muster enough numbers to claim the position of Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha.

The 2024 parliamentary polls are being seen as a do or die battle for the opposition INDIA bloc.

According to a News 18 opinion poll, the BJP-led NDA is headed for a "historic mandate" in the upcoming polls.

The opinion poll claimed that the NDA is set to win 411 seats in the 543-member Lok Sabha with the BJP alone clinching a record 350 seats.

According to an opinion poll survey by ABP-CVoter, the INDIA bloc is likely to get only six seats in the crucial state of Uttar Pradesh.

Regional and national parties have already begun announcing their candidates for the elections to the 543 Parliamentary constituencies. The BJP has so far released two lists of 267 candidates for the Lok Sabha polls, while the Congress announced the names of 82 candidates over two lists.

Meanwhile, the ECI on March 14 made public the data on electoral bonds it received from the State Bank of India and has also sought the return of the electoral bonds' documents handed over to the Supreme Court in sealed cover/sealed boxes.

Two New ECs

significance of their joining at a historic point when the Election Commission is all set to conduct Lok Sabha elections, a spokesperson said.

The vacancies had come up in the Election Commission after the retirement of Anup Chandra Pandey on February 14 and the sudden resignation of Arun Goel on March 8.

Gyanesh Kumar and Sandhu, both 1988-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers, belonged to the Kerala and Uttarakhnad cadres, respectively. PTI

Days Not Far

around four hours for evacuating Indian students trapped in the country".

"Only because of PM Modi, it was possible to rescue 22,500 students trapped in Ukraine in around four hours," he said.

"We have become the fifth largest economy in the world... the manner in which India is progressing, by 2027, the country would be among the top three economies of the world," he said.

By 2047, India will be a developed nation and "we want to make the country an economic superpower of the world".

On CAA, he said, minorities including Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and Parsis were facing religious persecution in countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan and were coming to India for shelter.

"We decided to give them citizenship... the BJP is branded as communal for this," he said.

Hitting out at former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren, he said it was unprecedented in India's history that a CM went missing but now he is behind bars for corruption.

"Never in history has a CM gone missing in the country. Currently, he is in jail as a government guest," he said, and took a jibe at Congress Rajya Sabha MP Dhiraj Sahu for the seizure of about Rs 350 crore from premises allegedly linked to him.

"People have to decide whether they want to take Jharkhand on the path of progress," he said, adding "had PM Modi not been there, no one could imagine what would have happened to the state".

"The PM recently laid the foundation of projects worth Rs 35,700 crore. I can say that the money spent in the state one year is more than what was spent by the previous UPA government in 10 years," he said.

"No one can point fingers at the BJP government over corruption unlike previous Congress regimes... We are completing 10 years in power but not

a single person in the world can level charges of corruption on government or ministers," Singh said.

Termining the people of Jharkhand as "industrious", the defence minister said it is a matter of pride that even in the Galwan Valley, he met jawans from the state.

He said the BJP believes in fulfilling the promises made by it.

"In 2014 and 2019, I was behind formulating the party manifesto... We don't indulge in politics of appeasement just for getting votes but we do politics for making the nation," he said.

"Women from all communities are equal to us. How could we have tolerated Triple Talaq? Without worrying about votes, we could do away with Triple Talaq. Likewise, we abrogated Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

Hitting out at the opposition over dynasty politics, he said, "For the opposition, their families are supreme but for us, people are supreme."

The defence minister asserted that BJP has "mission, vision and passion" for development.

Sunil Kumar Singh, the sitting BJP MP from Chatra, had to face stiff opposition from a section of party workers at the venue who raised slogans such as "Sunil Singh Wapas Jao" (Go back Sunil Singh) after apparently being peeved over the MP not being allegedly available for either party workers or the people of his constituency.

The BJP is yet to declare its candidate for the seat.

Later, while addressing party workers and leaders in Ranchi, Rajnath Singh claimed that BJP is the "only party in India that has an ideology" and is the "most credible" political organisation.

"The promises we made to the people of the country have been fulfilled. We had said that India will grow faster when BJP's government comes to power at the Centre. Now, the whole world is saying that the 21st century will be of India," he said.

Taking a dig at the Congress, Singh said that the grand old party always made promises to eradicate poverty but it increased under the party's rule.

"We did not make any such promise but we eradicated it. In the past nine years, around 25 crore people have come out of poverty" Singh said.

