

J&K's Risky Routes: Nearly 2,000 Lives Lost On 3 Roads In 5 Years

In Jammu and Kashmir, three vital roads have claimed nearly 2,000 lives in the past five years. The Srinagar-Jammu National Highway and the roads leading in Chenab Valley and Pir Panjal ranges have claimed at least 1986 lives in road accidents from 2019 to 2023. According to the official figures, in Chenab Valley at least 113 persons lost

their lives in accidents in 2019. In 2020, the road accidents in the region claimed 64 lives followed by 91 deaths in 2021, at least 81 in 2022 and 114 persons lost their lives in 2023. The official figures reveal that on the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway, at least 211 persons were killed in 2019 in road accidents followed by 178 in 2020, at least 271 in 2021, over 261 in 2022

and 234 in 2023. Likewise, from the Pir Panjal range, at least 109 persons were killed in road accidents in the year 2019, at least 56 died in 2020, 65 were killed in 2021, 74 in 2022 and 64 in 2023. On the roads of Chenab Valley, National Highway and Pir Panjal, a total number of 433 persons were killed in road accidents in 2019. | [More on P6](#)

Road Accident Fatalities

| CHENAB VALLEY | NATIONAL HIGHWAY | PIR PANJAL RANGE |
|---------------|------------------|------------------|
| • 2019: 113 | • 2019: 211 | • 2019: 109 |
| • 2020: 64 | • 2020: 178 | • 2020: 56 |
| • 2021: 91 | • 2021: 271 | • 2021: 65 |
| • 2022: 81 | • 2022: 261 | • 2022: 74 |
| • 2023: 114 | • 2023: 234 | • 2023: 64 |

'Order Of The Druk Gyalpo' PM Bestowed Bhutan's Highest Civilian Award

Press Trust Of India
Thimphu: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday received Bhutan's highest civilian award, the 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo,' the first foreign Head of the Government to receive the honour. The award has been conferred to Prime Minister Modi in recognition of "his outstanding contribution to | [More on P6](#)

Court Sends Delhi CM To ED Custody Till March 28

ED Alleges Kejriwal Is 'Key Conspirator' In Excise Policy Scam

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: A court here on Friday sent Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to the Enforcement Directorate's custody till March 28, a day after his arrest in the excise policy-linked money laundering case.

Special Judge Kaveri Baweja at the Rouse Avenue court said Kejriwal will be produced before the court on March 28 at 2 pm.

The court passed the order on the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) application



seeking a 10-day custody in the case.

During the hearing for remand, the ED said that Kejriwal -- the AAP's national convener -- was a "key conspirator" in the excise policy scam case along with

other ministers and party leaders.

Kejriwal was produced in the trial court shortly after he withdrew from the Supreme Court his plea against his arrest by the agency. | [More on P6](#)

'BJP Can Impose President's Rule In Delhi'

National Conference Vice President Omar Abdullah and PDP Chief Mehbooba Mufti have spoken out vehemently against the recent arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, expressing concerns over what they perceive as growing "authoritarianism" within the ruling government. Omar further raised concerns about the possibility of the BJP exploiting Kejriwal's situation to impose | [More on P6](#)

BJP & Congress Face Off In Udhampur-Doda LS Seat

Two Rajputs Vie For 3rd Term As MP

Agencies

Jammu: Since the Congress party has been able to get a best possible candidate by roping in Choudhary Lal Singh against BJP's Dr. Jitendra Singh, a fierce battle is expected between these two Rajputs from Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha constituency.

With Lal Singh's entry, it will not be a cake walk for Jitendra Singh from this seat which he enjoyed during 2019 general elections.

Dr. Jitendra Singh is a two-time and incumbent MP from this seat and was a giant killer in 2014 elections when he had defeated Congress stalwart Ghulam Nabi Azad with a



margin of around 60000 votes. With this achievement, he was able to get a place in the council of ministers of the Narendra Modi government in the first term and continued to enjoy the same treatment after winning the seat during 2019 elections.

Originally hailing from Malohri area of district Doda, Jitendra Singh's political journey took a jump after the 2008

Amarnath land row when he emerged as a strong face of the agitation and played the most important role of making people aware about the purpose of agitation. Being a strong communicator, Jitendra Singh never looked back and enjoyed great support from party leaders, both at the centre and in the state.

Currently, he is relying on the work done by the Modi

government in his constituency and is hoping that people will keep faith in him and the leadership of Prime Minister Modi.

On the other hand, Choudhary Lal Singh, a former Congressman who had left the party in 2014 after Ghulam Nabi Azad was preferred over him to contest the Lok Sabha elections, had joined BJP in August 2014 and had contested the Assembly elections in the same year. He is a two-time MP from Udhampur-Doda seat, which he won in 2004, by defeating BJP stalwart Chaman Lal Gupta, and in 2009. He has served as minister for health and minister for forests in Jammu and Kashmir in the past and people loved his style of work.

After distancing himself from BJP when he went against the party in demanding CBI inquiry | [More on P6](#)

QR Codes Mandated For Hospitals In J&K

Agencies

Srinagar: In an innovative move aimed at enhancing efficiency and transparency in healthcare services, Secretary of Health and Medical Education Jammu and Kashmir Dr. Syed Abid Rasheed Shah, has issued orders for the implementation of QR code systems at payment counters in hospitals across the region.

The initiative, spearheaded by the Secretary, aims to streamline the payment process for patients and their families while

also combating corruption and ensuring accountability in the healthcare sector.

All healthcare institutions under the jurisdiction of the Health and Medical Education Department have been directed to ensure the availability of QR code payment facilities.

The directive, issued by the Health and Medical Education Department, mandates that all Head of Departments (HODs)/ Institutions ensure the following directions within 10 days.

The directions | [More on P6](#)

Weather Improves After 36-hour Wet Spell

Rain, Snow Likely From March 26: MeT



Agencies

Srinagar: The weather conditions improved on Friday in parts of Jammu and Kashmir after recording light to moderate rains and snow for 36 hours since Thursday morning.

The 36-hour wet spell under the influence of Western Disturbance ended on Friday. However under its influence, several higher reaches of north Kashmir recorded fresh snowfall while rains lashed plains of Kashmir during the period.

According to weathermen, the weather is expected to remain dry during the next few days.

Upto March 26 from tomorrow, there is a

possibility of generally dry weather conditions with brief cloudiness as well, Director Meteorological department, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad said.

On March 27, he said that the weather would remain partly to generally cloudy with light rain and snow at few places, adding that from March 28 to 31, partly to generally cloudy weather is expected with intermittent light rain and snow at many places.

The MeT department has also issued an advisory, advising the farmers to resume farm operations after March 23.

A meteorological department official said that Srinagar received 9.7mm of rain in the last | [More on P6](#)

Flight Fares Soar Amid Election Season In J&K, Passengers Fume

Agencies

Srinagar: Air travelers traveling to Jammu and Kashmir are facing the harsh reality of soaring flight fares. With increased demand amidst the election environment and the approaching festival of Holi, airline companies have substantially raised their ticket prices, leaving passengers grappling with exorbitant costs.

The impact of this fare surge is particularly felt in routes connecting major cities like Jammu to Srinagar and Delhi. Previously affordable fares have now doubled, with travelers shelling out up to Rs 6,000 for a journey from Jammu to

Srinagar, and up to Rs 8,000 for flights to Delhi.

Despite the outcry over escalating fares, authorities have yet to take concrete measures to curb this trend, leaving passengers at the mercy of price hikes. At Jammu airport, which operates 32 flights daily to five different cities, the majority of flights cater to popular routes such as Srinagar and Delhi.

During the period from March 22 to April 10, the average fare for flights from Jammu to Delhi ranges from Rs 5,800 to Rs 7,500. However, with the onset of Holi, these prices skyrocket to between Rs 7,000 and Rs 10,000, placing additional strain on | [More on P6](#)



2ND FRIDAY OF RAMAZAN: Kashmiri Muslims offer prayers outside a mosque at Bund, Srinagar. KO Photo Abbid bhat

Hazratbal Shrine Development Project Aims For World-Class Status

What's The Rs 40 Crore Project All About?

Majid Nabi

Srinagar: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his maiden visit to Srinagar on March 7 after the abrogation of Article 370, inaugurated the 'Integrated Development of Hazratbal Shrine' project. With an anticipated cost of Rs 40 crore, the initiative is aimed to draw pilgrims from around the globe.

An inclusive development of Dargah Hazratbal shrine including the construction of the first



of its kind Tourist Facilitation and Sufi Interpretation centers is one of the 46 projects sanctioned under Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual

Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) scheme. Launched by the Union Ministry of Tourism in 2014, PRASHAD is a central sector scheme aimed at

- Tourist Facilitation Centre
- Sufi Interpretation Centers
- State-of-the-art parking structure
- Walking paths
- Public convenience block
- Improved lighting
- Installation of fountains
- Repair of damaged tiles
- Tensile structure for prayers
- Boundary wall
- Enhancement of Ghat, Devri paths
- Redesigning the market surrounding the shrine
- Installation of signposts

enhancing pilgrimage tourism in India.

This integrated project includes better facilities for visitors, like new parking areas,

walking paths, restrooms, improved lighting, and a tourist information center.

The all-inclusive development, according to one of the shrine board members, besides creating additional job possibilities, would make the Hazratbal shrine a well-liked tourism and pilgrimage site.

"Flocked by worshippers from across the length and breadth of the valley, the much revered Muslim shrine, Dargah Hazratbal under the integrated Development Project would become world's most popular tourist and pilgrimage destination soon," he said.

Dr. Darakhshan Andrabi, the chairperson of the Jammu and Kashmir Waqf | [More on P6](#)

HC Quashes 4 PSA Detention Orders

M Ahmad

Srinagar: The High Court of J&K and Ladakh has quashed detention orders under Public Safety Act against four detainees and ordered their immediate release from preventive detention if not needed in any other case.

A bench of Justice Vinod Chatterji Koul quashed detention order (no.24-DMK/PSA of 2022 dated 27.06.2022), passed by District Magistrate Kupwara against Rashid Habib Zargar of Tikker Kupwara, detention

order (No.20/ DMS/PSA/2022 dated 08.04.2022), passed by District Magistrate, Kulgam against Amir Ahmad Rather of Ashmuji Kulgam, detention orders (No. DMS/ PSA/17/2023 dated 08.03.2023 and No.DMS/ P S A / 8 3 / 2 0 2 2 dated 30.08.2022 respectively), passed by District Magistrate Srinagar against Danish Bashir Dar of Shah Colony, Parimpora Srinagar, and Suhail Shabir Ganie alias Imran of Chattergam, Nowgam. In all these petitions, the court directed authorities | [More on P6](#)



Elon Musk's Neuralink Shows First Brain-Chip Patient Uses Mind Control To Play Online Chess

Agencies

Elon Musk's brain-chip startup Neuralink livestreamed its first patient implanted with a chip using his mind to play online chess.

Noland Arbaugh, the 29-year-old patient who was paralysed below the shoulder after a diving accident, played chess on his laptop and moved the cursor using the Neuralink device. The implant seeks to enable people to control a computer cursor or keyboard using only their thoughts.

Arbaugh had received an implant from the company in January and could control a computer mouse using his thoughts, Musk said last month.

"The surgery was super easy," Arbaugh said in the video streamed on Musk's social media platform X, referring to the implant procedure. "I literally was released from the hospital a day later. I have no cognitive impairments."

"I had basically given up playing that game," Arbaugh said, referring to the game Civilization VI, "you all (Neuralink) gave me



the ability to do that again and played for 8 hours straight." Elaborating on his experience with the new technology, Arbaugh said that it is "not perfect" and they "have run into some issues." "I don't want people to think that this

is the end of the journey, there's still a lot of work to be done, but it has already changed my life," he added.

Kip Ludwig, former program director for neural engineering at the U.S. National Institutes of Health, said what Neuralink showed was not a "breakthrough."

"It is still in the very early days post-implantation, and there is a lot of learning on both the Neuralink side and the subject's side to maximize the amount of information for control that can be achieved," he added.

Even so, Ludwig said it was a positive development for the patient that they have been able to interface with a computer in a way they were not able to before the implant. "It's certainly a good starting point," he said.

Last month, Reuters reported that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration inspectors found problems with record keeping and quality controls for animal experiments at Elon Musk's Neuralink, less than a month after the startup said it was cleared to test its brain implants in humans. Neuralink did not respond then to questions about the FDA's inspection.

