

## J&K Busy Creating New History: LG



Observer News Service

Srinagar: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday said the conduct of peaceful elections and recent development in Jammu and Kashmir is proof of the fact that the Union territory is now busy "creating a new history by forgetting its past."

Addressing a function at Raj Bhawan here on the occasion of

Gandhi Jayanti, Sinha said, Bapu always wanted to see peace and progress in Jammu and Kashmir. He urged the new generation to take inspiration from the ideals of Bapu.

"The young generation has also understood this very well and therefore they do not have tools of destruction like guns and stones in their hands, but dreams of peace and aspirations are visible | More on P6

## 'Gandhiji's Ideals Shaping New J&K'

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Wednesday addressed the UT-level function commemorating the 155th birth anniversary celebration of Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, at Raj Bhawan. The event, organized by the Department of School Education & Department of Higher Education, also marked the closing ceremony of the Swachhata Pakhwada and Swachhata Hi Seva Abhiyan. In his address, the LG extended felicitations to the people on the occasion | More on P6

**1 CRORE 40 LAKH CITIZENS HAVE REITERATED THEIR FAITH IN THE VALUES OF THE CONSTITUTION AND HAVE RESOLVED TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS BEAUTIFUL UNION TERRITORY "**

## BJP's Surankote Candidate Dies A Week Before Results

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Former minister and BJP candidate from Surankote, Mushtaq Ahmad Shah Bukhari, died on Wednesday after collapsing at his residence in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, party leaders said.

He was 75 and is survived by his wife, two daughters and a son. Bukhari was unwell for some time and suffered a heart attack at 7 am, leading to his death, a BJP leader said.

Bukhari, a two-time former MLA from Surankote, joined the BJP in February this year after the Centre granted Scheduled

Tribe status to his Pahari community. He was fielded from Surankote, which went to polls along with 25 other segments in the second phase on September 25.

Bukhari had quit the National Conference in February 2022 after four decades long association following an argument with party president Farooq Abdullah over the Scheduled Tribe status.

Jammu and Kashmir BJP president Ravinder Raina and the leaders of other political parties condoled Bukhari's death.

"Bukhari was a mass leader and his death | More on P6

## ECI Revises Phase-III Voting To 69.65%

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A voter turnout of 69.65 percent was recorded in the third and final phase of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections on Tuesday, with the democratic exercise passing off peacefully amid tight security.

This marks a historic moment of "first time voting" for three communities -- West Pakistan Refugees, Valmiki and Gurkhas -- who have long lacked polling rights and political representation in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly for the past 75 years.

"The polling in phase 3 of the elections to the Legislative Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir recorded an approximate voter turnout of 69.65 percent," the Election Commission of India (ECI) said in an official statement.

The ECI said data will continue to be updated by the field-level officers as the remaining polling parties return and updated figures will be available assembly

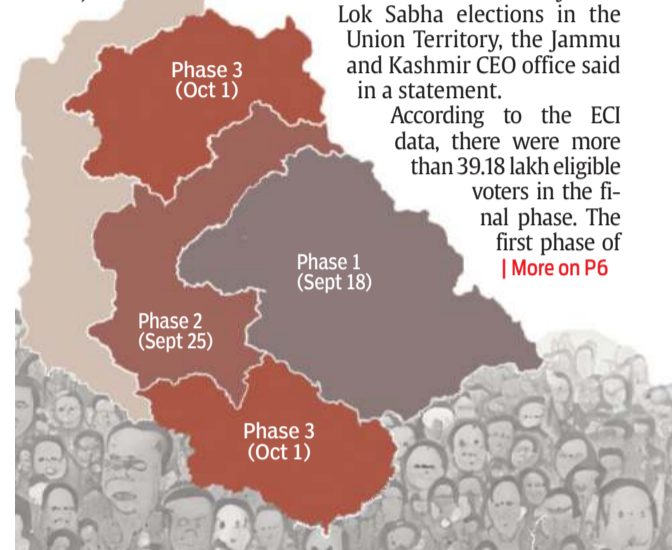
constituency and district-wise live on the Voter Turnout App.

