

## 10 Killed As Cab Skids Off Highway At Ramban

Tavera, On Its Way To Jammu From Srinagar, Fell Into A 300 Feet Gorge



Press Trust Of India

**Jammu:** Ten people were killed after an SUV skidded off the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway and fell into a gorge in Ramban district on Friday, officials said. The vehicle, a Tavera, was on its way to Jammu from Srinagar and it fell into a 300 feet gorge at

the Battery Cheshma area of the district around 1.15 am, they said. The bodies of nine passengers and the driver of the sports utility vehicle (SUV) have been recovered, the officials said. They said the car's driver, Balwan Singh (47), of Amb Ghrotha in Jammu and Vipin Mukhiya | [More on P6](#)

### PM, President, LG Express Grief

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a post on X, expressed grief over the loss of 10 lives after a car fell into a gorge in Ramban district. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund would be given to the next of kin of each of the deceased. President Droupadi Murmu mourned the loss of lives in the road accident and conveyed her condolences to the bereaved families. | [More on P6](#)

**THE NEWS OF PEOPLE GETTING KILLED** after a vehicle fell into a gorge in the Ramban area on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway is very sad. I offer my condolences to the bereaved families."

'No-Confidence Motion' Against DDC Chairperson

## HC Orders DC To Decide Within 15 Days

M Ahmad

Srinagar: The High Court of J&K and Ladakh has directed Deputy Commissioner Budgam to conclude 'No Confidence Motion' moved last month against the Chairperson, District Development Council, of the central Kashmir district within a period of two weeks.

In their plea, thirteen District Development Councilors of Khag, Nagam, Khansahib, Narbal, Pakharpara, Soibugh, Sukhnag, Rathsun, BK Pora, Sursyar, Parnewa, Chadoora and Budgam submitted that they moved 'No Confidence Motion' against the Chairperson, Nazir Ahmad Khan, before Deputy Commissioner Budgam on February 29 this year. According to them, in

terms of Section 45-A of the Panchayati Raj Act, 1989, Chairperson or Vice Chairperson of District Development Council, is deemed to have vacated his office forthwith, if a resolution, expressing want of confidence in his favour, is passed by a majority of not less than 2/3rd of the directly elected members of the District Development Council at a meeting specifically convened for the purpose on the grounds of gross misconduct, neglect of duty, any disqualification prescribed under sub-section 10 of Section 45-A of Act of 1989, or failure to attend three consecutive meetings of the District Development Council.

They further contended that in terms of SO No. 117 of 2024, Deputy Commissioner, was obliged to | [More on P6](#)

'Unauthorized Fee Hikes & Unfair Practices'

## Stern Directives Issued Against Private Schools

- Seek fee fixation committee's approval for fee adjustments
- Charge only tuition, annual, transport fees and voluntary activity charges
- Don't force students to buy books, uniform from a specific shop
- Non compliance may invite fine of 1 Lakh, cancellation of registration

Agencies

Srinagar: The Directorate of School Education in Jammu and Kashmir has warned schools from mandating parents to purchase uniforms and books from specific vendors, promoting fair competition among suppliers.

Stern directives were issued to private schools, warning against unauthorized fee hikes and unfair practices for the upcoming academic session of 2024-25. Schools found guilty of increasing tuition fees without proper permission may face fines of up to Rs 1 lakh, with the possibility of registration



KO Photo | Abid Bhat

## Rains Lash Plains As Snow Blankets Gulmarg, Sonamarg

MeT Predicts More Rains Till March 31

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Rains drenched most parts of Jammu and Kashmir while Sonamarg and the world famous ski-resort Gulmarg recorded fresh snowfall on Friday under the influence of a Western Disturbance that affected J&K.

Srinagar received the highest rainfall in the last 24 hours even as temperature recorded a drop. A meteorological department official said that Srinagar received 25.2mm of rain during the time till 0830 hours followed by Banihal (20.4mm), Pahalgam (17.8mm), Gulmarg

(17.6mm), Qazigund (13.0mm), Kokernag (11.0mm), Kupwara (8.9mm), Baderwah (8.6mm), Batote (4.8mm), Katra (3.6mm) and Jammu (1.7mm). With regard to the forecast, he said, fairly widespread light to moderate rain/snow/TS is expected over Jammu | [More on P6](#)

### Massive Avalanche Hits Sonamarg

A massive snow avalanche struck the Hung area of Sonamarg in Central Kashmir's Ganderbal district on Friday. Officials said that two vehicles were buried in snow, but all the | [More on P6](#)

## 3 Main Contenders Of Udhampur LS Seat Crorepatis

**JITENDRA SINGH (BJP)**

Movable Assets **Rs 3.33 crore**  
 Immovable Assets **Rs 3.71 crore**  
 Wife's Movable Assets **Rs 88.88 lakh**  
 Wife's Immovable Assets **Rs 66 lakh**

**LAL SINGH (CONGRESS)**

Movable Assets **Rs 26,53,027**  
 Immovable Assets **Rs 1.53 crore**  
 Cash Holdings **Rs 45,000**  
 Bank Accounts **Over Rs 11.63 lakh**

**G M SAROORI (DPAP)**

Movable Assets **Rs 44.47 lakhs**  
 Cash Holdings **Rs 1.1 lakh**  
 Wife's Movable Assets **Rs 28.28 lakhs**  
 Wife's Immovable Assets **Rs 84.08 lakhs**

Press Trust Of India

Kathua: The three main contenders of the Udhampur Lok Sabha constituency in Jammu and Kashmir going to the polls on April 19 are crorepatis, according to their election affidavits submitted to the Election Commission. Choudhary Lal Singh, who recently rejoined the Congress and is contesting his fourth Lok Sabha election from the seat, has recorded a multi-fold increase in his

wealth over the past one-and-a-half decades, according to his poll affidavits. He and his wife, former legislator Kanta Andotra, have shown movable and immovable properties worth Rs 1.79 crore and Rs 1.76 crore respectively in their affidavit in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, as compared to their properties worth Rs 7.27 lakh and Rs 10.62 lakh in the 2009 Lok Sabha polls respectively, data in their affidavits revealed. Choudhary Lal Singh, 65,

who is being probed in a money laundering case by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), filed his nomination papers, including the mandatory affidavit, from the Udhampur-Kathua Lok Sabha constituency on Wednesday. He won the Udhampur seat twice on Congress ticket in 2004 and 2009, besides being a three-time former MLA. He switched from the Congress to the BJP in 2014 and was also a minister in the previous PDP-BJP | [More on P6](#)

### Papers Of 3 Covering Candidates Rejected

After the scrutiny of nomination papers of candidates for Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha seat, papers of three covering candidates of different parties were rejected by the returning officer on this parliamentary seat. These include covering candidates of Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP), Congress and Bahujan Samaj Party. A total of 15 candidates had filed their nomination papers for the Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha seat | [More on P6](#)

## Lotus Will Bloom In Every J&K House: Chugh Criticizes Abdullahs, Muftis For Politicizing Shah's Remarks On AFSPA

Agencies

Srinagar: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) BJP National General Secretary and Party Incharge for J&K, Tarun Chugh Thursday welcomed the announcement of Union Home Minister Amit Shah that the Centre was prepared to revoke the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act



(AFSPA) in a phased manner and said that the Opposition leaders like Abdullahs and Muftis should stop trying | [More on P6](#)

### Property Rights In J&K Will Be Protected: Lal Singh

Former MP and Ex. Minister Choudhary Lal Singh conducted his canvassing for the parliamentary election 2024. Lal Singh started a bike | [More on P6](#)

In Conversation With Bill Gates

## Climate Action Gained Momentum Post G20 Summit: PM



Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said parameters used to measure progress are detrimental to climate and suggested developing the concept of a green gross domestic product.

In an interaction with

philanthropist and Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, he also said that climate action has gained momentum since the G20 Summit in India last September.

When Gates asked if the green approach could be made more affordable for easier adoption, Modi said the world needs to adopt a | [More on P6](#)

## Leopard Attacks In Budgam Shoot-at-Sight Order Issued After Minor's Death

Agencies

**Budgam:** Following another fatal attack on a minor child in the Khansahib area of central Kashmir's Budgam district, the Wildlife Department issued shoot-at-sight orders on Friday to eliminate the "man-eater" leopard.

The Khansahib area has been gripped with fear and anguish after a series of leopard attacks claimed the lives of two minor girls

and left a minor boy injured within a span of 17 days.

Toiba Mushtaq, 7, daughter of Mushtaq Ahmad, was taken from the lawns of her home during the evening hours, and her body was later discovered in nearby bushes. Notably, a 9-year-old girl was fatally attacked, while a minor boy sustained injuries in a separate incident involving a leopard in the neighbouring village of Samsan within | [More on P6](#)

### Stay Indoors: DC

Deputy Commissioner Budgam Akshay Labroo asked people in Khansahib area of central Kashmir's Budgam district to stay indoors, particularly in the morning and evening, and to take extra care of their children by not letting them go outside. Speaking to media persons | [More on P6](#)



'Species In 17 Mountains Worldwide Face Extinction Risk Due To Global Warming'

Press Trust Of India

Species living in 17 mountains around the world may be facing the risk of extinction due to the rapid rate at which the planet is warming, new research published in the journal Nature has found.

Researchers said that the mountains at significant risk due to global warming included those in the Iran-Pakistan region, Northeast Asia, Brazilian highlands, Western America and Mexico, and the Mediterranean basin.

The international team of researchers, led by Academia Sinica in Taiwan, called for setting up more meteorological monitoring stations in mountainous areas globally, essential for developing a deeper understanding of the extent of such risks.

In their study, the researchers found these mountain regions to have the highest climate velocity, or the rate at which "species must move to stay within their survivable habitats".

They explained a new approach they developed to estimate climate velocities in mountainous regions that considers two important influencing factors -- surface warming and humidity -- whilst incorporating the theories of atmospheric science.

Setting up meteorological observation stations in mountainous areas is challenging, leading to a global shortfall in long-term climate data for these regions, the team said.

This knowledge gap, compounded by the complex topography, has limited the understanding of warming trends, they said.

The team's newly developed approach



compensates for the lack of station data and assess shifts in temperature isotherms -- locations having the same temperature -- in mountain regions under climate change, they said.

In humid climates, climate velocity can be high, even as warming is less pronounced, according to lead author Weiping Chan from the Biodiversity Research Center, Academia Sinica, and a postdoctoral researcher at Harvard University, US.

"The mountainous regions of Taiwan, like Japan, are more affected by humidity-

induced high velocities than continental regions. Our study suggests that accounting for humidity is critical to fully understanding the variability of temperature isothermal shifts in mountainous areas worldwide," said Chan.

Lead researcher Sheng-Feng Shen, also from the Biodiversity Research Center of Academia Sinica, said, "The lack of meteorological observation data from mountains is both the most valuable and the biggest challenge of our study." In the absence of such data, he said they have to rely on mod-

The mountainous regions of Taiwan, like Japan, are more affected by humidity-induced high velocities than continental regions. Our study suggests that accounting for humidity is critical to fully understanding the variability of temperature isothermal shifts in mountainous areas worldwide

els for making estimates, which could vary significantly depending on the model and method used.

Further, global data isn't suitable for making local predictions due to differences in scale, Shen added.

"The unique characteristics of various mountain regions and the absence of local data mean that just because an area isn't highlighted, doesn't mean it's unaffected," he said.

Therefore, the researchers emphasised the need to set up more weather stations in mountains to better understand the real situation and tackle the effects of climate change on species.

