

Country Will See 'Big Storm' In Politics: PM



Agencies

Odisha: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said that in the next six months after June 4, the country will see a "big storm" in politics with the "new disintegration" of the "family parties" as disappointment is brewing in the workers about the "leaders" who have "failed repeatedly."

PM Modi said while addressing a public rally at Kendrapara in Odisha on Wednesday. PM Modi further batted for a "Majboot Sarkar" in the Centre as he highlighted the BJP's poll promises to the voters in Odisha. "Odisha wants to get rid of those who are looting it. The state has decided to elect a 'double-engine' government this time. Not only Odisha, but the entire country has decided to form a 'Majboot Sarkar' for the third time," PM Modi said.

THE COUNTRY WILL CATCH A NEW PACE OF DEVELOPMENT. In the 6 months after June 4, we will see a new disintegration in the family parties.

TWIN TRAGEDIES 5 Dead After Falling Into Wells In Budgam, Kupwara



KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Two people were killed and three others were hospitalised after they fell into a well in the Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, officials said.

Five people fell unconscious while cleaning a well in the Satboon area of Kupwara, the officials said. The victims were rescued and rushed to a hospital where the doctors declared two of them brought dead. The doctors [More on P6](#)

Men In Khaki Assaulted in Kupwara Police Files FIR Against Army, Army Denies Charges

Majid Nabi

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir Police have registered an FIR against the personnel of Indian army after the latter allegedly broke into a police station in frontier Kupwara district late last night, wounding four cops. The army, however, has denied the charges.



The incident, sources said, took place day after a police team investigating the case against a local Territorial Army personnel raided his residence in Batpora-Kupwara in north Kashmir.

Sources said that four policemen, including two Special Police Officers (SPOs) and two constables, were injured in the incident and were removed to Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of

SHORT-LIVED RELIEF FOR KASHMIR

Heatwave Set To Return From June 3: MeT

Agencies

Srinagar: The people across Kashmir heaved a sigh of relief on Wednesday as the maximum temperature plummeted and settled around the normal temperature after the days of intense heat wave.

Gusty winds and light rainfall were witnessed in parts of Jammu and Kashmir after late afternoon on Wednesday, providing a respite from sweltering temperature. However, the Meteorological Centre Srinagar said that another spell of heatwave is imminent in J&K.

An official from the MeT said a slight relief from the "heat wave" and "hot & dry weather" would be observed over most parts of Kashmir division for a few days ahead of the onset of another "heat wave" in J&K from 3-5 June.



KO Photo | Abid Bhat

The weatherman also said that there would not be any respite in the hot weather and heat wave conditions during the next seven days over the plains of the Jammu division.

The temperatures across the valley plunged moderately last night compared to the previous night's mercury

digits. Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu & Kashmir, recorded a maximum temperature of 27.5 degree Celsius, which was just 1.4 degree Celsius above the normal. The station simmered at 32.6 degree Celsius yesterday. Qazigund, a [More on P6](#)

Jammu Sizzles At 44.8 °C

Mercury continued its upward trend across the district, with Jammu city recording the season's highest temperature at 44.8 degrees Celsius,

Forest Fire Incidents On Rise In Rajouri

Incidents of forest fire in the areas in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri District have been on the rise this summer season compared

Hajj 2024: 19 Kashmiri Pilgrims 'Abandoned' In Makkah

Syed Mohammad Burhan

Srinagar: A group of 19 Hajj pilgrims who departed from Srinagar on May 16 have alleged gross mismanagement and abandonment by authorities after they were reportedly left unattended in a Makkah hotel.

The pilgrims, belonging to Maktab No. 276 (agency managing the group) said that they were a part of a group of 322 pilgrims and their initial plan was to fly directly to Madinah from Srinagar. However, to their surprise, they were issued tickets to Jeddah and landed there before being transported to Makkah.

Speaking to Kashmir Observer, Shafiq Mir, one of the stranded pilgrims, said, "After a week in Makkah,



KO Photo | Abid Bhat

the pilgrims requested to be taken to Madinah as planned. However, the agency responsible for managing their group allegedly denied the request, claiming the pilgrims belonged to the wrong Maktab."

"The authorities informed us that this has happened due to an error that took place at the J&K State Hajj Committee responsible for the assignment of Maktab," he added. According to Shafiq, even after repeated meetings with Indian Haj [More on P6](#)

JAMMU-SRINAGAR NATIONAL HIGHWAY 17 Points Identified For Urgent Repairs

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: At least 17 vulnerable points have been identified for urgent repairs along the strategic Jammu-Srinagar national highway to ensure smooth flow of traffic, with focus on the upcoming Amarnath Yatra, a senior official said on Wednesday.

A high-level team of officers on Tuesday inspected the 270-km national highway, the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country, to identify the bottlenecks hampering traffic movement amid the ongoing

four-laning project.

"The main purpose behind the visit was to inspect the vulnerable points (along the 56-km stretch) between Nashri to Banihal, which needs urgent repairs ahead of the yatra," Deputy Commissioner Ramban Baseer-ul-Haq Choudhary said.

The inspection team, which included the local police, deputy inspector general (DIG), traffic police and senior officers of the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI), also took stock of the traffic arrangements in Banihal town and intake capacity of 'yatri niwas' at Lamber. [More on P6](#)

DGP SUPPORTS SIA'S PROPOSAL

Terror, Narcotics Accused To Cover Ankle Monitor Cost

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir Director General of Police R R Swain on Wednesday visited the State Investigation Agency (SIA) here, conducting a comprehensive review of its operations and its GPS ankle tracker technology.

The DGP also emphasised SIA's significant role in investigating terror cases and instilling a fear of law enforcement in terrorists and their associates, a spokesperson said.

During his surprise visit to the SIA headquarters here, the



DGP reviewed the agency's operations and interacted with the stationed officials, they added.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Deepika briefed him about the improvements made in

the work environment of the investigating body, a police spokesperson said.

She highlighted the filing of charge sheets by SIA in significant terror financing and narco-terrorism cases and introduction of the ankle monitoring programme pioneered by the CID wing.

The ankle monitoring technology, used as a stringent bail condition, remotely tracks the movement of offenders under UAPA, NDPS, and other serious criminal charges, making Jammu and Kashmir police the first in India to [More on P6](#)

China Bolsters Pak Defense In PoK

Press Trust Of India

Kupwara: Pakistan's key ally China has been actively bolstering the defence capabilities of the Pakistani army along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir over the past three years which includes the construction of steelhead bunkers and the provision of Unmanned Aerial and Combat Aerial Vehicles, officials said on Wednesday.

Chinese assistance also extends to the installation of highly encrypted communication towers and the laying of underground fibre cables along the LoC.

Moreover, advanced radar systems of Chinese origin, such as the 'JY' and 'HGR' series, have been deployed to enhance medium and low altitude target detection capabilities, providing crucial intelligence support for army and air defence units, they said.

Additionally, the presence of the SH-15, a 155 mm truck-mounted howitzer gun manufactured by a Chinese firm, has been noticed at various locations along the LoC.