He said that India is now a strong country and had made progress in every field.

"Defence exports have crossed Rs 20,000 crore," he said.

Pull Quote - "Without worrying about votes, we could do away with Triple Talaq. Likewise, we abrogated Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir"

'Art 370 Abrogation

Kaul asserted that the BJP's

relentless efforts have been instrumental in steering Jammu and Kashmir towards a path of progress and prosperity. He underscored the significance of the recent influx of individuals from diverse backgrounds into the party, citing it as a testament to the growing confidence in the BJP's vision and leadership.

Addressing a gathering of newly recruited members, Kaul highlighted the overwhelming response received by the BJP's nationwide engagement programs in Jammu and Kashmir. He expressed confidence that under the stewardship of the Prime Minister, India is poised to achieve unprecedented development milestones by 2047.

During the event, Kaul urged party workers to intensify their outreach efforts and mobilize support for the BJP ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Former MP Shamsheer Singh Manhas and former minister Priya Sethi were also present on the occasion.

In a separate program, 42 senior citizens also pledged their allegiance to the BJP. Kaul extended a warm welcome to the new members, expressing optimism that their inclusion would fortify the BJP's organizational structure and advance its objectives in Jammu and Kashmir.

Petrol, Diesel

among metros in BJP-ruled Maharashtra and lowest in Delhi.

Commenting on the petrol and diesel price cut, Emkay Global Financial Services said while the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas' X handle first reported oil companies taking the decision themselves, "the government's influence can be felt, given the fact that it has happened just before the announcement of election dates and model code of conduct".

"In our view, this cut will be effective for next 2-2.5 months and once national elections are over, we would return to a normalised margin scenario, with higher opex (operating expenditure) over the years likely to set margins higher than Rs 3-4 per litre. Deepening deregulation with resumption of daily pricing should likely pass any USD 5-10 a barrel movement in oil prices," it said. PTI

Govt Okays Amendments

newly added tribes get benefits of reservation equally and separately, the AC approved an equal and separate percentage of reservation for them i.e. 10% each.

The AC also approved the addition of 15 new castes in OBCs and enhancement of reservation in favour of OBCs to 8%, which will meet the long pending demand of the OBC category

in the UT. It also approved change in nomenclature and synonymy of some castes as recommend by the SEBC Commission.

Approval was also accorded to replace the term physically challenged persons or handicapped wherever appearing in the rules with the term Persons with Disabilities in conformity with the provisions of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

"The said amendments shall fulfill the long pending demands of these communities regarding their right to adequate representation in government jobs and professional courses, which they stood hitherto deprived of, due to their social, educational and economic backwardness," an official spokesperson said.

Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to the Lieutenant Governor; Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary, J&K; Mandeep Kumar Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor attended the meeting.

ACB Arrests JE

Kupwara, was authorized last year by the panchayat to execute two developmental works title (A) Improvement of road from Chainag to Ashoponor. (B) Filling and leveling of graveyard near Jamia Masjid Kunnel & that the complainant had completed both the works for which department initially gave him some amount under labour head but full labour payment was not given to him," the statement said.

It was also found that on completion of the works complainant (contractor) requested J.E concerned to prepare the bill of both the works but in return the J.E demanded a bribe of Rs 5000 as commission. It was also found that GRS was also demanding a bribe of Rs 3000 from the complainant as his commission for preparing labour demand.

Discreet probe also reveal that both these officials use to take bribe from complainant through m-pay as well as cash on earlier occasions also & were demanding more bribe for final bill & labour demand. As complainant was not interested in paying bribe to these officials he accordingly approached ACB through helpline number & with written complaint subsequently. Under these circumstances the complainant approached ACB and requested for legal action against both these officials JE as well as GRS for demanding bribes from him, the statement added.

Accordingly on the basis of the findings & recommendation of the Verifying Officer dated 14.03.2024, prima facie offence U/S 7 of Prevention of Corruption Act 1988 (as amended in 2018) & section 120-B IPC were made out against accused Public servants namely Arshid Ayoub Marazi, JE & GR Suboor Mir both officials of Rural

Development Department Kralgund Handwara for demanding & accepting bribe from complainant for processing/preparing his Bill & putting demand for remaining labour payments case FIR No 02-2024 U/S 7 of Prevention of Corruption Act 1988 (as amended in 2018) & section 120-B IPC was registered at PS ACB Baramulla & investigations were initiated," the statement said.