Before The Hon'ble Court Of Principal District & Sessions Judge Pulwama
BEFORE THE HON'BLE COURT OF MUNSIF AT PAMPORE

Abdul Rashid Bhat
 S/o: Ghulam Qadir Bhat R/o: Kadlbal Pampore (Caveator/Applicant)

V/S Public At Large (Non-applicants/ Non-Caveators)

In the matter of:
 Caveat application in terms of section 148-A of C.P.C on behalf of the Caveator. May it please your Honour.
 The application is most humbly submitted as under:-
 1. That the Caveator is the Permanent resident of UT of J&K.
 2. That That applicant no. 1 is the owner & possessor of land falling under Survey no. 1356 situated at Kadlbal Pampore and the caveator has already constructed shopping line on the said land after receiving proper permission from the concerned department.
 3. That the applicant/Caveator is raising/constructing second story of the said shopping line against the proper permission from the concerned department
 4. That caveators/applicants are under apprehension that the Non-applicants/ Non-Caveators may institute a civil suit on some false and frivolous grounds against the caveators/applicants thereby trying to make unnecessary interference with the same and might succeed in getting an expiry order on the back of the applicant against them and in their favour.
 5. That before passing any kind of order/relief in favour of the non-applicants in any suit or application, the caveators be given a reasonable opportunity of being heard, otherwise the caveators shall have to face great irreparable loss, injury and inconvenience.
 6. That a duly sworn affidavit is annexed herewith this application Prayer:- In the premises it is therefore prayed that this honhle Court may be pleased to provide an opportunity to the caveators of being heard before passing/granting any kind of relief/order in favour of the nonapplicants with regard to the subject matter above mentioned which will be filed against the above mentioned cause and with the on going construction in the interests of justice and law.
 fko
 Caveators through counsel

Longer Genes Are Associated With Ageing

ANI

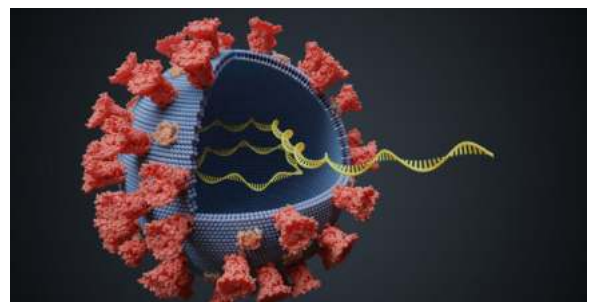
What causes our bodies to age?

Four complementary research, including one from Northwestern Medicine, reached the same conclusion, long genes.

In a recent study, the scientists describe their results and how they contribute to existing information about ageing.

"Long genes that become

in ageing," Stoeber said. "In addition to ageing, we show that the same finding occurs in patients with Alzheimer's disease, an age-associated disease. Our findings help us rethink the causes of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease. Because genes with neural function are unusually long, we hypothesize that the decreased activity of long gene cells fails to produce suffi-



less active with age may be the central cause of ageing in our bodies," said co-corresponding author Thomas Stoeber, assistant professor of medicine in pulmonary and critical care at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and a member of the Potocznak Longevity Institute.

"Our finding advances the field by identifying a single phenomenon that connects most existing knowledge about ageing and makes this underlying phenomenon measurable."

The paper, which highlighted the shared findings of four international research groups, was published in Trends in Genetics on March 21. The groups are the first to conclude that most aspects of biological ageing relate to gene length.

Conditions known to accelerate ageing decrease the activity of long genes. This includes oxidative stress and UV irradiation. Conditions known to slow aging increase the activity of long genes such as caloric restriction. Also, genes that are very short or very long encode for cellular processes known to change in aging such as the formation of cellular energy, protein synthesis and transmission of neural signals.

"The regulation of genes is one of the most central processes of life, and our four studies explain why the activity of long genes in particular change

cient biomaterials to properly maintain neural function." The trigger of ageing is a physical phenomenon related to the length of the genes and not to the specific genes involved or the function of those genes, the scientists report. The original findings were based on a mixture of molecular data from humans, mice, rats, killifish, C. elegans, D. melanogaster and experiments in mice. Previously scientific research sought to identify specific genes responsible for aging. This new view differs from prevailing biological approaches that study the effects of single genes.

Long genes simply have more potential sites that could be damaged. The scientists compare it to a road trip—the longer the trip, the more likely that something will go wrong. And because the physiological roles of some cell types rely upon genes that are longer than those of other cell types, some cell types are more likely to be affected by DNA damage that accumulates as they age. During ageing, genes take damage as the strands of DNA that contain the genes break. This stops cells from reading the information and activating the information contained in the gene. The longer the gene, the more likely it is that at least one DNA damage site exists and stops the gene's activation.

AI Can Identify Clinically Anxious Youth Based On Brain Structure: Study

Press Trust Of India

Artificial intelligence (AI) can help recognise individuals with anxiety disorders based on their unique brain structure, according to a study.

The research, published in the journal Nature Mental Health, involved about 3,500 youth between 10 and 25 years old from across the globe.

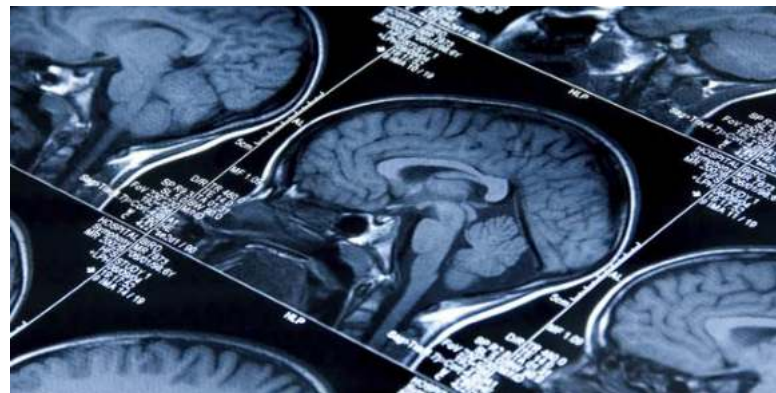
The researchers used machine learning (ML) - a type of AI that help machines learn and improve from data analysis without explicit programming - looked at cortical thickness and surface area, along with volumes of deep-lying brain regions.

To improve the results, the algorithms must be further refined and other types of brain data, such as brain function and connections, must be added, they said.

These initial results tend to hold - are generalisable - in such a diverse group of youngsters in terms of ethnicity, geographical location and clinical characteristics, the researchers said.

This renders the study outcomes rather fascinating, they said. According to lead researcher Moji Aghajani, Assistant Professor at Leiden University in Netherlands, the study could eventually facilitate a more personalised approach to prevention, diagnostics and care.

Anxiety disorders typically first emerge during adolescence and early adulthood. These disorders cause ma-



This incomplete understanding of underlying brain bases is largely due to our simplistic approach to mental disorders among youths, in which clinical studies are often too small in size, with way too much focus on the 'average patient' rather than the individual

ajor emotional, social and economic problems for millions of youngsters worldwide.

However, it is unclear which brain processes are involved in these anxiety disorders, the researchers said.

"This incomplete understanding of underlying brain bases is largely due to our simplistic approach to mental disorders among youths, in which clinical studies are often too small in size, with way too much focus on the

'average patient' rather than the individual," said Aghajani.

"This, moreover, concurs with use of traditional analytical techniques, which are unable to produce individual-level outcomes," the researcher added.

However, the field is slowly changing, with more focus on individuals and their unique brain characteristics, through the use of large and diverse datasets - also known as "big data" - combined with AI.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir
Office Of The Executive Engineer Mechanical And Hospitals Division Srinagar
 (Tele-fax No: 019-2496089, e-mail id: xenmhchdk@yahoo.in)

Subject: - Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Automatic Fire ball (drum type) Extinguishers for Auditorium Hall of Govt. Dental College/ Hospital, Srinagar
 Ref This office NIT No: M&HD/TS /2023-24/195/e-tendering Dated 15.03.2024.

CANCELLATION

In view of minimum number of bidders not received for Technical Evaluation and Due to announcement of Lok Sabha Elections-2024, by the Hon'ble Election Commission of India and subsequent enforcement of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) in the entire country, the above referred e-NIT is hereby cancelled.

Sd/-
 Executive Engineer,
 Mechanical & Hospitals Division,
 Srinagar

No: M&HDS/TS/11105-108 **DIPK-18187/23 Dated: 22.03.2024**

GOVERNMENT OF (U.T) JAMMU & KASHMIR
Office Of The Executive Engineer Jal Shakti (PHE) Deptt. Ground Water Division Srinagar Baghi-Ali-Mardan, Nowshara Srinagar.

CANCELLATION NOTICE

Sub: Construction of 03 No's Bore Wells/Hand Pump at Ogabal Action Plan under Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarh Gram Yojana District Kupwara.

Ref: This office e-NIT. No: 42 of 2023-24 issued vide this office endorsement No: JS-PHE/GWDS/Corrs./ 9978-90, dated: 20-11-2023, Bearing ID No. 2023_PHE_237525_1.

Refer to the subject & reference cited above, in this matter due to the administrative reason the above mentioned work is hereby cancelled.

Sd/= Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti (PHE) Deptt. Ground Water Div. Srinagar.

DIPK-18182/23 dated: 22-03-2024

NORTHERN RAILWAY
WALK-IN-INTERVIEW
FOR MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS ON CONTRACT BASIS
 Walk-in-Interview for the engagement of 06 Medical Practitioners on contract basis over Firozpur Division will be held on **04.04.2024** at Railway Officers Rest House, Pathankot Station, on **05.04.2024** at VIP Room/SS room, Railway Station, Amritsar and on **08.04.2024** at the committee hall, DRM Office, Firozpur. Candidates can download detailed Notification and Walk-in-interview form from the website <https://nr.indianrailways.gov.in/> News & recruitment info-Recruitment info>. For any query contact on 9779232631, 9540096053 or can email on srdpofzr@gmail.com.
 For Divisional Railway Manager (P) Northern Railway/Firozpur
 910/2024
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR
Office Of The Registrar Births & Deaths Block Wagoora
 Subject:- Registration of Births / Deaths
 Public Notice
 This office is in receipt of representation HAFSA ALTAF CHAROO W/o SUHAIL BASHIR R/O KREERI Tehsil KREERI District Baramulla for issuance of Birth Certificate in favour of MY DAUGHTER namely HANEefa TRUMBOO D/O SUHAIL BASHIR R/O KREERI D.O.B as per documents is 10/05/2014 bearing registration no 577/15-A/PSK /16 & date of issue 09/11/2016 & date of registration 08/12/2016 event shown to be occurred at home In this connection if anyone have any objection in the registration of birth certificate shall present his/her claim to this office or Tehsildar Kreeri/Wagoora /BDO office Wagoora within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained
 REGISTRATION BIRTH & DEATH (BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICE WAGOORA)
 fko

Classic Public High School Ahmadpora Zone Singhpora Pattan
 Fee structure for session 2023-24
 Ref no: CPHS/AP/163 Dated: 22-02-2024

| S.no | Class | Monthly Tuition Fee |
|------|---------|---------------------|
| 01 | P. Nry | 650 |
| 02 | Nursery | 650 |
| 03 | L.K.G | 650 |
| 04 | U.K.G | 650 |
| 05 | 1st | 700 |
| 6 | 2nd | 700 |
| 07 | 3rd | 750 |
| 08 | 4th | 750 |
| 09 | 5th | 750 |
| 10 | 6th | 800 |
| 11 | 7th | 800 |
| 12 | 8th | 800 |
| 13 | 9th | 1300 |
| 14 | 10th | 1300 |

bmg Sd/- Principal

PUBLIC NOTICE
 I have lost the number plate of my vehicle bearing regd no: JK05F 6559 missing while travelling from Kunzer to Nowgam Srinagar. Now I have applied for the duplicate of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the concerned office within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.
Aamir Bashir
 R/o: Gokhama kunzer fko

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR
Office Of The Registrar Births & Deaths Block Wagoora
 Subject:- change of fathers & mothers name on birth certificate
 Public Notice
 This office is in receipt of representation from HANIYAH TRUMBOO D/O SUHAIL BASHIR R/O, KREERI Tehsil KREERI with DOB 05/04/2019 District Baramulla her fathers name on Birth Certificate wrongly written as SUHAIL AHMAD TRUMBOO and mothers name as HAFSA ALTAF while his correct fathers name is SUHAIL BASHIR & Mothers name HAFSA ALTAF CHAROO which needs to be corrected. In this connection if anyone have any objection in the registration of birth certificate shall present his/her claim to this office or Tehsildar Kreeri/Wagoora / BDO office Wagoora within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained
 Registration Birth & Death (Block Development Office Wagoora)
 fko

اطلاع عام
 منظرہ نے اپنا نام دینے طاہرہ حسن میرا بیہوشی رینڈ ساکنے ہاؤس نمبر 378 مقدمہ حسی پورہ ہڈ گام سے طاہرہ حسن ساکنے حسی پورہ تحصیل چاڈورہ ضلع ہڈ گام تبدیل کیا ہے۔ اس ضمن میں اگر کسی شخص کو کوئی عدلیا اعتراض ہو تو وہ سات دن کے اندر آڈر پاپیورٹ آفس سرری گریٹس پیش کرے۔ بعد از معیاد کسی بھی شخص یا فرد کو کوئی بھی اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔
 منجانب طاہرہ حسن حسی پورہ تحصیل چاڈورہ ضلع ہڈ گام

Lok Sabha Polls-2024 First EVM Randomization Conducted In Srinagar

Observer News Service

Srinagar: In connection with forthcoming Lok Sabha Elections 2024, the first randomization of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) scheduled by the Election Commission of India (ECI) for all the eight Assembly Constituencies of Srinagar District was conducted here on Friday at Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex.

