

Nauroz In Kashmir: Rediscovering The Essence Beyond Sectarian Lines

Syed Mohammad Burhan

Srinagar: Nauroz, the festival of spring and the first day in the Persian New Year is celebrated across Central Asia. Pertinently, Nauroz starts at the exact moment of the vernal equinox, commencing the start of the spring. Exact moment of the vernal equinox in Srinagar, commonly known as 'Tahvil', this year (20th March 2024) was at 08:36:26 a.m. on Wednesday.

In Kashmir however, the festival has sadly attained

sectarian connotation and this has decreased its significance for the general public.

"It is sad Nauroz in Kashmir has been associated with a sect and seen from a sectarian perspective", said Prof G. N. Khaki, former Director of the Centre of Central Asian Studies at the University of Kashmir. Prof Khaki believes that this spring festival belongs to the whole Muslim community.

"This year, it is coinciding with the month of Ramazan, which has doubled its essence, and we should be grateful to



God for the kind of bounties he has provided us with. Life is infused into all things on this day

and it signifies rebirth" he said. He further said that there is nothing wrong in celebrating

cultural festivities as long as they do not clash with the religious beliefs. Imam Abu Hanifa (r.a) has put it rightly, quotes Prof Khaki. "As long as traditions do not contradict Islamic fundamentals and beliefs, we can continue with them".

According to Dr. Abid Gulzar, Assistant Professor at the CCAS Kashmir University, "It is primarily celebrated in the countries where the Persian empire shared the arc of influence and political authority for long periods of time.

Reflecting on Islamic

teachings, Dr. Gulzar asserted that Islam never opposes cultural festivities and the indigenous festival of a place. He drew a historical parallel, stating, "Even when we look at the history of Islam, Prophet Muhammad (P.b.u.h) did not change the names of people after they embraced Islam because changing names after embracing faith is not necessary and is not an essential matter of the faith."

But in Kashmir, we saw hundreds of people changing names just | More on P6

PM, LG, DGP Greet People On Nauroz

Srinagar: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Director General of Police (DGP) and political leaders greeted people on the auspicious occasion of Nauroz.

"Nauroz Mubarak! On this blessed day, I wish for everyone's joy and wellbeing. May the coming year be filled with success, growth and enhance the bond of unity in our society," Narendra Modi wrote on X.

"Warm greetings to all on the auspicious occasion of Nauroz. May this festival bring joy, happiness and prosperity to everyone. Nauroz | More on P6

Fresh WD To Affect J&K From Today

Rains, Snow Expected At Many Places: MeT

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: As the day temperature has gone up in J&K parts, the weatherman here has predicted two-day wet spell in Jammu and Kashmir from tomorrow (March 21), saying that light to moderate rains and snow is expected at many places.

According to the meteorological department, a fresh Western Disturbance is affecting Jammu and Kashmir tomorrow and under its influence light to moderate rain and snow is expected to commence in parts of Kashmir from tomorrow afternoon onwards.

Director Meteorological department (MeT), Dr Mukhtar Ahmad said that the weather would remain generally cloudy; there is a possibility of light to moderate rains, snow at many places with thunder, lightning and gusty winds over parts of Kashmir and Jammu division.

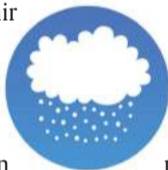
An Independent Weather Forecaster, Faizan Arif Keng also stated that by evening tomorrow, most parts in Kashmir Valley would have received a spell of rain and snow.

Rain and snow can activities can continue in some areas on 22nd March, he said, adding that least impact of WD is

expected in Jammu, Samba, and Kathua districts.

There is a possibility of hail-storm and gusty winds in some areas during this period, he added.

However, the MeT Director stated that the weather would remain generally dry on March 23 while on March 24, the weather is expected to remain generally cloudy with light rain and snow at isolated places.



While the weather is expected to remain dry during March 25 and 26, the MeT Director said on March 27 to March 29, the weather would remain generally cloudy with possibility of light rain and snow at few places.

Amid forecast for rains and snow, night temperature recorded a rise at most places in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday.

Srinagar recorded a minimum of 4.2°C against 2.5°C on the previous night which was below normal by 0.5°C for the summer capital of J&K for this time of the year.

Qazigund recorded a minimum of 2.4°C against 2.2°C on the previous night and it was 1.2°C below normal for the gateway town of Kashmir, he said.

Pahalgam recorded a low of minus 1.1°C against minus 0.9°C on the previous | More on P6

Assembly Elections In J&K Will Be Held Before September Deadline: Amit Shah

KO WEB DESK

New Delhi: Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir will be conducted before September 30, Union Minister Amit Shah said on Wednesday.

Speaking at CNN-News18 Rising India Summit 2024 in New Delhi, Shah said, "Voting in Jammu and Kashmir will happen before the Supreme Court of India's deadline of September 30."

On December 11, 2023, the apex court directed the Election Commission of India (ECI) to conduct elections



in Jammu and Kashmir by September 30, 2024. "We direct that steps shall be taken to conduct elections for the Legislative Assembly

of Jammu and Kashmir by September 30, 2024, and statehood shall be restored as soon as possible," the bench said. The last | More on P6

TODAY, EVERY KASHMIRI GETS AN ANNUAL health insurance of Rs 5 lakh, water supply and rice, tourism is flourishing, theatres have opened after 30 years, this is all because of democracy."

'Punish Those Who Deprived You Of Democracy'

As Jammu and Kashmir goes for its first major election since the abrogation of Article 370, Union minister Amit Shah at the CNN-News18 Rising India Summit 2024 on Wednesday said it does not matter whether the BJP will get a mandate in the Union Territory, but the three 'Parivarvadi parties' - the Congress, National Conference (NC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP) - who did not let democracy flourish in the region should be wiped out. The people of | More on P6

Poll Notification Issued For Udhampur

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: The notification for the Lok Sabha poll in Udhampur constituency on April 19 was issued on Wednesday, an election official said. The Udhampur-Kathua constituency is one of 102 segments across the country going to the polls in the first phase on April 19.

Kathua District Magistrate Rakesh Minhas, who is also the returning officer for the constituency, issued the notification for filing nominations from Wednesday.

The last date to file nominations is March 27. The papers will be scrutinised on March 28 while the last date for withdrawal of candidature is March 30, Minhas told reporters in Kathua. So far, only the BJP and the Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) have announced their candidates for the seat.

Union Minister Jitendra Singh is contesting | More on P6

LOK SABHA POLLS

Jailed Er Rashid To Contest From Baramulla

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: Engineer Rashid, who is currently lodged in jail on UAPA charges, will contest the Lok Sabha elections from Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla constituency on an Awami Ittehad Party ticket. Abdul Rashid Sheikh alias Engineer Rashid (56) is a former MLA.

He was arrested in 2019 and charged by the National

Investigation Agency under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), becoming the first mainstream politician to be booked under the stringent anti-terror law.