Udhampur district, which has four assembly segments, registered the highest voting of 76.09 per cent followed by Samba district, which has three assembly segments. Kathua district (six segments) polled 73.34 per cent, followed by Jammu (11 segments)

with 71.40 per cent, Bandipora (three segments) with 67.68 per cent, Kupwara (six segments) with 66.79 per cent and the lowest in Baramulla district (seven segments) with 61.03 per cent.

Overall, after the conclusion of all three phases, the poll percentage stands at 63.45 per cent, which is higher than the turnout recorded in the recently held Lok Sabha elections in the Union Territory, the Jammu and Kashmir CEO office said in a statement.

According to the ECI data, there were more than 39.18 lakh eligible voters in the final phase. The first phase of



## KPs Record Over 30% Turnout In Final Phase

The Kashmiri Pandits registered a voter turnout of over 30 per cent in the third and final phase of the elections in Jammu and Kashmir. Spread across 16 assembly segments in three districts of North Kashmir, the Kashmiri Pandits cast their votes at 24 specially designated polling booths in Jammu, Udhampur and Delhi-NCR. "Out of the 18,357 registered displaced Pandit voters, 5,545 turned up to exercise their franchise," said Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner and Returning Officer Dr Arvind Karvani. Special arrangements were made by the Relief and Rehabilitation Department at all polling stations in Jammu and Udhampur to facilitate the voting process.

This turnout follows the earlier phases | More on P6

## All 16 Reserved Seats Record Over 70% Voting

All 16 assembly constituencies reserved for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) recorded over 70% voter turnout in Jammu and Kashmir. The third phase of Jammu and Kashmir assembly elections recorded a voter turnout of approximately 68% on Tuesday, contributing to an overall polling percentage of around 63%

across all three phases. These elections, held on September 18, 25, and October 1, were the first since the abrogation of Article 370 and the first assembly elections in the region in a decade. Jammu and Kashmir has a total of 90 assembly seats, 47 of which are in the Kashmir Valley and 43 in the Jammu division. Of the 90 seats, nine are reserved | More on P6

## 'Unpredictable As Weather': Analysts On J&K's Post-Election Future

Agencies

Srinagar: As the assembly elections held after a decade in Jammu & Kashmir concluded on Tuesday, the political landscape is more unpredictable than ever. With 90 seats up for grabs, the race to secure a majority of 46 MLAs is heating up, and independent candidates and leaders from small parties are expected to play a decisive role in shaping the future of the region's governance.

In otherwise "ungovernable" downtown Srinagar, a city once marred by violence, stone-pelting and frequent strikes, the transformation is visible. The windows of homes, which often bore the brunt of unrest, now shine with an unusual calm following the repeal of Article 370, which granted special autonomy to the region. But as peaceful as the streets may appear, the underlying tensions and questions about the region's political future remain unanswered.

The upcoming elections are widely seen as a referendum on the central government's 2019 decision to revoke Article



**NEXT GOVT MAY BE A 'MULTIGRAIN KHICHDI' - a coalition of parties with vastly different ideologies, each willing to make compromises in exchange for power."**

370. For the first time since that historic event, voters will have the chance to decide who governs them, and the stakes

are high. With political alliances shifting rapidly, the outcome is uncertain, and experts caution that no one can predict with confidence who will come out on top.

Mehraj Ahmad Dar, a research scholar in Political Sciences remarked, "Jammu & Kashmir has a long history of surprising political alliances. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) has allied with both the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at different times, while the National Conference (NC) has also joined forces with both the Congress | More on P6

## Doors Open For Like-minded Parties, Individuals: Karra

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: The National Conference-Congress alliance is open to taking support of like-minded parties and individuals for government formation in the Union Territory if such a need arises, the Congress' Jammu and Kashmir unit chief Tariq Hameed Karra said on Wednesday.

"What we can see is that the people have voted in favour of the alliance or to keep the BJP out of power corridors, which is a good thing," Karra told reporters here, a day after the three-phase assembly elections concluded in J-K.

"If the need arises, our doors are open for all like-minded people, forces, parties and even individuals. We can discuss this with our alliance partner so that we can talk to such people if there is a need," the Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) president said.