This move is seen as part of efforts to

Mehbooba Booked For 'Violating' Poll Code

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: Election authorities in Kashmir have registered an FIR against former chief minister and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti for allegedly violating the Model Code of Conduct, officials said on Wednesday.

The FIR has been registered against Mehbooba for violating Section 144 after she and her party workers held a protest sit-in in the Bijbehara area of south Kashmir's Anantnag district, the officials said.

The PDP president termed

the registration of the FIR against her as "amusing".

"Amusing to find an FIR filed against me for apparently flouting MCC. This is the price PDP has paid for speaking truth to power. Our protest was against GOI in cahoots with the local administration for detaining hundreds of PDP polling agents and workers in the hours leading up to voting," she said.

"Still not satisfied, the same administration went on to launch Cordon and Search Operations in traditional PDP stronghold areas to terrorise our voters [More on P6](#)

We'll Not Kneel Our Knees: Iltija

PDP leader Iltija Mufti on Wednesday termed the registration of an FIR against her mother and party president Mehbooba Mufti as an [More on P6](#)

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The incident, sources said, took place day after a police team investigating the case against a local Territorial Army personnel raided his residence in Batpora-Kupwara in north Kashmir.

Sources said that four policemen, including two Special Police Officers (SPOs) and two constables, were injured in the incident and were removed to Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of

Medical Sciences (SKIMS) Soura for treatment. The injured cops have been identified as constables Zahoor Ahmad and Saleem Mushtaq, and Special [More on P6](#)

9 Kashmir Wetlands Fail To Meet Water Quality Standards

Auqib Javeed

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir government has admitted that the water quality in nine wetlands across Kashmir fails to meet the Class B standards of Designated Best Use (DBU).

Class B of Designated Best Use refers to outdoor bathing, fishing, a healthy aquatic habitat, industrial supply, and agricultural use.

The Central Pollution Control Board has informed the National Green Tribunal (NGT), after the court took cognizance of a report published in a local magazine.

The government informed the NGT that the Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) and Potential of Hydrogen (pH) level in Dal lake and nine wetlands in Kashmir has increased.



The J&K Pollution Control Committee's analysis confirmed these findings for monitored lakes and wetlands in April 2024. The report also cited issues with solid waste management and illegal dumping

affecting several districts. The report had highlighted the issue of deteriorating condition of wetlands in Kashmir and disclosed that unchecked deposition of millions of tons of sediments annually has led

to shallowing of wetlands, elevated temperatures, increased Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) and Potential of Hydrogen (pH) levels.

The NGT had sought a report from the Central Pollution Control Board, Jammu & Kashmir Pollution Control Committee and other stakeholders.

The J&K Pollution Control Committee submitted analytical results of 11 monitored lakes/wetlands in Kashmir viz Wular Lake, Anchar Lake, Dal Lake, Hokersar Wetland, Manasbal Lake, Shalbugh Wetland, Hygam Wetland, Freshkooori Wetland, Kranchoo Wetland, Chatlam Wetland & Manibugh Wetland.

The analytical reports for the parameters pH, DO of and BOD reveal that [More on P6](#)

Lok Adalat On Traffic Challans, Power Bills On June 08 In Srinagar

Observer News Service

Srinagar: In compliance with the plan of Action formulated by J&K Legal Services Authority, U.T of J&K, Lok Adalat for amicable settlement of Pre and Post Litigation pending before the courts at District Court Complex Srinagar and also Addl. Spl. Mobile Magistrate (13th FC) Pantha Chowk Srinagar, is scheduled to be held on 08 May, 2024.

The Lok Adalat is scheduled to be held under the Chairmanship of Chairman District Le-

gal Services Authority (PDJ) Srinagar.

Meanwhile, all the concerned Judicial Officers have been requested to identify Traffic Challans and Electricity Bills to be taken up in the Lok Adalat and submit the list of the cases to DLSA Srinagar by or before 04-06-2024.

The litigants who are interested to settle their dispute in the proposed Lok Adalat are directed to approach the concerned courts immediately so that their cases shall be listed for amicable settlement in the Lok Adalat.

GCE Srinagar Organizes 'Alumni Meet 2024'

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Govt. College of Education (GCE) Srinagar today organized 'Alumni Meet 2024' today in the college auditorium in order to reconnect alumni with the alma mater and their old classmates and teachers.

All the alumni were received with open arms by the organizing committee and Alumni Association 'QANDEEL' headed by Dr. Shaheena Rasool.

The program witnessed unprecedented response from the alumni and dignitaries invited to grace the occasion. Their presence really made the program meaningful and colorful. Notable among them were Prof. Zamaan Azurda, Prof. (Dr) Khurshed Ah Khan, Dr Uheeda Shah, Prof. Munawara Syed Alumna, Prof. (Dr) Al-laiya, Prof. Gurmeet Kour.

During the program a beautiful cultural program was staged by the students of GCE. The program included a variety of cultural items like Group Song, Ladakhi Dance, Solo Song, Kashmiri Rouf, Duet, Gazal

singing etc.

Prof. Gurmeet Kaur also sang a gazal on the stage which enthralled and mesmerized the audiences.

Prof. Zamaan Azurda, Prof. (Dr) Khurshed Ah Khan, Dr. Uheeda Shah shared their nostalgic memories of their college days and encouraged the students to study well for their better future.

Prof Zaman Azurda deliberated upon the "Qandee" alumni meet and expressed his remarkable memories of the college. He also highlighted the importance of the event. He said that we have got fully illuminated by this institution as we give first priority to attend the functions of our own basic institution.

Prof Khusheed one of the alumni also expressed his nostalgic memories with the college, adding that it is really a hub of learning.

Dr. Uheeda Shah, while narrating her memories narrated how this institution has sown seeds of success for her career advancement.

More than 120 alumni participated in this event. The Alumni Meet 2024 proved a grand success as it offered an opportunity for the alumni to network and to contribute to the development of the institution in various ways.

World Environment Day

DEERS Organizes Model Making Competition At GHSS Rainawari

Observer News Service

Srinagar: In a significant move towards promoting Environmental Sustainability and as a prelude to World Environment Day 2024, the Department of Ecology Environment & Remote Sensing (DEE&RS) EIACP Hub Jammu & Kashmir today organized a Model Making Competition on the theme 'Waste to Wealth at Govt. Girls Hr. Sec. School (GHSS) Rainawari, Srinagar.'

The event aimed to raise awareness about the effects of desertification.

Participants showcased their creativity and deep understanding of environmental issues through meticulously crafted models. Each model vividly depicted the adverse effects of desertification, emphasizing the urgent need for sustainable practices to combat this growing problem.

The competition witnessed participation of 20

students, divided into 4 groups, who brought their innovative ideas to life with passion and precision.

Participants showcased their creativity and deep understanding of environmental issues through meticulously crafted models.

The top three winners of the competition will be felicitated on World Environment Day, June 5th, recognizing their outstanding efforts and contributions to environmental awareness.