"The political affairs committee of the Awami Ittehad Party decided that we will field Engineer Rashid as our candidate from the Baramulla Lok Sabha constituency," Firdous Baba, the | More on P6

PARTY LOYALTIES IN FLUX!

35 Politicians Switch Sides In J&K Since Art 370 Abrogation

Agencies

Srinagar: The 2024 Lok Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir are anticipated to be both significant and intriguing for several reasons. Primarily, following the abrogation of Article 370, it will serve as a litmus test in the altered political landscape for the first time.

Over the past five years, there has been a considerable transformation in the political dynamics of the region. During the electioneering process, one can expect to witness the emergence of contenders affiliated with non-traditional political entities challenging the dominance of established family-based parties. Notably, three newly registered parties have surfaced in Jammu and Kashmir, poised to challenge their parent parties. Numerous leaders, former ministers, and ex-MLAs are



anticipated to actively engage in politics within this evolved political milieu. A notable trend has been the significant number of leaders, former ministers, and MLAs switching allegiances in Jammu and Kashmir.

Following the revocation of Article 370, Kashmir experienced initial political upheaval. Several senior leaders distanced themselves from the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Notably, former

minister Syed Altaf Bukhari, previously aligned with PDP founder Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, parted ways with the PDP to establish a new entity, Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party. In the inaugural District Development Council (DDC) elections, the party demonstrated commendable performance in various regions, challenging the dominance of its parent party, the PDP. Subsequently, influential | More on P6

Gun License To Ineligible Persons CBI Files Chargesheet Against 15, Including Officials

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The CBI on Wednesday filed two charge sheets against 15 people, including a former district magistrate and an additional district magistrate of Kupwara, in connection with the issuance of firearm licences to ineligible candidates in violation of rules during 2012-16.

In the charge sheets filed before a special court in Srinagar, the CBI submitted its findings on around 15,000 such licences issued allegedly based on forged documents.

One of the two charge sheets is on the alleged role of the then-district magistrate Itrat Hussain Rafiqima and nine other people, including four gun house dealers and a middleman. The second

one pertains to the alleged role of ADM Ravinder Kumar Bhat and four others, including gun house dealers and middlemen.

The CBI registered the case in 2018 at the request of the then-state government of Jammu and Kashmir. The matter pertains to the issuance of a large number of arms licences to ineligible people without following the due processes between 2012 and 2016.

"An investigation disclosed the nexus of the then licensing authority or district magistrate with middlemen and other gun house dealers," a CBI spokesperson said in a statement.

The official said in furtherance of the criminal conspiracy, the gun house dealers lured defence personnel posted at far away places in the | More on P6

Rape Of Minor Srinagar Girl Bihar Resident Sent To Jail For 8 Yrs

M Ahmad

Srinagar: A fast-track court on Wednesday awarded eight years' rigorous imprisonment to a mason from Bihar for kidnapping and raping a minor girl in Habba Kadal area of Srinagar in 2016.

Four days after convicting the mason, Santosh Kumar Paswan son of Saider Paswan of Lalpora Bhim Nagar Bihar, 2nd Additional Sessions Judge (Fast Track Court pertaining to rape cases)—Renu Dogra Gupta—also imposed Rs 20,000 on him. "...I sentence 8 (eight) years of rigorous imprisonment and fine of Rs

20,000/- to the Convict Santosh Kumar Paswan ...for the commission of the offence under section 376 RPC (rape)," the court said, adding, "For the commission of offence under Section 363 RPC (kidnapping) the convict shall undergo rigorous imprisonment for 7 years (Seven years) and a fine of Rs. 10,000."

However the court ordered that both the sentences shall run concurrently.

"In case of default in payment of fine, the convict shall further undergo simple imprisonment for a period of 2 months," the court said and ordered | More on P6

Sikhs In Kashmir Demand Pahari Status, Job Package

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Sikhs in Kashmir on Wednesday announced the formation of the All Kashmir District Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee Coordination Committee.

The objective behind the committee's formation is to get "Pahari" status for Sikh-inhabited areas of Kashmir, special job packages for Sikh youngsters and political reservation for the community, Jaspal Singh, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee's chief in Srinagar, said in a statement.

The other objectives include implementation of Punjabi language in schools and heritage status for gurdwaras in Amira Kadal and Maharajganj. During a press conference in



Srinagar, committee members raised questions regarding the selective allocation of Pahari status, expressing concerns over the exclusion of the Sikh community from the move. Why has Pahari status been selectively granted, leaving out communities like Sikh?," Sikh Committee members question.

The committee also emphasized urgent land issues and concerns surrounding Gurdwara Mattan Sahab Anantnag, in south Kashmir.

Seeking assistance and permissions, the committee advocated for the construction of Gurdwara Sahab at Gulmarg and a | More on P6

Lok Sabha Elections-2024

DEO Srinagar Inspects Election Strong Rooms Cum Distribution/ Collection Centre's

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The District Election Officer (DEO) Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat on Wednesday conducted a comprehensive inspection of proposed election Strong Rooms cum Collection/ Distribution Centre's being established for all 08 Assembly constituencies of Srinagar District.

The inspection was undertaken to assess the preparedness for smooth conduct of the upcoming Lok Sabha Election-2024 in the District.

During the visit, the DEO/DC took onsite review of the arrangements and facilities at Strong Room cum Collection/ Distribution Centre's for all 08 Assembly Constituencies viz 19-Hazratbal, 20-Khanyar, 21-Habakadal, 22-LalChowk, 23-Chanapora, 24-Zadibal, 25-Eidgah and 26-Central Shalteng.

He stressed upon the concerned Assistant Returning Officers (AROs) to take up necessary measures to ensure that all required arrangements are put in place well in advance to facilitate smooth and efficient election process.

He asked them to make proper arrangements for polling staff, adequate parking and separate entry/exit of the vehicles carrying election material at Strong Rooms cum Collection/ Distribution Centre's.

He also laid emphasis on placing adequate spac-

The inspection was undertaken to assess the preparedness for smooth conduct of the upcoming Lok Sabha Election-2024 in the District.

es for counters to be placed at Collection/Distribution Centre's in order to avoid any cluttering during distribution/collection of election materials.

While interacting with the AROs and other concerned staff, the DEO/DC underscored the importance of ensuring that all Strong Rooms cum Collection/ Distribution Centre's adhere to prescribed standards of Election Commission of India to uphold the integrity and fairness of the electoral process.

He stressed on proper handling/ management of election material besides ensuring efficient and secure mechanisms for its storage.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ARO/ERO- Zadibal), Dr Khalid Hussain Malik, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ARO/ERO- Hazratbal), Syed Ahmad Kataria, Deputy District Election Officer, Mir Imtiaz Ul Aziz, Other AROs, and other concerned officers accompanied the DEO during the visit.



As spring approaches, the sprawling Badamwari garden in Srinagar is dazzling with almond blossom. KO Photo Abid Bhat

Court Summons Facebook Page Admin In Defamation Case

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A local court here has issued a notice to a Facebook admin in a defamation plea filed by a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) "Smile Foundation" for allegedly circulating "malafide videos" against it.