Asked whether they considered the PDP a "like-minded party", Karra said he would not like to qualify anyone. "I have said like-minded, on the same page against BJP's repressive, oppressive policies," he added.

The J&K Congress chief said there was "a nefarious design"

## All Eyes On Oct 8 Counting

Agencies

Srinagar: As all three phases of Assembly polls have culminated peacefully in J&K, all eyes are now on October 8, the day results of 90 seats will be out. On the same day, things will be clear as to who will form the government J&K after a gap of ten years.

After Tuesday's polling, focus has shifted to appointment of counting agents by the candidates as well as preparation by the election commission of India to keep the counting day peaceful and foolproof.

Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir were held after 10 years and this time the enthusiasm of people to participate in the democratic process was unmatched.

During these elections the fate of one former chief minister, UT president of two major national parties Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), chiefs of three major regional parties, several former ministers and many new faces has been sealed in the electronic voting machines (EVMs).

The presence of banned Jamaat-e-Islami backed candidates in the electoral politics for the first time since 1987 allegedly rigged elections has given a new direction to these elections which is one of the reasons for improved voter turnout in Kashmir valley. The Jel backed | More on P6



behind the process of nominating five MLAs by the Lieutenant Governor to the J&K assembly.

Asked if the independent candidates could emerge as the kingmakers after the poll results are announced on October 8, Karra said they see independents as "spoilers".

When the Centre realised that all their experiments and formulas had failed, "they implemented a novel way to fragment votes here by fielding independents", the Congress leader charged.

"Their only aim is to disempower Kashmiris," he alleged.

On the detention of climate activist | More on P6

## 'Cybersecurity Crisis' Srinagar Resident Loses Thousands In Online Fraud

Observer News Service

Srinagar: On September 26, around noon, Zubair Ahmed, a resident of Srinagar, received a series of unexpected notifications on his phone. As he quickly pulled out his device, a wave of shock washed over him, as if the ground had slipped beneath his feet. He discovered he had fallen victim to an online scam.

Zubair had received multiple One Time Passwords (OTPs) from Jammu and Kashmir Bank, only to find that a staggering Rs 81,886 had been fraudulently withdrawn from his account.

"I do not recall clicking any link that could have compromised my personal information," Zubair said. "I had received a series of anonymous calls. After successfully phishing, the scammers blackmailed me into a video call." As he desperately pleaded for a refund, the scammers coerced him into sharing his screen, demanding access to his phone's data.

Zubair wasted no time in reporting the incident to the



cyber police station and freezing his credit card at his bank. Desperate for any clues, Zubair searched for the numbers on Truecaller, only to be met with disappointment. The scammer, according to Ahmad, was likely domestic, operating from within India and speaking Hindi, and not as 'professional' as he initially believed.

"The scammer has used my credit card for Amazon shopping. I have shared the transaction details with the cyber police. I am hopeful that the case will be solved swiftly," he said.

However, the delay in retrieving his money is adding to his distress.

According to media reports, the Cyber Police in Kashmir has been kept on tip toes as they are tackling a range of digital offences while fortifying the online space for netizens' safety. The year 2023 witnessed an escalation in the sophistication of cyber threats, posing challenges for law enforcement agencies. The data of Zonal Police Headquarters reveals that Kashmir Cyber Police in 2023 registered 39 FIRs. | More on P6

## Mirwaiz Files Plea In HC Against 'House Arrest'

Hearing On October 4

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: Hurriyat Conference chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq has filed a petition in the Jammu and Kashmir High Court challenging his "house arrest", the separatist amalgam said on Wednesday.

It said the court is scheduled to hear the petition on Friday.

While the Hurriyat has claimed that its chairman has been under house detention for one month and his movements are restricted, the J-K administration has maintained that he is a free man but security agencies determine his movements because of security reasons.

"The hearing of the case of Mirwaiz's house arrest/illegal detention has been listed on October 4 in the High Court. Mirwaiz has been under house detention for the last one month," the Hurriyat said.



It said that the Mirwaiz had earlier filed a writ petition in Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh High Court which had been listed for November 2024.