This initiative not only highlighted the importance of addressing desertification but also encouraged young minds to think critically about sustainable solutions. By engaging the youth in such meaningful activities, DEERS-EIACP Hub Jammu & Kashmir aims to foster a deeper understanding of ecological issues and inspire collective action towards a sustainable future.



Dal Lake played home to a mega handcraft exhibition on Wednesday, with children thoroughly enjoying the roller-coaster rides. KO Photo, Abid Bhat

J&K Witnesses Aquatic Boom As Educated Youth Embrace 'Pisciculture'

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Mudasir Ahmad Khan (24) soon after completing his graduation in fisheries science has decided to set up his own business.

From trying out his hand in horticulture to the hospitality sector, nothing worked for him since he wanted to do something out of the box.

It was when he thought of utilizing his knowledge about fisheries sciences and took fish farming as his profession.

Two years of his reunion with the fisheries science fetched him enough revenue given his expansion of two units.

"This was probably the profession I was made for. During these two years, I gained some experience from the seniors and the department and utilized it to grow my farm. I had a very good business last year," he said.

Khan is being followed by many

This was probably the profession I was made for. During these two years, I gained some experience from the seniors and the department and utilized it to grow my farm. I had a very good business last year

aspiring entrepreneurs in Baramulla who too imbibed his strategy to set up their fish farms.

"I have two farms- a carp and a trout farm. I sell them to the dealers in various markets of Baramulla district. Now, many youth have set up their fish farms to earn a good sum out of the business," he said.

Pertinently, fish production in Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed

a substantial surge, courtesy expansion of the farming throughout the union territory.

According to the data, the production of fish in Kashmir has increased by 5840 tons, generating 366.12 lakhs of revenue in the last four years. The production of trout has increased from 598 tons in 2019 to 1990 tons during the financial year 2022-23.

An official from the department of fisheries told KNO that fish farming was getting popular among youth in Jammu and Kashmir. "We have witnessed that the majority of the educated youth have been taking fish farming as their profession. They are getting assistance from the department in the form of incentives and expertise to set up their successful ventures in their respective districts," he said.

The official said the number of private fish units established in the private sector will increase to more than 2,300 in 2022-23.

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

8 WEEK FREE GROUP THERAPY

I did wash my hand ... but... did I clean it enough? ?Wash it again? is it clean now?

It's not just RECURRENT HANDWASHING AND CHECKING BUT UNSEEN PAIN myths and stigma associated with OCD

KASHMER | Kashmir American Society of Healthcare, Medical Education & Research

in collaboration with HPVT (Help Poor Voluntary Trust)

is initiating a **free 8 weeks Group therapy** for the individuals suffering with OCD by a team of counselling clinical psychologists led by leading consultant clinical psychologist of J&K.

If you or some one you know is experiencing symptoms of OCD, seeking professional help is crucial.

You do not have to fight your battles alone.

There is no need for referral, simply call us for registration.

Happy & Healthy minds Office, HPVT Building (First Floor), Daresh Kadal Chowk, Srinagar

9070806160

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

AIRPORTS
 SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈️

RAILWAYS

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

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

HIJRI CALENDAR

21 Zil-Qadah
1445

PRAYERS

FAJR 3:40
 ZUHR 12:28
 ASR 5:26
 Magrib 7:39
 ISHA 9:17

This Day In History

- 1591- Spanish troops in Zutphen surrender to Dutch and English forces under Maurice of Nassau
- 1626- An explosion at the Wanggongchang Gunpowder Factory in Beijing destroys part of the city and kills 20,000 people
- 1631- The Treaty of Fontainebleau signed between Maximilian I, Elector of Bavaria, and the Kingdom of France, establishing a secret alliance between them during the Thirty Years' War.
- 1635- The Peace of Prague signed between the Habsburg Emperor Ferdinand II and the Electorate of Saxony (representing Protestant states of the Holy Roman Empire). It effectively ended the civil war aspect of the Thirty Years' War
- 1646 -Spain & Netherlands sign temporary cease fire
- 1783- Benjamin Tower of Philadelphia publishes 1st daily newspaper in US
- 1808- Napoleon Bonaparte annexes Tuscany and gives it seats in the French Senate
- 1814- Napoleonic Wars: War of the Sixth Coalition - the Treaty of Paris (1814) is signed returning French borders to their 1792 extent.
- 1822- George Wilson and Joe LaRoche betray a planned slave revolt organized by Denmark Vesey in Charleston, South Carolina, confirming an earlier warning from Peter Prieoleau. 35 Black people are later hanged. (date is approximate)
- 1842- John Francis attempts to assassinate Queen Victoria
- 1848- Second Battle at Giotto: Sardinia-Piemonte beats Austrians
- 1848- Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo between US and Mexico comes into force, giving California Nevada, Utah and most of Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona to the US in return for \$15 million
- 1862- Battle of Booneville MS - captured Gen Beauregard evacuates Corinth
- 1864- Battle of Bethesda Church [Totopotomoy Creek], cavalry battle fought in Hanover County, Virginia, inconclusive result (US Civil War)
- 1876- Ottoman sultan Abd-ul-Aziz is deposed and succeeded by his nephew Murat V.
- 1896- First car accident occurs; Henry Wells hits a cyclist in NYC
- 1902- Spanish King Alfonso XII, who was elected as a constitutional monarch, suspends the Cortes, Spain's parliament
- 1904- The Japanese Army capture the City of Dairen after landing troops along the south coast of Manchuria
- 1913- Treaty of London signed by the Great Powers, the Ottoman Empire and the victorious Balkan League (Serbia, Greece, Kingdom of Bulgaria, and Montenegro) bringing an end to the First Balkan War
- 1914- The new and then largest Cunard ocean liner RMS Aquitania, 45,647 tons, sets sails on her maiden voyage from Liverpool, England to New York City.
- 1921- Salzburg, Austria, votes to join Germany
- 1933- Patent on invisible glass installation
- 1941- British Army enters Baghdad, chasing pro-German coup government
- 1943- French General Charles De Gaulle arrives in Algiers
- 1943- US troops reconquer Attu Aleutians
- 1946- United flight 521 crashes on takeoff at LaGuardia Airport (NY) 42 die
- 1949- East German constitution approved
- 1959 - Iraq terminates milt assistance pact with US due to neutrality
- 1959 - World's 1st hovercraft (SR-NI) tested at Cowes, England
- 1966 - US launches Surveyor 1 to Moon
- 1967 - Biafra declares independence from Nigeria
- 1967 - King Hussein of Jordan visits Cairo
- 1971 - US Mariner 9 1st satellite to orbit Mars launched
- 1982 - Spain becomes 16th member of NATO
- 1990 - 135 die in a (6.4) earthquake in Peru
- 1990 - Earthquake hit Peru, killing 135
- 1992 - UN votes for sanctions against Serb-led Yugoslavia to halt fighting
- 1998 - A magnitude 6.6 earthquake hits northern Afghanistan, killing up to 5,000.