During the course of investigation a trap team was constituted which laid a successful trap and caught the accused JE red handed while demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 5000 from the complainant. The bribe money was later recovered from possession of the accused as well as one shopkeeper to whom he has given the money in presence of independent witnesses. The accused public servants were arrested on the spot after completing all legal formalities. The role of GRS & other officials in case is being investigated," it said, adding that further investigation in the case is going on—(KNO)

Announce Dates

What can we hope for from them: drum-beating 'one nation one election' if you do not start from J&K. Is it to fool the people?

"There have to be elections in J&K and it is a golden opportunity. Let them restore democracy fully here and announce the dates of both Parliament as well as assembly elections," he added.

Asked whether the Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) would be meeting in the coming days to sort out its differences, Abdullah said the question should be put to the office bearers of the alliance.

"If there is (a meeting), you ask (alliance president) Farooq Abdullah. I am not an office bearer in the PAGD, I belong to NC. Ask those who hold an office in the PAGD," he said.

Asked when the party would announce its candidates for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, the NC leader said "whenever we wish to."

Pull Quote - "If there is a meeting, you ask alliance president Farooq Abdullah. I am not an office bearer in the PAGD, I belong to NC. Ask those who hold an office in the PAGD"

SIA Raids 7

Mohd Irfan of Bhagwah and Sabder Ali of Phagsoo in Doda; Abdul Rashid of Arnas and Shamshad Begum of Pouni in Reasi; Abdul Rashid Naik of Khari in Ramban; and Sajad Ahmed alias "Shadu" in the Sidhra area of Jammu.

Several android mobile-phones and incriminating material were seized during the searches, the spokesperson said, expecting some leads from the seized articles to reach the bottom of a deep-rooted conspiracy of terrorist

networks.

The official said that the raids were conducted in connection with an on-going probe into a case registered at the SIA, Jammu, to unravel a criminal conspiracy hatched by the cadre and Over Ground Workers (OGWs) of various terrorist organisations and their affiliates or off-shoots to carry out terrorist and subversive activities.

According to intelligence inputs, the official said, a number of border guides and couriers are active in the hinterland and assist terrorist networks of different outfits by facilitating infiltration of terrorists from across the border, and further guiding them through the tough and treacherous terrain by bypassing anti-infiltration obstacles set up by security forces.

Many of them are also in touch with their Pakistani handlers and active terrorists, operating from across the border, through their mobile phones and using different applications, the official said.

KU VC Appears

the Legal Cell of KU for alleged lack-adaisical approach in handling cases.

"How did this particular case reach the point of contempt petition which led to VC's personal appearance is a big question which needs thorough investigation," said a senior KU academician, who wished anonymity. He said it is neither good for the institution's image nor the dignity of the VC's chair that court cases are allowed to reach the stage of contempt petitions.

Meanwhile, after today's appearance of KU authorities before the division bench, the HC listed the matter for further hearing on April 1, after submissions and assurances made by the KU VC on implementation of court directions.

HC Closes PIL

the competent authority, the same will be examined by the authorities so that the difficulties of the public are addressed."

Accordingly, the court disposed of the Public Interest Litigation with the observation that the representation submitted by them to the Chief Secretary to Government be disposed of "expeditiously preferably within a period of four weeks from the date copy of this order is made available".

"The petitioner is, however, at liberty to approach this Court again, if the cause survives," the court said, adding, "The instant Public Interest Litigation is closed."

IAF Airlifts 348

operates C-17, C-130 and AN-32 aircraft regularly to airlift stranded passengers between Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh in view of the closure of the 434-km Srinagar-Leh national highway since January owing to heavy snowfall.

27th year OF PUBLICATION

KASHMIR OBSERVER

The methods used to consume news have changed over time from newspapers, to television, to the Internet on our computers to carrying the news around with us 24/7 on smartphones in our pockets.

Kashmir Observer, with 25 years of experience in news gathering is now available 24x7 on all digital platforms like laptops, cell phones or via Bluetooth on your smart TV's across the world.

Kashmir Observer is a one stop information bank for you. Watch live debates, talk shows and documentaries on critical issues facing Kashmir on KO youtube channel.