"However, as he incessantly has been once again put under illegal and unauthorised detention without any formal orders by the administration even during the pendency of the said writ petition, depriving him of his fundamental rights guaranteed to him including his religious rights as well, he therefore, was compelled to file another petition along with an | More on P6

## Israel's Deadliest Day 1 In Lebanon, 8 Soldiers Killed



Agencies

Beirut: Eight Israeli soldiers have been killed fighting Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Israeli army said on Wednesday.

However, Sky News Arabia reported that at least 14 Israeli soldiers have been killed during clashes with Hezbollah fighters since ground incursion began on Tuesday.

Six soldiers of the Ergoz commando unit were killed in a gun battle in a southern

Lebanese village, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said, adding that five more soldiers were wounded in the same incident.

Two soldiers of the Golani recon unit were killed in a separate incident, in which another soldier was seriously wounded, the IDF said.

The IDF earlier named Captain Eitan Itzhak Oster, 22, as the first soldier killed since it invaded southern Lebanon. Israel launched its ground invasion | More on P6



## 'Women Bunk Tech Career For Lack Of Support, Higher Cost; Add To Workforce Gender Gap'

Press Trust Of India

Companies struggle to find right women talent with STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) profiles as lack of family support and higher cost of education discourage girls from pursuing higher education in this stream, according

start working together to create a system where women can succeed in STEM," he noted. Tally, she said, talks to young girls in schools and colleges to encourage women to choose and continue in the STEM fields. "I do believe that every company should look at equal opportunity without compromising merit and talent," she added.



to industry experts. The gender gap persists largely in STEM education due to societal and cultural factors including gender biases and lack of support.

"While the higher cost of education can sometimes be a factor, the bigger issue is a lack of encouragement from a young age, limited role models, and not enough support for women entering STEM related fields," workforce solutions provider NLB Services CEO Sachin Alug told PTI.

This is making it difficult for companies to find the right women talent from the STEM stream, he said, adding that lack of gender diversity is limiting creativity, innovation and different perspectives to solve complex business problems.

Echoing a similar view, home-grown software solutions provider in business processes Tally Solutions executive director Nupur Goenka said there is a huge gap in men-women ratio in the STEM area as access to continuous education is a privilege rather than a right. "To encourage women, it is important to change how we perceive a woman's role in society at a fundamental level across the population. Without this, it is difficult to imagine how social construct, education opportunity, workforce opportunity, culture, safety, and policies will all

Quest Deputy CEO - IT Staffing, Kapil Joshi said that there is an improvement in male-female ratio in STEM across colleges, which will gradually reflect in the job market in the future.

"However, several societal and geopolitical challenges continue to hinder this progress. These barriers include social biases against women in certain STEM fields, a lack of resources and leadership commitment, gaps in the education ecosystem, issues of socialisation and isolation in STEM, and others," he added.

He said, the significance of STEM education is underscored by the fact that 80 per cent of jobs created in the next decade will require some form of maths and science skills.

Moreover, 70 per cent of the top-paying jobs globally will demand highly skilled STEM graduates, he said, adding that fields like statistics, information security, and computer science are expected to see substantial growth, making it imperative that we prepare a gender-diverse workforce to meet this demand.

"Addressing the gender skill gap in STEM is crucial for India's economic future. As we move forward, it's essential that we continue to foster an environment where women in STEM can thrive, contributing to a more innovative and equitable workforce," added Joshi.

## Genetic Study Tracks Migration History Of Elephants In India, Finds 'Dilution Of Diversity'

Press Trust Of India

A genetic study has charted the migration history of elephants in India from north to south, revealing multiple bottlenecks encountered along the way that threatened their existence and likely caused a "dilution of genetic diversity". Genetic diversity is important for a resilience to disease and long-term survival, including an ability to adapt to environmental changes.

The findings can help shape the future of elephant species in India by informing conservation strategies, researchers from the National Centre for Biological Sciences and the Indian Institute of Science in Bengaluru, said.

The Asian elephant has been listed as 'Endangered' species on the IUCN Red List since 1986. The list was established by the International Union for Conservation of Nature in 1964.