In an order, the court of Munsiff/Sub Registrar Srinagar Adnan Manzoor Naqashbandi, as per GNS, restrained the admin namely Mudasar Bashir, alias Mudasar Aziz, from 'interfering with the affairs of the NGO or uploading any video related to the organization.'

The defamation suit was filed by the plaintiff non government

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organization (NGO) Smile Foundation in response to the defamatory content allegedly uploaded by the defendant, Mudasar Bashir a few days ago, following which the court issued summon and directed the defendant to remove all the content immediately.

The court also directed admin to remove all the related content to the case in hand from his Facebook pages.

The admin has also been asked by the court to respond to the notice by the next date of hearing on March 26.

The plaintiff NGO was represented in the court by advocates Talib Hussain and Seerat Mehraj.

Mirwaiz To Address Worshippers At Dastgeer Sahib Today

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Anjuman Auqaf Jama Masjid Srinagar, has informed that in connection with the passing away anniversary of Umm ul Mominen Hazrat Khadijah Al Kubra (RA), Mirwaiz-e-Kashmir Dr Moulvi Mu-

hammad Umar Farooq, will address the faithful at Aastan e Aaliya Dastgeer Sahib Khanyar on Thursday, 10th of Ramazan, from 4:00 pm till Asr prayer.

In a statement issued here, the Anjuman has requested the people to participate in the gathering in large numbers.

Locals, Visitors Enjoy Badamwari's Almond Bloom

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The iconic 'Badamwari Garden' here has come alive with the breathtaking beauty of almond bloom, much to the delight of locals who eagerly anticipate this annual spectacle.

"For us Kashmiri's, the blooming of almond trees in Badamwari Garden is a cherished and beautiful view that marks the beginning

of spring," said Azan, a resident of Zafraan Colony Srinagar. "It's a sight that fills our hearts with joy and reminds us of the resilience of our land."

Rahul, one of the visitors from Mumbai said the enchanting beauty of Badamwari Garden's almond bloom and the arrival of spring is like seeing heaven with your naked eyes.

The vibrant hues of pink and white blossoms against the back-

drop of snow-capped mountains evoke a sense of wonder and reverence among the people.

The beauty of Badamwari Garden during almond bloom is unparalleled, Sahil, a local said, adding that it is like stepping into a fairytale, where every tree is adorned with delicate flowers.

Families are gathered amidst the blossoms to celebrate the arrival of spring, and the air is filled with a festive look.

2019 'Aerobridge' Project Connecting SMHS With SHH Hospital Stalled

Deliberations On To Fix Technical Issues: Sec Health

Jahangir Sofi

Srinagar: The absence of a crucial overhead bridge, between the SMHS (Shri Maharaja Hari Singh) hospital and its multi-specialty counterpart, the Super Specialty Hospital (SSH), has left patients and their attendants grappling with daunting challenges.

Despite the sanctioning of an "Aerobridge" project in 2019 aimed at facilitating seamless transfer between the two healthcare facilities, no tangible progress has been made, exacerbating the plight of those in

need of specialized medical care.

Several attendants and patients complained that they had to shift their patients on stretcher or wheelchair through a highly congested traffic road between SSH and SMHS hospital.

"There is no seamless movement between the two hospitals, although sometimes there are ambulances available, but that does not happen to be always," said an attendant.

The proposed Aerobridge project, conceived to enhance the quality of healthcare services and expedite patient transfers, remains

mired in inertia. Despite substantial allocations to the health department in the region's budget for the year 2023-24, the long-standing issue persists, underscoring the disconnect between policy intentions and on-ground realities.

However, in response to a question over the absence of overhead bridge during a recent event, Secretary health for Jammu and Kashmir Dr. Syed Abid Rasheed Shah cited the technical issue as an impediment, but said they along with the team of concerned engineers are trying to find a solution.

NIT Srinagar To Host 2 Day National Conference On RASE-2024

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The National Conference on Role of Academic-driven Startups in Developing Economy of J&K (RASE-2024) will be hosted by NIT Srinagar from 29-30th June this year.

The conference will be held in association with prestigious institutions including the Department of Holistic Education, Vidya Bharti, Punjab.

Director NIT Srinagar, Prof. A Ravinder Nath released a brochure of the (RASE-2024). It was attended by Dr. Thakur SKR, Sci/Engr-SF and Director, DHE & VBITR, eminent educationists Vijay Nadda and Deshray Sharma,

Dr. Saad Parvez, Head, IIEDC, Dr. Vijay Kumar, Dr. H S Pali, Dr. Ranjeet Kumar Rout and Shahid Abbas Mir, CEO- iTBI Greenovator, Incubation Foundation, NIT Srinagar.

In his keynote address, Director NIT Srinagar, Prof. A. Ravinder Nath said this innovative conference is expected to bridge between academia and industry.

"The conference will serve as a dynamic platform for students, researchers, and entrepreneurs, facilitating discussions on various aspects of startup culture, spanning from ideation to execution. It will offer valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities present within the startup ecosystem," he said.

NORTHERN RAILWAY						
Notice Inviting Tender						
Sr. DEET/TRD/FZR acting for and on behalf of the President of India invites E-Tenders for the works as under. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date 15.04.2024 at 15:00 Hrs. only Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall not be considered.						
Tender No.	Name of work	App Cost (Rs.)	Cost of Tender form (Rs.)	Date & time for submission of tender	Earnest Money # (Rs.)	Completion period
511F-TRD-FZR-2023-24	Strengthening of earthing arrangement by replacement of overaged earthing system at various Traction Sub Stations and Switching Stations in Sahnewal-Amritsar section over Firozpur division	₹ 83,11,251.07p	NIL	Upto 15.04.2024 15:00 Hrs	1,66,200/-	12 Months
524B-TRD-FZR-2023-24	TRD work in c/w provision of new washing Line No. 10 at Badgam (BDGM) yard over Firozpur division	₹ 1,63,29,558.87p	NIL	Upto 15.04.2024 15:00 Hrs	2,31,700/-	06 Months

Tenderer(s) may please note that offers received without Bid Security either in cash through e-payment gateway or as Bank Guarantee bond from a scheduled commercial bank of India or as mentioned in tender documents (as per Annexure-21) valid for a period of 90 days beyond the bid validity period, will be considered as incomplete & invalid offer and for which contractor shall have no claim on Railway.