از دفتر نائب تحصیلدار کریری
عنوان درخواست منجانب: جنید بیگم زچہ مرحوم خورشید احمد میر ساکنہ سوسہ نسبت اجرائی لیگل بیر (دارت جائز) سرٹیفکیٹ
اشتراہ برآمد آگاہی
ماملہ مندرجہ الصدر میں پٹانری حلقہ سے رپورٹ طلب کی گئی۔ مطابق رپورٹ پٹانری وچہ سرٹیفکیٹ خورشید احمد میر ولد علی محمد میر ساکنہ سوسہ مورخہ 2022/06/21 کو فوت ہو چکا ہے۔ موتی اپنے پچھلے مندرجہ ذیل وارثان جائز چھوڑ گیا
رشتہ برہمہوتنی
1.. جنید بیگم زچہ مرحوم 32 سال سرکاری ملازم
2. اہقت خورشید پیر 08 سال زیر تعلیم
3. علیہ خورشید دختر 06 سال
4. علیہ خورشید دختر 05 سال
5. حارہ بیگم زچہ مرحوم علی محمد میر ولدہ سال عمر رسیدہ
اس طور مکمل (05) افراد پر مشتمل مطابق رپورٹ پٹانری مندرجہ وارثان جائز کے عداد اور کوئی وارثان جائز نہیں ہے۔ سرٹیفکیٹ زیر بحث اجراء کریمی اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو کوئی عزر یا اعتراض ہو وہ اپنا عزر یا اعتراض ساتھ دن کے اندر پیش کرے معاذ کرنے کی وجہ کو کوئی عزر یا اعتراض قبول نہیں ہوگا
نائب تحصیلدار کریری kri

از دفتر نائب تحصیلدار کریری ا کلترہ با اجلاس نائب تحصیلدار کریری ا کلترہ درخواست منجانب عبدالعزیز کنانی داماد علی بیٹ ساکنہ شہ پورہ برآمد سوسہ RBA سرٹیفکیٹ بین شہدتی گائی و مشیر شہدتی اشتراہ برآمد آگاہی ہر خاص و عام
معاملہ مندرجہ الصدر میں درخواست سال گذشتہ میں زیر کاروائی ہے اس نسبت پٹانری حلقہ سے رپورٹ بشمول مطلوبہ نقوالات ریکارڈ طلب کے گئے جس سے عیاں ہوتا ہے کہ سال 2022/06/21 کو فوت ہو چکا ہے۔ موتی اپنے پچھلے مندرجہ ذیل وارثان جائز چھوڑ گیا
رشتہ برہمہوتنی
1. عبدالعزیز کنانی 85 سربرہ عمر رسیدہ
2. ربیہ بیگم 80 زچہ
محمد شفیق 50 سرکاری ملازم
حیدر بیگم 48 سال گھر بیگام
شامی شفیق 18 زیر تعلیم
عزیز شفیق 13 پوتا
مہوش شفیق 12 پوتی
اسکے عداد کو کوئی بھی افراد نہیں بتلایا گیا ہے۔ سرٹیفکیٹ زیر بحث اجراء کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو کوئی عزر یا اعتراض ہو وہ اپنا عزر یا اعتراض ساتھ دن کے اندر پیش کرے۔ معاذ کرنے کے بعد کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔
نائب تحصیلدار کریری fko

'Ice Melting In Antarctica Slowing Earth's Rotation, Affecting Timekeeping'

Press Trust Of India

Ice melting in Greenland and Antarctica, driven by global warming, is affecting timekeeping the world over by slowing down the Earth's rotating speed, according to a new research.

As a result, a second might need to be deducted from the Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) three years later than otherwise, it found.

The study author, Duncan Agnew, explained that because the Earth doesn't always rotate at the same speed, the UTC consists of discontinuities.

Since 1972, all discontinuities have required that a 'leap second' be added, because many networked activities like computing and financial markets require the consistent, standardised and precise timescale provided by the UTC, he said.

Agnew is a geophysicist at Scripps Institution of Oceanography at University of California San Diego, US.

Using mathematical modelling, Agnew showed that the rate at which the Earth's liquid core rotates -- angular velocity -- has been slowing down. To compensate for this, the rotating speed of the solid Earth has steadily increased.

The compensatory effect comes from the fact that for a closed system



such as the Earth, angular momentum -- the rate at which rotating speed changes -- is a conserved quantity and doesn't change, he explained.

His study has been published in the journal Nature.

He found that the effect of the solid Earth rotating faster has resulted in fewer leap seconds being needed to be added to the UTC in recent decades.

When extrapolated to the future, he predicted that a leap second will need to be deducted from the global primary standard of timekeeping as early as the year 2026.

However, Agnew also found that the increased melting of ice caps in Green-

land and Antarctica has slowed down the Earth's rotation more rapidly than ever before and therefore, he estimated that the leap second will not need to be deducted until the year 2029. The ice melting was measured by satellite gravity.

The findings suggested a possible problem for computer network timing, and thus, changes in the policy of aligning UTC to the Earth's rotation may need to be made earlier than currently planned, Agnew said.

He noted that if the melting of polar ice caps had not recently accelerated, the turning back of the UTC by a leap second would be required three years earlier - in 2026.

PUBLIC NOTICE

My name has been wrongly written in my J&K Bank Account as Asad Rather while my correct name as per Aadhaar is Mohd Asadullah Rather which needs to be corrected. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Jk Bank Sumbal Sonawari within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained. Mohd Asadullah Rather S/o Mohd Qasim Rather R/o: Rather mohalla Sarai Dangerpora

The Jammu And Kashmir Board Of School Education New Campus Bemina Srinagar

I have passed/appeared in Secondary School Examination (Class- 10th) under Roll No. 3101401 Session: Annual (Pvt/ Biannual Year 2020-21 through the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education. Due to the error committed by the concerned School/parent/ Board against my DOB as 01-05-1994 instead of 05-01-1994. Now, I have applied for correction/rectification of error in the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education, New Campus Bemina, Srinagar, if any person has any objection in this regard, may file the same in the office of the Assistant Secretary, Certificates-KD within seven days from the date of Publication of this notice, after the expiry of said period no objection will be entertained. Name: Irshad Ahmad Dar F/N: Ab Rashid Dar M/N: Raja Begum DOB: 05-01-1994 Residence: Qazipora Bandipora Kmr

Office of the Naib-Tehsildar Pattan Executive Magistrate 1st Class

Subject: Issuance of Registration orders in respect of delayed Birth Public Notice The registrar Births and deaths (EO Municipal Council Pattan/ Block Development Officer Pattan) has submitted a case file pertaining to Birth of Haider Nabi s/o Ghulam Nabi Parray r/o Hygam Sopore Tehsil Khoie District Baramulla with verified date of event (birth) as 19-06-2020 occurred at SDH Pattan In this connection, if anybody having any objection to the issuance of said registration may contact this office within seven (07) days, after which no objections shall be entertained. Executive Magistrate 1st Class Naib Tehsildar Pattan fko

Office of the Naib-Tehsildar Pattan Executive Magistrate 1st Class

Subject: Issuance of Registration orders in respect of delayed Birth Public Notice The registrar Births and deaths (EO Municipal Council Pattan/ Block Development Officer Pattan) has submitted a case file pertaining to Birth of Ishtiyaq Arif, Muzamil Arif and Amir Arif ss/o Arif Hussain Bhat R/o Hanjiwera Bala Tehsil Pattan District Baramulla with verified date of event (birth) as 03/03/2013, 31/12/2016, 03/05/2018 occurred at Home In this connection, if anybody having any objection to the issuance of said registration may contact this office within seven (07) days, after which no objections shall be entertained. Executive Magistrate 1st Class Naib Tehsildar Pattan fko

Jammu and Kashmir Bank Ltd. Notice: Notice is hereby given that the certificates in respect of the under - mentioned shares of J&K Bank have been lost/misplaced and the holders of the said shares have applied to J&K Bank Ltd/ M/s KFin Technologies Ltd. (Share Transfer Agent) for issue of Duplicate Share Certificates. Table with columns: S. No, Name of the Shareholder, Folio No., Certificate No., Distinctive No.'s, No of Shares, Address. Includes contact info for Share Transfer Agent and Company Secretary.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir Directorate of School Education Kashmir. NOTICE: Whereas, without any prior intimation, you have remained un-authorizedly absent from your legitimate duties w.e.f 08/07/2022; and Whereas, you were given an opportunity to resume your duty by the Drawing and Disbursing Officer concerned through a Show Cause Notice on 24/09/2022, but you failed to avail this opportunity and did not joined back; and Whereas, you were again served a show cause notice by the Drawing and Disbursing Officer concerned on 10/10/2022 and were asked to explain your position with documentary evidence, but you failed to do so; and Whereas, un-authorized absence from duties attracts action as warranted in terms of article 128 of J&K Civil Services Rules (Volume I) of 1956, which reads as under: 'Absence without leave or after the end of leave involves loss of appointment' Whereas, this Directorate through the medium of Show cause Notice dated: 17/08/2023 gave you an opportunity to explain as to why the action for remaining un-authorizedly absent from your legitimate duties shall not be initiated against you; and Whereas, in the reply submitted by you on 31/08/2023 you submitted the plea for release of salary by enclosing a Medical Certificate issued by Medical Superintendent, SMHS Hospital Srinagar vide No. 6888 dated:- 16.05.2023; and Whereas, the reply submitted by you was forwarded to the Chief Education Officer, Baramulla for a report and the Chief Education Officer, Baramulla vide his communication No. CEO/Bla/IMW/1361 dated:- 10/01/2024 forwarded the report of Zonal Education Officer, Wagoor, wherein it was submitted that you have not applied for any kind of leave sanction either in person or through any representative; and Whereas, it was further reported that you have neither uploaded your monthly performance on JK-EPM, nor registered yourself on JKHRMS portal or Co-ordinate based Smart Attendance Portal; and Whereas, the issue was placed before the Designated Committee in its meeting held on 11/03/2024 and the Committee decided as under: "Notice be issued to the subject to join within 15 days". Now, therefore, pursuant to the decision of the Designated Committee, you are granted an opportunity to join your duties physically within 15 (fifteen) days from the date of issuance of this Notice, failing which action under Article-128 of J&K CSR (Vol-I) shall be initiated against you for remaining un-authorizedly absent from your legitimate duties w.e.f 08/07/2022. Sd/- Director School Education Kashmir



### Water Seeping Into Residential House Worries Family In All Kadal

**Majid Nabi**  
Srinagar: In what can only be described as official apathy, water seeping into the house from an unidentified source has put an eight member family at the Ali Kadal area of the old city in trouble.  
The family members have requested the authorities to discover the source of the water leaking, claiming that the problem is becoming worse with each passing day.  
"We repeatedly approached the higher authorities, pleading with them to save our house from collapsing. They dispatched the team as well, but nothing much was done to allay the fears," Zahoor Ahmad Ashai, the house owner, told Kashmir Observer.  
He said that while the water works department's field workers had excavated the affected area, they were unable to locate the cause of the seepage.  
"I am now pleading with the authorities to show compassion for our family and find out the underlying cause of the issue at the earliest to alleviate our concerns," he added.  
The executive engineer in question could not be contacted for the official version despite numerous attempts; nonetheless, a top official promised that the department will look into the issue.  
"Meeting the family's concerns will undoubtedly be addressed; field workers have already been instructed to report to the location," the official told Kashmir Observer.



Man rides a two-wheeler at Lal Chowk in Srinagar on Friday while wearing a raincoat as parts of Kashmir were battered by intermittent rains. KO Photo by Abid Bhat

### E-rickshaw Drivers Calls For Two Day Strike, Alleges Harassment By Traffic Cops

**Observer News Service**  
Srinagar: The e-rickshaw drivers, who are operating in Srinagar areas, are being allegedly stopped from running their affairs by the traffic police, thereby calling for a two-day strike against the move.  
The drivers staged a protest under the banner of All Kashmir E-Rickshaw Association and alleged that they are being pushed to the wall by creating hurdles in their way.  
Arshid Abbas, President of the association, said that the traffic policemen didn't allow them to operate in Karan Nagar area, which has been already mentioned in the permissible route plan by the RTO Office.  
"We don't understand the reasons for which we are being stopped from operating in the design-

### Amid Rains, Thousands Offer Congregational Prayers At Jamia Masjid

**Observer News Service**  
Srinagar: Amidst the rainfall in Srinagar, the Jamia Masjid here has witnessed a huge rush of devotees on the third Friday of Ramadan.  
The showers did little to deter worshippers, who gathered in good numbers to observe their religious duties.  
The devotees underscored the significance of respecting religious practices and ensuring a peaceful environment during this auspicious time.  
One of the devotees, Mohammad Umer said, "Ramazan holds immense importance for us, and it's essential for authorities to uphold our religious rights."  
He added despite the weather challenges, the community's spirit remains strong, reflecting our unwavering commitment to our faith.  
Moreover, as the holy month progresses, residents of Srinagar continue to unite in prayer and reflection.  
Meanwhile, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who lead the prayers at Jamia Masjid, addressed people at the Friday congregation, and lamented that even in the holy month of Ramzan which is a time of spiritual significance when the faithful look forward to guidance and religious sermons to enrich their faith and practice, he is not allowed unimpeded access to mosques and is repeatedly put under house arrest.  
According to a statement, he said that yesterday as per the announced program he was not allowed to address the religious gathering at Aali Masjid.  
Mirwaiz said that such actions also curtail the fundamental freedoms of expression and religion. Mirwaiz asked the authorities to desist from pursuing this cycle of unexplained detentions, and allow him to continue his religious work of dawah.  
Mirwaiz emphasized the virtues and significance of Ramadan as highlighted in the Qur'an and Hadith, underscoring the dual nature of devotion during this holy month: spiritual closeness to Allah Almighty through prayer and the importance of financial generosity.  
He stressed that Ramadan calls us not only to spiritual worship but also to extend our financial support to those in need within our community, through zakat and charitable donations.  
He shared that Darul Khair Mirwaiz Manzil has been a beacon of support for the less fortunate, including the ill, and those affected by disasters, for several decades. In light of this, he expressed hope that during Ramadan, the community would bolster this institution's efforts by contributing zakat and charity, thereby honoring both the spiritual and financial aspects of worship.  
Mirwaiz also announced that a special waz o tableegh majlis would take place at Dastgir Sahib Sarai Bala on the 21st of Ramadan from zuhr to ASR prayers, marking the Martyrdom Day of Hazrat Ali (RA).  
Furthermore, Mirwaiz expressed profound sorrow over the tragic loss of 10 lives in a road accident near Battery Chashma Ramban on the National Highway. He conveyed his deepest sympathies and solidarity with the bereaved families, sharing in their grief during this difficult time.