KASHMIR OBSERVERTM

Thursday | 30-05-2024

Sustainable Tourism

The rising temperature in the mainland is bringing more tourists to Kashmir this summer. Although the Valley itself is reeling under a heat-wave, temperature is still moderate compared to other parts of the country. In Delhi, the mercury has touched 50 degrees, forcing people to head to relatively colder regions such as Kashmir. However, this surge in tourism is straining the local infrastructure, revealing an urgent need for comprehensive upgrades to ensure sustainable tourism growth and preserve the region's natural beauty.

The sheer volume of tourists is overwhelming existing facilities. Roads to popular destinations like Gulmarg, Pahalgam, and Sonamarg are congested with traffic, turning what should be a scenic journey into a stressful ordeal. Hotels and guesthouses, once sufficient for a modest number of visitors, are now fully booked months in advance. This has led to the proliferation of makeshift lodgings that often lack basic amenities, resulting in dissatisfied tourists.

To maintain the momentum of this tourism boom and ensure positive visitor experiences, there is an urgent need to invest in infrastructure. Expanding and upgrading accommodation options is critical. While houseboats and traditional guesthouses offer unique and charming stays, they alone cannot meet the rising demand. Investment in new hotels and the expansion of existing ones are necessary steps to accommodate more tourists comfortably. These establishments must meet high standards of hygiene and service to prevent the rise of substandard lodgings.

Moreover, the transportation infrastructure requires significant improvements. The roads leading to key tourist spots must be expanded and maintained to reduce traffic congestion and ensure safer travel. Investing in public transportation options, such as shuttle buses to major attractions, could also alleviate some of the pressure on the roadways.

Waste management is another pressing issue. The current systems are not designed to handle the increased volume of waste generated by the surge in tourists. The government and local authorities must implement robust waste management strategies to protect the environment. This includes setting up more waste disposal and recycling facilities, as well as launching awareness campaigns to educate tourists on sustainable practices.

Environmental conservation must remain a priority amid this tourism boom. The pristine beauty of Kashmir, which draws so many visitors, is at risk if sustainable practices are not adopted. Initiatives to preserve natural habitats and reduce the ecological footprint of tourism activities are essential. This can be achieved through policies that promote eco-friendly accommodations, responsible trekking, and conservation projects.



You can invest in gold through a Gold ETF?

Did You Know?

Irshad Mushtaq

A Gold ETF, or Exchange-Traded Fund, is a type of investment fund that is traded on stock exchanges, just like stocks.

Investing in a Gold ETF allows you to gain exposure to the price of gold without actually owning physical gold. This means that you can benefit from fluctuations in the price of gold without the hassle of storing and securing the physical metal.

One of the advantages of investing in a Gold ETF is the ability to do SIP (Systematic Investment Plan) in gold. This means that you can invest a fixed amount of money at regular intervals, rather than making a lump sum investment. This can help you take advantage of cost averaging and reduce the impact of market volatility on your investments.

Furthermore, investing in a Gold ETF through a mutual fund can provide complete hedge in gold. This means that your investment is protected against fluctuations in the price of gold, providing a level of stability and security to your portfolio.

Another benefit of investing in a Gold ETF is the transparency of prices. Since Gold ETFs are traded on stock exchanges, the prices are readily available and updated in real-time. This transparency can help you make informed investment decisions and track the performance of your investment easily.

In conclusion, investing in a Gold ETF can be a smart and efficient way to gain exposure to the price of gold. Whether you choose to do SIP in gold, invest through a mutual fund, or hedge your investments in gold, a Gold ETF can provide a convenient and transparent way to invest in this precious metal.

Learn from the insights of writer and investor, founder of MI Securities and business partner at Sharekhan. Reach out to him at Irshad@bp.sharekhan.com for valuable knowledge on financial matters

Illegal Riverbed Mining

The Harm Spreads to Fisheries Industry

Illegal riverbed mining is impacting our fisheries industry now. Over 2500 trout fish were killed due to it and the perpetrators haven't been taken to task till now



Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat

Peerzada Rayees from Sail Beerwah in Central Kashmir's Budgam district has been in search of justice for more than a week now. Last year, Rayees set up a fish farm with the support of the Department of Fisheries, J&K. He was planning to sell his crop towards the end of May but before he could do so, his entire crop of trout fish died during the intervening night of May 23rd and 24th, as the fresh water supply to his farm was diverted by people involved in illegal riverbed mining in Sukhnag river. The average weight of the fish was between 200 to 350 grams. Till date neither has any FIR been registered against the accused people nor has any senior officer from administration visited his farm. Rayees and his brothers had made an investment of Rs 9 lakhs on this farm but before they could reap its benefits, the entire fish population in his farm had perished.

The fish farm named Peerzada Brother's Trout Fish Farm is located on Beerwah Tosamaidan Road at Dooen Kuel Bagh, village Sail Tehsil Beerwah of District Budgam. Rayees had done his Masters Degree in Chemistry and when he couldn't get a Government job he started a fish farm in March 2023. His brothers were assisting him in this business and in a few weeks they were planning to sell the first crop on the eve of Bakra Eid.

Until May 23rd night, the water supply to the fish farm was normal but the same was cut down in the wee hours of May 24th. On Friday/May 24th 2024, Rayees' brothers woke up around 4:30 am and found a large number of dead fish in the tanks. When the family inquired how the water supply was seized they came to know that people who were involved in illegal riverbed mining had cut the supply line to enable them to take out boulders and other riverbed material. A lot of muddy water had also entered the tanks initially and that was also responsible for the death of fish. For the last 6 days Rayees has been moving from Pillar to Post but there is no action at all. Even the Police Station Beerwah hasn't filed any FIR in this case till date, even as Rayees tried to lodge a complaint at the police station twice.

This author also highlighted this issue on social media and posted the pictures of dead fish on X/formerly Twitter.

No action has been taken by the District Administration Budgam even as I had tagged the District Magistrate Budgam and officers of Geology and Mining Department.

On Wednesday afternoon, the aggrieved filed a written complaint before Sub Divisional Magistrate-SDM Beerwah who marked the representation to his subordinate officer i.e Tehsildar Beerwah. This author spoke to Teshildar Beerwah who reassured that action will be taken and that he would personally visit the farm in the next few days. The officers of Fisheries Department told Rayees that they can only forward his case to the higher ups and advised him to file a complaint in the online portal of the Lt Governor's grievance cell.

Illegal Riverbed Mining in Sukhnag

The construction company-NKC Project Pvt Ltd which was involved in illegal riverbed min-



ing in Shali Ganga at Panzan village in Chadoora around 2021 has now shifted its operation to Sukhnag river which is around 30 kms from Panzan. In September 2022, the National Green Tribunal-NGT banned mining in Shali Ganga after this author moved a formal application against NKC Projects Pvt Ltd in 2021. It took me almost 1 year to persuade the NGT that NKC company was using heavy machinery during mining which isn't allowed. My counsel produced the GPS photos which proved that heavy earthmovers, JCBs and L&T cranes were being used by the company and in fact the said company tried to lie before the tribunal that they were not using machines. In fact they challenged the NGT order in Supreme Court of India, which vacated the stay but then they again had to undertake the riverbed mining manually using labourers. The company preferred to move to another location Sukhnag river, Sail Beerwah.