Elephants in India -- known to make up 60 per cent of the global Asian elephant population -- started migrating about 1,00,000 years ago, eventually settling in different parts of the country.

The researchers analysed 34 whole genome sequences, obtained from blood samples taken from wild elephants across the country's landscapes.

The analysis, published in the journal Current Biology, identified five genetically distinct populations, as opposed to previously reported three or four, "emphasising their antiquity and unique evolutionary histories", according to the authors.

Of the five distinct breeds, two are located in north and central India, and three in the south, separated by the Palghat and Shencottah Gaps or 'breaks' in the Western



**“Such understanding can help predict population trends in the future for these populations. Further, understanding the distribution of variation across populations will help plan strategies for future gene flow, should it be necessary**

Ghats, they said. The Palghat Gap lies between Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu and Palakkad in Kerala, while the Shencottah Gap connects Tamil Nadu's Madurai with the district Kottayam, Kerala. Further, the northern breeds were found to be more genetically diverse and have low inbreeding -- where creatures having very similar genetic material breed -- compared to the southern ones, two of which had low diversity and were inbred, they said. Co-lead author Uma Ramakrishnan, a mo-

lecular ecologist and a professor at the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru, told PTI that the team observed a "dilution of diversity". "Imagine an ink blot on a filter paper, dropped at the top right corner. The further we go from this, towards the bottom left, the less dark the ink is. Similarly, the diversity in southern western ghats is less than that in the northeast and north populations," she said. Ramakrishnan added that the inbreeding

in the southern populations suggested that "there has been either a bottleneck, or mating between relatives recently".

The researchers also found evidence of historical exploitation endured by the land mammals in the form of "bottlenecks". Wild elephants in India are known to be regularly exploited for military and domestic use, since they began to be tamed during Harappan times.

In this study, the samples from the populations in north India and those in the north of the Palghat Gap showed that both underwent a recent bottleneck around 1,500-1,000 years ago, followed by a recovery that started around 300-500 years ago.

Ramakrishnan said, "Many endangered species have been through bottlenecks in the recent past. The nature of this bottleneck affects the distribution of genetic variation and the ratio of good versus bad mutations."

Knowledge of such genetic nature can help inform biodiversity conservation efforts, she added.

"Such understanding can help predict population trends in the future for these populations. Further, understanding the distribution of variation across populations will help plan strategies for future gene flow, should it be necessary," Ramakrishnan said. The researchers said the presence of five genetically distinct elephant breeds suggested that natural barriers may have kept them apart, allowing them to evolve separately. Alternatively, it could also indicate an ancient distribution of the population, as elephants these days arguably roam more extensively, largely in search of habitats increasingly fragmented because of human interventions, they said.

## Ants Reason For Bird Species Diversity At Higher Elevations: Study

Press Trust Of India

A recent study from the Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru has uncovered a different factor driving bird species diversity at mid-elevations - the presence of ants from the Oecophylla genus.

"In mountains, you often see hump-shaped patterns (of species diversity), and for a long time, people have been interested in why this happens. One of the mechanisms they did not think much about was biotic interactions like competition," said Kartik Shanker, Professor at CES and co-author of the study published in 'Ecology Letters'.

Oecophylla ants, known for their aggressive and dominant behaviour, are voracious predators of insects at the bases of mountains found in the paleotropics, covering Africa, Asia and Oceania, stated a press release issued by the IISc.

The researchers at IISc decided to test how the ants' presence affects the diversity of insect-eating birds, especially at lower elevations. A previous study led by co-author Trevor D Price, Professor at the Department of Ecology and Evolution,



University of Chicago, showed that the presence of Oecophylla ants at the base of the eastern Himalayas decreased the density of insects and might therefore have an effect on the presence of insect-eating birds, stated the release.

In the current study, the team wanted to see if this pattern was more widespread among other insect-eating species as well.

Led by Umesh Srinivasan, Assistant Professor at CES, the researchers used existing datasets with information about bird species observed at various elevations across different mountain ranges. They categorised the birds into dietary guilds - groups of species with similar dietary requirements, such as insectivores and omnivores.