VISIT

<https://www.youtube.com/c/kobserver>



OR SCAN

Will AI Save Humanity? US Tech Fest Offers Reality Check

Agenceis

Austin, United States: Artificial intelligence aficionados are betting that the technology will help solve humanity's biggest problems, from wars to global warming, but in practice, these may be unrealistic ambitions for now.

"It's not about asking AI 'Hey, this is a sticky problem. What would you do?' and AI is like, 'well, you need to completely restructure this part of the economy,'" said Michael Littman, a Brown University professor of computer science.

Littman was at the South By Southwest (or SXSW) arts and technology festival in Austin, Texas, where he had just spoken on one of the many panels on the potential benefits of AI.

"It's a pipe dream. It's a little bit science fiction. Mostly what people are doing is they're trying to bring AI to bear on specific problems that they're already solving, but just want to be more efficient."

"It's not just a matter of pushing this button and everything's fixed," he said.

With their promising titles ("How to Make AGI Beneficial and Avoid a Robot Apocalypse"), and the ever presence of tech giants, the panels attract big crowds, but they often hold more pragmatic objectives, like promoting a product.

At one meeting called "Inside the AI Revolution: How AI is Empowering the World to Achieve More," Simi Olabisi, a Microsoft executive, praised



the tech's benefits on Azure, the company's cloud service.

When using Azure's AI language feature in call centers, "maybe when a customer called in, they were angry, and when they ended the call, they were really appreciative. Azure AI Language can really capture that sentiment, and tell a business how their customers are feeling," she explained.

"Smarter than humans The notion of artificial intelligence, with its algorithms capable of automating tasks and analyzing mountains of data, has been around for decades.

But it took on a whole new dimension last year with the success of ChatGPT, the generative AI interface launched by OpenAI, the now iconic AI start-

up mainly funded by Microsoft.

OpenAI claims to want to build artificial "general" intelligence or AGI, which will be "smarter than humans in general" and will "elevate humanity," according to CEO Sam Altman.

That ethos was very present at SXSW, with talk about "when" AGI will become a reality, rather than "if."

Ben Goertzel, a scientist who heads the SingularityNET Foundation and the AGI Society, predicted the advent of general AI by 2029.

"Once you have a machine that can think as well as a smart human, you're at most a few years from a machine that can think a thousand or a million times better than a smart human, because this AI can modify its own source

code," said Goertzel.

Wearing a leopard-print faux-fur cowboy hat, he advocated the development of AGI endowed with "compassion and empathy," and integrated into robots "that look like us," to ensure that these "super AIs" get on well with humanity.

David Hanson - founder of Hanson Robotics and who designed Desdemona, a humanoid robot that functions with generative AI - brainstormed about the plus and minuses of AI with superpowers.

AI's "positive disruptions... can help to solve global sustainability issues, although people are probably going to be just creating financial trading algorithms that are absolutely effective," he said.

Hanson fears the turbulence from AI, but pointed out that humans are doing a "fine job" already of playing "existential roulette" with nuclear weapons and by causing "the fastest mass extinction event in human history."

But "it may be that the AI could have seeds of wisdom that blossom and grow into new forms of wisdom that can help us be better," he said.

"Not there yet" Initially, AI should accelerate the design of new, more sustainable drugs or materials, said believers in AI.

Even if "we're not there yet... in a dream world, AI could handle the complexity and the randomness of the real world, and... discover completely new materials that would enable us to do things that we never even thought were possible," said Roxanne Tully, an investor at Piva Capital.

Today, AI is already proving its worth in warning systems for tornadoes and forest fires, for example.

But we still need to evacuate populations, or get people to agree to vaccinate themselves in the event of a pandemic, stressed Rayid Ghani of Carnegie Mellon University during a panel titled "Can AI Solve the Extreme Weather Pandemic?"

"We created this problem. Inequities weren't caused by AI, they're caused by humans and I think AI can help a little bit. But only if humans decide they want to use it to deal with" the issue, Ghani said.

No Smartphone Or Internet? AI-Backed Phone Has You Covered



Agenceis

Visually-impaired Nigerian Kehinde Olutubosun is a geography and animal enthusiast who struggled to find information because he has no smartphone. But that is changing, thanks to an Artificial Intelligence-powered mobile phone that works offline.

The service, launched by Canada-based Viamo in Nigeria last month, allows anyone - even in the middle of nowhere without the internet - to access AI technology.

Viamo uses a traditional handset to tap into local mobile phone networks to send commands or requests for information through SMS or voice calls.