For more than a year, NKC Projects Pvt Ltd has been taking out boulders and other riverbed material - at least 100 dumpsters (big trucks) per day in Sail Village Beerwah in Budgam. No Environmental Clearance -EC has been obtained by this company from J&K State Environmental Impact Assessment Authority-SEIAA which is mandatory as per the guidelines of Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change -MoEF.

In Budgam only two streams have been e-auctioned for riverbed mining, Shali Ganga and Doodh Ganga, and the said work has to be done manually as per the specific and standard guidelines of J&K State Environmental Impact Assessment Authority- JKSEIAA. The work of this authority in J&K has been assigned by MoEF Govt of India to the Department of Environment Ecology and Remote Sensing but this department is also not able to do justice as they are not taking action against the violators due to a dearth of staff and other logistical issues. In Shali Ganga and Doodh Ganga, the use of heavy machines has been curbed after NGT's intervention last year but in places like Sail, Beerwah as well as other districts, the loot and plunder is rampant. Moreover, the government officials are unmoved



In Shali Ganga and Doodh Ganga, the use of heavy machines has been curbed after NGT's intervention last year but in places like Sail, Beerwah as well as other districts, the loot and plunder is rampant. Moreover, the government officials are unmoved

Minor Mineral Concession Rules 2016

In order to control illegal mining, the J&K Govt in 2016 came up with a new set of rules called the Jammu and Kashmir Minor Mineral Concession, Storage and Transportation of Minerals and Prevention of Illegal Mining Rules 2016. In an order dated March 19, 2019 the Industries and Commerce Department decided to allot mineral blocks through e-auctions. District-level e-auction committees were constituted, headed by District Magistrates. Senior officers and engineers from the PWD, Irrigation and Flood Control, Geology and Mining and Finance departments are members of these committees. The Department of Geology and Mining has also moved from open auctions to e-auctions. So far, more than 173 mineral blocks across Jammu and Kashmir have been notified for the e-auctioning but Sukhnag river doesn't figure in that list at all. Before 2016 the Geology and Mining Department would only take royalty from the people involved in the mining trade including truck drivers carrying the riverbed material (RBM) like sand, boulders, nallah bajri etc. Infact, the allotments made through e-auction also prohibit contractors from using heavy machinery. The Minor Mineral Concession Rules 2016 say that riverbed mining is to be done manually or maximum use of semi mechanised machines is allowed. The Earth Movers, JCBs and L&T cranes are highly mechanised machines and their use is completely illegal. This has been authenticated by several SC court orders, NGT orders, High Court judgements and Sustainable Sand Mining Management Guidelines 2016. These guidelines were passed by none other than the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

Conclusion

Heavy riverbed mining leads to the increase of velocity of the flowing water, thereby eventually eroding the riverbeds. The sand aquifer helps in recharging the water table and its progressive depletion in the river is accompanied by the lowering of the water table in the nearby areas. Sand depletion in the streambed or riverbeds causes rivers to deepen. This enlarges the river mouths and coastal inlets.

The impact of illegal riverbed mining is not only causing depletion in the water table, drying up of springs or defacing of the river landscape but this is impacting our fisheries industry as well. The livelihood of fishermen living around Rambiarra in Shopian and Pulwama, Doodh Ganga in Budgam and Srinagar or Vaishav in Kulgam district has been impacted. Now the fish farms which get water supply from the nearby rivers and streams are also under threat. Irony is that the companies and contractors who are involved in illegal riverbed mining are not reprimanded or taken to task by Govt officers. It is only on the orders of NGT that authorities are acting against illegal riverbed mining and in majority of the areas the administration including police are acting as mute spectators. The case of Rayees is before us. The authorities have neither arrested anyone nor has an FIR been filed till date against the perpetrators of the crime that led to the death of 2500 fish. Is any one listening?

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

Prioritizing Quality in Healthcare Delivery

Dr. Abdul Rouf

In today's global healthcare landscape, the pursuit of quality has become paramount, crossing borders and transforming traditional approaches. From developed nations to emerging economies, governments and healthcare institutions are increasingly recognizing the importance of quality assurance in healthcare delivery. Accreditation systems have emerged as a cornerstone in this quest for excellence, providing a structured framework for assessing and improving healthcare standards. India, with its vast and diverse healthcare ecosystem, stands at the forefront of this transformative journey towards quality-driven healthcare. The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW), in collaboration with the National Health Mission (NHM), has embarked on a comprehensive accreditation process to elevate the quality of healthcare services, particularly in public health facilities.

At the heart of this initiative lies the National Quality Assurance Standards (NQAS), a meticulously crafted framework designed to align with the specific requirements of public health facilities. Developed in 2013, NQAS draws inspiration from global best practices, setting rigorous standards across eight key Areas of Concern: Service Provision, Patient Rights, Inputs, Support Services, Clinical Care, Infection Control, Quality Management and Outcome. These standards, accredited by the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua), reflect a commitment to excellence and serve as a benchmark for healthcare providers nationwide.

The implementation of NQAS is spearheaded by the National Health Systems Resource Centre (NHSRC), which



oversees capacity building initiatives and training programs aimed at empowering healthcare professionals. Through continuous learning and skill development, NHSRC fosters a culture of quality improvement within healthcare facilities, ensuring that standards are not just met but exceeded. Accreditation under NQAS serves as a testament to a facility's commitment to quality and patient safety. It not only enhances the credibility of healthcare providers but also instills confidence in patients and stakeholders alike. However, despite the strides made in improving healthcare standards, challenges persist, particularly in regions like Kashmir.

Efforts to bolster accreditation rates under NQAS

hold the promise of elevating healthcare standards in Kashmir. By prioritizing quality assurance, stakeholders reaffirm their commitment to providing standardized, evidence-based care that prioritizes patient safety and satisfaction. Moreover, enhancing quality standards aligns with broader objectives of strengthening the health system and advancing public health initiatives.

As Kashmir celebrates milestones such as the elimination of Tuberculosis (TB) in five districts, attention turns towards addressing the gap in accreditation under NQAS. While progress has been made in combating both communicable and non-communicable diseases and infant and maternal mortality the need to

ensure consistent, safe, and effective healthcare services remains paramount.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has set a target to achieve NQAS certification for all public healthcare facilities by December 2026. In Kashmir, there are approximately 2000 public health facilities, but fewer than 10 have received NQAS accreditation. While some facilities are in the process of obtaining certification, a significant amount of work remains to meet the national target.

While the road ahead may pose challenges, the resolve to deliver quality healthcare remains unwavering. Notably NQAS accreditation can be achieved within existing budgets and human resources

of public health facilities but resources require careful planning and alignment of objectives. Yet, as history has shown, with dedication and collective effort, Health Care workers in Kashmir have overcome challenges in the past, setting new benchmarks in healthcare delivery.