The randomization process was held under the supervision of District Election Officer (DEO), Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat in presence of the various representatives of Registered Recognized Political Parties, Assistant Returning Officers (AROs), Deputy DEO and other Officers of District Election Authority.

During the process randomization of Ballot Units, Control Units and VVPATs for 08 Assembly Constituencies of Srinagar District was carried out. Each AC was allocated with the required number of EVMs along with 40% Extra (as reserve) for use during the upcoming Polls.

The District has a total of 929 Polling Stations and the Assembly segment wise allocation of EVMs for conduct of Lok Sabha Elections includes 163 EVMs for 19-Hazratbal, 176 for 20-Khanyar, 179 for 21-Habbakadal, 191 for 22-LalChowk.

Similarly, 127 EVMs for 23-Chanapora, 200 for 24-Zadibal, 104 for 25-Edgah and 158 EVMs for 26-Central Shalteng Assembly segments.

All the process was video recorded as per the laid guidelines of the Election Commission of India.

Prior to the randomization process, the DEO Srinagar briefed the representatives of the Political parties about the First Randomization process ensuring their confidence in the uprightness of the process and encouraging that all requisite measures have been enacted to uphold the sanctity of the polls in free, fair and transparent manner as per the guidelines of Election Commission of India.

The DEO said that the EVM randomization facilitated by dedicated software is to ensure transparent, free and fair elections devoid of human interference.

He further elaborated that following the randomization; EVMs will be securely transferred to designated Strong Rooms of the respective constituencies under rigorous security and surveillance.

The representatives of political parties including CPIM, Bhartiya Janata party; Indian National Congress, Peoples Democratic Party and J&K National Conference attended the first phase of the randomization process.



PIC: Abid Bhat/KO

Srinagar's Amar Singh College Faces Backlash For Axing 234 Poplars

Majid Nabi

Srinagar: The iconic 'Poplar Avenue' in the 111-years-old Amar Singh College in Srinagar is no more as 234 standing poplar trees were chopped down by the college administration, sparking outrage among the netizens and students alike.

Infringed by the vandalizing green tunnel of poplar trees at Amar Singh College days before the World Arbor Day, many students threatened to move to the court against what was termed as an irresponsible act. However, the college administration deafened the move, saying the trees had grown old, posing threat to life and property.

On social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, images of fallen poplar trees incited indignation among users, especially students, who largely blamed the college administration for seriously damaging the poplar avenue.

Termining the axing of hundreds of poplar trees within the college campus as unfortunate and arbitrary, experts said the ancient stone-and-brick building, designed in the Indo-British architectural style, was given a unique character by these poplar trees.

Approximately 182 poplar trees, which have reached to their maximum height, they claimed, were planted to create an avenue at the principal front of the building, facing onto a street.

State Convener of the INTACH Kashmir Chapter Mohammad Saleem Beigh expressed his disappointment over the images and videos of the fallen poplar trees surfaced on social media sites.

"I was shocked to see the very healthy trees chopped down. Poplar trees are a part of the cultural fabric that encompasses the entire area including the college building. In what sense, therefore, is it legitimate to do away with a single component? questioned Beigh.

Principal Amar Singh College Professor Sheikh Aijaz Bashir defended the move, saying the trees that were hacked down had grown old, posing a serious threat to life.

"As soon as I joined the institution, I was informed about this matter. The For-

cidents were reported at the college from time to time.

"Since 4000 students enter the institution through the main entrance, they were also dealing with this problem, which was somewhat concerning. The Social Forestry Department evaluated the trees, and the State Forest Corporation then placed them up for auction through a proper tendering," he added.

However, many active students and alumni's taking to the social media platforms criticized the college administration, terming the move as arbitrary.



File Photo

est Development Corporation was awarded the contract to chop poplar trees. Since there had been several reports of poplar tree falls at the campus, I immediately contacted the Social Forestry Department about the problem," Prof. Aijaz told Kashmir Observer.

One of the trees, he said, had fallen on a house adjacent to the nursing home that snowballed into a major issue later while similar in-

"The so-called 'development administration' has cold-heartedly butchered the aesthetics of Amar Singh College, my beloved alma mater, by mercilessly axing the picturesque poplar tree tunnel. My heart sinks seeing images of what was once a serene haven, where I cherished my college days, now ruthlessly stripped of its greenery. The shameless destruction of our beautiful landscapes is unforgivable," Junaid Dar, a former student who works as a journalist, wrote on X.

Nazir Ganaie, another alumni wrote "In a bizarre move, authorities have chopped down a beautiful green tunnel of poplars, symbolic to our Alma mater, #AmarSinghCollege#, Srinagar. A part of our heritage is gone. An emotion lost. History erased. People behind this manmade disaster should hang their heads in shame"

Meanwhile the alumni of Amar Singh College, in a statement expressed deep sense of concern regarding the chopping of poplar trees. "As cherished part of our cultural heritage, these trees represent not only the natural beauty of this historic college but the collective history of thousands of students who have walked in through its gates," the statement reads.

The alumni demand high level inquiry be initiated to ascertain whether adequate thought was given to the course of actions and what alternatives were considered.

Chopping Done In Compliance With Law: A.S College

Srinagar: The Amar Singh College Authorities today clarified that a recent tree auction was conducted by the Forest Development Corporation within the College premises and consequent upon that cutting of Willow/Robina and Poplar trees was done under due process of law.

The clarification was issued after the College Authorities faced severe criticism on the issue with several people expressing their concern regarding the falling of Green Avenue of college on social media. Due to this, the college administration came across a lot of lapses and misinformation circulating on the social media regarding the issue.

Divulging the details, it was revealed that during 2014 floods in Kashmir the institution remained immersed in water for a long duration of time. The deluge not only damaged the infrastructure but also severely damaged the trees. The trees started uprooting in minor windstorms and causing damage to the surrounding structures and began to pose grave safety concerns for the students, visitors and staff.

Several grievances regarding safety and health concerns were received by the college administration during this period and are well documented in the college records. These complaints underscored the urgent need for the administration to address the safety challenges posed by the poplar trees.

The matter was taken up with Social Forestry Department in 2018-19 by then college authorities and the trees were numbered by the concerned department and put to auction by the J&K State Forest Corporation vide an Open Auction Notice No. 499-510/CGM/N/SFC/S, Dated: 29/05/2019.

DEO Srinagar Discusses ECI Guidelines With Political Parties

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The District Election Officer (DEO) Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat today during a meeting discussed various guidelines set by the Election Commission of India for smooth and transparent conduct of the electoral process for forthcoming Lok Sabha elections.

At the outset, the DEO Srinagar briefed the participants about the enforcement of the Model Code of conduct, Media Certification and Monitoring Committee (MCMC) and Expenditure Monitoring mechanism.

He underscored the importance of various activities to be taken by Political parties during the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections-2024 as per the directions of the Election Com-

mission of India (ECI).

The DEO urged the Political parties to cooperate with the District Administration to ensure free, fair and peaceful elections in Srinagar District.

He emphasized the need for strict adherence to different ECI guidelines including Model Code of Conduct, Media Certification and Monitoring Committee (MCMC) and Expenditure Monitoring mechanism by the contesting political parties to uphold democratic values during the election process.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner Sales Taxes Department, Ilyas Ahmad, who is designated Nodal Officer for Model Code of Conduct (MCC), informed the participants about the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) which has been put into place.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

Directorate of School Education, Kashmir

Subject:- Approval of Management Committee In favour of (Classic Public High School Goom Ahmadpora District Baramula ;
Order No: 0000IDSEK 2022 Dated: 11-Mar-2022

Managing Committee comprising of the following is hereby approved for conducting the affairs of Classic Public High School Goom Ahmadpora District Baramula in accordance with the rules and procedures laid down from the government by time to time.

| S.No | Member Name | Parentage | Residence | Occupation | designation/member | Qualification |
|------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1 | Asif Ali Mir | Mohd Ibrahim mir | Watamagam | Private Em | Principal/Prin-cipl | M.Sc |
| 2 | Bashir Ahmad Malik | Gh Hussain Malik | Goom Ahmadpora | Business | Chairman/Other | 12th |
| 3 | Firdous Ahmad Bhat | Ab Rahman Bhat | Kanterbugh, | Private Em | Member/Parent | BA |
| 4 | Gh Mohammad Baba | Gh Mustafa Baba | Goom Ahmadpora | Private Em | Parent/Parent | 8th |
| 5 | Mohd Ibrahim Baba | Gh Hussain Baba | Goom Ahmadpora | Private Em | Member/Other | BA |
| 6 | Syed Ahmad Shah | Syed Hossain Shah | Goom Ahmadpora | Business | Secretary/Other | 8th.... |
| 7 | Syed Maqbool Hussain | Syed Assadullali Shah | Goom Ahmadpora | Private Em | Treasurer/Teacher | MA |
| 8 | Syed Mudasar | Syed Mehdi | Goom Ahmadpora | Private Em | Parent Parent | 2th |

Principal HSS Ahmadpora (Departmental Representative)

The tenure of managing committee shall be Three years from 11-Mar-2022 to 11-Mar-2025 unless otherwise modified by the competent authority.

The departmental representative shall work as Nodal Officer of the department who will monitor the implementation of departmental instructions issued from time to time and shall:-

- 1 Maintain close co-ordination with the school management and the department.
- 2 Convene/attend monthly meetings of the school management and furnish details of the functioning of the school.
- 3 Ensure that the functioning of the school is in accordance with the rules governing them and shall update the department about any contravention/violation in this regard.

The Management Committee shall perform inter-alia the following duties/functions:-

1. Monitor the working of the school monthly basis and management shall furnish report to CEO concerned on quarterly basis.
2. The Committee shall be responsible for the Management of the School in accordance with the provisions of the act.
3. The management of the school shall consult the Parents Association in matters if academic importance and co-curricular activities.
4. The Managing Committee shall apprise the Parents Association about the performance and various activities of the school.

bmj

- 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 - (Open)



**HIJRI
CALENDAR**
12 Ramzan
1445

| PRAYERS | |
|---------|-------|
| FAJR | 5: 08 |
| ZUHR | 12:40 |
| ASR | 4: 58 |
| Magrib | 6:48 |
| ISHA | 8: 08 |

This Day In History

- 1919 - 8th Congress of the Russian Communist Party re-establishes a five-member Politburo which becomes the center of political power in the Soviet Union. Original members Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Joseph Stalin, Lev Kamenev and Nikolai Krestinsky
- 1920 Perserikatan Communist of India (PKI) political party forms
- 1921 - Germany announces it will be unable to meet its Great War reparation payments
- 1931 -Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev embrace the gallows during the Indian struggle for independence. Their request to be shot by a firing squad is refused.
- 1933 - Enabling Act: German Reichstag grants Adolf Hitler dictatorial powers
- 1936 - Italy, Austria & Hungary sign Pact of Rome
- 1936 - Physician Joseph G. Hamilton injects a leukemia patient with a sodium radioisotope, the first intravenous injection of a human with a radioisotope
- 1940 - All-India-Muslim League calls for a Muslim homeland
- 1940 - The Lahore Resolution (Qarardad-e-Pakistan or the then Qarardad-e-Lahore) is put forward at the Annual General Convention of the All India Muslim League.

From KO Archives

Vajpayee Swears By Secularism

Vous To Create New Work Culture

New Delhi- Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee today declared that his coalition government will initiate speedy internal liberalisation of the economy, allow upto Rs 1,500 crore of foreign direct investment in states in the power sector and strive to create a new work culture.

The government is committed to speedy internal liberalisation of the economy, freeing it from all the growth-hindering bureaucratic and government controls, 72-year-old Vajpayee said in his first broadcast to the nation.

Vajpayee said in the turbulence of the world markets and in the new emerging regime of the world trade organisation, India's principle responsibility should be to safeguard and, promote the country's interest.

Asserting that a major area of focus will be restructuring centre-state relations and decentralising financial and administrative powers to states, he said as a first step, the government will urgently devise legal and executive changes so that decision can be taken directly by states in regard to sectors such as power. Even in regard to foreign direct investments upto, say, Rs.1,500 crore, he said.

In his broadcast, the Prime Minister said we must restore the credibility of public life and public institutions, making them once again reliable and independent pillars of state.

Noting that the country must give up the harmful path of confrontation, he said my government is unequivocally committed to the concept of secularism... we treasure it.

Stressing that his government would reach out to talent across the country, Vajpayee said it shall strive to create a new work culture, a world class working environment so that the best remain here to build our country, so that those who are now working elsewhere return, and put their prodigious acumen to work for their country.

The Prime Minister said he would personally monitor programmes for doubling female literacy within ten years, vastly improving medical care for daughters and mothers, protecting self-respect for women and empowering them politically through reservation in parliament and State Assemblies.

On relations with India's neighbors, Vajpayee said the BJP-led coalition will strain every nerve to accelerate the trend in the last few years to improve relations with neighbouring countries.