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

AIRPORTS  
SHIEKH UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈️

RAILWAYS  
SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259  
ANANTNAG: 01932-228243  
BARAMULLA: 0194-102029  
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  
19 Ramzan  
1445

PRAYERS  
FAJR 4:56  
ZUHR 12:36  
ASR 5:03  
Magrib 6:53  
ISHA 8:13

- ### This Day In History
- 240 BC - 1st recorded perihelion passage of Halley's Comet.
  - 1603 - Battle at Mellifont: English army under Lord Mountjoy beats Irish
  - 1796 - Carl Friedrich Gauss, German mathematician, discovers the construction of the heptadecagon
  - 1814 - Napoleonic Wars: Sixth Coalition forces march into Paris after defeating Napoleon.
  - 1842 - Ether used as an anaesthetic for 1st time by Dr Crawford Long (Ga)
  - 1856 - Russia signs Peace of Paris, ending the Crimean War
  - 1885 - The Battle for Kushka triggers the Pandjeh Incident which nearly gives rise to war between the British Empire and Russian Empire.
  - 1919 - Gandhi announces resistance against Rowlatt Act
  - 1925 - Stalin supports rights of non-Serbian Yugoslavians
  - 1941 - German counter offensive in North-Africa
  - 1945 - USSR invades Austria
  - 1945 - World War II: a defecting German pilot delivers a Messerschmitt Me 262A-1 to Americans.
  - 1950 - Phototransistor invention announced, Murray Hill, NJ
  - 1953 - Albert Einstein announces revised unified field theory
  - 1959 - Dalai Lama flees China and is granted political asylum in India
  - 1961 - NASA civilian pilot Joseph A Walker takes X-15 169,600' (51,690 m).
  - 1965 - Vietnam War: A car bomb explodes in front of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, killing 22 and wounding 183 others.
  - 1968 - General Ludvík Svoboda elected president of Czechoslovakia
  - 1970 - USSR wins its 8th straight world hockey championship
  - 1972 - North Vietnamese troops enter South Vietnam

### LS Polls-2024: Amar Singh College Organizes Declamation Event



**Observer News Service**  
Srinagar: The Electoral Literacy Club (ELC) at Amar Singh College Friday organized a declamation event centered around the theme 'Elector as an Ideal Citizen of the Country.'  
The event aimed to promote electoral literacy among students and faculty members, emphasizing the importance of active participation in the democratic process. The students participated in this declamation event.  
The event commenced with an insightful address by Principal, Prof. Sheikh Ajaz Bashir, who underscored the significance of exercising the right to vote as a fundamental duty of every citizen. He emphasized that by participating in elections, individuals contribute directly to the functioning of democracy, thereby shaping the future of the nation.  
The event was undertaken on the directions of Election Commission of India and District Election Officer Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat.  
Dr. Mushtaq Ahmad Rather, Convener of the Electoral Literacy Club, provided an overview of the club's various activities and highlighted the responsibility of ELC members in fostering voter participation both within the campus and beyond.  
Prof. Rather emphasized the role of students and faculty members in promoting awareness about electoral processes and encouraging fellow citizens to exercise their franchise.  
The event witnessed active participation from a significant number of students and faculty members, demonstrating a keen interest in the subject matter. The diverse audience engaged in discussions and expressed their viewpoints on the theme, reflecting a deep-seated commitment to democratic values.  
The declamation event was adjudicated by panel comprising Prof. Isaaq Ahmad, Dr. Zubair Nazeer, Prof. Tawheed Yousuf Dadoo, and Prof. Irfan Yousuf.  
Students namely Maliha of 1st semester bagged the 1st position, Muskan Javid of 2nd semester was declared runner-up and Imroz Rashid and Salika of 3rd semester got the 3rd position in the Declamation Contest.

### 34-Yr-Old Man Found Dead In Srinagar's Soura

**Observer News Service**  
Srinagar- The body of a 34-year-old man was found in the Soura area of Srinagar on late Thursday evening, officials said.  
Quoting an official, news agency KNO reported that the body of Tariq Ahmad Bhat (34), a resident of Anchar Srinagar, was found near Soura area late yesterday evening.  
He added that the body was sent for post-mortem.  
Moreover, the body will be handed over to the family after legal proceedings, and police have initiated an investigation in this regard.

### Residential House, 3 Shops Damaged In Separate Fire Incidents In Srinagar

**Observer News Service**  
Srinagar- A residential house, three shops and a transformer were damaged in separate fire incidents in Srinagar, officials said.  
Quoting an official, news agency KNO reported that at around 10:53 PM, one electric transformer caught fire at Kathi Darwaza area of Makdoom Sahab Srinagar, which soon spread to two shops, causing damage to transformer and the shops as well.  
He added that one residential house, double-storey also got damaged in another blaze at Kralpora area of Srinagar.  
The attic portion of the house has got damaged, the officials said, adding that the cause of fire is said to be electric short circuit. Also, one more incident of fire has taken place at Hawal Chowk in the intervening night of Thursday-Friday in which one shop at the first floor of a double-storey shopping complex was damaged.

### From KO Archives

### Ansari Faces Expulsion From Congress

**Observer News Service**  
New Delhi- Influential Shia leader and lone Congress minister in Farooq Abdullah government Moulvi Ifikhar Ansari, appears certain to face expulsion from the party in case he refuses to quit as a minister.  
Taking exception to Farooq Abdullah's overtures with the BJP, the Congress leadership feels that "it is right time" to ask Ifikhar to resign and work for "revitalising the party" in the state, highly placed sources said here tonight. In case Ansari refuses, the party will be left with no other alternative but to expel him, the sources added.  
Incidentally, senior Congress leader Mufti Mohammad Syed had a long meeting with the newly appointed party president Sonia Gandhi, late last night. Mufti's meeting with Sonia assumes significance in the background of wavering approach of former Congress chief Sita Ram Kesri with regard to party affairs in Kashmir, making it virtually defunct.  
The party leaders are sure that no action was taken against Ansari even as he openly campaigned against the Congress candidates in just-concluded Lok Sabha elections in Kashmir. "Time has come now to show the Moulvi his right place" a senior AICC leader told this reporter. (Kashmir Observer, 30 March, 1998)

### EXTENSION OF HOLI SPECIAL TRAINS

To clear extra post Holi rush of Passengers, Northern Railway have decided to extend the services of following Holi special trains as per the details given below:-

Train No.	From	To	Days to Dep.	Notified up to	Extended Date
04085	Varanasi Jn.	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	Sunday	28.03.24	on 31.03.2024
04086	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	Varanasi Jn.	Monday	29.03.24	on 01.04.2024

\* Rest instruction will hold good.

For detailed information, please call RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit enquiry website: www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

Visit RailMadad website : www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in & download Railmadad app.

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# Why Aren't Mosques in Kashmir Leading the Way in Social Reform?

Amir Suhail Wani

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The prevalent conceptualisation of a mosque as some otherworldly space needs a rethinking in order to accommodate the challenges and paradigms of the day in which it is supposed to play an important role

Mosques – the places of worship in Islam were never just places of worship divorced from the society and unconcerned of social issues. In Islam, Mosques are given the stature of institutions and include in their very mandate the cause of social reform and the creation of just, equitable and crime-free communities. This is what is testified by the proceedings of Masjid-i-Nabwi, the very first institution established in the history of Islam, where companions brought to table the various social ills and evils and contemplated their remedy. Riaz Syed and et al have succinctly summarised the phenomenon as “The strategy of the Holy Prophet ( ) is the best example to reform the society. In that era Masjid was not only a building but an academic and socio-political institution. It was at a time a community centre, religious place, political and administrative office, ambassador and international relation Centre, moral and welfare training centre”.

Therefore, the prevalent conceptualisation of a mosque as some otherworldly space needs a rethinking in order to accommodate the challenges and paradigms of the day in which it is supposed to play an important role. In the power structure of Muslim societies, Mosque is a power axes and it has to wake up to its task of thrusting this power in the service of society and mankind, to cure Muslims and by extension everybody of the moral pestilence that is festering our souls, families, societies and the world at large.

We have landed in a social scenario where criminality has become the order of the day and every minute our eyes and ears are bombarded with the reports of matricide, patricide, homicide, plundering, raps, social anarchy and the host of other crimes which escape vocabulary. According to the NCB data stated in a news report, the murder cases saw an increase of 25% with 149 cases in 2020 as against 119 in 2019. There were 136 cases of murder in 2021 against 149 in the previous year. J&K recorded 119 murder cases in 2019. There were 487 cases of attempt to murder, 35 cases of abetment of suicide and 24 cases of abetment of suicide



of women in 2020. The crimes against children also witnessed an increase of around 29% with 606 incidents in 2020 in comparison to 470 and 473 cases each in 2019 and 2018, respectively, says a report. This is not just a quantitative increment but there are qualitative dimensions to this rising crime seen too, if I may be allowed to use the word qualitative in a negative sense here.

Syeda Afshana, underlining this metamorphosis notes, “Kashmir is witnessing a surge in all kinds of crime, from petty theft, drug trafficking, sexual abuse, cyber bullying, organized gangs to the surfacing of peculiar brand of kidnapers and imposters. The impact is borne by every section of society, from the common man to the business community, and even by the UT administration”. But how does a place like Kashmir, whose sensitivities are mainly shaped by religion and whose air still reverberates with the

holy chants come to this morass? Do our preachers and Mosques share a responsibility to this end and what can these institutions of sanctity, command and power do to mitigate and abort the rising criminality in Kashmir? That's the question we shall explore.

Religious movements in the past, particularly in Kashmir, played a significant role in diluting the prevalent challenges of the day and to neutralise the social corrosion which was threatening the very existence of society. Anjuman E Nusratul Islam, Anjuman E Hamdard Islam, Anjuman I Tahaffuzi Namaz O Satari, were some of the paradigmatic religious movements which took upon themselves the cause of education, social discipline and religious reform in the past. In the closer past too, attempts of various sorts were made to awaken mosques to their task of social reformation and a vigorous “Mosque activism”.

Much water has flown during the past decade and as said above, crimes have spiralled into a humongous chimer of social evils, including in their fold not only the foreseeable and the expected, but unimaginable too. Mosques and their administrators need to realise that they have a role and prerogative in the midst of all this and our clergy needs to harness the power of the pulpit not to bring one another down but to collectively fight against the criminal menace that has invaded our society.