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

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Confounded by Politics

Faizan Bashir

Stone-carved promises, emotional appeals, and compensatory talks are a common sight these days. From making up for the losses to providing employment, from eliminating trivial troubles to easing grave aggravations—the world of politics is in full swing. Bent on delivering enigmatic provisions once voted to power, politicians seem to have devoured a pill of divinity: each of their omissions and commissions crafted with fastidious care.

Where one gets hilariously perplexed is when they pit arguments against each other for wrongdoing. 'Political party A has been feeling drowsy thus far, and we will awaken them and make policies for the welfare of the poor citizens. Political party B has been capitalizing on the emotional inclinations of the destitute; they have been amassing money while siphoning off public wealth, so it's a word to make this piece of the planet a piece of heaven.'

Amidst such a political play, a citizen like me gets confused about whom to pin our hopes on and whom to discard as a sheer play of smart words and theatrics. When it comes to the only monopoly the poor have, it's trust. We have countless examples to showcase that people here have been deprived of such a monopoly. Over and again. Numerous promises shot forth, covetous power in the hands, and tad work done. I'm not apolitical, but have we done enough to deserve public votes every time?

How many bridges are awaiting construction, how much trash is lying on the roads, how compact are the drainage channels, how many unemployed youths are reeling under the tentacles of inflation, and how many more stand languishing within the four walls of the room, puffing away at coffin nails, and awaiting the construction of libraries? We have not been able to get to the basics of the more complex problems; how is it possible for us to fill our Kashmir with divine fragrance and butterflies?

Politics was meant to be a noble calling, a vehicle to peek into the deepest, darkest troubles of people and have a dialogue with them. We, the politicians of the present times, have upended the essence of it, reducing it to dramas, dances, and distress and ripping the solemn public trust apart at that.

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How To Make Sure Your Leftovers Are Safe To Eat

Primrose Freestone

Eating leftovers can be a great way to save money, diversify your cooking repertoire and reduce food waste.

But eating leftover food can also be risky as these foods have already been exposed to bacteria in the environment. If you haven't stored and re-heated leftovers correctly, you could be putting yourself at risk of potentially life-threatening food poisoning.

That doesn't mean you should start avoiding leftovers, however. By following the the correct food safety practices, you can ensure you avoid harm when eating leftovers.

How quickly should leftovers be refrigerated or frozen?

Bacteria exist everywhere in our world, including in kitchens – and the foods within them. The bacteria that cause food to spoil can grow rapidly with the right nutrients, moisture and temperatures. Some double in numbers in as little as 20 minutes.

It's important that any leftovers are put into the fridge or freezer as quickly as possible and within two hours maximum. This time advice is based on how quickly bacteria can grow in food at non-refrigerated temperatures, and means leftover food become less safe to eat the longer it is left at more than 5°C. You should also make sure that leftovers are covered. Clingfilm and airtight lids help prevent air from getting at the food. This is important, as most pathogens need oxygen to grow.

How long are refrigerated leftovers safe to eat?

Your fridge should be kept at a temperature of between 0 and 5°C, as this inhibits the growth of food poisoning bacteria on leftovers.

Leftovers must be eaten within two days, as any longer gives harmful bacteria more time to grow. Indeed, pathogens such

as Listeria, which can cause flu-like symptoms, can even grow in refrigerated temperatures and are more likely to grow beyond two days – which is why this is

not, don't eat it.

Leftover foods should be reheated to an internal temperature of at least 165°F (74°C). For sauces, stews, soups and gravy,

wave, you should also make sure they reach an internal temperature of 74°C before eating.

Reheating food using a slow cooker is not a good idea because

any harmful bacteria to start to re-grow.

This then makes it harder for heat kill all the pathogens present the next time you warm up



the recommended time limit for storing your leftovers.

If you don't think you'll eat your leftovers within that timeframe, consider freezing them. Leftovers can be kept for up to three months if frozen at -18°C.

What is the safest way to re-heat your leftovers?

When you reheat leftovers, you must ensure the food is piping hot all the way through. If

it's best to bring them to a full boil, stirring for at least three minutes. These practices will kill most bacteria and inactivate any heat-sensitive bacterial toxins that are present.

If reheating leftovers in the oven, set the oven temperature to at least 325°F (163°C or gas mark 3) and bake long enough to completely heat the food through to at least 74°C. If reheating leftovers in the micro-

if foods stay at a temperature less than 165°F for several hours, this can permit bacterial growth – increasing your risk of food poisoning.

Can you reheat leftovers more than once?

You really should not reheat leftovers more than once. Each time a food warms and cools, it provides the right temperature and amount of time needed for

the leftovers. If you don't think you'll eat all your leftovers within two days, consider freezing them.

Can you reheat a takeaway?

Whether you can safely re-heat takeaway foods depends on how you stored it.

If it was stored warm in the back of your car or left at room temperature in your home for more than two hours, then the

meal may be a food poisoning risk – especially if you've already touched or partially eaten it (which introduces bacteria to the food).

But if you didn't handle the food much and refrigerated it within two hours of purchase, then the takeaway is safe to re-heat – provided the next time it's eaten it's first heated to a piping hot temperature of at least 74°C. It also shouldn't be stored in the fridge for more than two days.