"We looked at the ranges of these bird species. We noted what bird species (in each guild) occurred at 100 metres, then 200, 300 and so on, for every 100 metres," explained Srinivasan.

"We then classified mountain ranges with or without Oecophylla at the base, and looked at what species were present at different elevations." The researchers found patterns consistent with Oecophylla ants competing with insect-eating birds for food at lower elevations. This could then have ended up pushing these birds higher up in the mountains - the species diversity was highest at an elevation of about 960 metres. Other bird groups like nectar-eating and fruit-eating birds - which weren't competing with Oecophylla ants - reduced in species diversity as the elevation increased.

The presence or absence of Oecophylla ants at the base of mountains, therefore, was a good predictor of why the diversity of insect-eating birds peaked at mid-elevations, the team found. "With climate change, if the ants shift their ranges towards higher elevations, this might impact the bird species at higher elevations as well," added Srinivasan.

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## Mirwaiz Moves HC Against 'Illegal House Detention'

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Mirwaiz Umar Farooq has approached the Jammu and Kashmir High Court to challenge his 'illegal detention' on Wednesday and the case has been listed on 4th October 2024.

"The hearing of the case of Mirwaiz Umar Farooq's house arrest/illegal detention has been listed on 4th October 2024 in the High court. Mirwaiz has been under house detention since last one month," a statement issued here said.

Pertinent to mention that Mirwaiz Umar Farooq had earlier filed a writ petition no.2400/2024 in the Jammu and Kashmir & Ladakh High court.

"Mirwaiz has been once again put under illegal and unauthorized detention without any formal orders

by the administration even as the matter is pending disposal before the High Court, depriving Mirwaiz of his fundamental rights. He therefore was compelled to file another CMP NO.5884/2024 along with an urgency memo. The CMP has been listed before the high court on the 4th (Friday) of this month," statement added.

The statement said that it is expected that the honorable high court will provide the much needed relief to Mirwaiz in view of laws of natural justice and human rights also enshrined in the constitution and he will be set free.

An appeal is also made to the legal fraternity, political organization and human rights groups to raise their voice against this blatant violation of the Mirwaiz's fundamental rights, statement said.



## Cab Driver, Woman Goes Missing In Aharabal

Family Hit Streets, Police Expedite Probe

Majid Nabi

Srinagar: Police have expedited the investigation into the mysterious disappearance of a cab driver and a woman at Aharabal, Gurwatan area in Kulgam district of south Kashmir.

The vehicle they were traveling in was found abandoned at Arabal, a tourist attraction in south Kashmir by the police. The family of the missing cab driver staged a protest at Press Enclave to press for the early recovery of the kin.

The missing youth has been identified as Adil Bashir Sofi, son of Bashir Ahmad Sofi of Naidyar, Rainawari, who according to his family left home on Monday, September 30 for Aharabal.

Along with his shoes and socks, the missing man's car was discovered abandoned from the spot from where both are thought to have been missing, a senior police officer informed Kashmir Observer.

Ruling out the suicide angle, the police officer, said had the duo been drowned, their bodies would have hit by a barrier erected at some 200 meters from the spot. He said the woman accompanying Sofi in his cab has not been identified yet.

"We are investigating the

## Body Of Missing Youth Recovered From Stream

Majid Nabi

Srinagar: The dead body of a 22-years-old youth, who was missing since last month has been found from a stream (nallah) at his native place in Brein Nishat area of the city late last night.

Identified as Ruman Nazir, son of Nazir Ahmad of Doonpora-Brein, Nishat, according to his family, was missing since September 28.

The dead body was recovered three days after the deceased went missing. The family of the deceased had also filed a missing report at the concerned police station on Tuesday, October 1.

However, a pall of gloom descended on the entire local-

ity after Roman's lifeless body was found from a stream by locals late last night in the Pahloo-Brein area of Nishat.

Confirming the incident, a police official said the dead body was recovered by some locals who then informed the police. The dead body of the missing youth, he said, was handed over to his family after necessary legal formalities.

A missing complaint, he said, was already filed by the family of the deceased and the investigation to ascertain the cause of death is on.