No. 511F & 524B-TRD-FZR-2023-24
Dated: 19.03.2024

879/2024

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PUBLIC NOTICE


I have changed my name from Nazir Ahmad S/o Mohd Ismail Ganai to Nazir Ahmad Ganai S/o Mohd Ismail Ganai in future I will be known as Nazir Ahmad Ganai S/o Mohd Ismail Ganai. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Regional Passport Office Srinagar within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Nazir Ahmad Ganai
S/o Mohd Ismail Ganai


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- 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
SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

RAILWAYS


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

HIGHWAY STATUS


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



HIJRI
CALENDAR
10 Ramzan
1445

PRAYERS

FAJR	5 : 11
ZUHR	12:40
ASR	4: 58
Magrib	6:46
ISHA	8: 06

This Day In History

- 630- Byzantine emperor Heraclius restores the True Cross to Jerusalem
- 717- Battle of Vincy fought in the Cambrai during Frankish Civil War; Charles Martel's forces defeat those of King Chilperic II and his mayor Ragenfrid
- 1188- Accession to the throne of Japan by emperor Antoku
- 1804 -Napoleonic Code adopted in France, stresses clearly written and accessible law
- 1864- Battle at Henderson's Hill (Bayou Rapids) Louisiana
- 1865- Battle of Bentonville ends, last Confederate effort to stop Sherman
- 1899 - British & French accord over West Africa
- 1907 - US sends troops to Honduras to halt the Nicaraguan army takeover
- 1918- World War I: Germany launches Somme offensive
- 1925- Iran adopts Khorshidi solar Hijri calendar
- 1927- Guomindang Army conquers Shanghai as British marines flee
- 1934- Fire destroys Hakodate Japan, killing about 1,500
- 1935- Persia is officially renamed Iran
- 1942 - Convoy QP9 departs Great Britain to Murmansk
- 1943 - Assassination attempt on Adolf Hitler fails
- 1945 - During WW II Allied bombers begin 4-day raid over Germany
- 1958 - USSR performs atmospheric nuclear test
- 1962 - Yogi the bear becomes the 1st creature to be ejected at supersonic speeds by the US military testing ejection seats
- 1965 - US Ranger 9 launched; takes 5,814 pictures before lunar impact
- 1975 - Ethiopia abolishes its monarchy after 3,000 years
- 1979 - Egyptian Parliament unanimously approve peace treaty with Israel
- 1990 - Namibia becomes independent of South Africa, Sam Nujoma becomes president
- 1991 - 27 lost at sea when 2 US Navy anti-submarine planes collide
- 1991 - UN Security Council panel decided to lift the food embargo on Iraq
- 1992 - Pakistan scores 6-264 to overhaul NZ in exciting World Cup semi
- 1994 - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) enters into force after being ratified by the required number of nations
- 1999 - Bertrand Piccard and Brian Jones become the first to circumnavigate the Earth in a hot air balloon.
- 2002 - In Pakistan, Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh along with three other suspects are charged with murder for their part in the kidnapping and killing of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl.
- 2006 - Immigrant workers constructing the Burj Dubayy in Dubai, The United Arab Emirates and a new terminal of Dubai International Airport join together and riot, causing \$1M in damage.
- 2012 - Five former Guatemalan paramilitaries are sentenced to 7,710 years in jail for their role in the Plan de Sanchez massacre in 1982
- 2012 - Greek Parliament votes in favour of an international bailout deal
- 2013 - 42 people are killed and 84 are injured by a bombing in a mosque in Damascus, Syria
- 2013 - At least 45 people drown and 60 are missing after a Nigerian boat sinks off the shore of Gabon
- 2013 - 24 people are killed and 100 are injured by a tornado and hail storm in southern China
- 2013 - The European Space Agency reveals new data that indicates that the universe is 13.82 billion years old
- 2014 - Russia formally annexes Crimea amid international condemnation
- 2018 - Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg admits they "made mistakes" after data on 50 million users is harvested by Cambridge Analytica

KASHMIR OBSERVERTM

Thursday | 21-03-2024

Escalating Climate Crisis

The fresh report released by the United Nations and the India Meteorological Department paints a grim picture of our planet's climate crisis. Global temperatures continue to soar, with 2023 marking the hottest year on record. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) warns that 2024 is likely to surpass even these alarming levels. The consequences of this unprecedented warming are dire and far-reaching, affecting every corner of the globe.

One of the most alarming trends highlighted in the report is the prevalence of marine heatwaves, which have gripped nearly a third of the world's oceans. These extreme events have devastating impacts on marine ecosystems, further exacerbating biodiversity loss. Moreover, glaciers worldwide are experiencing record ice loss, leading to rising sea levels and threatening coastal communities.

The implications of these climate shifts are not confined to distant regions; they are felt close to home as well. Kashmir, a region known for its natural beauty, is has been intermittently reeling under intense and record-breaking heatwaves. In September last year, Srinagar experienced its second-hottest day in over a century, with temperatures soaring well above normal levels. The dry weather during Chilai Kalan and the attendant warmth have exacerbated the situation, posing significant challenges to agriculture and impacting vital cash crops like apples and saffron.

The heatwave in Kashmir is not an isolated event but rather part of a broader pattern of extreme weather events occurring with increased frequency worldwide. Climate scientists warn that unless urgent action is taken to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and curb fossil fuel consumption, such events will recur, wreaking havoc on ecosystems, livelihoods, and economies.

The changing climate patterns in Kashmir also underline the urgent need for local adaptation and resilience measures. As temperatures continue to rise and precipitation patterns become more erratic, it is crucial to invest in sustainable agricultural practices, water management systems, and disaster preparedness strategies. Also, efforts to conserve forests, protect watersheds, and promote renewable energy sources are essential for building climate resilience in the region.

Addressing the climate crisis requires collective action at the global, national, and local levels. Governments, businesses, and individuals must commit to ambitious climate targets and implement concrete measures to reduce emissions and transition to a low-carbon economy. Investing in clean energy infrastructure, promoting energy efficiency, and supporting climate-smart agriculture are essential steps towards building a sustainable future for all. The recurrent heatwaves in Kashmir, one of the world's coldest regions, serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need to prioritize climate action. We cannot afford to ignore the warning signs any longer.



Taliban Challenge To Pakistan

Even before the August 2021 Afghan Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)—better known as the Pakistani Taliban—appeared to be on an upward trajectory, as these authors outlined in an article for CTC Sentinel in the spring of 2021. At that time, after years of organizational fragmentation, the group was beginning to show signs of a resurgence. Not only had it managed to survive the existential threat previously posed by the Islamic State, but it had also strengthened its ranks through a series of mergers, broadened its support base, introduced a series of new regulations curtailing the indiscriminate targeting of civilians in suicide bombings, and increased the tempo of its operations. In the ensuing two years, building on the Afghan Taliban's victory, and drawing strength and inspiration from it, the TTP's revival has continued to grow in strength, partly due to an 'incoherent' response from the Pakistani military. The group is now on the trajectory to emulate the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan. With a further uptick in and geographical expansion of its operations, additional mergers, its fighters relocating from their 'victory' in Afghanistan to Pakistan, and a much more local focus and a centralized organizational structure, the TTP is now attempting to escalate its violence against the state after a series of failed peace negotiations.

This article draws on open-source materials and interviews to assess the TTP's growing strength over the past two years and analyze its potential future trajectory. The first section analyzes the implications of the Afghan Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan for the TTP. The second section examines the group's growing strength, defining four key developments: mergers, organizational centralization, growing operational activity, and a strengthening of media operations. The third section looks into the 2021-2022 negotiations between the TTP and the Pakistani government, and the fourth section outlines the TTP's recent and more localized focus. The final section investigates the January 2023 Peshawar Mosque attack and offers an assessment of the TTP's potential short-term future trajectory.