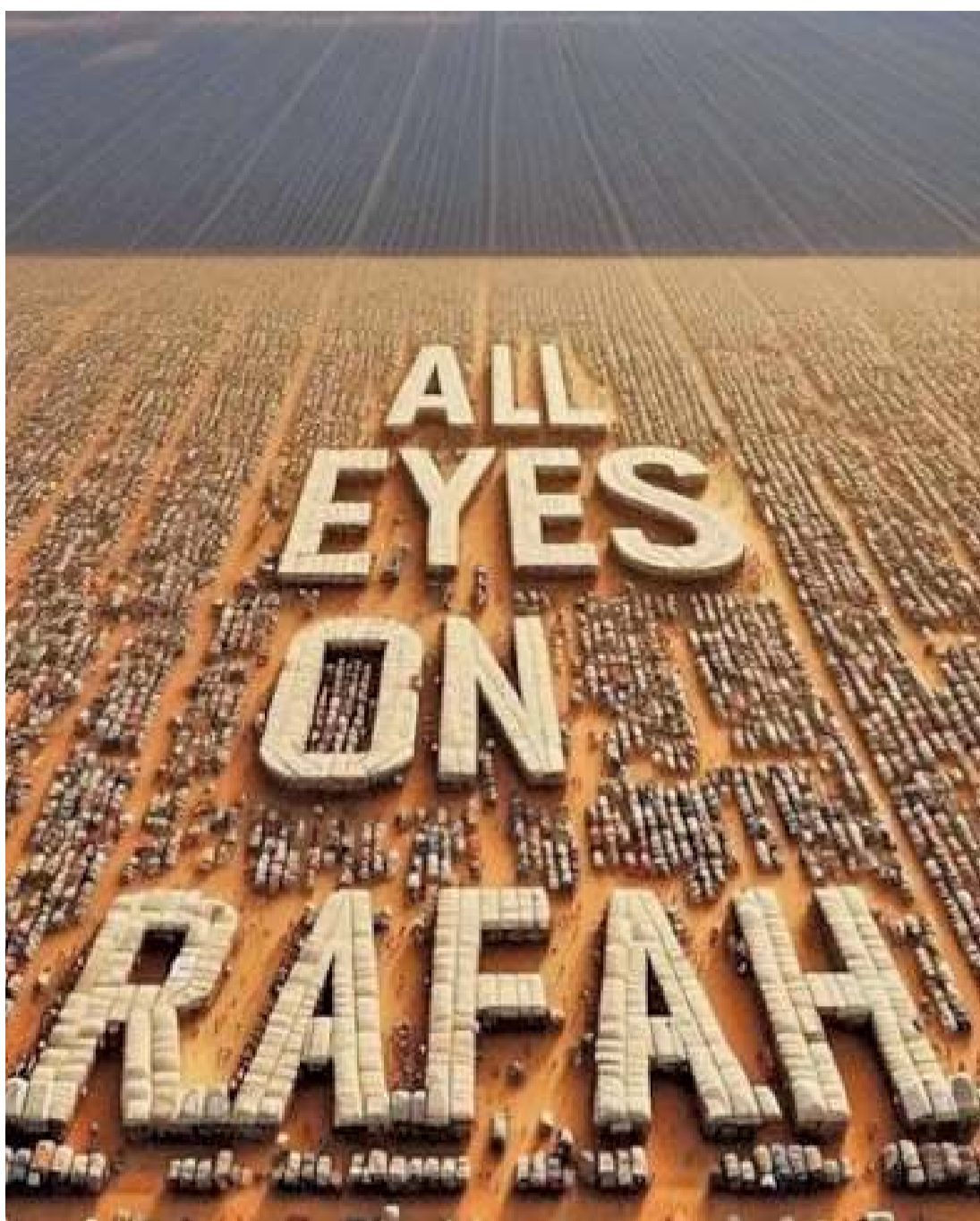
There are some takeaway foods that you should be careful about saving as leftovers. Cooked rice dishes are possibly the most risky to save. Uncooked rice may contain spores of Bacillus cereus, a bacterium that causes food poisoning.

While the parent bacterium is killed when rice is cooked, its spores can survive the temperature of boiling water. If rice is not refrigerated within two to three hours of cooking, the spores can grow into bacteria which in turn release the rice toxins which give rise to food poisoning symptoms such as diarrhoea, abdominal pain and vomiting. The longer contaminated cooked rice is left to stand at a non-refrigerated temperature, the more Bacillus cereus will be present and the more unsafe the dish becomes.

If cooked rice needs to be saved, it should be covered once cooked and cooled quickly (ideally within 2 hours), then stored and refrigerated for no more than 24 hours. Cooked rice leftovers should be piping hot when reheated, and should never be reheated more than once.

Leftovers can be safe to eat so long as you take the right precautions. But if you're ever in doubt, or don't think you'll eat them within two days, storing them in the freezer will give you more flexibility than storing them in the fridge.

By arrangements with The Conversation



'ALL EYES ON RAFAH'

Image Shared by Millions on Social Media

Agencies

As pressure on Israel grows over its military assault on the southern Gaza town of Rafah, an image with the words All Eyes on Rafah has gone viral on social media.

The image, which according to Al-Jazeera is AI-generated, was reportedly shared more than 37 million times on Instagram in less than 24 hours, along with the hashtag #AllEyesOnRafah.

It depicts tents in a camp across a vast plain with tents in the center spelling out "All Eyes on Rafah".

It has been shared largely through Instagram's Stories feature with celebrities and others of influence also posting the image.

HORRIFIC AIRSTRIKE

On Sunday night, at least 50 Palestinians were killed in an airstrike on a camp for the displaced in Rafah. The horrific attack caused a fire that spread rapidly through the camp. Footage showed charred bodies, as well as a man holding a beheaded baby as screams were heard all around him.

Israeli forces intensified its attacks on Gaza despite a ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Friday which ordered Israel to immediately halt its ground invasion of Rafah.

On Tuesday, at least 20 people

were killed and many others wounded in another massacre carried out by the Israeli occupation army, which bombed a camp for displaced people in the Al-Mawasi area of Rafah.

Rafah housed more than 1.5 million displaced Palestinians before the ground invasion began on May 6. Many had fled their homes in areas across the besieged enclave which was attacked by Israeli forces.

ONE MILLION FLEE

According to the UN Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), nearly one million Palestinians have fled Rafah in the past three weeks.

"This happened with nowhere safe to go & amidst bombardments, lack of food & water, piles of waste & unsuitable living conditions," UNRWA said on X on Tuesday.

The UN agency added, "Day after day, providing assistance & protection becomes nearly impossible."

While the All Eyes on Rafah image has spread quickly, NBC News reported, video footage from Rafah "posted by Palestinian journalists has been restricted and in some cases removed from social media for depicting the graphic aftermath of Israeli strikes."

"An Instagram spokesperson said the company removed the content due to its violent and graphic nature, which it said violated the platform's policies," according to the report.

OVER 36,000 KILLED

Currently on trial before the International Court of Justice for genocide against Palestinians, Israel has been waging a devastating war on Gaza since October 7.

According to Gaza's Ministry of Health, 36,171 Palestinians have been killed, and 81,420 wounded in Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza starting on October 7.

Moreover, at least 11,000 people are unaccounted for, presumed dead under the rubble of their homes throughout the Strip.

Palestinian and international organizations say that the majority of those killed and wounded are women and children.

The Israeli war has resulted in an acute famine, mostly in northern Gaza, resulting in the death of many Palestinians, mostly children.

The Israeli aggression has also resulted in the forceful displacement of nearly two million people from all over the Gaza Strip, with the vast majority of the displaced forced into the densely crowded southern city of Rafah near the border with Egypt - in what has become Palestine's largest mass exodus since the 1948 Nakba.

Israel says that 1,200 soldiers and civilians were killed during the Al-Aqsa Flood Operation on October 7. Israeli media published reports suggesting that many Israelis were killed on that day by 'friendly fire'.



Nikki Haley Writes "Finish Them" On Israeli Bombs Days After Rafah Strike

Agencies

WASHINGTON: Former US presidential hopeful Nikki Haley has been photographed writing "Finish Them" on an Israeli shell as she toured sites near the northern border with Lebanon.

The photograph was posted on X on Tuesday by Danny Danon, a member of the Israeli parliament and former ambassador to the United Nations, who was accompanying Haley on her visit.

"Finish Them". This is what my friend the former ambassador Nikki Haley wrote," Danon said in his post that showed a kneeling Haley writing on a shell with a purple marker pen.

Haley was a hawkish UN envoy under Donald Trump, and her term overlapped with Danon.