We are determined to be friend with all and precisely because we happen to be the largest country, we shall be all the more sensitive to the aspirations and needs of our neighbours that applies to Pakistan as much as to our other neighbours, he said. (PTI)

(Kashmir Observer, 23 March, 1998)

Alarming Rise of Student Suicides

Is Indian Education to Blame?

Ummar Jamal

It's clear that the Indian education system is in dire need of reform. Rather than focusing solely on academic achievement, there must be a greater emphasis on holistic development and emotional well-being. Schools should prioritize critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills over rote memorization. Counseling services should be readily available to students, and mental health education should be integrated into the curriculum

In recent years, we saw a disturbing trend of surge in student suicides. Since 2016 alone at least 16 Kashmiri students pursuing higher education in colleges and universities outside Jammu and Kashmir have tragically lost their lives to suicide. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), one student took their own life every 42 minutes in 2020 in India. In the same year, 11,396 suicides of students below the age of 18 were reported across the country. The gravity of the situation is further highlighted by the Ministry of Education's report, revealing that 122 students from prestigious institutions like IITs, NITs, and central universities died by suicide over 2014-2021. Moreover, Kota, a hub for coaching centers, has seen a disturbing trend with 22 student deaths reported since 2022 and around 121 since 2011. Sadly, the toll continues to rise, with four students already having committed suicide in the year 2024.

From the pressure-cooker environment of exam preparations to the intense competition for college admissions, young minds are buckling under the weight of academic expectations. While factors contributing to this crisis are multifaceted, it's evident that the Indian education system bears a significant share of responsibility.

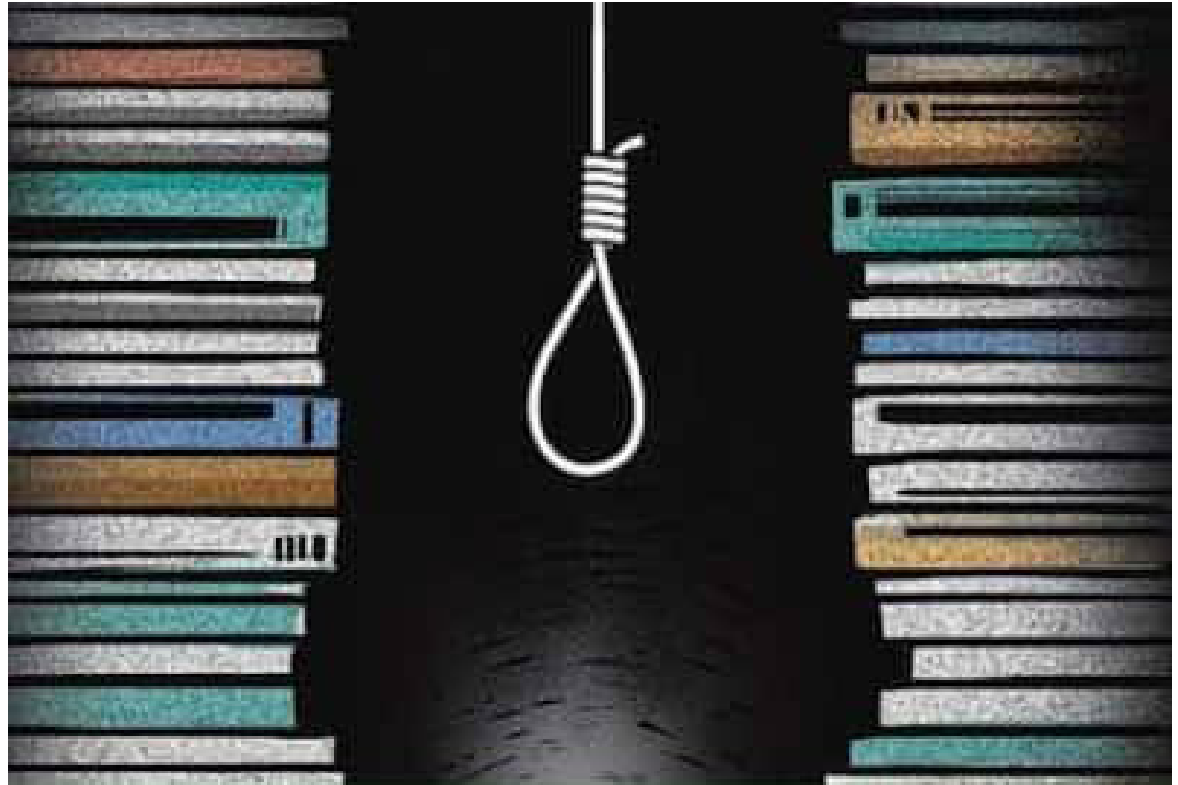
India's education system is notorious for its emphasis on rote memorization and high-stakes exams. From a young age, students are subjected to relentless pressure to excel academically. The pursuit of top grades becomes an all-consuming obsession, leaving little room for holistic development or personal growth.

One of the fundamental flaws of the Indian education system is its over-reliance on rote learning. Students are taught to memorize information without truly understanding its significance or relevance. This approach stifles creativity, critical thinking, and intellectual curiosity, fostering a culture of conformity rather than innovation.

The examination system in India is deeply flawed, placing an undue burden on students' mental health. Year-end board exams and entrance tests for prestigious colleges loom like dark clouds over students' lives, dictating their worth and future prospects. The fear of failure becomes paralyzing, driving some to extreme measures to escape the pressure.

The competition for admission to elite institutions in India is cutthroat. With limited seats and an ever-growing pool of applicants, students face intense competition from their peers. The relentless pursuit of perfection leaves many feeling inadequate and overwhelmed, leading to feelings of despair and hopelessness.

In Indian society, mental health issues are often stigmatized and misunderstood. Seeking help for psychological distress is viewed as a sign of weakness rather than courage. As a result, many students suffer in silence, afraid to speak out or seek support



for fear of being judged or ostracized.

Parents and society at large play a significant role in perpetuating the cycle of academic pressure. Well-meaning but misguided parents often place undue expectations on their children, equating academic success with personal worth. The relentless pursuit of prestige and status fuels the obsession with top grades, leaving little room for individual interests or passions.

We must reconsider the very essence of education. Is its sole purpose to pass exams or secure employment? We must teach our children the true meaning of education. It's about nurturing curiosity, fostering critical thinking, and instilling values that go beyond mere academic achievement. Education should empower individuals to become compassionate, well-rounded citizens who can navigate life's challenges with resilience and contribute positively to society. By embracing this broader perspective, we can ensure that education serves not only as a means to a job but also as a pathway to personal growth and societal betterment.

It's clear that the Indian education system is in dire need of reform. Rather than focusing solely on academic achievement, there must be a greater emphasis on holistic development and emotional well-being. Schools should prioritize critical think-

ing, creativity, and problem-solving skills over rote memorization. Counseling services should be readily available to students, and mental health education should be integrated into the curriculum. This alarming trend, if ignored, will exacerbate the already dire situation.

The rise of student suicides in India is a wake-up call for policymakers, educators, and society at large. The escalating prevalence of student suicides reflects a distressing reality, yet our policymakers and legislators remain inactive. The current system is failing our youth, pushing them to the brink of despair in pursuit of an elusive notion of success. It's time to reimagine education in India, placing the well-being of students at the forefront and fostering an environment where they can thrive, both academically and emotionally. Only then can we hope to stem the tide of this tragic epidemic and build a brighter future for the next generation.

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer
Ummar Jamal is a Kashmir based columnist and National General Secretary of J&K Students Association and can be reached at umarjama1968@gmail.com

India AI: The Next Steps

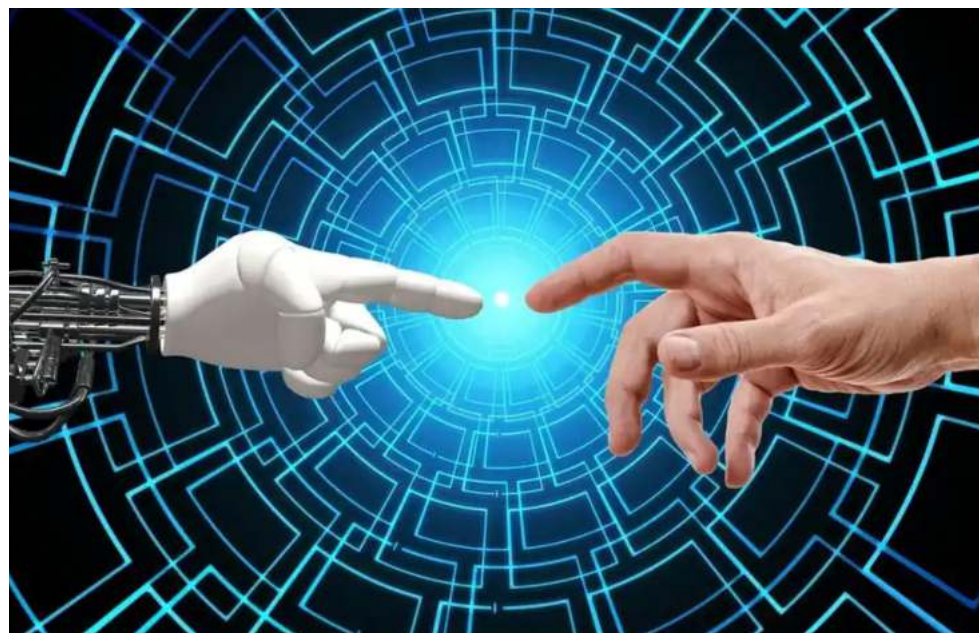
Rajnish Gupta

The Union Cabinet's approval on March 7 on how it will operationalise the IndiaAI Mission shows how serious the government is about making India an AI power. It recognises all the building blocks of an AI ecosystem—computational power, data, algorithms, skills, entrepreneurship, and the approach towards regulating the technology, though the level of details vary.

The financial commitment of Rs 10,372 crore over five years to set up compute infrastructure for access to start-ups and research ecosystem has received plenty of media attention. What has been less commented about is the clarity in the direction of AI research and innovation.

The Action Plan envisages enabling the development of indigenous Large Language Models (LLMs) and domain specific Foundational Models. The current LLMs like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini have been developed in English and may not capture the cultural nuances and sensitivities of the Indian context. Development of LLMs in local Indian languages using training data specific to a particular language, culture, and region may better capture the context, expressions, and cultural nuances. This will make the output more relatable and relevant and also useful for a wide range of applications, particularly in areas of administration and service delivery. This would also foster trust in the AI ecosystem. Domain-specific foundational models could be used by both the government and private players to solve critical challenges that are more India-specific, for example, tracking diseases or provision of public services specific to India.

The government has also stated its plan to facilitate access to non-personal data (NPD). While details are awaited, it will need to principally cover two areas. The first part would involve maxi-



mising open data (OD). This is open for anyone to access, modification, reuse, and share. The second would deal with implementing frameworks and infrastructure to access NPD.

The government will set up a data platform that will then provide start-ups and research institutions access to NPD. Data.Gov, set up in the US, is an example of open sourcing of data and provides access to approximately 300,000 data sets released by federal, state and local governments and universities. The Indian government could open source some data, especially what may be available within the government machinery such as with stock exchanges, commodity exchanges, in surveys and census, geospatial data, and so on.

To access non-OD, data marketplaces are be-

ginning to come up in other jurisdictions. Some of the issues that the government could address as it works on operationalising access to this data are bringing in more clarity with regard to ownership of NPD between the government, the entities collecting the data and the businesses/individuals whose data is collated. It will also need to incentivise private players to share data and participate in data platforms/marketplaces. Inter-operability is also needed between different systems that have access to data, especially in important sectors like healthcare.

The government could also consider a framework around making available confidential data to private players for AI development, taking a leaf from the proposals in EU.

The issue of data sovereignty also needs attention—France and Germany are two countries that are considering implementing sovereign data clouds.

In addition to promoting and facilitating the development and deployment of AI, there is a need for safe and trusted AI. As the government moves forward and brings in amendments under various Acts to regulate AI, it would need to balance the need to prevent public harm without hampering development and innovation.

Regulation and development of AI would also require the creation of institutional capacity within the government. Suggestions have been made about the need to set up a regulatory agency like Sebi for AI. The technology is evolving rapidly and therefore a specialised body with the requisite technical skills that are updated regularly is extremely important. Such a body could prescribe norms for oversight over algorithms to address issues such as unlawful content and standards for inter-operability. It could also be used to implement a "regulatory sandbox" under which a new algorithm can be tested in a controlled environment and policy and regulatory changes needed to deploy such an algorithm can be identified.

The IndiaAI Mission announcement is a welcome step and will help establish a comprehensive ecosystem, catalysing AI innovation through strategic programs and public private partnerships. AI is a strategic technology (with military and economic consequences) and all countries are working furiously to move ahead and develop their own strengths. The speed and effectiveness of implementation will impact India's technological and economic sovereignty.

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 Financial Express

RAMAZAN: Strength and Significance

Mohammad Hanief

Every year, as the blessed month of Ramadan draws near, Muslims around the world await in joyous anticipation for the opportunity to observe fasting—the fourth of five foundational pillars of the Islam.