The Implications of the Taliban's Takeover in Afghanistan for the TTP

The Afghan Taliban and Pakistani Taliban have long had deep-rooted relations. Yet, prior to the Afghan Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the government in Pakistan promoted the narrative that the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban were not interconnected and blamed the growing threat from the TTP on foreign intelligence agencies' support through the former Afghan government. Pakistani officials claimed the Taliban's recent accession to power would force the TTP to retreat from Afghan territory and eventually face a certain organizational death. As this piece will outline, many Pakistani militants did leave Afghanistan, but when they came home, with the war won in Afghanistan, they focused all their attention on the TTP's war against the Pakistani state and particularly the tribal belt adjacent to Afghanistan. This specific, and localized, focus became clear during peace negotiations in Kabul last year between the TTP and Pakistani government when the TTP stressed that the reinstatement of the semiautonomous status of the tribal belt and the implementation of sharia were its key demands.

The TTP was the first militant group to officially celebrate the Taliban takeover within hours of the

speech, he proclaimed that the anti-state militant struggle in Pakistan continued and urged those gathered to dedicate all efforts to the jihadi front in Pakistan. Praising the locals' support and shelter of the TTP, he claimed that his group was now aiming for a comparable victory in Pakistan.

The Afghan Taliban leadership publicly discourages its members from joining the war against the Pakistani state, although the group's rank-and-file consider it a religious and national obligation to support the TTP from an ideological perspective and due to tribal and personal connections cemented in the last two decades of insurgency. Unsurprisingly, reports are emerging of Afghan militants contributing to the TTP's war against Pakistani security forces, including suicide bombers. Some Afghan Taliban foot soldiers have declared the fight against Pakistani forces as the next



Taliban entering Kabul. In a statement released on August 17, 2021, the TTP declared the Taliban's return to power as a great victory for the jihadi project. The TTP emir Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud publicly renewed his group's pledge of allegiance to the Taliban emir Hibatullah Akhundzada and promised to continue unconditional support to the Afghan Taliban. Drawing attention to the TTP's two decades of fighting U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan, Mehsud announced that his group would now work to ensure the stability and survival of the Taliban regime.

The Taliban's takeover also resulted in an instant injection of strength for the TTP with the release of hundreds of TTP members from prisons across Kabul, who had been imprisoned by U.S. forces and the former Afghan government. This included senior commanders like the TTP's founding deputy emir Maulawi Faqir Muhammad Bajauri and former spokesperson Mufti Khalid Bulti, arrested in Afghanistan in 2013 and 2015, respectively. Immediately after his release, Bajauri was seen addressing large gatherings of TTP fighters in Kunar province adjacent to his native Bajaur tribal district in Pakistan. During his

phase of their jihad. The TTP legitimizes its war against the state by applying the same arguments that the Taliban used in Afghanistan. An interesting manifestation of this overlap is the TTP's response to a statement from a senior Pakistani religious leader Mufti Taqi Usmani in January 2023, who declared any armed uprising against the state illegitimate. In response, the TTP's central Umar Media foundation released an archived statement from the Taliban's supreme leader supporting the TTP in its jihad against the Pakistani state.

In sum, the Taliban victory in Afghanistan has emboldened and strengthened the TTP. With the Taliban in control of Afghanistan and sympathetic to the TTP, and the group no longer having to fear operations against it there, the TTP now enjoys a level of 'strategic depth' that is arguably unparalleled in its history.

—This is the abridged version of the article originally published by CTC.uestpoint.edu

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

Abdul Sayed/ Tore Hamming

With the Taliban in control of Afghanistan and sympathetic to the TTP, the TTP now enjoys a level of 'strategic depth' that is arguably unparalleled in its history



Your FINANCIAL

Did you know ?

To Buy or To Rent?

Irshad Mushtaq

The decision to build a house instead of renting has often been considered a sound investment. However, when we take into account the skyrocketing land rates and the high returns of other asset classes, it becomes evident that renting a house may actually be the cheaper option. Let's consider an example to illustrate this point.

In 2003, the value of land was Rs 5 lakh per kanal, and the cost of constructing a house was Rs 25 lakhs, making the total value cost at that time Rs 30 lakhs. Fast forward to today, the selling value of the house with 1 kanal of land is approximately Rs 3.5 crore, which translates to a 13% compounding annual return over the past 20 years. On the other hand, the value of the land shot up to a staggering 45 times, bringing the total value to Rs13.50 crore, equating to a 20.97% compounding annually over 20 years.

Comparing these figures, it becomes clear that the decision to build a house instead of renting has resulted in a significant loss. Over a span of 20 years, the loss incurred by building the house amounts to a staggering 10 crore rupees. This highlights the financial implications of the decision to build a house instead of opting for rental accommodation.

Unfortunately, many individuals have made the same mistake, realizing too late the financial drawbacks of owning a house. This has led to a situation where a large number of Kashmiri people are forced to live in rental accommodations, creating a social trap.

In conclusion, the example provided clearly demonstrates the financial implications of the decision to build a house instead of renting. It is imperative that we learn from these mistakes and start to think strategically about our housing decisions. We must prioritize the future of our society and focus on skill development to ensure a better standard of living for the generations to come. It is time to break free from traditional social pressures and create better living decisions for our society.

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PENMAN'S DESK

Written Words And
The Song Of Spades

S.Sarwar.Malik

With changing times, among many things that change, is our understanding of the past. Spoken words do transmit from one generation to another what one experientially gathers, but since mortals we are, human life is limited to some years and usually during the sunset years, memories fade and so do other things, stored within our system.

Inherent quality of written word is that it can be transmitted to other individuals and generations and that it suffers little change, comparatively. With the birth of written-language legends, myths and tales, in simple prose or ornate verse-form got preserved and subsequently the treasure house of literature on varied subjects, came to be amassed.

Language, in simple words, is the structured system of communication. Speech, (-including gestures) and writing together constitute language. Names of thousands of languages can be listed with a little labour but it is most probably impossible to trace all of them to a single original universal human language. Sumerian, Akkadian, Egyptian, Aramaic, classical Hebrew, Arabic, Archaic Chinese, Tamil and Sanskrit are said to figure in the list of ancient languages. Sumerian, which was spoken in Mesopotamian areas of Babylonia and Assyria (Iraq) as per some, as early as 3500 BC, (but surely before 2600 BC), is long extinct. Akkadian that was also spoken in ancient Mesopotamia, including Babylonia as early as 2500 BC, is also extinct. Aramaic (- the proto-Semitic language), dated back to 1,000-700 Bc, was spoken in ancient Syria, Sinai peninsula and also Mesopotamia. (*David* and *Ezra* chapters of the Old Testament are said to have used this lingo.)

Till 19th Century AD, Hebrew was largely thought to be the most ancient written-language, by those who professed Jewish/ Christian faith.