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

The author is a Srinagar-based columnist

# Measuring Progress: Factors That Can Accelerate GDP Growth

Madan Sabnavis

India, with a per capita income of \$2,411, would be classified as a low middle-income country (LMIC). Interestingly, World Bank data shows that the per capita income for Bangladesh was \$2,688. Sri Lanka, which is a very fragile economy and was on the verge of bankruptcy a couple of years ago, has a per capita income of \$3,354. Something looks out of place, considering that in the past three years India has been the best performing economy in the world with growth rates upwards of 7%, while the rest of the economies had to face sharp challenges in terms of growth. Yet, there is a sharp difference once the GDP numbers are normalised by population.

The simple reason why India does very well when it comes to headline growth, which also results in high GDP numbers, is that there has been overall development across sectors. Services and manufacturing have grown at consistently steady rates, with greater formalisation leading to good overall performance. But the country scores low in terms of per capita indicators due to a very high population of 1.4 billion. This is the reason why even smaller countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka score better in relative terms.

Per capita income, in a way, is a measure of average productivity in the economy, which has tended to be low. While population growth has come down well below 1% per annum, there is also a need for accelerated growth of GDP while controlling the population. This is why China, which has around the same population, does much better regarding per capita. However, this has been done over a period of over three decades, with a big push being given by the government on capex. Similar is the case with countries like Argentina and Turkey, where a lower size of population



allows the benefit of higher per capita income.

It is against this backdrop that one must look at the targets for a GDP of \$5 trillion, \$7 trillion, or \$10 trillion being relevant. The size of the cake must increase so that with modest growth in population, the per capita income can also increase to higher levels. This is also why having an objective of reaching the status of an upper middle-income country is relevant. There are two issues here—increasing the size of the cake, and improving the quality or productivity of the population so that the former is achieved at an accelerated pace.

India has demonstrated that a nominal growth rate of more than 10% is achievable with real growth of 7% per annum. Assuming that India clocks 11% growth in the next few years, and population growth remains where

it is today, we can reach the threshold of \$4,095 per capita in the next five years (including FY24). At a conservative level, it can be six years, assuming that there can be slips along the way due to an unfavourable monsoon. If this momentum is maintained for the next 15 years, India can hit the magic number of \$12,965 as per capita income, which will make us reach the league of high-income nations. Again, an allowance of another year can be made for any slippages, and the fact that the World Bank's definition will also adjust to the inflation developments during this period.

Therefore, in the next two decades, which will be up to roughly 2045, with the present momentum being maintained, India can reach the status of a high-income nation. This leads to the second question on the quality of

population. While we do talk a lot about demographic dividend, the present matrix does not ensure that the youth are well-educated and are in a position to get jobs which require an acceptable level of skillsets. While there has been a jump in employment in the last few years, it has tended to be concentrated in the construction, retail and delivery industries, which require limited skillsets. There is clearly a need to move over to higher skilled jobs, which will evolve as this pace of growth is maintained.

It must also be remembered that with the widespread use of technology in most industries, there is also a case of labour being replaced. CMIE data shows that for the age group of 15 years and above, there are around 439 million people, of which only 14% are graduates. A graduate degree is not sufficient to get a well-paying job in the private sector. Further, the labour participation rate is around 61% for graduates and 40% for all education groups. Clearly, education is the main challenge for the nation going forward.

Therefore, there are a few elements that have to fall in place. First, the average product of the population has to increase, and this is where education and skills matter. Second, jobs have to be created at an accelerated pace in sectors which require these skills. These two factors will also help to bring in accelerated GDP growth. The comforting factor is that with the present standard and quality of labour force, the country has done well enough to clock such high GDP growth rates on a sustainable basis. The fulfillment of these two objectives will help add a delta to the growth rate.

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

# Spring

## The Season of New Beginnings

Mohammad Hanief

Spring is the season during which the natural world re-awakens and reinvigorates after the colder winter months and during it dormant plants begin to grow again, new seedlings sprout out of the ground and hibernating animals awake.

What most people call spring relies on the astronomical definition of the word. Defined by the angle of Earth's tilt toward the sun, astronomical spring relies on equinoxes and solstices to define it. Spring is generally considered the period between the spring equinox and the summer solstice.

Equinoxes are days during the year when day and night are almost equal. There are two equinoxes each calendar year, one in the spring and one in the fall. The spring, or vernal, equinox occurs around March 20 in the Northern Hemisphere and around Sept. 22 in the Southern Hemisphere.

Spring is one of two times when the Earth's axis is not pointed toward or away from the sun. In the Northern Hemisphere, the North Pole is tipped at its greatest angle toward the sun during the summer solstice, which occurs around June 21. In the Southern Hemisphere, around December 21, it is the South Pole's turn to be nearer. As such, in the Northern Hemisphere, astronomical spring runs from March 21 to June 21, while in the Southern Hemisphere it encompasses September 21 to Dec. 21, though the dates may shift slightly from year to year.

The air may lose its winter chill before the middle of March or September, though. Weather forecasters define meteorological spring as a three-month period based on rising temperatures. North of the equator, meteorological spring takes place in March, April and May, while in the south it is characterized by the months of September, October and November.

In the hemisphere that is tilted closer to the sun, temperatures become warmer. Warmer temperatures means the ground, which may have frozen over the winter months, grows softer and more yielding to plants. Spring is often marked by increased rainfall, which helps to water the infant seeds taking root in the ground.

Animals that spent the winter



Abid Bhat/VO

in hibernation come out of their dens, while those that traveled to warmer regions return. Many animals give birth in the spring. Winter coats are shed by those that sported them, and some animals may change coloration to blend in with their new surroundings.

The rising rainfall of spring may bring with it an increase in flooding as melting snow overwhelms rivers. Spring may also boast storms, as warm air from the equator combines with still-cool air farther north or south.

One of the first signs that spring has sprung are the presence of tree buds. A plant's buds act as a shield for the delicate flowers inside. Flowers of different shapes, sizes and forms come with individual and distinct protection. Throughout winter these buds remain closed and dormant, surviving the cold until their time comes to thrive in the spring, making a vibrant emergence from their compact casing. While it's usually easy to distinguish a species from its distinct flowers, buds can have more subtle differences. This visual guide to the more common tree buds should help you identify them.

Spring in Kashmir is beautiful beyond words. It enthralls the visitors and locals alike and



**One can spend a wonderful time at the Badamwari garden and can stroll along the walkways and watch the beautiful flowers. An evening at the garden is really refreshing and one can feel awesome enjoying the scenic beauty of the garden. Flocks of tourists can be seen at the garden that comes to watch the splendid garden**

heralds the end of the harsh winter. For many decades, the appearance of the almond blossoms in Badamwari meant

that the spring was finally there in Kashmir and the sighting was celebrated with much joy. Delicately beautiful, an almond flower with its pale pink petals, resembles a painted umbrella when fully bloomed and it is symbolically connected with Kashmir's social celebrations.

Every year on the onset of the spring season in Kashmir valley, the tourist season starts with the opening of Badamwari and Tulip Gardens in Srinagar city giving an open invitation to all kinds of tourists and visitors of India and abroad to come to Kashmir to spend vacations with your family and friends to enjoy the real scenic beauty, culture, heritage and enriched known Kashmiri hospitality are the famous elites of Kashmir Valley.

Srinagar is clearly the heart of Kashmir Valley. With the Himalayan Mountain Range forming a picturesque backdrop, the sparkling Dal Lake and the rows of colourful houseboats and shikaras on it, Srinagar offers its visitors a visual treat. Some of the top popular tourist attractions & things to do in Srinagar are Mughal Gardens, Hari Parbat, Chashme Shahi Garden and Pari Mahal.

The early bloom of flowers on Almond trees in the sprawling historic Badamwari garden in

Srinagar has become a source of attraction for nature lovers and tourists. Situated on foothills of Koh-e-Maran, the 300 Kanals garden was dotted with trees, flowers, and cascades providing a soothing experience to the visitors in Kashmir valley.

Believed to be existing before the 14th century ruler, Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, this comparatively lesser-known garden in Srinagar boasts streams and fountains that enhance the beauty of this 300 kanals park that is ideal for family picnics or enjoying the beauty of nature. There is also a dome-shaped structure that is named after Warris Shah, an Afghan Ruler.

In the ancient days, the people of Kashmir celebrated the harvest festival in the spring months. The Badamwari Garden is in full bloom during the spring season. The aura of the garden has fragrant airs and beautiful white flowers.

One can spend a wonderful time at the Badamwari garden and can stroll along the walkways and watch the beautiful flowers. An evening at the garden is really refreshing and one can feel awesome enjoying the scenic beauty of the garden. Flocks of tourists can be seen at the garden that comes to watch

the splendid garden.

A fully flowering almond tree is a sight to behold too and the old residents of the Kashmir Valley recollect their prettiness with misty eyes. It is because a blooming almond tree meant the beginning of Navreh in Kashmir and in olden times, the Kashmiri Pandits celebrated it as their New Year festival. Those used to be the days when peace, prosperity, and communal harmony existed in the valley and people irrespective of their religion, visited the garden to enjoy the blooming almond trees on Navreh.

According to historians, families of Kashmiri Pandits celebrating Navreh used to gather at Badamwari after visiting the Hari Parbat shrine to seek goddess Sharika's blessings and people carried delicious wazwan items (traditional Kashmiri food) in their picnic hampers. Folk singers wandered about singing songs of spring to people who gathered under the blooming almond trees to enjoy the end of winter. Hot kahwa (Kashmiri tea) gurgled from traditional samovars and opened willow baskets emanated the aroma of nadermonja (lotus stem fritters) and Parathas (deep-fried flatbread).

Though its history remains obscure, the older generation of Kashmiris finds it impossible to forget the Badamwari festival in spring. A beautiful forgotten event of the 'good old days', the appearance of almond blossoms at Badamwari was inextricably linked with the happiness of the people of Srinagar, especially those living in the Shehr-e-Khas area. Since Srinagar during those days had only one picnic spot, every year the spring festival used to be held at Badamwari. The festival used to be a mega cultural event in which many renowned singers performed for the public and Badamwari's gorgeous venue added to the charm of the celebrations.

For centuries the Badam Wari was the first to reverberate with life with the onset of the spring season in Jammu and Kashmir. Till 1980, the people of Srinagar would assemble there to announce the arrival of the spring season – after braving the vagaries of a harsh winter – with music and mirth.

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

# Honouring The Wisdom Of Aged

Abid Hussain Rather

In our fast-paced world, it is easy to overlook the invaluable treasure trove of wisdom and experience that our senior citizens and elders bring to our communities. As we rush through our daily lives, it is essential to take a moment to reflect on the elderly individuals who have contributed so much to society and are still contributing in countless ways. Senior citizens are an invaluable part of our society. They have a wealth of life experience and knowledge, which can be a source of wisdom and inspiration. As a society, we owe a debt of gratitude to the older generation who have contributed to our communities and played a pivotal role in shaping our world. It is our moral and societal duty to ensure that they lead a life of dignity, comfort, and respect. They have contributed their wisdom, experience, and often a lifetime of hard work to create the world we live in today. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that they enjoy their golden years with dignity, respect, and the support they need. Respecting and helping senior citizens strengthens the social fabric of our communities. It creates a sense of belonging, interdependence, and a culture of empathy and compassion. Helping and respecting senior citizens is not just a moral obligation; it's a duty we owe to those who have paved the way for our present and future. Senior citizens are a valuable and often overlooked segment of our society. These individuals have contributed a lifetime of wisdom, experience, and hard

work to build the world we live in today. It is our responsibility as a society to ensure that they are not only cared for but also respected for their invaluable contributions.

## UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF ELDERLY AND SENIOR CITIZENS

As people age, they may face a range of physical, mental, and emotional challenges. To offer genuine help and respect to senior citizens, it is crucial to understand their unique needs and challenges. It is crucial to understand and empathize with these challenges to provide appropriate help and respect.

With age, mobility and physical strength may decline. This can make daily tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, or even dressing, more difficult. As we grow older, our body strength weakens and doesn't support us to do needful things for ourselves. Seniors are also often more prone to health problems, and managing chronic illnesses can become a significantly difficult part of their lives. With growing age, our immunity decreases and we become more prone to various infections and common diseases. Many senior citizens may also experience social isolation due to the loss of friends and family members. Loneliness can lead to mental health issues like depression. In the later stages of life, people are left in isolation assuming that they are old fashioned, uninteresting and boring which ultimately leads to many kinds of mental health issues among older people.