The word 'Ramadan' is derived from the Arabic word Ramdh (رَمَضٌ), which means, 'intensely hot' or 'burning'. The month of Ramadan is named as such for three reasons: One who fasts becomes hot due to thirst, worship and devotion in this month burns away the traces of sin and devotion in this month produces the necessary warmth of love in man for his Creator and fellow beings.

As part of this month of spiritual rejuvenation, Muslims worldwide fast during daylight hours (consuming no food or water) as a form of worship to bring them closer to God. Families and friends unite to break their fast together, after sunset during iftar or before dawn during suhour.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar - the timing is based on sightings of the crescent moon which means that the dates vary from year to year. Ramadan ends with the new moon and is celebrated with the holiday of Eid al-Fitr, the Festival of the Breaking of the Fast, where families and friends gather together to share celebratory meals and give gifts to their children. Eid al-Fitr is considered to be a time for gratitude, forgiveness, and for making amends.

During Ramadan, most Muslims try to avoid negative acts or their personal vices, whilst instead practicing positive acts, exercising self-control and showing compassion for those less fortunate than themselves. They aim to better their relationship with God and their community in various ways: by attending the mosque for prayers and iftar, spending extra time reading the Quran, participating in volunteer work, or coming together for long nights of prayer.

In Islam the practice of fasting is not only a physical exercise but a spiritual one; the ultimate aim of which is the attainment of God's pleasure through regulation of one's life in accordance



with His ordinances. If a Muslim merely observes the outward requirements of the fast, they will simply succeed in making themselves hungry and thirsty and nothing more.

Indulgence in unbecoming speech and inappropriate actions nullifies the very objective of fasting in Islam. This is why the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has taught that "He who does not shun telling a lie by word and deed, should know that God needs not his abstention from food and drink." Furthermore, fasting aims to teach Muslims to control their passions and lead productive lives. It is with this intent in mind that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught a simple lesson regarding fasting.

Islam prescribes fasting for all Muslim adults because it is a religion that wishes for every Muslim to attain spiritual heights

and be recipient of the Grace of God. Islam does not desire the practise to become a burden on those who are not able to fast. Thus, those who are incapable of fasting due to sickness or travelling are exempt from fasting in the month of Ramadan and are required to complete the missed fasts later on.

This compensation is not to be considered a penalty for the inability to fast, rather it is prescribed as a small sacrifice so that God may bestow them the capacity and the strength to observe the fast themselves.

The wisdom of fasting, when practised in all sincerity and fulfilling all conditions, is that if one is able to renounce the lawful satisfaction of his desires for the period of one month, he certainly acquires the power and will to renounce the unlawful gratification of his senses as well. It is for



Through coming together and elevating our acts of worship for the sake of Allah (SWT), Ramadan is truly a period where our spirituality, ties with our family and community bonds strengthens us and allows us to become the best version of ourselves

this very reason that fasting in Islam is not only promoted and limited to the month of Ramadan. Voluntary fasts, as kept by Prophets and Saints, have proven to be a source of great blessings and divine favours from God Almighty.

In addition to fasting, extra attention is also given to more acts of worship. These acts can come in the form of prayer, zikir, reciting Qur'an, giving charity, and asking for forgiveness from Allah (SWT). Through performing such actions which are pleasing to Allah (SWT), we become closer to our Creator and are given more rewards during this blessed month.

From helping our parents prepare food during meal times to reciting Qur'an with our younger siblings, there are many activities which we can do to draw closer to our families. Other

great activities which are great for family bonding include praying together, reading Islamic Books together, and visiting local Mosques and attending community Iftar events together.

From grand community Iftars, local street food stalls, and gathering for taraweeh in local Mosques, Ramadan is when our communities engage in activities that get everyone involved - in one way or another!

Similarly, Ramadan is also a time where we work together to fulfil another pillar of Islam: Zakat. Since the time of the Prophet (PBUH), the Muslim community has always valued giving charity to those in need. As Ramadan is a time filled with the most opportunities to gain blessings from Allah (SWT), many of us choose to give Zakat or Sadaqah (charity) during this blessed month.

Towards the last ten nights of Ramadan especially many Muslims gather together to try and observe Laylat-ul-Qadr (Night of Power) as Laylat-ul-Qadr is considered the holiest night of the year, it is the most ideal time for us to pray more and give more charity together as a community.

Following Ramadan's end, all members of the community gather together to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr - a joyous time of gift-giving, feasting (in moderation) and spending time with our loved ones. Marked as a blessed time of reflection and increased rewards, Ramadan holds a great importance in the lives of all Muslims.

Through coming together and elevating our acts of worship for the sake of Allah (SWT), Ramadan is truly a period where our spirituality, ties with our family and community bonds strengthens us and allows us to become the best version of ourselves.

The holy month of Ramadan is the perfect opportunity to use the Power of Zakat. It is a time for us to pause and reflect, leave behind bad habits and replace them with good ones, increase our acts of worship and good deeds, and practice self-discipline - all for the sake of Allah (SWT).

*The author can be mailed at m.hanief@gmail.com
X (Twitter): @haniefmha*

Are We Reading Prophet's Seerah Right?

Amir Suhail Wani

More dangerous than the absence of religion is the malice of secularisation of religion, the creation of false religion, the corruption of authentic tradition and bankruptcy of symbols. Counterfeit symbols, like inauthentic myths and rootless rituals tend to create the cauldron of confusion making people to oscillate between the poles of utter disbelief and militant piety. In an era of intellectual shallowness, when the collection of facts pertaining to the profane order and constricted to the horizontal aspect of human existence becomes the order of the day, not only are transcendental and unifying principles ignored, but are dethroned too. Seerah in modern times and for that matter the entire corpus of Islamic sciences has exhausted itself in individuals whose scholarship we seriously doubt and whose errors and deviations are evident in axiomatic fashion. Before we come to the principle error in modern day approaches to Seerah and the contemporary understanding of the subject, it is pertinent to set some background in context of "Post-Colonial Muslim World". The tormenting experience of colonialism made Muslims to look back at the Prophetic Model - The model they recognised as the archetype of virtue and just behaviour. But this Muslim urgency to read into the life of Prophet (SAW) the problems of their own time. This "reading-in" not only gave a hermeneutic twist to Seerah alien to its structure, but also pushed the real import of the Seerah into background, shrouding it behind the veils of political or mundane exigencies.

So, what is the true import of Seerah that we are referring

to and how its fall into oblivion has brought among Muslims an alienation from the life of Prophet (SAW) and his teachings? This is the metaphysical grounding of Seerah and its comprehension with reference to the transcendental and vertical component that forms the essence and marrow of Prophetic persona. With the profusion of Seerah literature - from both the Muslim scholars and orientalis, the gaze of the reader has been shifted from the spiritual and existential aspects of Seerah to its more mundane and yielding aspects. Attempts have been made to contextualise the life of Prophet outside the framework of Prophethood and to understand him as a social reformer, ethical teacher, political leader or a strategist of worldly affairs. While these dimensions pertain to Seerah, no doubt, but they are peripheral and revolve in an orbit around the centre of prophetic phenomenon - the phenomenon that doesn't defy the mundane, but goes beyond it into the realm of principles, metaphysical principles to be precise. Muhammad (SAW), as a founder of the last of the Major world religions, stands at the closure of the window of transcendence - the last to have had access to the realm of Being, transcendence and Godhead. In post-Muhammadan era, the revelation has exhausted itself and the mystical experiences, even if they are granted autonomy of content, have to pass through the Muhammadan gateway and they can't be a more than of a hundred-thousandth ray of the sunlight which shineth in the bosom of Muhammad (SAW). Religion, if its truth has to have any value has to etch itself in the experiential landscape of man, but for the fact that modernity treats religion as no more than a

socio-historic phenomenon, depriving it of its experiential and existential content, the spiritual aspect of prophethood is either lost or is appropriated and compensated by the naive leaps of parapsychology. Unless the tran-

scedental aspect of prophethood is taken into account, the aspect which roots the teachings of Prophet not in any historical contingency, but in a timeless transcendental fountainhead, all attempts to benefit from the stream of prophethood and to model our lives after it will end up at the secularisation of religion, a reference to which has been made in the beginning of this article.



The lives of Alexander and Napoleon may be understood without any reference to God and religion; the teachings of Plato

and Plotinus may well be explicable without any reference to the transcendental cause, but the lives of Jesus and Muhammad, of Buddha and Moses can never be understood without a reference to God whom they called

defined the trajectory of his life couldn't be understood in atomic sense, in their socio-historical context deprived of their religious and metaphysical import. The Quranic dictum "Your fellow man (Prophet) is neither mis-

guided nor astray. Nor does he speak of his own whims", need to be our defining points in any attempt to understand Seerah with its multifarious implications. Every act of Prophet and therefore every inactivity on his behalf could only be understood when these activities are seen in the backdrop of their divine origin. In this regard, Muslim scholars and recently some Orientalists have come up with profound and precise works on the life and teachings of Prophet. Shibli Noman and Syed Suleiman Nadvi initiated the regime of serious

seerah scholarship in Urdu and thence scholars like Idrees Khandlvi, Khalid Maso'od, Jafar Shah Phulwari, Naem Siddiqui, Khurshid Lateef Gaba and others have produced works of merit and serious scholarship.

In recent times, English has emerged as the Lingua Franca, not only in worldly matters, but in religious affairs too. The younger generation is fast losing touch with oriental languages like Arabic, Persian and Urdu, which constitute the bulk of Islamic literature. Scholars have risen up to this change and have started to produce works of Seerah in English. In addition to Muslim scholars, Orientalists, whose language of priority is English have also added to the rich treasure of Seerah literature in English. Starting with Syed Ameer Ali and passing through the classical work of Khalifa Abdul Hakeem, the writers like Martin Lings, Adil Salahi, Karen Armstrong, Barnabey Rogerson, Marshall Hodgson and others have richly contributed to the field of Seerah. While the English authors mentioned here have brought in their biases here and there and tried to distort the import of Seerah, but their works on the whole are objective and scholarly. As we face the modern world with all its attendant intellectual challenges, it no longer suffices to treat Seerah as a mere collection of facts or a chronological look at the life and teachings of the Prophet, but a deeper hermeneutic treatment and an appreciation of Seerah rooted in wisdom is called for.

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

NIT Srinagar hosts interactive session with IIT Delhi faculty member for Mechanical Engineering Students

Srinagar: The Department of Mechanical Engineering at National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar on Friday organized an interaction session for its students with Prof. Naresh Varma Datla faculty at (Department of Mechanical Engineering at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi.

The event was coordinated by Dr. Ved Prakash Sharma. It was aimed to provide a platform for students to explore M.Tech, PhD opportunities, and research



work at IIT Delhi.

The interaction program was

aimed to introduce students to the diverse research activities and opportunities available at the Department of Mechanical Engineering, IIT Delhi.

The session witnessed active participation from students who enthusiastically posed questions regarding PhD and M.Tech programs, application procedures, and internship opportunities at IIT Delhi.

Prof. Adnan Qayoum, HOD, Mechanical Engineering extended gratitude to Prof. Datla

for this interaction Program and also appreciated his dedication to fostering academic exchange and collaboration between the two institutions.

In his talk, Prof. Datla patiently addressed each query, providing guidance and valuable advice to aspiring researchers. It served as a catalyst for fostering meaningful collaborations between NIT Srinagar and IIT Delhi, paving the way for future endeavors in academia and research.

DJMC IUST organized program on 'Careers in Media'

Awantipora: The Department of Journalism & Mass Communication (DJMC), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) organised a special guest lecture on "Careers for Media Students in the Government Sector: Indian Information Service (IIS)" today as part of University Industry Connect initiative. Mr. Ishfaq Ahmad Shah (IIS), News Editor at Akash Vani, Srinagar was the keynote speaker. The session was organised in collaboration with the Industry Connect vertical under the aegis of Office of

the Dean Outreach IUST. Mr. Shah, shared valuable insights and provided students with a comprehensive overview of the IIS exams, recounting his journey in the prestigious service. He encouraged students to pursue IIS and highlighted the significance of the Indian Information Service in shaping the nation's media landscape. Earlier, Dr. Mujeeb Liyakat, Head of DJMC, delivered the welcome address and underscored the vast array of career opportunities available to mass communication students.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Court Sends

The ED told Judge Baweja that Kejriwal received several crores of rupees as kickbacks from the 'South group' for formulating and implementing the Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22.

He demanded Rs 100 crore from some accused from the 'South group' for contesting the Punjab elections, Additional Solicitor General (ASG) SV Raju, who appeared for the agency, told the court.

The law officer said the money trail showed that Rs 45 crore "kickback" used in the Goa elections came from four hawala routes.

He said the statements of the accused and witnesses have been corroborated through Call Detail Records (CDR).

The AAP chief was produced before the court around 2 pm amid tight security on and around the court premises.

"We have given an application for 10 days' remand," ASG Raju told the court.

He said the AAP is not an individual but a company, and every person responsible for the conduct of the company will be held responsible.

Senior Advocate Abhishek Singhvi, who was representing Kejriwal, said this is the first time in the history of India that a sitting chief minister has been arrested.