The Gaza war was sparked by Hamas's October 7 attack on southern Israel, which resulted in the deaths of 1,189 people, mostly civilians, according to an

AFP tally based on the latest Israeli official figures.

Militants also took 252 hostages, 121 of whom remain in Gaza, including 37 the army says are dead.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 36,096 people in Gaza, mostly civilians, according to the territory's health ministry.

Haley, 52, abandoned her White House bid in March after heavy defeats in Republican primary contests to Trump, and last week said that she would vote for him in the election.

Trump has ruled her out of contention to be his vice president, but she is a potential presidential runner in 2028.

The White House said Tuesday that President Joe Biden has no plans to change his Israel policy following a deadly weekend strike on Rafah but that he is not turning a "blind eye" to the plight of Palestinian civilians.

France's Macron Urges A Green Light For Ukraine To Strike Targets Inside Russia With Western Weapons

Agencies

PARIS: France's president has joined the head of NATO in pushing for a policy shift that could change the complexion of the war in Ukraine - allowing Kyiv to strike military bases inside Russia with sophisticated long-range weapons provided by Western partners.

The question of whether to allow Ukraine to hit targets on Russian soil with Western-supplied weaponry has been a delicate issue since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022.

Western leaders have mostly shrunk from taking the step because it runs the risk of provoking Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has repeatedly warned that the West's direct involvement could put the world on a path to nuclear conflict.

But the war has been going Russia's way recently as the Kremlin's forces have exploited Ukrainian shortages in troops and ammunition after a lengthy delay in US military aid, and Western Europe's inadequate military production slowed crucial deliveries to the battlefield.

Russian missiles and bombs have pummeled Ukrainian military positions and civilian areas, including the power grid. Ukraine is facing its hardest test of the war, and untying its hands on long-range weapons could spur a fightback and upset the Kremlin.



Macron said that France's position is that "we think we must allow (Ukraine) to neutralize the (Russian) military sites from which the missiles are fired."

"If we tell (the Ukrainians) you do not have the right to reach the point from which the missiles are fired, we are in fact telling them that we are delivering weapons to you, but you cannot defend yourself," Macron said late Tuesday on an official visit to Germany.

His remarks came a day after NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg urged the alliance's members to lift some of the restrictions on Ukraine's use of Western weapons.

"The right to self-defense includes hitting legitimate targets outside Ukraine," Stoltenberg said at a NATO meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria on Monday.

Already, at the start of May, Moscow interpreted as a threat UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron's comment that Ukraine could use British long-range weapons, such as the Storm Shadow cruise

missile, to hit back at Russia.

That, and Macron's comments that he doesn't exclude sending troops to Ukraine, prompted Russia to announce it would hold drills involving tactical nuclear weapons. Russia also warned the UK government that its decision could bring retaliatory strikes on British military facilities and equipment on Ukrainian soil or elsewhere.

The leaders are choosing their words carefully. Macron underlined that only Russian bases used to launch missiles against Ukraine should be regarded as legitimate targets - not other Russian bases or civilian infrastructure.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, speaking alongside Macron, was as usual more guarded and noncommittal, noting that Ukraine "is allowed to defend itself" under international law.

Scholz's spokesperson, Steffen Hebestreit, clarified Wednesday that the chancellor meant that Ukraine's defense "isn't limited to its territory." He declined to say what agreements with Ukraine on weapons supplied by Germany stipulate, insisting they are confidential.

Scholz has insisted on avoiding steps that could end up drawing NATO into a battlefield confrontation with Russia. Other Western leaders have expressed similar fears of a creeping, high-stakes escalation.

His concerns are shared in Washington. Over the past

two years, the US has gradually ceded to Ukrainian requests for support, sending tanks and long-range missile systems that it initially hesitated to provide, but with a caveat on aiming them at Russian soil.

"There's no change to our policy at this point," US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said Tuesday. "We don't encourage or enable the use of US-supplied weapons to strike inside Russia."

Western leaders are keen to put pressure on Putin, whose forces have recently been pushing hard against Ukrainian defenses in eastern and northeastern Ukraine.

This week has brought a cascade of new European aid, with Belgium and Spain each pledging around 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion) in new military support to Ukraine. Sweden announced Wednesday it will donate aid worth 13 billion kronor (\$1.23 billion) - the largest package Sweden has donated so far. It will include air defense systems, artillery ammunition and armored vehicles.

Ukraine has recently been under intense pressure from Russian attacks in the north-eastern Kharkiv region and in the partially occupied eastern Donetsk region.

Putin has said he wants to establish a "buffer zone" in Kharkiv to halt cross-border Ukrainian assaults. Analysts say the Kharkiv push also draws depleted Ukrainian forces away from Donetsk.

Yemen's Houthis say they downed US MQ-9 drone in Yemen's Maareb

Agencies



CAIRO: Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis said they downed a US MQ-9 drone in Yemen's southeastern province of Maareb, the group's military spokesman said in a televised speech on Wednesday.

Houthi's spokesman Yahya Saree said that this drone "is the sixth UAV that has been shot down so far." On May 21, Houthi shot down another drone over Al-Bayda province in Southern Yemen.

The group, which controls Yemen's capital and most populous areas of the Arabian Peninsula state, has attacked international shipping in the Red Sea since November in solidarity with the Palestinians in the war between Israel and Hamas militants, drawing US and British retaliatory strikes since February.

Yemen Targets 6 Vessels Amid Escalating Anti-Israel Campaign

Agencies

Yemen's Armed Forces have targeted six ships in waters near the country as well as the Mediterranean Sea as part of their operations against Israel and its backers the United States and Britain.

In a statement, spokesman Yahya Saree said they hit three ships in the Red Sea, namely LAAX, MOREA, and Sealady.

The spokesman said the operations were carried out using naval and ballistic missiles and drones.

They also staged missile and drone attacks on the American ships ALBA and Maersk Hartford in the Arabian Sea, according to Saree.

The sixth operation hit the ship MINERVA ANTONIA in the

Mediterranean Sea with several winged missiles.

"All the aforementioned ships were targeted for violating the ban on visiting the ports of occupied Palestine," he said.

The Yemeni spokesman said they would target all the Israeli-linked ships in the declared area of operations, regardless of their destination.

US military MQ-9 Reaper drone downed

In another statement, Saree said that Yemeni armed forces shot down another US military MQ-9 Reaper drone with domestic missiles in the east of Ma'rib province.

Images published online also showed the MQ-9 on its belly in the desert, its tail assembly disconnected from the rest of the drone's body.

Since October last year, the Yemeni armed forces have been launching attacks on ships linked to Israel or en route to the Israeli-occupied territories in the Red or Arabian seas in solidarity with the Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip.

The Arab country expanded its operations early this month in what was described as the fourth phase of anti-Israel operations.

The fourth phase is intended to impose a total naval blockade on the Israeli regime, with the Yemeni forces attacking any ship arriving at the regime's ports in the Red Sea or the Mediterranean Sea.

Yemen says its operations won't stop unless the regime halts its brutal aggression against Rafah and other parts of the Gaza Strip.