Additionally, with growing age, our IQ decreases and our memory

power starts declining. Some seniors may experience memory loss and cognitive decline, making it essential to approach them with patience and understanding. This may explain why senior citizens often feel perplexed and confused at public offices. We must recognize that many seniors may not be tech-savvy, they need various kinds of help at public offices. Public offices should prioritize accessibility by providing ramps, handrails, and elevators for those with mobility challenges. Elders often need help in information interpretation and proper communication with the employees at public offices.

They may also experience reduced mobility. Therefore, providing transportation or helping them with daily errands is a significant support. They often need support while walking, travelling or crossing roads. Knowing and understanding the various needs of senior citizens, it is imperative upon every member of a society to help, support and respect them in every possible way.

Following are some of the practical ways to help and respect our elders and senior citizens which may provide insights on how to provide them with the care and consideration they deserve:

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND PLANNING

Financial matters can become increasingly complex with age. It is important to help seniors manage their finances, ensure they are aware of their entitlements, and prevent them from falling victim to financial scams. Seek legal advice for estate planning to protect

their assets and provide a sense of security. It is duty of youngsters to support them financially when they are unable to earn because of their age factor. Elders too have basic needs like other people have and they need financial support to fulfill their basic needs.

## ENSURING SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

For many seniors, their living conditions may need to be modified for safety and accessibility. This may include installing handrails, ramps, or adapting bathroom facilities. These adjustments not only enhance their quality of life but also prevent accidents. Nowadays elders and senior citizens are taken as burden on the family and are kicked away from the homes which renders them homeless. These issues need to be addressed and special laws and provisions need to be framed to safeguard their shelter.

## PROVIDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Elderly individuals often face emotional challenges such as loneliness and isolation. Spending time with them, engaging in conversations, and being empathetic can significantly improve their mental well-being. Strong emotional support helps seniors feel valued and cared for. Nowadays most of us remain busy with social media, spending less time with our families especially elders. Resultantly, they feel isolated and secluded. It is better to spend much time with them so that they may feel integrated with other family members which will give them emotional support.

## Technological Assistance

Many senior citizens may not be familiar with modern technology and new digital tactics. We should offer them help to learn how to use smartphones or computers to stay connected with loved ones or access information. Nowadays, most of the offices/banks are digitized. While finding some senior citizen struggling with something in any office, we should readily help him and clear his confusion regarding some issues or handling any gadget.

## LISTEN ACTIVELY

One of the most fundamental ways to respect and honor our seniors is by actively listening to their stories, experiences, and advice. Their life journeys are filled with invaluable lessons that can guide us through our own challenges. When engaging in conversation, put away distractions and give them your full attention. Not only will they appreciate it, but you'll gain insight and understanding in return and they will in turn feel honoured.

## OFFER ASSISTANCE

Many seniors may require assistance with daily tasks or errands. Whether it's helping them with grocery shopping, taking them to medical appointments, or assisting with household chores, offering a helping hand can make a world of difference. These small acts of kindness show that you care and are willing to support them.

## RESPECT THEIR INDEPENDENCE AND THEIR PERSPECTIVE

While it is important to offer help, it is equally crucial to respect

their independence. Seniors cherish their autonomy, and we should encourage and enable them to maintain it as long as possible. Ensure that your assistance doesn't overshadow their ability to make decisions about their own lives. We should try to not interfere in their decisions. Senior citizens often have different viewpoints shaped by their experiences. Even if you disagree, always respect their perspectives and engage in meaningful discussions rather than dismissing their thoughts.

## INCLUDE THEM IN ACTIVITIES

**ISOLATION AND LONELINESS CAN BE SIGNIFICANT:** and critical issues for senior citizens. Make an effort to include them in social activities and gatherings. Invite them to family events, local community gatherings, or simply spend time with them. Such interactions can provide much-needed companionship and keep their spirits high.

## SUPPORT THEIR HEALTH

Senior citizens often face health challenges. Encourage regular check-ups and help them adhere to prescribed medications or treatments. Physical activity and a balanced diet are crucial for their well-being, so consider engaging in these activities together.

## ENSURE SAFETY

Safety is a top concern for seniors, especially if they live alone. Help them create a safe home environment by addressing potential hazards, such as loose rugs or inadequate lighting. Consider installing handrails or ramps to

make their living spaces more accessible. Their rooms should be regularly checked to ensure their safety from any hazard.

## PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING

Encourage seniors to pursue lifelong learning. They can take up new hobbies, attend classes, or engage in volunteer work. This not only keeps their minds active but also makes them feel valued in their communities.

## ADVOCATE FOR THEIR RIGHTS

Advocate for policies and programs that protect the rights and well-being of senior citizens. Support organizations that focus on senior issues and be aware of elder abuse, reporting any concerns when necessary. Their rights should be strictly safeguarded and any breach should be strictly dealt with law.

In conclusion, helping and respecting senior citizens is an essential part of building a compassionate and inclusive society. Our elders have contributed to the world in countless ways, and it is our responsibility to show gratitude and provide the support and respect they deserve. By implementing these guidelines, we can ensure that the senior citizens in our lives live with dignity and fulfilment in their golden years. In return, their wisdom and experiences can enrich our lives in countless ways, creating a mutually beneficial relationship that fosters a stronger and more compassionate community. Let us remember that age should be celebrated, and senior citizens should be valued for their unique contributions to society.

# Education Key To Social Transformation: LG

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday interacted with the members of JATF, a Mumbai-based nonprofit organization, dedicated to empower youth through education. The LG appreciated the group

for helping students to achieve their dreams through its various coaching and mentoring projects across the country. "JATF is guided by the noble ideals of Lord Mahavir and it is committed to give back to the society. JATF's project for the competitive exam is creating a human resource



that will take advantage of new opportunities for development

and contribute to the growth of the nation," the LG said. He called upon all stakeholders to make collaborative efforts to promote holistic education which is essential for the development of society. "Education is a powerful instrument of social

transformation and nation's progress. For a peaceful, harmonious and progressive society, more organizations like JATF must come forward to create an educated, responsible and skilled generation that can contribute to nation-building and inclusive development of all

sections of society," he said. Since its inception, JATF is continuously striving to shape the future of the youth, guiding and assisting them to prepare for the Civil & Judicial Services, IIT and Banking sector. My best wishes to the foundation for its future endeavours, he said.

## CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

### 10 Killed As Cab

Bhairangang of West Champaran in Bihar are among the deceased. The operation to retrieve the bodies was carried out by police and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) personnel amid heavy rains in the area, the officials said.

### PM, President,

"The news of people getting killed after a vehicle fell into a gorge in the Ramban area on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway is very sad. I offer my condolences to the bereaved families," Murmu said in a post in Hindi on X. In his condolence message, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said, "I am deeply shocked to learn of the unfortunate road accident in Ramban today, in which precious lives have been lost. I send my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families." Sinha said he has issued instructions to the district administration and divisional commissioner to render all assistance to the kin of the victims. Democratic Progressive Azad Party chairman Ghulam Nabi Azad conveyed his condolences to the bereaved families. Union Minister and Udhampur MP Jitendra Singh in a post on X said, "My sincere condolences to the bereaved families." "Spoke to Ramban Deputy Commissioner Baseer-ul-Haq after learning about the tragic road accident in which a passenger taxi rolled down a deep gorge on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway near Battery Chashma leading to loss of 10 lives," Singh said.

### Rains Lash Plains

and Kashmir during next 24 hours. On March 31, he said, partly to generally cloudy weather with intermittent light rain/snow is expected at a few places. Generally dry weather has been forecast thereafter till April 5. According to MeT advisory, farmers have been advised to suspend farm operations till 31st March. There is a possibility of landslides, mudslides and shooting stones during above period, the advisory reads, adding that thunderstorm, lightning activity with possibility of hailstorm & Gusty winds is expected during 29 & 30th March. Meanwhile, efforts to restore connectivity along the Mughal Road, linking Poonch-Rajouri to Kashmir, saw significant progress as snow removal operations concluded within a record 17 days. Regarding night temperature, he said, Srinagar recorded a minimum of 8.2°C against 9.8°C on the previous night and it was above normal by 2.1°C for the summer capital of JK for this time of the year. Qazigund recorded a minimum of 8.4°C against 9.8°C on the previous night and it was 3.7°C above normal for the gateway town of Kashmir, he said. Pahalgam recorded a low of 5.0°C, same as on the previous night and it was 3.4°C above normal for the famous resort in south Kashmir. Kokernag, also in south Kashmir, recorded a minimum of 7.7°C against 9.1°C on the previous night and it was 3.0°C above normal, the official said. Kupwara town recorded a low of 7.3°C against 9.5°C on the previous night and it was 2.8°C above normal there, the official said. Gulmarg recorded a low of 0.4°C against 3.0°C on the previous night and it was above normal by 1.2°C for the famous skiing resort in north Kashmir's Baramulla district. Jammu, he said, recorded a minimum of 19.6°C and it was above normal by 3.0°C for the winter capital of J&K. Banihal recorded a low of 10.4°C, Batote 10.1°C and Baderwah 9.6°C, he said.

### Massive Avalanche

occupants were rescued. After a swift operation, 10 people onboard were evacuated safely, they said. Upon receiving the report, SDPO Kangan, Dr. Muzaffar Jan, Police, SDRF and the Primary Health Center in Sonamarg swiftly mobilized a team of medical staff to conduct rescue operations, the officials said. Police officials confirmed that all ten individuals, including drivers, trapped in both vehicles were safely evacuated while two of them have been shifted to the hospital for further treatment. Tehsilgund and DSP Traffic also visited the spot to assess the situation. SDM Kangan, after inspecting the area, announced that vehicular movement on the Sonmarg road would be restricted until March 31. However, vehicles can still access Sonmarg via Sonmarg Z-Morph Tunnel. He urged tourists and locals to avoid traveling on the Sonmarg road at night due to the risk of avalanches in certain areas. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Ganderbal Sandeep Gupta also confirmed that the two vehicles that got buried under the snow avalanche have been evacuated safely and added that no loss of life or injury was reported in the incident. Meanwhile, the Jammu and Kashmir Disaster Management Authority on Friday issued a medium-danger level avalanche warning for four districts of Kashmir division. Avalanche with medium danger

level is likely to occur above 2400 metres over Kupwara, Bandipora, Baramulla and Ganderbal districts in next 24 hours, reads an advisory. People living in these areas are advised to take precautions and avoid venturing in the avalanche prone areas till further orders. In case of any help, the authority can be reached at 112.

### Congress Gets

the Left party is consulting its lawyers to challenge the notice of the tax authorities. The sources said notice mentions that in case it fails to explain its position to the I-T department, penalties along with interest due to authorities for "discrepancies" in the use of an old PAN card by the party would be levied. Earlier a leader said the notice was for Rs 11 crore but later said it did not mention the amount. "We are seeking legal assistance and consulting our lawyers," a senior CPI leader told PTI.

The I-T department has also withdrawn the tax exemption of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) for the year 2016-17 and taxed the Left party Rs 15.59 crore for not declaring a bank account in its tax returns for the year.

### Climate Action

two-pronged strategy: first, nature and climate-friendly innovation, and second, environmentally-friendly lifestyles. The prime minister said, "Our current challenge is how we perceive progress. For example, a country's development is often judged by its steel consumption and energy usage. Based on these criteria, we calculate the country's economy." "If we continue to rely on these parameters, we will consume more electricity and steel, resulting in increased carbon emissions. This means we need to change our mindset. We need to make lifestyle choices and measure progress in ways that are climate-friendly. Currently, all our measures of progress are detrimental to the climate," he said. Modi suggested that the world adopt the concept of green GDP which would be incorporated into the overall gross domestic product. "We need to change the global terminology," he said. Green GDP is an alternative metric for gauging economic growth which takes into consideration the environmental consequences linked to economic activities. The prime minister said that if "we continue to consume excessively and waste electricity and water", the climate change problem cannot be solved. He noted that his and Gates' perspectives on climate change closely align. The philanthropist praised Modi's "Mission Innovation" launched at the 2015 Paris climate meeting.