The power of arrest is not equal to the need of arrest and there was no necessity of arresting this man, he said.

"Please don't look at remand as a routine exercise... it requires application of significant judicial mind... larger issues of democracy involved," Singhvi said.

Lawyer Vikram Chaudhari, who was also representing the Delhi chief minister, told the court that the "ED has become judge, jury and executioner".

'BJP Can Impose

President's rule in Delhi, thereby interfering with the democratic process. He urged the Aam Aadmi Party to remain vigilant and warned against the misuse of constitutional provisions to subvert the will of the people. "If Aam Aadmi Party is adamant on keeping Arvind Kejriwal as Chief Minister from jail. The Center may use this as an excuse to impose President's rule in New Delhi. Arvind Kejriwal is not the first in such a case and he will not be the last."

He also criticized the BJP's purported confidence in winning over 400 seats in the upcoming elections, juxtaposing it with what he describes as evident nervousness within the party.

He suggested that Kejriwal's arrest is indicative of this anxiety, labeling it as a stain on democracy.

Omar also highlighted past instances of opposition leaders being targeted, citing the detention of Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren as an example.

PDP Chief Mehbooba Mufti echoed similar sentiments, condemning Kejriwal's arrest as an act of political vendetta. She warned against the dangers of arbitrary arrests and expressed apprehensions about the ruling party's intentions, cautioning that such actions could undermine democratic norms. She emphasized the need for unified resistance against tyranny, asserting that history has shown that authoritarianism cannot prevail in the face of collective opposition. "The arbitrary arrest of yet another Chief Minister by the ED smacks of political vendetta and growing authoritarianism. This cowardly act has exposed the apprehensions of the ruling party that now desperate measures are being taken by manipulating the elections even before the elections are held. History is witness to the fact that tyranny has never been able to prevail in the face of unified resistance. We will not be afraid," Mehbooba said.

J&K's Risky Routes

Similarly, in 2020 at least 298 persons were killed in road accidents in these areas.

The official figures also reveal that in 2021 at least 427 persons were killed in road accidents followed by 416 in 2022 and 412 in 2023.

According to the government report, there is a huge rise in road accidents in India that claim at least 19 lives per hour.

PM Bestowed

the growth of India-Bhutan relations and for his distinguished service to the Bhutanese nation and people."

"Honoured to be conferred with 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo' Award by Bhutan. I dedicate it to 140 crore Indians," Modi posted on X soon after. Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck awarded the 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo' to Prime Minister Modi.

The announcement for the honour was made by the King of Bhutan during the 114th National Day celebrations on December 17, 2021. On Friday, Prime Minister Modi received it during his two-day State visit, his third since he took over as the prime minister in 2014.

A statement from the Indian Embassy in 2021, when the announcement was made, said, "As per ranking

and precedence established, the Order of the Druk Gyalpo was instituted as the decoration for lifetime achievement and is the pinnacle of the honor system in Bhutan, taking precedence over all orders, decorations and medals."

In 2020, Modi received the 'Legion of Merit by the US Government' award of the US Armed Forces and in 2019, Russia conferred its highest civilian honour 'The order of St. Andrew' award on Modi.

Earlier in the day, hours after he arrived in the Himalayan nation, Modi said he was grateful to the Bhutanese people for according to him a "memorable welcome" to their beautiful country and hoped that India-Bhutan friendship "keeps scaling new heights."

Modi's visit seeks to further cement India's unique and enduring relations with Bhutan as part of the country's 'Neighbourhood First' Policy.

BJP & Congress Face

into Rasana rape and murder case of a nomad girl, Choudhary Lal Singh formed his own party Dogra Swabhiman Sangathan and contested the 2019 Lok Sabha elections but faced huge defeat. He was nowhere close to BJP candidate Dr. Jitendra Singh and Congress candidate Vikramaditya Singh. He was able to get only 19049 votes whereas Jitendra Singh had got over seven lakh votes.

But this time, with the efforts of Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) President Vikar Rasool Wani and others, he has joined back the grand-old party and is contesting the Lok Sabha elections.

With Lal Singh's entry as Congress party candidate, the battle on this high profile seat is expected to be a fierce one.

There are other aspects as well in this contest as Ghulam Nabi Azad, who formed his own party Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) after leaving Congress party, had fielded three-time MLA Ghulam Muhammad Saroori from this seat. Saroori being a native from Kishtwar district, enjoys a good image within his community and being a former Congressman, whatever votes he will be able to fetch will make a dent to Congress party. His party has already announced that they are fighting against the INDIA alliance.

After delimitation, Reasi district is no longer part of this constituency and votes have also decreased this time. During the 2019 elections, the total number of votes of this constituency was over 16.65 lakh whereas this time votes stand at 1622599. The

constituency is spread in five districts, Kishtwar, Doda, Ramban, Udhampur and Kathua, with its headquarters at Kathua. The total number of votes in Kishtwar district is 175844, Doda district has 304866, Ramban has 219106, Udhampur has 419789 and Kathua has 502994. (KNO)

QR Codes Mandated

include the establishment of QR Code facility at all health institutions, compatibility with popular mobile payment platforms. Training of staff members to assist users in the payment process and establishing a feedback mechanism for further improvement in the payment process.

Dr. Javed Iqbal, JKAS, Deputy Secretary of the Health and Medical Education Department, has been appointed as the Nodal Officer responsible for overseeing the implementation of these directives.

This initiative aims to modernize payment facilities within healthcare institutions, providing patients and attendants with a seamless and hassle-free payment experience.

By integrating QR code technology, the Health Department seeks to improve efficiency and transparency in healthcare transactions, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of healthcare services in the region.

Speaking about the decision, Secretary Abid emphasized the need for modernization and innovation in healthcare administration.

He stated, "By introducing QR code technology at payment counters, we are taking a significant step towards digitization and transparency in our healthcare system. This initiative will not only simplify the payment process for patients but also enable real-time tracking of transactions, reducing the scope for malpractices."

The QR code system will allow patients to make payments securely and conveniently using their smartphones. Upon reaching the payment counter, patients will simply scan the QR code displayed using a mobile payment app linked to their bank account.

This eliminates the need for cash transactions, reducing the risk of theft and ensuring greater financial security for both patients and hospital staff.

Moreover, the implementation of QR codes will enable the authorities to monitor and analyze payment data in real-time, facilitating better financial management and resource allocation within the healthcare system. One of the top officials of the health department emphasized that this initiative aligns with the government's broader vision of leveraging technology to improve service delivery and governance

across sectors.

He added, "Incorporating QR code systems at hospital payment counters is just the beginning. We are committed to exploring further innovative solutions to enhance the quality and accessibility of healthcare services for the people of Jammu & Kashmir."

He added that Syed Abid's directive to implement QR code systems at hospital payment counters reflects a forward-thinking approach to healthcare management

Weather Improves

24 hours till 0830 a.m.

He said Qazigund received 3.4mm, Pahalgam 16.0mm, Kupwara 9.2mm, Kokernag 2.9mm, Jammu 0.1mm, Banihal 9.0mm, Batote 10mm, Katra 3.4mm and Kathua 2.6mm while Gulmarg recorded 1.5cms snowfall during the time.

Regarding temperature, he said, Srinagar recorded a minimum of 7.2°C against 9.9°C on the previous night and it was above normal by 2.2°C for the summer capital of JK for this time of the year.

Qazigund recorded a minimum of 7.0°C against 6.4°C on the previous night and it was 3.3°C above normal for the gateway town of Kashmir, he said.

Pahalgam recorded a low of minus 3.7°C against 3.0°C on the previous night and it was 3.3°C above normal for the famous resort in south Kashmir.

Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, recorded a minimum of 5.6°C against 8.2°C on the previous night and it was 2.3°C above normal, the official said.

Kupwara town recorded a low of 6.6°C against 7.3°C on the previous night and it was 3.4°C below normal there, the official said.

Gulmarg recorded a low of minus 0.5°C against 3.2°C on the previous night and it was above normal by 1.1°C for the famous skiing resort in north Kashmir's Baramulla district.

Jammu, he said, recorded a minimum of 17.7°C and it was below normal by 2.2°C for the winter capital of J&K.

Banihal recorded a low of 9.0°C, Batote 8.7°C and Baderwah 8.0°C, he said.

Flight Fares Soar

travelers' budgets. Similarly, flights from Jammu to Ahmedabad are now priced between Rs 6,000 and Rs 8,000, while those to Indore range from Rs 8,000 to Rs 10,000.

Comparing prices with February reveals a staggering increase of three to four thousand rupees, highlighting the significant impact of festival-related fare hikes on travelers. "With

such sharp increases, the burden falls disproportionately on passengers, underscoring the need for regulatory intervention to ensure fair pricing practices in the aviation sector," an aggrieved traveller from Srinagar said.

Hazratbal Shrine

Board, also said that the integrated development project will enhance the Hazratbal shrine's infrastructure and attractiveness, placing it among the world's most preferential pilgrimage sites.

Andrabi outlined the potential improvements under the PRASHAD project. "These include upgrading the shrine's infrastructure for better accessibility, creating modern parking facilities, installing fountains, repairing damaged tiles, and enhancing overall cleanliness," she told Kashmir Observer.

With regard to future plans to increase or decrease the size of the market surrounding Hazratbal shrine in light of its integrated development, a senior official in the administration feigned total ignorance, saying it would be immature to comment on something that hasn't been discussed with them.

He emphasized that the Ministry of Tourism is leading the project and will involve all stakeholders before making any decisions.

"Just 13 days ago, I believe, the project's official inauguration was done by the prime minister. Major ideas cannot, therefore, be discussed days prior or post inaugurations," he told Kashmir Observer.

In response to a question about whether the project will be given to Srinagar Smart City Ltd. for execution, he said that since the project comes under ambit of PRASHAD, the central government has the final say.

He also highlighted other essential elements of the project 'Integrated Development of Hazratbal Shrine', including site development of the entire area, a tensile structure for prayers that can be used in all weather conditions, and lighting of the shrine complex, besides construction of Sufi interpretation centre.

The primary attributes of the project encompass a public convenience block, a state-of-the-art multi-level parking structure, a tourist facilitation center, a redesigned market surrounding the shrine, the installation of signposts, the building of a boundary wall, and enhanced Ghat and Devri paths.

HC Quashes

to release them forthwith provided they are not required in any other case.

27th year OF PUBLICATION

KASHMIR OBSERVER

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OR SCAN

SHRINKING OPENINGS

OM Candidates Express Discontent With J&K Reservation Policy

Auqib Javed

SRINAGAR: Eight months of dedication, countless hours spent with his nose buried in books, Mohammad Ubair, 25, was laser-focused on cracking the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET). But his confidence took a hit in the past two weeks. The news of a 10% reservation for Paharis being carved out of the general/open merit quota, reducing it to just 30%, cast a shadow of uncertainty on his dreams.

On March 15, the Jammu & Kashmir administration approved 10% reservation for newly-included tribes, including Paharis, in the Schedule Tribe (ST). The Council also approved the addition of 15 new castes in OBCs and enhancement of reservation in favour of OBCs to 8%. The bill will provide reserva-

tion in government jobs, promotions, educational institutions etc.

The bill was earlier cleared by Lok Sabha on 06 March. The Bill aims at empowering (i) Pahari Ethnic Group (ii) Padari Tribes (iii) Koli and (iv) Gadda Brahmin by providing Scheduled Tribe status. This has been a long pending demand of these communities.

Earlier, J&K had 8% reservation for SC, 10% for STs, 4% for OBCs, 4% for residents along Line of Actual Control/International Border, 10% for Residents of Backward Area (RBA) and 10% for Economically Weaker Sections (EWSs).

The government said that the inclusion of these communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes in Jammu and Kashmir will have absolutely no impact on the current level of reserva-

tions available to the existing Scheduled Tribe communities such as Gujjars and Bakarwals. "They will continue to get reservations like before," a statement from the government said.

However, the reservation has raised apprehensions among individuals in the open merit category within the union territory, who argue that their opportunities for securing a government job are diminished due to the reservation policy.

The decision has incited widespread anger in the valley, with students expressing their dissent on social media platforms regarding the reservation policy.

"The injustices faced by the general category due to reservation policies are deeply concerning. It's disheartening to see deserving individuals being overlooked simply because of

their backgrounds," posted Mir Ruksar on X/twitter.

Jasib Shabir, another user, argued that an open merit system is crucial for fairness and merit. "It means people get chances based on skills, not advantages. Let's push for a level field where everyone can succeed based on what they can do, not where they come from."

The aspirants said the policy has greatly disrupted the open merit system by allotting only 40% reservation to open merit candidates, while allocating 60% to different categories.

"The share of General Category has been slashed from 50% to 40%. This 10% has been snatched from Open Merit and added to ST's (Gujjars, Bakarwals, Pahadi) and OBC Quota. Even out of 40% the 10% is earmarked for Horizontal Reservation. So, effectively the Unreserved category

is left with only 30%. These 30% of seats are open for everybody, no matter if he/she belongs to Open Merit or any other Reserved Category," one of the aspirants said.