Likewise, Hindus claim the same for Sanskrit, though Telugu/Tamil-speaking populace contest it. The Arabic speaking world, too, has its separate claim.

The earliest writing system, called *Cuneiform*, (-derived from the Latin word *Cuneus*, wedge), was first used in URUK, (east of Euphrates), whose samples were discovered by archaeologists. Cuneiform kept evolving with time at different places. They are named as Sumerian-Cuneiform (2600 BC); Babylonian-Cuneiform; Elamite-Cuneiform (-Persian Cuneiform; believed to have developed independently) and Hittite- Cuneiform (-related to Akkadian logograms; read ahead, about this race) are the famous four Cuneiform types that are preserved in great numbers in reputed museums of the world. First three



among these were deciphered by the German Philologist, George Friedrich Grotefend, from 1800 to 1836 AD.

Imagine the great spade work of the battery of great archaeologists; carried relentlessly, investing sweat, time and money as a result of which Mari tablets were found in 1933 AD; (-Mari is on West of Euphrates, Syria) & of Nineveh around 1840-50 AD; both are Akkadians. (Nineveh was the Assyrian area on the eastern bank of Tigris river, in north Iraq). Those found in Sippar around 1880 AD are Babylonian; those found in Hattusa (in 1906 AD) are Hittite; those found in Drehem are Sumerian; those found in Persepolis (1933 AD) are Elamite (old Persian) and those found in Nimrud (in 1952) are Neo- Assyrian cum Neo- Babylonian tablets. Based on pictograms, phonograph and characters, Cuneiform is mankind's earliest available form of writing that has come to us. Cuneiform is believed to have most probably preceded Egyptian *hieroglyphics*, too (- the latter, archaeologists have found in the tombs of Pharaoh.) Cuneiform, as old as 3,000 BC, have come to us in the shape of imprinted clay-tablets. This system of recording transactions (-of sheep/goats, grains etc in the beginning); believed to have, evolved; after pottery was invented by Mankind, from *pictograms/ graphs* to abstracted *glyph*, then to *signs* as written on clay, *syllabograms*; marked by

wedge-shaped-indenting, done with stylus. The script morphed & adapted and was used in a considerably big area, first to keep track of transactions, then later used in religious, cultural & artistic practices.

Cuneiform script was used in ancient Mesopotamia for folklore writing (- *Epic of Gilgamesh*, of Uruk, translated in 1872 AD by George Smith from the Cuneiform); for recording laws (-like *The Code of Hammurabi*); for business documents; for listing medicine, and even for "writing mathematical equations". Hammurabi was the Babylonian king who destroyed the Mari kingdom on Euphrates around 1700 BC. This code is preserved on a Stele in Louvre Museum that was discovered in 1901 AD. This Code is believed to have been composed around 1750 BC, in Akkadian dialect. It dwells on different types of laws.

For the knowledgeable, these archaeological finds transferred some *tales* to the realm of history but largely changed the very position that the Bible (Old Testament) occupied, as many questions arose about the Great Deluge & Laws of Moses (a.s) and also many other aspects of scriptures but laity remained untouched. People read with great interest books written by great American, English, French and German scholars after a century of digging in the Middle East, in Mesopotamia, Palestine and Egypt. Schools

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of *Oriental Research* came up; and *archaeology departments* became the Centre of focus in many countries.

Ancient Iraq, which was home of Sumerians and Akkadians, spoke about its eloquent past, distinctively. The area between Euphrates, Tigris and Nile gained importance. The area from Caspian Sea to Persian Gulf, to Thebes & Nile to Cyprus & to Ararat Hills suddenly emerged as 'The Cradle of Humankind', as per many scholars. French archaeologists like Andre Parrot (1936-1954), C.F.A Schaeffer (1939-1949) and scores of others, and also, those writers who published their works, after studying scriptures afresh in light of these findings, like Werner Keller (German, 1956 AD), became famous world wide. [This author has read a few related books during 1980's, out of which only that of W.Keller (-along with my jottings) survived in readable state, after the devastating Srinagar Flood of 2014 AD].

A small note about the *Hittites*, mentioned above. As per Old Testament portions viz *Numbers*, *Joshua*, *Judges* and *Exodus*, Hittites were a "nation" that lived with other four nations including *Amorites* and *Canaanites* etc, somewhere in the expanse from the coast of Jordan, Euphrates, Lebanon to mountains, to the "land flowing with milk and honey"; whom (as per *Deuteronomy*), Prophet Moses (a.s) drove out, after living with these

'nations' for sometime. Note *Uriah* in the story of Prophet David (given in Bible) was a Hittite. Likewise other people mentioned above, in the context of Cuneiform tablets are not a figment of imagination. This much about Cuneiforms.

To state briefly Semitic/Proto-Canaanite, Phoenician, Greek, Roman/Latin scripts etc all contributed to the development of the alphabets, much before the English language was standardised in Britain around the 15th Century AD. Students of English literature know that Canterbury Tales of Geoffrey Chaucer (1387-1400 AD) present some samples of what is called *Middle English*. Here I end the main body of my write-up: *written words and the song of spades*.

Few more interesting pieces of information, as dessert:

The story of the Flood given in the Old Testament/Bible, as well as holy Quran, (-account related to Prophet Noah a.s); is fairly known. The Epic Of Gilgamesh, mentioned in preceding paras (-that are the heroic sagas; given in *Umanishum* portion, is the story of The Great Flood) is another account of The Great Deluge.

Sanskrit, we know, is the lingua franca of many Indian languages. *Brahmi* was its ancient script & *devanagari* of later time; possibly dating back to 1500 BC, as per some researchers. It claims to have the richest literature in the world. Among the holy books of Hinduism, there exists one called *Matsya-Purana*, wherein Lord Vishnu (- who is said to have manifested in ten major forms/*avatars*) in one form, (-that is half fish, half human), informs *Manu*, about the coming flood, instructs him to construct a huge ark, to lodge living creatures, including seeds of plants, and at the end guides him to a rocky peak; thereby saving them for starting afresh. (Surprised?) It is said that *Matsya-Purana*, that is in Sanskrit, has many versions, including one in Tamil. Are these all different accounts of one universal deluge or multiple localised ones? Only time will tell after chronological issues are settled scientifically.

Now one more interesting similarity. As per Hinduism the first man (equivalent to Adam of OT) is called *Manu* and first Female *Ananti*. (Remember, the Sanskrit word for humankind is *Maanav*.)

Now the Parting Shot, dear readers: As per Hindu scholars, Sanskrit scriptures say "three hundred sixty days make one solar year. *One solar year is equal to one Divine Day* (sounds familiar?) and one *Maha-yug* is equal to 12,000 Divine Years".

Adieu, till we meet again.