"Mission Innovation", termed by Modi, involves collaboration among 23 countries and the European Commission (on behalf of the European Union) to accelerate the clean energy revolution and progress towards the Paris Agreement goals and pathways to net zero. India is a founding member of "Mission Innovation". Gates said the world will probably miss the Paris Agreement target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and even the "2 degrees Celsius goal is not going to be easy". Global average temperatures have risen by more than 1.1 degrees Celsius since 1850, exacerbating climate impacts, with 2023 being the hottest on record. The greenhouse gases spewed into the atmosphere, largely due to the burning of fossil fuels since the start of the Industrial Revolution, is closely tied to it. The prime minister said that post-G20, an atmosphere has been created where everyone has resolved to fulfill their responsibilities towards climate.

He told Gates that India is making rapid advancements in the renewable energy sector. "Our efforts are focused on solar and wind energy. And, we are also eager to accelerate progress in the nuclear sector. Similarly, our ambitions extend to making significant progress in green hydrogen," he said. The G20 Summit held here last year concluded with the major economies agreeing to triple renewable energy capacity by 2030, which is also one of the key outcomes of the UN climate conference held in Dubai in December. Modi also said his government is promoting innovation in sunrise sectors through Rs 1 lakh corpus fund to youth and interest-free loan for up to 50 years to work on futuristic technologies.

Discussing India's rich history of environmental conservation, the prime minister said recycling and reusing are inherent to the nature of Indian people and their ethos. He informed Gates that the jacket he was wearing was made of recycled materials. Gates said consumers should prefer clean products "when they are buying a car or when they are buying any product". "Changing their food consumption, even if they don't go all the way to be a vegetarian, they can eat less beef, more chicken, or less chicken and more fish, they can moderate quite a bit, and we know that it also has some health benefits as well," he said. To this, Modi said that even a vegetarian diet needs improvement and this can be done through the inclusion of millets.

"We celebrated 2023 as the 'Year of Millets' with the UN. Millets have great benefits. They grow in barren land, need minimal water, and don't require fertilisers. They are a superfood. Promoting millet can be a big step forward," he said. Even with vegetarian options, some choices are more harmful, he added. Modi also outlined his vision to transform the lives of rural women by providing them with an access to technology and training, thereby challenging the traditional gender roles and fostering economic independence.

The prime minister reiterated his commitment to bridging the digital gap in rural areas, especially emphasising the importance of empowering women through innovative programmes like "Namoo Drone Didi". "I want to give them technology in their hands and bring a psychological change. Everyone in the villages should feel that they are transforming their village," he said.

### 3 Main Contenders

government in Jammu and Kashmir that collapsed in June 2018 after the national party pulled out of the alliance. Several months before the government's fall, Choudhary Lal Singh resigned from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and floated his own outfit following an uproar over his participation in a rally in support of the accused in a rape-and-murder case of an eight-year-old girl in Kathua in January 2018. However, he defended his participation in the rally, stating that he was there to "defuse the situation". On November 7 last year, Choudhary Lal Singh was arrested by the ED in connection with a money laundering case against an educational trust run by his wife. However, he was released on bail three weeks later. In his latest affidavit, Choudhary Lal Singh put the value of his movable assets at Rs 26,53,027 and immovable assets at Rs 1.53 crore. His wife's movable assets are valued at Rs 76.60 lakh and immovable assets at Rs 1 crore in 2024. In 2009, he had declared his movable assets of Rs 2,27,378 and immovable assets of Rs 5 lakh, while his wife's immovable and movable assets were declared at Rs 5,62,000 and Rs 5 lakh respectively. The latest wealth included Rs 45,000 cash in his hand and Rs 40,000 cash with his wife, three bank accounts each for self and his wife having over Rs 11.63 lakh and over Rs 25.40 lakh respectively. The assets also included a residential house in Marheen in the name of his wife and non-agriculture land in Bosholi. Besides, the husband and wife own 150 grams and 600 grams of gold worth Rs 9.45 lakh and Rs 10 lakh respectively. According to the latest affidavit, the income tax returns of Choudhary Lal Singh filed for the last five financial years are pegged at Rs 4,55,870 in 2022-23, Rs 1,50,000 in 2021-22, Rs 4,75,000 in 2020-21, Rs 3,47,500 in 2019-20 and Rs 20,91,486 in 2018-19. His wife has also filed her income tax returns ranging between Rs 6 lakh and Rs 27 lakh during the same period. The Congress candidate has a liability of Rs 20.34 lakh, including Rs 15.34 lakh loan from UCO bank, while his wife has a liability of a loan of Rs 5 lakh from the Jammu and Kashmir assembly, which they are yet to pay.

According to the affidavit, the CBI has filed a charge sheet against Choudhary Lal Singh in the R B Education trust which was subsequently converted into a case of money laundering by the ED in 2022. Besides him, there are two more crorepatists, including Union minister Jitendra Singh of the BJP and G M Saroori of the Ghulam Nabi Azad-led Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) in the fray. Jitendra Singh, who won from the Udhampur seat in the 2014 and 2019 polls, has put the value of his movable assets at Rs 3.33 crore and immovable assets at Rs 3.71 crore. His wife Manju Singh's movable assets are pegged at Rs 88.88 lakh and immovable assets at Rs 66 lakh. Saroori of DPAP has movable assets worth Rs 4,446,542 and Rs 1,11,560 in cash. He does not have any jewellery. His wife has movable assets worth Rs 2,828,247, including 500 grams of gold amounting to Rs 2,671,000 and Rs 151,500 cash. Saroori has immovable assets worth Rs 51,924,450, while his wife has immovable assets of Rs 8,407,755. The nominations of 12 candidates, including independents, have been found valid.

### Papers Of 3 Covering

which included big names like BJP candidate Dr. Jitendra Singh, Congress candidate Choudhary Lal Singh and Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) candidate Ghulam Muhammad Saroori. Other candidates belonged to smaller parties and independents. The filing of nomination papers ended on March 27 and on March 28 scrutiny of papers was done during which papers of three candidates, who were covering candidates, were rejected by the RO office. "Those whose papers were rejected included Prem Nath, BJP covering candidate for Dr. Jitendra Singh, Divya Surya Partap Singh, covering candidate for Congress candidate Choudhary Lal Singh and Tilak Raj, covering candidate for BSP candidate Amit Kumar," an official said. All the three covering candidates had filed

their nomination on their respective party mandate but as the original belonged to main candidates, their forms were rejected by the RO office. Since the papers of three candidates have been rejected, 12 candidates are still in the fray and till tomorrow evening candidates have the option of withdrawing their papers beyond which there will be no option to leave the contest. The Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha seat which will be going for polls on April 19 in the first phase of parliamentary elections in which big guns like Jitendra Singh and Lal Singh will be fighting to get their third term as Member Parliament. DPAP candidate G M Saroori is also in the fray hoping to get maximum votes from his home district Kishtwar and neighbouring districts of Doda and Ramban—(KNO)

### Shoot-at-Sight

the past 17 days. The rise in human-animal conflicts has left villagers living in constant fear, who had appealed for a shoot-at-sight order from the district administration. Altam Hussain, Wildlife Warden (Central), said that they have issued the shoot-at-sight order for the "man-eater" leopard. "Our first priority will be tranquilising or trapping the animal, but if these measures fail, shooting will be considered. After assessing the situation, orders have been issued to hunt down the said animal following the necessary formalities," he said. Over the past 17 days, the Jammu and Kashmir Wildlife Department has conducted extensive search operations, utilising drones in various areas where the presence of the leopard is suspected.

Describing the horrific incident, Ajaz Ahmad, a local of Hariwani, said that 7-year-old Toiba Mushtaq was taken away from the lawns of her home in the evening, despite her mother being with her when they stepped outside to use the toilet. Her body was later found in nearby bushes. "Out of the three brothers, only one brother had a child, and she was that, but the leopard also made her its victim. The Wildlife Department hasn't succeeded in catching it, and the district administration has remained a silent spectator," he lamented. "No orders are being given by them to kill this leopard even after two killings. We are living in constant fear, and our children are not able to go out of the house, affecting their education."

Javed Ahmad, another local of Hariwani village, said the recent leopard attacks have left them trembling with fear. "We cannot even step out of our homes without worrying about the safety of our children. Yesterday, after killing a minor girl, the leopard attacked another person in the same village, but he luckily managed to escape," he said. "This man-eating leopard attacks by entering the yards of houses, and fearing that, a person cannot even step outside the houses. The Wildlife Department has very few staff, due to which they are not able to catch the leopard," he added.

### Stay Indoors

following his visit to Hariwani where a 7-year-old girl was mauled to death by a leopard, the DC advised people to exercise extra caution until the operation is over, especially with regard to their children, and to walk in groups to prevent any more unfortunate incidents. "I urge people to cooperate with the police, wildlife, and revenue departments to make this operation effective. Only then will people be able to heave a sigh of relief when the leopard that has turned into a monster is swiftly apprehended," he said. "In order for the wildlife team and police to follow up on leads, sightings can also be reported to our SDPO, SHO and police department, who are already at work," the DC said. Earlier, speaking to the media persons, SDM Khanshab said the administration is keeping a close eye on the leopard. "Cages had already been set up in Samsan village, but unfortunately, the leopard moved and attacked another child four kilometres away in Hariwani," he said. He said that under the Deputy Commissioner's direction, a wildlife team has been permanently deployed in the village, and community awareness campaigns have been conducted, advising residents to stay inside during the morning and evening hours and to take extra care of their children until the leopard is apprehended.

### Lotus Will Bloom

to politicise it to build a fake narrative. According to a statement, Chugh said that National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah and PDP's Mahbooba Mufti should acknowledge the Modi government's contribution in bringing peace to J&K. The Abdullah and Mufti families have been promoting separatism in J&K for their petty political interests and with the new policies of the Modi government both of them are rattled and frustrated, he said. He said the Modi government had taken a series of steps including abrogation of Article 370 to take J&K onto the new path of development and progress. "Since Union Home Minister Amit Shah has AFSPA and withdrawal of troops in Jammu and

Kashmir, the regional political parties especially NC seems to be in absolute frustration. Perhaps NC has forgotten its role in its bringing and implementation in J&K," Chugh said. He said NC has brought AFSPA to J&K in 1978 with an aim to crush their political opponents and to remain in power. This party has made enough destruction to J&K and its institutions with the help of such laws. "Now when BJP took a stand to revisit the law it led NC and its entire leadership into absolute frustration," Chugh added. "NC during their times pampered terrorism, separatism, and corruption. They made thousands of youth scapegoats for their cheap politics," he held. Chugh said that the regional parties of Jammu and Kashmir have been rejected by masses, and in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections these leaders will lose their addresses. "Kashmiris have embraced BJP after August 05, 2019. They are supporting pro-people initiatives of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. March 7 rally at Bakshi Stadium Srinagar is eye opener for regional political parties. No one can stop Lotus to bloom in every house of J&K," Chugh added—(KNO)

### HC Orders DC

convene a meeting of the elected members of the council for consideration of 'No Confidence Motion' to be held at the office of council at a time appointed by him, which shall not be later than 15 working days from the date on which the notice under sub-Rule (1) is delivered to him and a meeting convened under sub-Rule (2) has to be presided over by Chairperson if 'motion' is against Vice Chairperson and by Vice Chairperson if 'motion' is against Chairperson. "They said while the 'motion' was to be concluded by DC within 15 working days, the authority failed to discharge the duty vested in him under law and he deliberately slept over the matter without any lawful justification."

However, after arguing for a while, counsel representing DDCs submitted that he will be satisfied if Deputy Commissioner Budgam was directed to conclude the 'No Confidence Motion' within a time frame. "In view of the above, the present writ petition is disposed of with a direction to respondent No.2- Deputy Commissioner Budgam to conclude the 'No Confidence Motion' dated 29.02.2024, moved by the petitioners against Chairperson, District Development Council, Budgam, having due regard to the legal position governing the field, within a period of two weeks from the date copy of this order along with copy of writ petition and documents, is furnished to him," a bench of Rajesh Sekhri said.

### Stern Directives

light of these directives, the Directorate aims to uphold transparency and accountability within the education system, ensuring that students and parents are protected from undue financial burdens and discriminatory practices," said a senior Officer privy to the development.