The police are investigating the case from all fronts including the 'murder and suicide', and they would follow up on any leads they get, he told Kashmir Observer.

matter from every possible angle and are doing our best to trace the missing duo alive," the police officer said.

To facilitate their recupera-

tion, the authorities have urged anyone who may come across the duo—alive dead or alive—to contact the nearest police station immediately.

## IDA Kashmir Conducts Tobacco Cessation Certification Program

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Indian Dental Association (IDA) Kashmir Central Branch on Wednesday conducted a Tobacco Cessation Certification program at Jawahar Nagar for its members.

The body said that the initiative aimed to equip dental professionals with the necessary skills and knowledge to help patients quit tobacco use.

Through this program, the IDA seeks to strengthen the role of dentists in promoting public health by addressing tobacco consumption, a significant contributor to oral and general health issues. The event featured workshops, expert talks, and training sessions to ensure a comprehensive understanding of tobacco cessation and effective intervention strategies.

Expert talks were delivered by Dr. Majid Shafi (Psychiatrist) and Dr. Mohd Nasier, (State Project coordinator, Vital Strategies J&K) who shared valuable insights on the importance of tobacco cessation and its impact on both oral and overall health. Their sessions provided dental professionals with

practical strategies to assist patients in quitting tobacco, underscoring the critical role of dentists in tobacco control and public health advocacy.

The workshop was attended by prominent figures, including Dr. Hilal Ahmed Joo, President of the IDA State Branch, along with the Dr Syed Ishiyaa Gilani President and Dr Adil Malik Secretary of the IDA Kashmir Central Branch. Their presence highlighted the significance of the program in empowering the dental community to contribute more effectively to public health, particularly in tobacco cessation efforts.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Humaira, the convener of the workshop. In her closing remarks, she expressed gratitude to the participants, expert speakers Dr. Majid Shafi and Dr. Mohd Nasier, and distinguished attendees, including Dr. Hilal Ahmed Joo and the leadership of the IDA Kashmir Central Branch. She emphasized the importance of the program in promoting tobacco cessation and the collective role of the dental community in advancing public health initiatives.

## NIT Celebrates 'Swachh Bharat Diwas-2024' On Gandhi Jayanti

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar on Wednesday celebrated Swachh Bharat Diwas 2024, marking the 10th anniversary of the Swachh Bharat Mission and organized a special cleanliness drive as part of the 'Swachhata Pakhwada 2024' campaign.

The event was organized by the NSS unit of the Institute, drawing enthusiastic participation from students, faculty, and staff members. The pledge ceremony was held at the Main Faculty Block at 9:30 AM and was administered by the student coordinators.

It was followed by a mega cleanliness drive carried out by sanitation staff accompanied by NSS student volunteers from Fountain Park to the Director's residence.

Under the banner of 'Swachhata Hi Seva' participants armed themselves with brooms, dustpans, and waste disposal equipment to embark on a comprehensive cleaning mission.

In his message Director NIT Srinagar, Prof. Ravinder Nath said that cleanliness was one of Mahatma Gandhi's core beliefs, and today, we pay our tribute to him by actively contributing to a cleaner

and greener future.

"Such campaigns are the need of the hour, bringing hope for a cleaner and healthier environment," he said.

Institute's Registrar, Prof. Atikur Rehman also actively participated in the cleanliness drive and inspired others with his dedication to the cause.

"There is significance of Gandhi Jayanti as it is not only a day of remembrance but also an occasion for us to reflect on the values and principles that Mahatma Gandhi stood for," he added.

The mega cleanliness drive was attended by NSS Coordinator, Dr. Jitendra Gurjar, Dr. Mukund Sharma, Dr H S Pali, Dr. Pramod Yadav, Hindi Officer Dr. Rajesh Shukla, Dr. Ashok Kumar and Dr. Brajendra Singh Sengar.

This year's theme, 'Swachh Swachhata, Sanskaar Swachhata,' emphasizes the importance of cleanliness and environmental well-being.

NIT Srinagar campus witnessed a flurry of activity as students, faculty, and staff worked tirelessly to ensure every nook and corner was spotless. The initiative extended its scope to include waste segregation and responsible disposal, promoting sustainable practices.