The author is a Srinagar based Penman, Columnist & Poet, who has been contributing non-political writeups to newspapers & literary journals, from over two decades

Criterion of Success

Dr Ashraf Amin

Man is born creative, ambitious, and progressive. He is dynamic and always aims at excelling. However at times he fails to grasp up with the true spirit of success and excellence. He is sometimes carried away by the opinions of others. His success is steered by the views of others. In short he is lost in mass consciousness. This stays true with our generation. Our youth have a great difficulty in defining success. They perceive money and prestige as the ultimate parameters of success. In fact the general psychology of society prompts them to see things through the lens of money, power and prestige. They would hardly think of contribution to social welfare as the primary goal of their career. As soon as they set out to achieve the goal of securing a lucrative job or making an enterprise of material fortunes, they would already surrender their creativity, wit and wisdom. Their efforts and aims are not self-driven but society driven. They have been made subservient to someone else's aspirations.

The contemporary mind-set that

pervades our society defines and measures success in terms of monetary-gains. We would be often seen lauding an IAS officer or Doctor for that matter, but we would be miserly in acknowledging the contribution of an innovator or scientist or a social activist. Our general psychology does not allow us to produce social scientists, thinkers, reformers and philosophers. Money and matter seem the pivotal elements in taking up our career. And when success is measured in terms of money and prestige belittling other career options, society as a whole loses real assets of scholars, thinkers, innovators and social workers.

God has favored every single being with a unique trait that makes him distinct from the rest of his fellow beings. That characteristic trait is manifested in the profession one takes up, when one listens to his heart and soul. The society flourishes only when there is a wholesome development in its all domains. The teachers, parents imposing career choices on their students and wards beyond their capacities or tastes is not only unethical but equally barbaric. They not only distort the personality of a student but also rob society off from his/her genuine



contribution. The harms induced by wrong choices in careers under the impression of general thinking are not only reflected in the split personality one attains as result but also in the form of suicides or drug addictions. A young man must ascertain that success is self-defined. Success is not measured through luxurious homes and large cars, huge office rooms and rocking chairs. Success is measured by the contribution one makes to the cause of humanity, to the cause of virtue and righteousness. The worst feeling that one gets even after getting a deluxe job is when he feels a misfit at his working place. He constantly curses his choice. He realizes that he was made for something else. Success is not pleasing the general psychology of the society. Success is reforming the thinking of society. Success is reminding the society what priorities to take up, what matters to solve first. Success is feeling good, proud at one's own place, in one's own profession. Success is satisfying one's own intellectual conscience.

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T20I Rankings: SKY No. 1 In Batting List, Rashid Back Among Top-10 Bowlers

Press Trust of India

DUBAI: Suryakumar Yadav maintained his numero uno position among batters despite being out of competitive cricket for the past three months while ace spinner Rashid Khan, back in Afghan jersey after an injury lay-off, is back among top-10 in bowlers' list in the latest ICC T20I rankings published on Wednesday.

Surya, who will make a comeback for Mumbai Indians in the upcoming IPL, is way ahead of the pack with 861 points under his belt. Phil Salt is a distant number two with 802 points. Surya hadn't played any cricket since December, having undergone sports hernia surgery.

Afghanistan spin wizard Rashid re-entered the elite list of the ICC men's T20I bowler rankings following his contribution in team's 2-1 series victory over Ireland.

The 25-year-old spinner re-



turned from injury in style, claiming eight wickets and his exploits saw him jump four places to ninth in the latest rankings.

The Afghanistan ace collected a series-high eight wickets over the three matches at an average of 5.62 in what was his first series since he injured his back

during last year's ICC Men's Cricket World Cup.

Rashid, who first held the No.1 ranking for T20I bowlers at the start of 2018 and has

consistently remained near the top, only slipped out of the top 10 recently and will be keen to maintain his position within the premier spots in the lead-up to the T20 World Cup in US and the Caribbean.

Rashid's Afghanistan teammate Naveen-ul-Haq (up two places to 55th) made some ground following his three wickets during the Ireland series, while Irish trio of Josh Little (up seven spots to 39th), Mark Adair (up two places to 56th) and Barry McCarthy (up 15 spots to 77th) also boosted their T20I bowler ranking that is still being led by England spinner Adil Rashid.

In T20I batting rankings, Bangladesh veteran Shakib Al Hasan maintained his place at the top of the rankings for T20I all-rounders, with Ireland's Gareth Delany (up four places to 18th) the biggest mover in this category following his 76 runs and a wicket against Afghanistan.

Short TAKES

Kashmir Skier Raja Khan Clinches 3rd Spot In International Event

Mehraj-ud-Din Khan, also known as Raja Khan, of Alpine Snowboard Team India has created history by winning the first international competition medal.

He secured a third place finish in the ongoing FIS VIA Stars Cup 2024, Giant Slalom, in Kopaonik, Serbia. "This is a great achievement for Ski & Snowboard India administered by IOA AdHoc Committee," the J&K Sports Council said in a statement.



De Villiers Expects Kohli To Be At His Usual Best In IPL 2024

South Africa great AB de Villiers has backed his former Royal Challengers Bengaluru teammate Virat Kohli to be at his usual best in the upcoming edition of the Indian Premier League, starting in Chennai on Friday.

"Stalwart, King Kohli, over 7000 runs, over 200 IPL matches -- but that's simply incredible. That's like a career in itself.

"Virat will be back. We've missed him dearly and absolutely cannot wait to watch the best of him this coming season," de Villiers said on his YouTube channel.

Mumbai Indians Replace Dilshan Madushanka With Kwena Maphaka

Mumbai Indians on Wednesday named uncapped South African medium-pacer Kwena Maphaka as injured Sri Lankan pacer Dilshan Madushanka's replacement for the upcoming IPL season.

The 23-year-old Lankan pacer suffered a hamstring injury in the just-concluded ODI series in Bangladesh, which the visitors lost 1-2.

The 17-year-old Maphaka came into the limelight after being adjudged the Player of the Tournament during the U19 World Cup at home this year, scalping 21 wickets at an average of 9.71.

IPL 2024: Gujarat Titans Announce Mohammed Shami Replacement

Gujarat Titans on Wednesday announced pacer Sandeep Warrier as a replacement for Mohammed Shami ahead of the Indian Premier League season starting from Friday.

The BCCI earlier in March confirmed that star India pacer Mohammed Shami will miss the upcoming IPL with GT. In an official statement, BCCI stated that Shami is currently monitored by the BCCI medical team after going through surgery on his Achilles tendon in February.

Bayern Make Final Offer To Davies Amid Real Madrid Interest

Bayern Munich sports director Max Eberl says the club has made its final offer to Canada left-back Alphonso Davies to extend his contract amid reported interest from Real Madrid.

"I can say we made Alphonso a very concrete, appreciative offer," Eberl told the Sport Bild magazine on Wednesday. "At some point in life, you have to say yes or no."

Davies' contract with Bayern expires at the end of next season.

India Eye 3 Points In FIFA WC Qualifier Against Afghanistan



Press Trust of India

ABHA: Bolstered by the return of Jeakson Singh and Anwar Ali, the Indian football team will renew its quest for a maiden entry into the third round of FIFA World Cup Qualifiers when it faces a weakened Afghanistan here on Thursday.