Strict enforcement measures are outlined in the Jammu and Kashmir School Education Act 2022, with provisions for initiating action against schools found in violation of its regulations. The Directorate has urged parents to step forward and report any instances of non-compliance or unfair practices to the Chief Education Officer of the district or the Directorate of School Education. (KNO)

### Property Rights

and car which started from Challog and passed from Duggan, Baddi, Taggar, Loang, and culminated at Bani where Ch Lal Singh Addressed a huge gathering and asked for the mandate. Ch.Lal Singh while addressing the gathering, urged upon the people to vote for him en masse and promised that the loss which they suffered in the last ten years which include loss of jobs, land, property and even the livelihood of the common masses, shall be restored. He reiterated its stand of fighting for the interest of the Dogra race and pledged to expose all those forces inimical to the growth of the Dogras.

While addressing the gathering, Lal Singh said that I am contesting elections for the jobs of the people of my area and state and I am struggling for the protection of the Dogra posterity and will never be demoralized. Lal Singh also said the local issues of the people of his constituency will remain his top priority. While addressing the gathering he said that the water pipe scam of PHE will be investigated fairly and if the congress is voted to power, all the culprits will be behind the bars. He also took up the issue of long power cuts in the area. He said the present MP does not even know the issues of the Bani where long and long power cuts are observed and what to talk of the other issues. He called upon all his party workers and supporters to be always proactive and take his vision to every nook and corner and make every worker well versed with the malafide agenda of the present government. Lal Singh also while addressing the gathering iterated his works as a health minister and forest minister like setting of Jambu Zoo at Nagrota. Others who accompanied Ch Lal Singh were Akash Bharat, Sanjay Rajdhan, Lekh Raj, Thakur Dass, Darshan Kumar, Suraj Padma, and Vishwal Padwal.

# Infiltration Along LoC Rises During Key Events Like Elections: BSF IG

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Chances of infiltration attempts from across the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir increase as the snow melts and when there is an important event like elections, but security forces are alert and capable enough to foil any such bid, a senior BSF official said here on Friday.

"The BSF is deputed with the Army on the LoC. The election is an important time and we are ready to thwart any infiltration attempts from across. We are conducting area domination exercises," BSF Inspector General (Kashmir Frontier) Ashok Yadav told reporters here.

He said while chances of infiltration attempts along the LoC are always there, "they increase when there is an impor-



tant event like an election".

"So, the BSF and the Army are alert and ready to foil such attempts," he added.

Yadav said the chances of infiltration attempts also increase as the routes of infiltration open after the snow melts.

"We have put plans in place to dominate those areas. We

have made vulnerability maps and the forces will conduct area domination exercises according to that. The forces are capable to foil any such attempts," he said.

The BSF IG said about 65 companies of the BSF are deployed in the hinterland in Kashmir along with the Jammu and Kashmir Police to make the

security grid stronger.

"About 65 companies of BSF are deputed in North, South and Central Kashmir ranges and are making the security grid stronger and conducting area domination exercises along with the J-K Police. Whatever we have to do to ensure smooth elections, we will do that," Yadav said.

# Radio Isotopes To Remain Temporarily Suspended At SKIMS

KO NEWS SERVICE

**SRINAGAR:** Authorities in Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) Soura, said that Radioisotopes will remain temporarily suspended in the first week of April.

Medical Superintendent, SKIMS Soura, Dr Farooq Jan has requested the public to cooperate as radio isotope based scans cannot be undertaken during this period.

"The general public is informed that there will be no supply of iodine -131 ( Radio Isotopes) for the 1st week of April 2024 as has been communicated by BRIT Mumbai due to issues with their generators and hence erratic availability of Iodine-131 in the country. As such Iodine -131 based scans done at Nuclear Medicine cannot be undertaken. We request people to cooperate and the inconvenience is regretted," said



Medical Superintendent SKIMS Soura in public notice.

Radioisotopes are an essential part of radiopharmaceuticals and they have been used routinely in medicine for more than 30 years.

Officials said that radioisotopes are used in a variety of ways to improve productivity and gain information that cannot be obtained in any other way.

They said that those who heavily depend on Nuclear Medicine for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes will suffer due to unavailability of radio isotopes at the valleys premier hospital.

They said that there is a need for robust planning and approach required so that such back up facilities may be put in place so that patients won't suffer at all.

# Sericulture Department Aims To Double Silkworm Seed Production

Agencies

**BARAMULLA:** Ajaz Ahmad Bhat (IAS), Director Sericulture J&K, in a significant move during his visit to the Silkworm Seed Station Tarhama in District Baramulla announced that the Department of Sericulture is actively working on doubling Silkworm Seed Production in U.T of Jammu & Kashmir indigenously. During his visit to the Seed Station Tarhama he inspected the ongoing up-gradation of the existing Silkworm Seed Unit and mulberry nurseries and farmers existing in the Station.

Speaking on the occasion Mr. Ajaz Ahmad Bhat (IAS), said that a proactive approach and concerted efforts are needed to make U.T of J&K self sufficient in Silkworm Seed production for which the department will rope in Silkworm Rearing in doubling the Silkworm Seed Production all across J&K.

This initiative will certainly pave way for making the U.T of J&K self-reliant in Silkworm Seed production as envisioned under the Holistic Agriculture Development Program (HADP). The Seed Station Tarhama hosts a sprawling 110 Kanal mulberry Farm with 10,000 mul-



berry plants of Dwarf and Tall plantation of exotic Mulberry varieties. The mulberry foliage harvested in the farm are being utilized in the Seed Station Tarhama for seed crop rearing and producing F1 Silkworm Seed for distribution among Silkworm Rearing of Kashmir Division including adjacent villages of Seed Station for Commercial Silkworm Cocoon Crop. Moreover, the commercial seed production capacity of seed Station is 1.0 lac to 1.20 lac DFLs capacity by rearing 1000 P1 DFLs to 1200 P1 DFLs.

During his visit, he took review meeting with the officers of Seed Station and stressed on the need to remove all the bottlenecks which hamper the progress of technical operations in the Seed Station Tarhama with respect to avail-

ability and optimum use of vital infrastructure at the Seed Station Tarhama. Moreover, he assured that the matter will be taken up with the authority for streamlining the operations at the Silkworm Seed Station.

Addressing the gathering, the Director urged silkworm rearers and farmers from adjacent villages to actively participate in silkworm seed production in addition to their silkworm rearing activities in order to bolster their income significantly. He pledged the department's commitment to provide technical guidance and support to interested individuals venturing into silkworm seed production. This move aims to enhancing productivity and doubling the production of Double Hybrid Silkworm Seed in J&K.

# Fruit Growers, Buyers Suffer Losses Due To Low Apple Demand

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** The fruit growers and buyers in Kashmir are deeply concerned, saying they face losses due to the low demand for apples.

Speaking with the news agency, growers and buyers expressed their dismay over the current situation, saying there has been a drastic decrease in apple prices compared to the rates during the main apple season in October-November 2023.

Mohamad Ashraf, a fruit grower from Shopian, said he was offered Rs 1,200 per apple box in November last year but opted to store them in a cold store at Laspiora. However, he now finds himself receiving only around Rs 800 per box, much lower than the expected rates of Rs 1,800-2,000.

Similarly, Shakeel Ahmad, an apple trader, lamented purchasing high-quality apples at Rs 1,000-1,500 per box last November, only to find that the current selling price has dropped to Rs 1,000 per box.

Ahmad said there was anticipation for increased demand in the spring season, which led growers and buyers to store apples in cold storage. However, the expected surge in demand did not materialise, resulting in substantial fi-



nancial losses.

Azhar Anjum, the manager of a cold store, confirmed the downward trend in apple prices, saying that rates have plummeted by Rs 300-400 per box. Currently, Kulu boxes are being sold for around Rs 1,000 per box, while Delicious apples fetch only about Rs 800, he said.

Despite incurring expenses of around Rs 300-400 per box on cold storage charges, growers and buyers are struggling to achieve even the rates attained during the main season last year.

Bashir Ahmad Basheer, chairman of the Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers Cum Dealers Union, expressed concern over the losses faced by growers due to the lack of demand this year compared to the previous year.

# Cash, Liquor Worth Rs 29 Lakh Seized In Kathua

Agencies

**JAMMU:** Cash and liquor worth Rs 29 lakh have been seized in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district since the enforcement of the model code of conduct, officials said.

Multiple enforcement teams operating across Kathua district have intercepted and seized the cash and liquor, they said.

"Vigilant enforcement teams have demonstrated infallible commitment to uphold the

sanctity of the electoral process," District Election Officer, Kathua, Rakesh Minhas, said.

Minhas, who is also the Returning Officer for the four Udhampur Lok Sabha constituencies, said they are determined to prevent any violation of the model code.

Ahead of the Lok Sabha polls beginning April 19, the administration has urged the citizens to stay vigilant and report any suspicious activities or violation of the poll code to authorities.

# DLSA Ganderbal Conducts Awareness Programme

KO NEWS SERVICE

**GANDERBAL:** The District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Ganderbal Friday organized an awareness programme on the ill effects of Child Marriage, Child Labour, Save Girl Child and Child Labour, Prevention of Child Abuse and Prevention of Drug Abuse at Government Girls High School (GGHS), Shalbugh Ganderbal.

The programme was held under the chairmanship of Ritesh Kumar Dubey, Chairman DLSA (Pr. District & Sessions Judge), Ganderbal and under the supervision of Nusrat Ali Hakak, Secretary/Sub-judge, DLSA Ganderbal.

On the occasion, Assistant

Legal Aid Defense Counsel, Tanveer gave a detailed description of topics. In his address, he emphasized the ill effects of Child Marriage; adding that girls who marry at a younger age lack maturity and are often subjected to domestic violence, lack access to education and future career opportunities.

He explained the importance of creating a safe and nurturing environment for children. He briefed the participants on the topic 'Child Labour'.

He said that child labour is the exploitation of children through any form of work that interferes with their ability to attend schools regularly, or is mentally and physically harmful for them.

# Handicrafts Department Kick-Starts Exhibition In Srinagar

KO NEWS SERVICE

**SRINAGAR:** The Department of Handicrafts and Handloom Kashmir on Friday organized a calligraphy Exhibition at the Government Arts Emporium, Srinagar to spotlight the remarkable craftsmanship of Solih Alnajjari, a well known figure in the calligraphy field.

The opening reception attracted a large audience, with visitors relishing the artistic displays and interacting with the talented artists.

Calligraphy over the years is receiving focus and recognition at both the UT and national levels

Speaking at the event, the Joint Director of Handicrafts and Handloom Kashmir, Parvaz Sajad Ganie reiterated the department's commitment to providing a platform for local artisans to showcase their talents and boost sales.

Such initiatives, he emphasized, play a crucial role in preserving the legacy of handicrafts and providing exposure and livelihood support to local artisans.

# Sonam Wangchuk Vows To Intensify Struggle For Ladakh's Statehood

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Renowned environmentalist Sonam Wangchuk, who recently concluded a 21-day fast in Leh, has pledged to escalate the movement for Ladakh's full statehood and inclusion in the Sixth Schedule. Amid ongoing protests, including a hunger strike by women in Leh, Wangchuk emphasized a commitment to Gandhian principles in advancing the cause.

According to the news agency, addressing a rally organized by the Leh Apex Body (LAB) on Thursday, Wangchuk



announced plans to intensify the struggle for Ladakh's statehood and Sixth Schedule status, underscoring a peaceful approach inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. He outlined a

forthcoming rally in Ladakh's border areas on April 7 as part of this endeavor, aimed at garnering wider support for the cause while advocating for environmental conservation.

LAB affirmed the continuation of the hunger strike, with diverse segments of society, including women, youth, students, and workers, actively participating. Wangchuk's fast, which concluded recently, has been succeeded by a ten-day hunger strike by women, further amplifying the call for Ladakh's statehood and Sixth Schedule inclusion.

Expressing disappointment with the BJP government's failure to fulfill manifesto promises, Wangchuk highlighted the need for concrete action in response to Ladakh's long standing demands. He criticized

the Union Home Ministry's rejection of these demands and urged the government to honor its commitments.

In addition to ongoing protests, Wangchuk outlined plans for a series of hunger strikes involving various stakeholders, including religious leaders and elders, to underscore the urgency of Ladakh's statehood aspirations. A planned march to Changthang on April 7 aims to shed light on the ground realities faced by Ladakh's residents, amidst growing discontent over unmet promises and political representation—(KNO)

# Farmers Advocate Use Of Standardized Pesticides To Safeguard Orchards

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** As the valley gears up for crucial spraying schedules, farmers have urged authorities to ensure that only standardized pesticides are made available to protect their orchards from pests and diseases.