It works like other AI chatbots and can be used by illiterate persons since it

can be prompted by voice. It is also cheaper.

"For people who are not that financially buoyant, they still have this opportunity to use even as little as 10 naira to ask lots of questions that will actually benefit them, I am so happy," said Olutubosun.

Viamo said the device was targeted at the world's poorest and remotest communities and is being expanded to Pakistan, India and Tanzania after being first launched in Zambia.

Viamo is supported by development agencies in the United States and the United Kingdom, among others. UNICEF has partnered with Viamo to provide information on HIV, tropical diseases, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene.

US Approves First Drug For People With Severe Form Of Fatty Liver Disease

Agenceis

Washington: The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on Thursday approved the first medication for people with a severe type of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

Madrigal Pharmaceuticals' Rezdiffra was shown to improve liver scarring in a clinical trial involving hundreds of people with non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), the worst form of the condition caused by a buildup of fat in the liver.

"Previously, patients with NASH who also have notable liver scarring did not have a medication that could directly address their liver damage," said the FDA's Nikolay Nikolov. "Today's approval of Rezdiffra will, for the first time, provide a treatment option for these patients, in addition to diet and exercise."

NASH affects approximately



6-8 million people in the United States and is often associated with other health problems such as high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and high blood fat levels.

Its symptoms include weakness, severe tiredness, yellowing of the skin or eyes, spider-like

blood vessels and more. NASH that progresses to cirrhosis -- the latest form of scarring -- will lead to liver failure over time, necessitating a transplant.

Rezdiffra, also known by its molecule name resmetrom, is an oral drug that targets the underlying causes of NASH.

In a trial of 966 people, liver biopsies taken at 12 months showed that a greater proportion of subjects treated with Rezdiffra achieved resolution of their condition or an improvement in liver scarring as compared with those who received the placebo. The results were published in February in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Side effects included diarrhea and nausea.

"The accelerated approval of Rezdiffra is a culmination of more than 15 years of research from our founder Dr. Becky Taub and a small R&D team that took on one of the biggest challenges in drug development," said Bill Sibold, Madrigal CEO.

The American Liver Foundation's Lorraine Stiehl also hailed the "groundbreaking" treatment.

Madrigal said the drug is set to be available to US patients in April.

India's First Underwater Metro Service Opens For Public In Kolkata

Agenceis

Kolkata: The newly-inaugurated India's first underwater metro line began public operations in West Bengal's capital Kolkata today with commuters seen queuing up for the first ride on the country's first-ever train ride under water.

People were seen clapping and raising 'Vande Bharat' and 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' slogans as they travelled in the country's first underwater metro train, an engineering marvel.

A train began its journey from the Howrah Maidan station on the East-West metro corridor of Kolkata at 7 am today. Simultaneously another train started from Esplanade station at the same time.

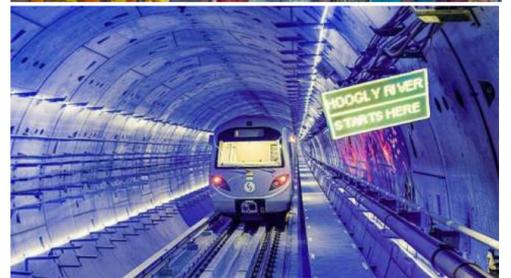
The Howrah Maidan-Esplanade section of the Kolkata's metropolitan transportation network is situated beneath the Hooghly River. The under-river section of the tunnel is 520 metres long.

Metro Railway Kolkata posted on social media platform X, "First commercial #Metro service entering newly inaugurated #Majherhat station of #Purple-Line this morning..."

A placard held by one commuter said, "Thank you very much Modi ji for making India proud."

Another passenger said, "I am so excited to travel in India's first underwater metro train. It hardly took 10 minutes to get the tickets."

The tunnel of the underwater metro is decorated with blue LED lights to mark the lower part of Hooghly River. The Kolkata underwater metro is scheduled to run on weekdays every 12 to 15 minutes in this section. The last metro of the day is available at 9.45 pm in both directions.



PM Narendra Modi had inaugurated metro operations in Kolkata on March 6. After the inauguration, he also took a metro ride with school students. During the journey, he engaged in conversations with them and the metro staff.

In addition to the underwater metro, the Prime Minister also inaugurated the Kavi Subhash - Hemanta Mukhopadhyay Metro section and the Taratala - Majherhat Metro section, which is part of the Joka-Esplanade line.