With mid-field general Jeakson and centre-back Anwar back in the line-up after long injury layoffs, because of which India suffered in recent past, the Blue Tigers will fancy their chances against the lower-ranked opponents in the second-round preliminary joint qualification match.

With three points and one win from two matches, India currently occupy the second place in the Group A pecking order.

Reigning Asian champions Qatar lead the standings with six points from two wins, while Kuwait are second with one win. Having lost both

their games so far, Afghanistan are placed last.

India's away win against Kuwait has put Igor Stimac's team in a strong position to progress further in the qualification cycle, something the 117-ranked side has never achieved.

Victories in their upcoming outings (away and home) against the 158-ranked Afghanistan will help India acquire nine points and with Qatar expected to win their next two matches against Kuwait, the Blue Tigers have a real chance of jumping to second place in the standings. India defeated Kuwait (1-0) in Kuwait City in their opening match of the qualifiers, before losing to Qatar (0-3) in Bhubaneswar.

Since their first-ever meeting way back in 1949, India and Afghanistan have met regularly and the regional rivalry has not run its course even after the latter left SAFF in 2016.

The face-off continued in the World Cup Qualifiers, Asian Cup Qualifiers and other continental and invitational tournaments, with India having their nose ahead on most occasions.

Nevertheless, the Afghans have always been a difficult opposition to overcome, fighting till the final whistle.

Nobody in this Indian squad can tell about Afghanistan better than the ever-green Sunil Chhetri, who is going strong at 39 and will be spearheading the visiting attack alongside Manvir Singh, who found the net in the team's win against Kuwait.

Chhetri's record against the neighbours is quite impressive, scoring four goals in eight matches including a spectacular strike from a free kick in Kolkata in 2022.

While Chhetri remains his biggest player, Stimac should be no less thrilled with the return of Jeakson and Anwar.

'MS Dhoni Understood Cricket Is Important But Not Everything To Him'

Press Trust of India

CHENNAI: Cricket remains integral but "not everything" for MS Dhoni, says his former India teammate Zaheer Khan of the man with a penchant for catching the world off-guard and an eagerness to explore various avenues.

At 42, the two-time World Cup winning captain Dhoni is gearing up to lead Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in the upcoming IPL. The charismatic former India skipper had quit international cricket four years back.

"Dhoni understood a long time ago that he is passionate about cricket and it is an integral part of his life. But it couldn't be everything," Zaheer said in an episode dedicated to him on JioCinema.

Besides his World Cup triumphs and India's march to the world number one position in Tests, Dhoni has led CSK to a joint-record five IPL titles, having taken on the top leadership role from the league's inaugural edition in 2008.

Zaheer said, "When you're playing, switching off (from the game) is very important. Cricket is not everything. Every cricketer has to face this eventually."

"When you step away from the game, you may not have a lot of options. We've seen many athletes struggle after retiring because they gave everything to the game, and when they left it, they didn't know what to do.

"In this sense, Dhoni understood a long time ago that he is passionate about cricket and it is an integral part of his life. But



it couldn't be everything. "He keeps doing things outside of the sport. For example, his interest in bikes. He's always researching them."

Speaking about Dhoni, ex-India and CSK all-rounder Suresh Raina said he wants his former teammate to continue playing in IPL for another five years.

"The biggest question is who'll be their next captain? Even if Dhoni stepped away as captain, he'll be in the dugout whether it's as a mental toughness coach or just for his presence. But the question is, who is he going to nurture?"

"This is a pivotal year for CSK. Who does MS have his eyes on? Ruturaj Gaikwad is a good option. This year is a very important year for CSK, more than for MS Dhoni.

"Because we'll see who he is going to select as his deputy and probably say, 'You handle this now, I've been looking after the team since 2008. You take care of the yellow, I will wear the jersey and sit in the dressing room,'" Raina said.

Russia Rages Against Olympic Chiefs, Accuses Them Of 'Neo-Nazism'

Agencies

MOSCOW: Russia launched a furious tirade at the International Olympic Committee on Wednesday, arguing the IOC's restrictions on Russian athletes and its criticism of the Moscow-organised Friendship Games amounted to "neo-Nazism".

The IOC on Tuesday both barred Russian athletes from taking part in the opening ceremony of the 2024 Paris Olympics on July 26 and criticised the Kremlin for planning to hold its own "Friendship Games" to rival those held in the French capital.

"These decisions demonstrate how far the IOC has moved away from its stated principles and slipped into racism and neo-Nazism," Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in a briefing.

The IOC suspended Russia from the 2024 Games last year, but gave the green light for its athletes to compete as neutrals as long as they did not actively support the Kremlin's assault on Ukraine.

This neutral status forces Russian athletes to "renounce any



association with their homeland, with their citizenship, with their history, culture and people," Zakharova argued.

"The IOC's decisions are wrongful, unjust and unacceptable," she said.

"We are outraged by the unprecedented discriminatory conditions imposed by the International Olympic Committee on Russian athletes."

Russia's fury comes a day after the IOC issued a strongly-worded

statement accusing the Kremlin of "politicising sport" by planning to hold its own Friendship Games.

Announced several months ago, the first edition of the Summer Friendship Games is "planned to be held in Moscow and Yekaterinburg" next September, the IOC said, with the first winter edition to take place in 2026 in Sochi, the venue for the highly controversial 2014 Winter Olympics.

The IOC called on the sporting world and governments invited by Moscow "to reject any participation in and support of" the event, but stopped short of sanctioning those who take part.

The Kremlin warned the IOC against such sanctions on Wednesday.

"This is intimidation of the athletes. It completely undermines the credibility of the IOC," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Tensions between Moscow and the Olympic body had already been running high for years over a long-running doping scandal which saw Russians barred from competing under their own flag in the 2020 Tokyo Games.

Rape Victim's Lawyer Furious As Court Bails Dani Alves For 1M Euros

Agencies

BARCELONA: Former Brazil international footballer Dani Alves is to be released from jail pending an appeal against his rape conviction in exchange for posting bail of one million euros (\$1.08 million), a Barcelona court said Wednesday.

The ruling came a day after his lawyer requested the 40-year-old's release on grounds he had already served a quarter of his four-and-a-half-year sentence in pre-trial detention following his arrest in January 2023.

In its ruling, the court granted him "provisional release" in exchange for "the bail payment of 1,000,000 euros" also requiring he hand over his Spanish and Brazilian passports, remain in Spain and present himself to court "on a weekly basis".

Public prosecutors had opposed his request, arguing he posed a high-flight risk.



One of the world's most decorated footballers who played for Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain, Alves was sentenced on February 22 after being convicted of raping a young woman at a Barcelona nightclub in December 2022.

His lawyers swiftly appealed the conviction.

The victim, who testified behind a screen to protect her identity, said Alves had violently forced her to have sex in a private bathroom

of the nightclub despite begging him to release her, causing her "anguish and terror", prosecutors said.

Alves' lawyers had argued the victim had been "glued" to the player while dancing at the nightclub, saying there was "sexual tension" between them.

But in its 61-page decision, the court said that did not mean "that she consented to anything that might have subsequently happened".