With Kashmir's economy heavily reliant on its apple industry, which contributes significantly to the region's GDP, the concerns of apple growers grow over the varieties of pesticides available in the market.

The demand for standardized pesticides stems from a growing apprehension among farmers regarding the efficacy and safety of the pesticides currently available in the market.

"For the last few days, social media has been abuzz with the availability of substandard pesticides in the markets. We appeal to the government to launch a massive drive against the substandard pesticide sellers to save our orchards," said Munner Ahmad Khan, an apple grower.

Meanwhile officials at the horticulture department said they conduct regular market drives to root up the menace of substandard pesticides. —(KNO)

news agency.

The call for standardized pesticides comes amidst reports of farmers experiencing inconsistent results due to the use of substandard chemicals.

"Many farmers have reported losses in previous seasons due to ineffective pest management despite investing heavily in pesticides. The availability of unregulated and counterfeit pesticides poses a significant risk not only to crop yields but also to human health and the environment," Malik said.

The growers said they often get confused with rumours of fake and substandard pesticides availability in the market.

"Our apples are not just fruits; they are a symbol of Kashmir's identity and livelihood for thousands of families. It is imperative that we safeguard our orchards with pesticides that meet international standards," he told the

# J&K Bank Lights Up 1000 Households With Solar Solutions

KO NEWS SERVICE

**SRINAGAR:** Extending eco-friendly lighting solutions to scheduled tribe (ST) community of district Ganderbal under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plan, J&K Bank on Friday distributed solar lanterns among one thousand households in collaboration with MOOL Sustainability Research and Training Centre (MSRTC) - a local NGO that works on different developmental projects for building integrative and regenerative communities through capacity building and creative solutions.

The Bank's General Manager Syed Rais Maqbool handed over one solar lantern to each of the family belonging to the ST Community and other marginal sections at a local school in Lar, Ganderbal in presence of senior bank officials and representatives from MSRTC.

After receiving the lanterns, the beneficiaries extended their heartfelt gratitude to the Bank for providing them an eco-friendly and convenient means of lighting their homes. "These lanterns mean a lot to us and our children as we can now carry on our lives happily in



case of power failure. For this we thank both the organisations and pray for their success", some of the beneficiaries said.

Speaking on the occasion, Syed Rais Maqbool said, "As a responsible financial institution, we encourage CSR interventions that play a crucial role in supporting the under-privileged sections of our society. And we see provision of these solar lanterns to the ST community not merely as act of philanthropy but an investment in a more inclusive society geared towards an eco-friendly future."

"For such empowering initiatives not only bring ease in the living conditions of these economically weaker sections of the society but contributes to the overall progress and well-being of the inhabitants of this place", he added.

## CONDOLENCE

With profound grief, we inform the demise of Zubair Ali Sofi S/o Gh Mohammad Sofi R/o Hanjiwera Pattan. He breathed last on Thursday 28th March 2024. His congregational Fateh Khawani will be held on Monday, 1st April 2024. An Exceptionally a humble being and pillar of our strength he ignited various lives and touched many Hearts with his simpleton attitude. May Allah Bless the departed soul with highest place in Jannatul Firdous.

**BEREAVED FAMILY**

## Block It Out: Steve Smith On MI Skipper Hardik Pandya Facing Boos

Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** Australian star batter Steve Smith has advised Hardik Pandya to simply "block out" the constant jeers and boos the new Mumbai Indians skipper is receiving from spectators at the IPL so far, as they are "all irrelevant".

Hardik, who replaced five-time IPL-winning captain Rohit Sharma as skipper this season, had a dismal start to his captaincy tenure as MI suffered back-to-back defeats.

On top of the two losses, the former Gujarat Titans skipper was booed by fans at Ahmedabad and Hyderabad—the venue of MI's first two matches—as they were clearly not happy



with the way Rohit was removed from captaincy. "I'd try and just say, to block

it out, it's all irrelevant," Smith, who has faced abuse from fans across the world for his role in

the 2018 ball-tampering scandal in Cape Town, told ESPNcricinfo. "No one outside knows what you are going through. No one (from outside) is in that change room."

Smith, who was called "cheat" by fans during the 2019 ODI World Cup in England, feels all these abuse will come as a big surprise for Hardik as he is getting it from his Indian fans at home.

"Personally, for me, it doesn't bother me. I don't care. I don't pay any attention," said Smith, who had to resign as Rajasthan Royals captain in 2018 after the ball-tampering scandal.

"You know it's all white noise, but certainly players do hear things and everyone's entitled to their own emotions and how

they respond to those.

"So is it affecting him (Hardik)? Maybe. It's possible. He probably hasn't experienced that before in, in any walk of life.

"So it's natural, I suppose, and particularly being in India and a star Indian player, to be in that position where some fans are booing you, it's certainly something he wouldn't have experienced."

Hardik had led Gujarat Titans to IPL title triumph in their maiden season in 2022 after he was released by Mumbai Indians.

However, last November, he returned to Mumbai Indians via a monetary trade and was soon made the captain, replacing Rohit, which did not go down well with the Indian captain's fans.

### Short TAKES

#### Virat Kohli's 83 Pushes Bengaluru Over 180 Against Kolkata

Virat Kohli's 83 runs and a few significant contributions from Cameron Green, Glenn Maxwell and Dinesh Karthik took Royal Challengers Bengaluru to 182 for six in 20 overs against Kolkata Knight Riders in Bengaluru.

Kolkata won the toss and asked Bengaluru to bat first at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru. Brief score: RCB 182/6 in 20 overs (Virat Kohli 83, Cameron Green 33; Andre Russell 2/29) vs KKR

#### WFI To Go 'No Cost To Govt' Model If Suspension Is Not Lifted

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) on Friday decided at its Special General Meeting (SGM) that it will start functioning at 'no cost to the government' model if its request to lift the suspension is not considered by the Sports Ministry.

The WFI had its SGM in Noida after the UWW (the sport's world governing body) lifted its suspension and the IOA also dissolved the ad-hoc panel that was managing the affairs of the body.

#### Andy Murray To Miss Two Tournaments Because Of Ankle Injury

Andy Murray still has no timetable to return from an ankle injury as the three-time Grand Slam champion's management team confirmed on Friday that he'll miss upcoming clay-court tournaments in Monte Carlo and Miami.

The 36-year-old Murray tore ligaments in his left ankle on Sunday during a match at the Miami Open and announced the next day that he'd be sidelined "for an extended period." The former world No. 1 rolled his ankle against Tomas Machac.

#### Alonso To Stay With Leverkusen Amid Liverpool & Bayern Talk

Xabi Alonso will stay as coach of Bayer Leverkusen, ending speculation linking him with the soon-to-be vacant Liverpool and Bayern Munich jobs.

"This is the right place for me to be, to develop as a coach," Alonso said Friday, adding that his squad's drive to succeed was a key reason to remain.

Leverkusen is on course for its first German title, 10 points clear in the Bundesliga with eight games remaining. They play Hoffenheim on Saturday.

## JKFA Writes To HM Amit Shah To 'Save' Baramulla Football Ground



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The Jammu and Kashmir Football has written a letter to Home Minister Amit Shah and J&K LG Manoj Sinha requesting their intervention in saving the football field at Degree College Baramulla.

"The playing ground of Degree College Baramulla is under threat of being used as a track for a railway line by the Indian Railways. This ground has been a vital sporting hub for the local community, providing a space

for various sports activities, including football, cricket, and athletics," the letter reads.

"The potential conversion of this playing ground into a railway track would not only deprive the local youth of a space for recreational and sporting activities but also have a detrimental impact on the development of sports in the area," it adds.

The JKFA had earlier sent a delegation of its members and civil society members of Baramulla to meet with Indian Railways officials.

## IPL 2024: LSG Eye All-Round Effort Against PBKS

Press Trust of India

**LUCKNOW:** Lucknow Super Giants will aim for an improved all-round effort when they take on Punjab Kings in their second Indian Premier League match here on Saturday.

K L Rahul-led LSG faltered in the opening game against Rajasthan Royals, losing by 20 runs in Chandigarh.

Barring Krunal Pandya, all the LSG bowlers leaked runs and also looked ineffective.

In the absence of Mark Wood and David Willey, LSG's pace battery looks thin with the likes of Mohsin Khan, Naveen-ul-Haq, and Yash Thakur expected to do the heavy lifting.

Fighting for a place in the upcoming T20 World Cup squad, Ravi Bishnoi too looked ordinary in the team's tournament opener.



Skipper Rahul, who has decided to play the wicketkeeper-batter's role keeping the T20 World Cup in mind, made 58 in his comeback game and would be looking to build on that.

He would be hoping his opening partner Quinton de Kock returns to his belligerent best against Punjab after missing out against Royals. The team

is also banking on the likes of Devdutt Padikkal Ayush Badoni, Deepak Hooda, and Krunal to deliver down the order.

LSG's success will also depend on the form of Australian all-rounder Marcus Stoinis, who was the leading run-getter for the team last year with 408 runs.

Match starts at 7.30 PM IST.

## I-League: Real Kashmir Play NEROCA In Srinagar Today



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Real Kashmir will square off against NEROCA FC in an 2023-24 I-League match on Saturday at Synthetic Turf TRC here. The game is scheduled to kick off at 2:00 PM.

Four draws in a row have left the Snow Leopards fourth on the I-League table, with 37 points

from 21 games. The home team will fight to finish in the top three positions and look to build off of coach Ishfaq Ahmad's impressive first season.

Meanwhile, NEROCA is at the foot of the I-League standings in 12th, with 13 points from 20 games. However, the team will face the Srinagar crowd having won their previous two matches.



## Miami Open: Bopanna-Ebden Sail Into Doubles Final

Press Trust of India

**MIAMI:** Indian tennis stalwart Rohan Bopanna and his Australian partner Matthew Ebden sailed into the men's doubles final of the Miami Open with a straight-set win over Marcel Granollers and Horacio Zeballos here.

Bopanna and Ebden, the Australian Open winners, hardly broke a sweat to get the better of Spain's Granollers and Argentina's Zeballos 6-1 6-4 in the semi-finals on Thursday night.

In the final, Bopanna and Ebden will take on Ivan Dodig of Croatia and American Austin Krajicek, who beat the German duo of Kevin Krawietz and Tim Putz 6-4 6-7(7) 10-7 in the other semifinal.

## French FA Limits Support For Players' Ramadan Observance

Agencies

**PARIS:** For Muslim soccer players in deeply secular France, observing Ramadan is a tall order, and this is not about to change. Wielding the principle of religious neutrality enshrined in the French constitution, the country's soccer federation does not make things easy for international players who want to refrain from drinking or eating from dawn to sunset during the Islamic holy month.

Ahead of training camps which took place in March, the federation made clear it would not change the schedule for meals and practices to accommodate players who want to fully observe the religious ritual.

Some left-wing politicians, coaches and former players were outraged; the federation denied accusations of religious discrimination. The secular outlook in France also prevents



league referees from authorizing pauses in games to allow Muslim players to break their fast with a quick bite and drink on the sidelines during evening matches. Such breaks have been authorised in nearby countries such as Germany, England and the Netherlands.

French secularism, while affirming religious freedom, provides that the state does not favor any religion and remains neutral. The French soccer federation (FFF) says part of its mission is to defend the country's strict adherence

to secularism in public life. Critics say this leads to anti-Muslim rules.

"You want to forbid them to be Muslim. Whether we like it or not, it's part of their identity that we're trying to erase," said Demba Ba, the former Senegal international player who was born in France and is Muslim. He says he fasted for Ramadan throughout his professional career, even on match days. He has described particularly hard days when he played in the English Premier League with Newcastle,

with matches sometimes scheduled at 1 pm in the summer, when the sun sets late in this part of England.

While Catholicism remains the leading religion, Islam is France's second-largest faith, encompassing an estimated 10% of the population. In Muslim countries, clubs shift their training schedule to make it easier for players who fast during Ramadan. In recent years, Western countries have followed suit and France's approach seems increasingly isolated.

In the English Premier League, captains of clubs with Muslim players can arrange with match officials to create a pause at sundown to allow players to break their fast. Soccer officials in Australia have adopted the same approach, introducing breaks for players observing Ramadan for the first time this season. In the US, Major League Soccer introduced drink breaks last year. (AP)

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