The latter features the Majherhat Metro station, an architectural marvel being an elevated station spanning railway lines, platforms, and a canal, further

showcasing the innovative approach towards improving urban mobility.

The Prime Minister had also inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for multiple connectivity projects worth 15,400 crore.

PM Modi also flagged off several other important projects across the country. These include the Pune Metro's stretch from Ruby Hall Clinic to Ramwadi, the Kochi Metro Rail Phase I Extension from SN Junction Metro station to Tripunithura Metro station, the Agra Metro's stretch from Taj East Gate to Mankameshwar, Pune Metro and Esplanade Metro- Kolkata.

Health conditions linked to heart disease found in adults in low-income nations

Agenceis

Adults living in extreme poverty in low- and middle-income countries, or LMICs, have health conditions like hypertension and diabetes that can lead to heart disease, according to new research published in the journal Nature Human Behaviour.

Researchers examining the relationship between poverty and cardiovascular diseases (CVD) discovered that CVD risk factors were highly prevalent in LMICs regardless of income, and could increase in prevalence as LMICs continue to develop economically.

Specifically, the team found that these risk factors - hypertension, diabetes, smoking, obesity, and dyslipidemia (abnormal lipid levels in blood) - were present among 17.5 per cent, 4 per cent, 10.6 per cent, 3.1 per cent and 1.4 per cent of adults in extreme poverty, respectively.

Yet, most of these adults were not treated for the CVD-related conditions, they said.

The international study, led by Stanford University in the US, analysed survey data from over 100 nationally representative household surveys across 78 countries. Including data from over 3 million individuals, the researchers estimated it to cover 53 per cent of the global population and 64 per cent of that living in LMICs, including India.

The dataset also represented 85 per cent of individuals living in extreme poverty worldwide, they estimated.

"Our study provides a crucial empirical foundation for future work in improving health outcomes for those living in the poorest sections of global society," said corresponding author Pascal Geldsetzer, Assistant Professor of Medicine at Stanford University.

The findings contradicted a common assumption that environmental factors



like food scarcity and lifestyles involving physical labour of those living in extreme poverty in LMICs protect against CVD risk factors, the team said.

"Understanding how an assumption of low prevalence of CVD risk factors among those in extreme poverty holds true is important for setting priorities within health policy and care delivery, both for equity and effectiveness," said study author Till Baernighausen, from Heidelberg University, Germany.

Despite being limited by possible measurement errors and potentially overestimating CVD risk in adults living in extreme poverty, the study could inform equity discussions for resource allocation and design of effective interventions, the researchers acknowledged.

"Further research into mechanisms of CVD risk specifically affecting individuals living in extreme poverty is essential - uncovering the different pathways that may predispose various groups to CVD risk will be vital in reducing that risk," said study author Sebastian Vollmer, Professor of Development Economics, University of Gttingen, Germany.

Study Indicates Turmeric's Potential In Improving Gut Microbiota

Agenceis

Researchers at the University of Western So Paulo (UNOESTE) and So Paulo State University have discovered a potential link between curcumin, the main ingredient in turmeric, and the enhancement of beneficial bacteria in the guts of mice. The study, published in the International Journal of Pharmaceutics, revealed that a solution containing curcumin, in the form of a nanoemulsion, was associated with a 25% increase in the abundance of Lactobacillus bacteria in the treated mice compared to the control group. Lactobacillus bacteria are commonly found in probiotic-rich foods like yogurt and are known for their positive impact on gut health.

REDISCOVER MIRRORLESS PERFORMANCE

Z 30 | Starting Price: ₹ 59,895.00*

GET CASHBACK UP TO ₹ 5,000.00*

for more attractive offers visit www.nikon.co.in

20.9 MP | 3.0" Vert-Angle LCD Monitor | 4K UHD Uncompressed | ISO 100-5000

Z 50 | Starting Price: ₹ 70,995.00*

CONSUMER OFFERS WORTH UP TO ₹ 5,550.00*

for more attractive offers visit www.nikon.co.in

20.9 MP | 4K UHD Uncompressed | 209 AF Points | ISO 100-5000

*Conditions apply. Limited period offer. Price quoted is for one unit of product. MRP inclusive of all taxes. For more details and offers, please visit our website: www.nikon.co.in

Abbas Ads.