"This is sheer injustice. The population of people belonging to the general category in J&K is 69% as per 2011 census. So how is 30% share in jobs and admissions for 69% population justified?" he asked.

Vinkal Sharma, a job aspirant from Jammu, told Kashmir Observer that reducing the open merit to only 30% feels like a betrayal to the remaining 70%.

"The share is less in government jobs and other opportunities. The government needs to rethink this policy," Sharma said.

Arshad Hussain, a student from south Kashmir's Shopian feels that open merit candidates

are like an "endangered species" with continuous narrowing of opportunities in government sectors.

"The political parties use the so-called reservation issue for their own interests but this all is being done at the cost of open merit candidates," he said, adding, "...these are politically motivated decisions and have added to the desperation of open merit category holders," Hussain said.

Sheetal Nanda, Commissioner Secretary to Government, told Kashmir Observer that the policy has been framed according to the constitution.

However, for students like Ubair and others who aspire to secure a job in the government sector or in an educational institution, the current reservation policies pose significant challenges and hurdles to their ambitions.

CS Reviews Functioning Of FCS&CA Dept
KO NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today had a detailed review of working of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA) department here.

Apart from Commissioner Secretary, FCS&CA, Zubair Ahmad, the meeting was attended by Director Food Supplies Jammu/Kashmir and other concerned officers of the department.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary held a detailed review of various aspects of functioning of the department having the mandate of distribution of food grains and other essential supplies.

Dulloo also took note of saturation of aadhar seeding of ration cards and coverage of UT population under NFSA, Non-NFSA and PMFSS schemes. He took notice of the areas not having online POS facility available and reach of Aadhar/OTP authenticated transactions, e-KYC and route optimization status.

Lal Singh Accuses Union Govt Of Neglecting Dogra Rights
Agencies

JAMMU: Chaudhary Lal Singh, who recently returned to the Congress fold after a decade, made scathing remarks against the Union government, alleging neglect of Dogra rights during his visit to Kathua and Hiranagar. Singh, warmly welcomed by supporters upon his return, criticized the government for overlooking the interests of the Dogra community.

As per the news agency Singh highlighted concerns over the lack of local employment opportunities in highway construction projects and the alleged seizure of lands belonging to the indigenous populace. He condemned the policy of offering 100 percent subsidies to external industrialists, labeling it as unjust to the Dogras.

Emphasizing his commitment to the Dogra cause, Singh declared his intent to continue the battle on their behalf, vowing to address past injustices. He rallied support for the Congress party, asserting its strengthening prospects and promising to amplify the voices of the Dogras both nationally and internationally.

Dr. Jitendra Singh Challenges Critics: Visit Udhampur for Real Development
Agencies

JAMMU: Dr. Jitendra Singh, BJP's nominee for the Udhampur parliamentary seat, kicked off his election campaign by addressing a public gathering at Ramlila Maidan in Kathua. Asserting the strides made in development, Singh urged skeptics to visit the Udhampur constituency to witness progress firsthand.

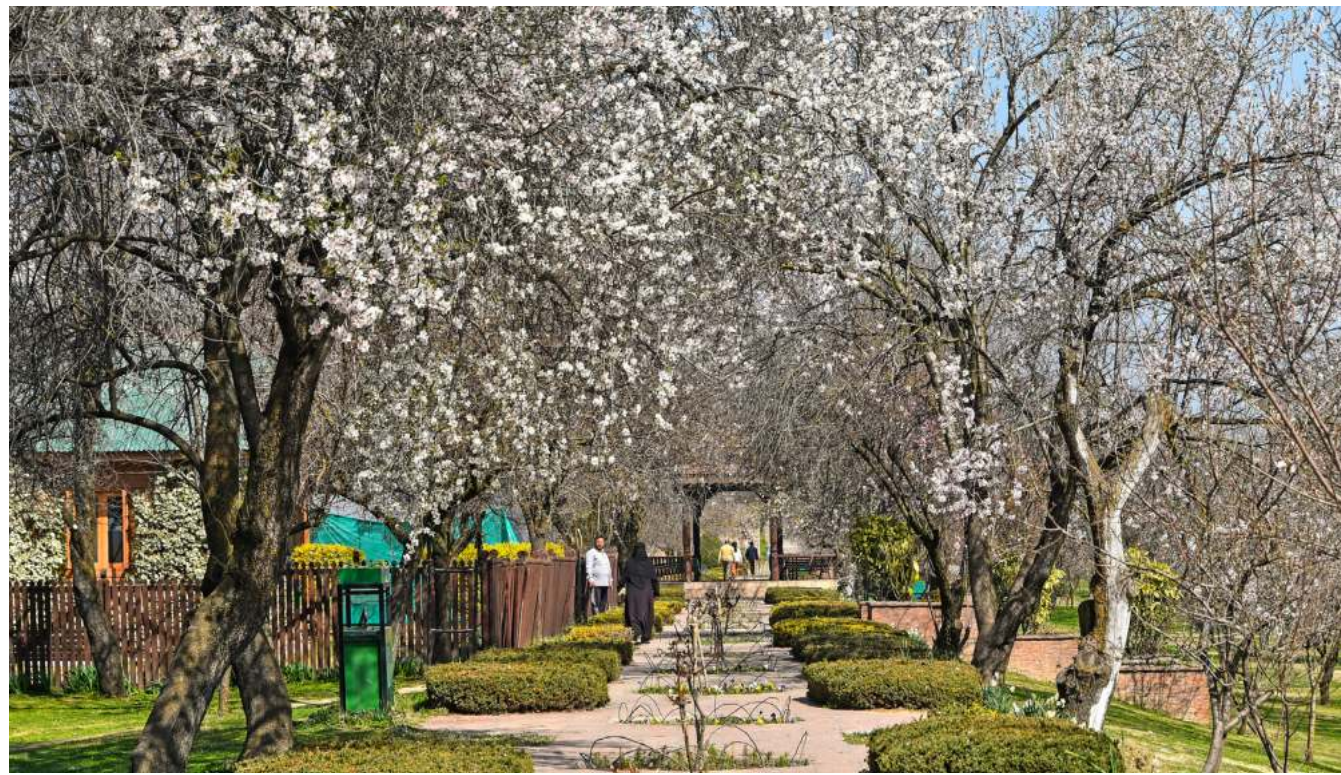
As per the news agency accompanied by Water Resources Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Singh emphasized that detractors who claim development has not occurred fail to recognize the tangible advancements taking place. He cited examples such as improved access to education, illustrated by the enrollment of local children in medical colleges and enhanced connectivity via expressways linking to Delhi.

He highlighted his role in facilitating the installation of Maharaja Gulab Singh's statue



at Lakhanpur, contrasting it with the previous administration's perceived subservience to Kashmir-centric policies.

Singh also criticized the Congress party for allegedly neglecting the interests of the region, particularly regarding the revocation of the Dogra Certificate and disparities in youth reservations. He underscored the Modi government's commitment to rectifying such injustices, pointing to recent initiatives aimed at ensuring equitable treatment for the youth of Kathua, Doda, and Udhampur—(KNO)



AS SPRING SETS IN, BADAMWARI IN SRINAGAR bursts into almond bloom, painting the landscape with a delicate palette of pink and white blossoms. KO PHOTO, ABID BHAT

Experts Stress Water Conservation on World Water Day
Agencies

SRINAGAR: On World Water Day, experts stressed the urgent need for concerted efforts at every level to conserve water for future generations, as the global water crisis continues to escalate.

They said that with the increasing global population, the demand for water is rising at an alarming rate, exacerbating existing challenges such as water scarcity, pollution and inadequate infrastructure.

Speaking with the news agency, Er Firdous Ahmad, an executive officer in the Jal Shakti Department, said this year's theme "water for peace" underscores the critical importance of cherishing, preserving and responsibly utilising water resources to avoid future scarcity and distress.

"It is imperative that initiatives, ranging from the local community level to the state and international levels, prioritise water conservation, preservation and equitable ac-

cess, transcending borders," he stressed.

Dr Mukhtar, another officer from the Jal Shakti Department, echoed similar concerns, saying there has been an alarming depletion of pure water bodies due to ongoing human intervention.

He warned that unless immediate action is taken, there may not be enough water available for current and future generations. "Despite the availability of water, pollution levels are rising, threatening the safety of all water sources," he added.

Dr Mukhtar said it is crucial to act now before the situation spirals out of control and becomes irreversible.

Experts underscored the importance of promoting water conservation, investing in water infrastructure and adopting efficient water management practices to mitigate the impacts of the water crisis. They said there is a need for collaborative efforts to safeguard this invaluable resource and ensure access to clean water for everyone.

Kejriwal's Arrest 'Blot On Democracy': Oppn Parties In J&K
Agencies

SRINAGAR: Opposition parties in Jammu and Kashmir, including the PDP and the NC, on Friday described Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest as a "blot on democracy" and said it will "dent" the country's image across the world.

The BJP, however, termed as "right" the decision of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to arrest the Aam Aam Party (AAP) national convener in the Delhi excise policy-linked money laundering case.

"This is the right decision. Whether a person is a chief minister or not. The ED had summoned him nine times. The high court rejected his bail application yesterday. It has been proven that he is involved in the scam," BJP J-K general secretary (organisation) Ashok Koul said.

National Conference (NC) vice president and former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah asserted that his party stands with Kejriwal and the AAP, and said this arrest shows the "remarkable degree of nervousness" in the ruling party -- the BJP



which is in power at the Centre.

"Aisi Taisi Democracy". For all the talk of 400+ seats, the ruling dispensation is displaying a remarkable degree of nervousness. Having a sitting opposition chief minister arrested by a pliable central agency within days of the general elections being announced is a blot on democracy," Abdullah said in a post on X.

Later, speaking to reporters here, he claimed that Kejriwal's arrest was clearly linked to the elections.

"Within days of the EC (Election Commission) announcing the dates for the Lok Sabha polls, you see that the sitting chief minister and an important part of the opposition alliance has been arbitrarily arrested by the ED," he said.

The AAP, the NC and the Peo-

ple's Democratic Party (PDP) are members of the INDIA bloc, an alliance of some opposition parties to counter the BJP in the Lok Sabha polls. The Congress, the DMK, the TMC and the JMM the Samajwadi Party are also its constituents.

PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti, who is also a former chief minister of J-K, said that "the arbitrary arrest of yet another chief minister by ED reeks of political vendetta and growing authoritarianism".

"This cowardly act has exposed fears of the ruling party now resorting to desperate measures by manipulating elections even before they are held. History has shown that tyranny never prevails in the face of unified resistance. We will not be intimidated," she said on X.

Former Jharkhand chief minister and JMM leader Hemant Soren was also arrested by the ED in January in a money laundering case after he resigned from his post.

The NC leader said Kejriwal is not the first opposition leader to face ED action.

"Some weeks ago, the sitting

Tourist Service Providers In Pahalgam To Have Uniforms
Agencies

PAHALGAM: In a significant move, authorities in Pahalgam have directed all tourist service providers, including taxi stands, hotels, restaurants, and guest houses, to implement uniforms and nameplates for their staff members who directly interact with tourists. This directive is the first-of-its-kind in the area.

According to an advisory issued by the Chief Executive Officer of Pahalgam, taxi operators are specifically instructed to wear green uniforms and keep jute bags in their taxis for collecting unwanted items.

"Professionalism stands as the cornerstone of success and sustainability in tourist trade. It transcends mere transactions and encompasses a commitment to excellence, integrity, and customer satisfaction. Professionalism in the tourist trade entails not only meeting but exceeding the expectations of visitors at every touchpoint, be it accommodation, dining, transportation, or recreational activities," reads the advisory, as per the news agency.

Stakeholders in the tourist trade are expected to uphold certain standards of professionalism to ensure visitor satisfaction and safety. Staff members interacting with

tourists are expected to present themselves professionally and adhere to prescribed uniforms or dress codes where applicable, and demonstrate courtesy, politeness and respect at all times.

As a result of a unanimous decision made in a meeting of tourist trade stakeholders, all tourist service providers in Pahalgam, including taxi stands, hotels, restaurants, and guest houses, will adopt uniforms and nameplates for their staff members who directly interact with tourists and the general public. This collective decision reflects a commitment to professionalism, efficiency, and ensuring a seamless experience for tourists and visitors, it mentions.

According to the advisory, the distinctive green uniform with nameplates will facilitate easy identification of staff members. All stakeholders are advised to strictly adhere to this uniform policy and ensure its effective implementation within their respective associations. Uniformity in attire will not only enhance the professional image of their businesses but also instill a sense of trust and reliability among visitors, it reads.

The initiative aims to make Pahalgam a premier tourist destination known for its professionalism and hospitality.

Absconders Arrested In Awantipora: Police
Agencies

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Police in Awantipora on Friday said to have arrested absconders who were evading their arrest for a long time.

"Two warrants under section 512 Crpc issued by Hon'ble Court of Principal District and Sessions Judge Pulwama and Hon'ble Munsif Court Pulwama pending with police Station

Awantipora against 02 accused persons namely Tariq Ah Lone son of Late Ab Khaliq Lone resident of Karphali Mohalla Shaheedgunj A/P Khanyar and Gulzar Ahmad Chechoo son of Gh Rasool resident of Aabi Nowpora Dalgate, were executed," a police spokesman said in a statement issued to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

Both the accused persons

who were involved in case FIR Nos 142/1989 and 130/1996 of Police Station Awantipora and were evading their arrest from last 34 years and 27 years respectively, were arrested by a special Police team, police said.

Subsequently, the arrested accused persons were produced before the respective Court of Law. Similarly, a special team of Police Station Tral under the supervision of SDPO Tral Su-

hail Ahmed Rishi also executed a warrant under section 512 Crpc, issued by Court of JMJC Court Tral against an accused namely Abdul Samad Malla @ Samad Inqelabi son of Late Ab Rehman Malla resident of Gunistan Sumbal who was evading his arrest from last 07 years and was involved in case FIR No. 49/2017 of Police Station Tral, the statement reads.

The accused person was ar-

rested from Gunistan Sumbal area. Subsequently, the arrested accused was produced before the Court of Law. Our consistent actions against anti-social elements should reassure the community members that we are making every effort to keep our society free of crime. Police has resolved to act as per law against those who indulge in criminal activities, police said—(KNO)

Real Kashmir Face Off Against Mohammedan SC At TRC Today

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Fourth-placed Real Kashmir FC will take on table-toppers Mohammedan SC at Synthetic Turf TRC today, Saturday, March 23, in an I-League 2023-24 matchup.

The Snow Leopards have all but extinguished their title hopes after drawing three of their last five games and trail Mohammedan by 11 points. The Srinagar club has picked up 36 points in its 20 games, winning 10, drawing six and losing four. In contrast, Mohammedan SC have racked up 47 points in their 20 outings, winning 14, drawing five and losing only once.

The Kolkata club's lone defeat came at the hands of Real Kashmir earlier this year, losing 3-0 at its home turf.

Real Kashmir coach Ishfaq Ahmad spoke at Friday's pre-match press conference and was upbeat about the team's chances.

"We also defeated Mohammedan Sporting Club earlier, and that too on its home ground," Ishfaq said. "We will



play our football. It will be our home advantage. Mohammedan SC has a quality side, and we

have to play extremely well to defeat them. If they want to take revenge, good luck to them."

Real Kashmir fell to a 1-1 draw against Delhi FC at TRC in their previous matchup, and

coach Ishfaq Ahmad expressed his disappointment with the result.

"We dominated the game, but it ended in a draw. Their goalkeeper made several saves. But I am still proud of my boys for the way they played football so far," Ishfaq said.

It was the third consecutive draw for the Snow Leopards, with Delhi scoring the equalising goal in 82nd minute.

Real Kashmir goalkeeper Shivam Pednekar expressed confidence ahead of the clash and said:

"We are confident for Saturday's game. We have a plan and will stick to it to get good results."

The game will kick off at 2:00 PM.

REAL KASHMIR POTENTIAL

PLAYING XI:

Muheet Shabir (GK), Muhammad Hammad (C), Shaher Shaheen, Kamal Issah, Carlos Alberto Silva Lomba, Wayne Vaz, Shahid Nazir Wani, Hyder Yusuf, Lalramdinsanga Ralte, Jeremy Laldinpuia, Henry Kisekka.

Short TAKES

National Aerobic Gymnastics C'ship Begins At Jammu



The National Aerobic Gymnastics Championship 2023-24 kicked off with an opening ceremony Friday at Gymnastics Academy, MA Stadium here.

Divisional Commissioner, Ramesh Kumar was the chief guest on the occasion.

The three-day national championship is being organised by Gymnastics Association of J&K in collaboration with J&K Sports Council under the aegis of Gymnastics Federation of India.

Athletes from over 20 states and UTs are participating in the championship.

India, Afghanistan Play 0-0 Draw In FIFA WC Qualifiers

India played out a goalless draw against Afghanistan after both sides failed to turn their opportunities into goals in a Group A fixture of the 2026 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers here.

It was end-to-end contest in the first half on Thursday night with India coming close to scoring through Manvir Singh on two occasions and the hosts too had their share of chances.

With this result, India climbed to the second spot in Group A with four points from three matches.

IPL: Kotian Replaces Zampa At Royals; Sharath Joins Titans

Mumbai's crisis man Tanush Kotian, who played a key role in their record-extending 42nd Ranji Trophy triumph this season, was on Friday drafted in by Rajasthan Royals as a replacement for Aussie Adam Zampa.

Kotian joined at his base price of Rs 20 lakh, the IPL announced.

IPL also announced Karnataka wicketkeeper-batter BR Sharath as a replacement for Robin Minz at Gujarat Titans.

Sharath represents Karnataka in domestic cricket. He will join GT for his base price of Rs 20 lakh.

Andrew Flintoff In England's Backroom Staff For T20 WC

Andrew Flintoff has been added to England's backroom staff for the upcoming T20 World Cup, and ECB managing director Rob Key viewed it as a portent to the former all-rounder's potential candidacy to the team's head coach role.

Flintoff will coach Northern Superchargers in the Hundred this season and will also be involved with the England team during its four-match T20I series against Pakistan ahead of the ICC showpiece.

Leicester Take Legal Route Against Premier League & EFL

Leicester City have issued two legal proceedings against the Premier League and the English Football League (EFL), the Championship club said on Friday after being referred to a commission over alleged breaches in spending rules.

Leicester, who were relegated from the top flight last season, could face a points deduction after the Premier League referred them to an independent commission on Thursday.

IPL 2024

Pant In Spotlight As Delhi Capitals Play Punjab Kings

Press Trust of India

CHANDIGARH: Rishabh Pant's resilient return to the cricket field in multiple roles will be the focus when Delhi Capitals take on Punjab Kings in their IPL opener here on Saturday, both teams hoping to erase the disappointment of below-par performances in the last season.

Pant's miraculous escape from a life-threatening car crash in December 2022 has now become a tale of perseverance after the big-hitting wicketkeeper-batter made a faster than expected recovery to be back in action.

He has been cleared to play as a keeper-batter and has the additional responsibility of captaining the side, taking back the position from David Warner, who led DC to a ninth-place finish in the 10-team tournament last year.

It has taken 15 months of hard work, courage and determination for Pant to be ready to lead DC again. He is a massive shot in the arm for the team whose best-ever performance in the IPL till date is a runners-up finish in 2020.

It is not yet clear whether



Pant will start his keeping duties immediately. In case case he doesn't, DC will fall back on either West Indian Shai Hope or South Africa's Tristan Stubbs.

DC have a potent fast bowling arsenal, backed up by an explosive batting lineup.

Warner, who recently retired from the Test cricket, will be hoping to make a mark and secure a spot in the T20 World Cup-bound Australian side.

In Prithvi Shaw, Mitchell Marsh, Pant and Stubbs, DC have explosive batting lineup, while their bowling attack will be led by Anrich Nortje in the company of Indian veteran Ishant Sharma, Mukesh Kumar, Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel.

The Punjab trophy cabinet is empty too. They have made it to the final only once, in 2014, losing to Kolkata Knight Riders on that occasion.

After finishing sixth for four consecutive seasons between 2019 and 2022, PBKS dropped to eighth in 2023, and will look to turn things around this time.

In Shikhar Dhawan, PBKS have a skipper who would be desperate to prove a point after being side-lined from the national set-up.

PBKS have a new vice-captain in Jitesh Sharma but Jonny Bairstow's form would be a concern.

KKR Take On SRH

Press Trust of India

KOLKATA: Shreyas Iyer's comeback from a long injury layoff will be in focus as IPL's two biggest signings, Australian pacers Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins, go head to head in Kolkata Knight Riders' opening match against Sunrisers Hyderabad here on Saturday.

The Indian batter, after missing the entire season last year due to a back injury, returns to lead KKR, who have made some tactical additions while keeping the nucleus of the side intact.



Shreyas sparked with the bat with a 95 in Mumbai's Ranji Trophy triumph recently but it remains to be seen whether he'll be available for all the matches, given his fitness concerns.

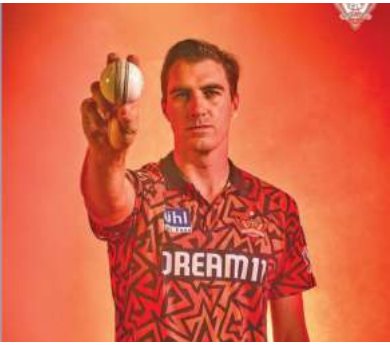
KKR's most successful leader Gautam Gambhir is back in his second innings as a mentor. His partnership with head coach Chandrakant Pandit, a shrewd tactician in domestic circuit, will be the key to their revival.

The biggest signing of this IPL is with KKR, and by acquiring Starc at a record sum of Rs 24.75-crore, the left-arm quick will be under huge pressure to perform.

His spell in power-play and the death overs will be the key. Starc and Andre Russell are the only two experienced pacers in KKR's ranks, and with no like-for-like replacements for them, their workload management will be crucial.

KKR boast of a star-studded top-order batting lineup in Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Phil Salt, Venkatesh Iyer and Shreyas to go with the Russell-Rinku Singh firepower at the death.

But the Gambhir-mentored side will rely heavily on the home conditions to offer some spin so as to give the likes



of Sunil Narine, Varun Chakravarthy and Suyash Sharma some assistance.

Starc will have his skipper Cummins leading SRH in the adjacent dug-out as the Australian captain will also have his task cut out. Cummins (Rs 20.50-crore) is the third-most expensive buy in this IPL and all eyes will be on him to revive the fortunes of the side that has had two wooden- spoon finishes in the last two seasons.

On paper, KKR with a star-studded batting and spin-heavy attack to complement Starc's pace, will be overwhelming favourites. Time: 7.30PM IST.

North Korea Vs Japan WC Qualifier Off Over 'Unforeseen Circumstances'

Agencies

TOKYO: North Korea's home World Cup qualifier against Japan was called off on Friday, the Asian Football Confederation said, hours after announcing it would be moved to a neutral venue.

"The fixture between DPR Korea and Japan, scheduled to be played on March 26, will not take place as scheduled due to unforeseen circumstances," the AFC said in a statement.

It said the decision was taken after talks with world football governing body FIFA and came a day after North Korea said it would not be able to stage the game in the capital Pyongyang.

North Korean officials did not say why.

The AFC said the matter would now be referred to "the relevant committees" in FIFA with further updates expected.

It did not confirm if the fixture would be played at a future time or place.

Earlier Friday, AFC general secretary Windsor John told AFP the game would proceed,



but at a neutral venue.

The match in Pyongyang would have been the first game in North Korea for Japan's men's team since 2011 and a rare international football match in isolated North Korea.

Japan and North Korea's women's playoff for the Paris Olympics was switched from Pyongyang to neutral ground in Saudi Arabia last month.

Japanese news agency Kyodo reported on Thursday that

North Korea didn't want to host the match over fears of bacterial infections in Japan.

North Korean officials the same day told their Japanese counterparts that they could not play host, without saying why.

"They asked us during half-time if we can organise (it) in Japan," Japan football association chief Koza Tashima said after the teams met in a first qualifier in Tokyo, which the

hosts won 1-0.

"I told them it was so sudden and that I cannot give them an immediate yes," Japanese media quoted Tashima as saying.

"I told them it will take us at least two or three days (to answer). I told them it's difficult," he said.

Earlier this week Japan's foreign ministry warned football fans not to attempt to travel to the country for the match.

Don't Mess With England Flag, Says Sunak As Soccer Kit Gets Update

Agencies

LONDON: National flags should not be "messed with", British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said on Friday, after Nike's decision to use an altered design of the St George's Cross on England's soccer shirts angered some fans.

Nike, which makes the kit for England's national soccer teams, unveiled its new design this week, which it said paid homage to the country's 1966 World Cup-winning men's team. It features the St. George's Cross, which is red on a white background and is England's national flag, but in shades of red, blue and purple on the back of the shirt collar.

Nike called the change a "playful update" that was meant to "unite and inspire", adding that the design "disrupts history with a modern take on a classic". But the move has spurred calls from some fans writing on social media and calling in to radio shows to scrap the new design.

With a national election expected in Britain this year, in which cultural issues are likely to feature prominently, politicians from across the spectrum have commented on the design. "Well,



obviously, I prefer the original," Sunak told reporters. "My general view is that when it comes to our national flags, we shouldn't mess with them, because they're a source of pride, identity, who we are, and they're perfect as they are."

Opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer told The Sun newspaper that Nike should reconsider the design. Former England goalkeeper Peter Shilton, who played for the national team at three World Cups, said there was no need to change the flag.

"I think we see a lot of changes

these days with different things and I just think the colours for England, like the Three Lions, it's traditional," he told BBC radio. Nike did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Friday.

The trim on the cuffs takes its cues from the training gear worn by England's 1966 heroes, with a gradient of blues and reds topped with purple," a spokesperson for the U.S. sportswear giant told media this week.

"The same colours also feature an interpretation of the flag of St George."