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**HIGHWAY STATUS**

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

 <b>HIJRI CALENDAR</b> 28 Rabi-ul-Awwal 1446	<b>PRAYERS</b> FAJR 5: 06 ZUHR 12:21 ASR 4: 34 Magrib 6:20 ISHA 7: 40
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### This Day In History

- 52 BC - Vercingetorix, leader of the Gauls, surrenders to the Romans under Julius Caesar, ending the siege and battle of Alesia
- 42 BC - First Battle of Philippi: Triumvirs Mark Antony and Octavian fight an indecisive battle with Caesar's assassins Brutus and Cassius.
- 382 - Roman Emperor Theodosius makes a treaty with the Visigoths, granting them lands between the Lower Danube and the Balkans in return for military service
- 1143 - Cardinal Guido elected Pope Coelestinus II
- 1247 - William II of Holland elected Roman Catholic anti-king of Germany
- 1264 - Comet said to predict death of Pope Urban IV is last seen
- 1272 - Beauvais cathedral in France is completed (choir and transept), designed to be the largest French Gothic cathedral ever built
- 1283 - Dafydd ap Gruffydd, Prince of Gwynedd, Wales, becomes the first person executed by being hanged, drawn and quartered
- 1569 - Battle of Montcontour: Duke of Anjou beats Huguenots
- 1574 - The Siege of Leiden is lifted by the Watergeuzen and the forces of Admiral Boisot
- 1605 - Chinese uprising on Philippines, Tondo/ Quiapo massacre
- 1657 - French troops occupy Mardyke
- 1683 - The Qing Dynasty naval commander Shi Lang reaches Taiwan (under the Kingdom of Tungning) to receive the formal surrender of Zheng Keshuang and Liu Guoxuan after the Battle of Penghu.
- 1691 - English & Dutch army occupies Limerick Ireland
- 1735 - France and Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI sign peace accord
- 1739 - The Treaty of Nissa is signed by the Ottoman Empire and Russia at the end of the Russian-Turkish War, 1736-1739.
- 1778 - Captain James Cook anchors at Alaska
- 1789 - Washington proclaims 1st national Thanksgiving Day on Nov 26
- 1793 - A warrant is issued for the arrest of French mathematician and philosopher Marquis de Condorcet forcing him into hiding
- 1835 - Battle of Gonzales fought between Texan settlers and Mexican forces. First engagement of the Texas revolution
- 1851 - The pasilalinc-sympathetic compass(a contraction built to test the pseudo-scientific hypothesis that snails create a permanent telepathic link when they mate) is demonstrated but proves to be a fake.
- 1864 - Battle of Saltville, VA
- 1912 - Gopal Krishna Gokhale, at invitation of Gandhi, arrives in South Africa on a 26-day tour; he also visits Tolstoy Farm
- 1920 - The Chinese sign an agreement with the Russo-Asiatic Bank, largely French and Russian controlled, which will oversee the Chinese Eastern Railway, but give local supervision to China
- 1923 - British occupying army leaves Constantinople
- 1924 - League of Nations approves protocols of Geneva
- 1935 - Mussolini's Italian army attacks Abyssinia (Ethiopia)
- 1940 - 17 German aircraft shot down over England
- 1941 - Germans launch attack on Moscow
- 1944 - Nazis crush Warsaw Uprising killing 250,000 people
- 1944 - US B-17's drops pamphlets on Walcheren
- 1949 - USSR recognizes People's Republic of China
- 1956 - 1st atomic power clock exhibited-NYC
- 1958 - Guinea (French Guinea) gains independence from France (National Day).
- 1963 - West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer condemns western grain shipments to USSR
- 1968 - Mexico City police fire on protesting students, 300-500 killed
- 1968 - Republic Guinea forms (day of republic)
- 1972 - Aeroflot Il-18 crashes near Black Sea resort of Sochi, kills 105
- 1977 - Pakistani general Zia ul-Haq bans all opposition

## KASHMIR OBSERVER™

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# India's Strategic Stance

## Balancing Diplomacy and Deterrence

### Amidst Ongoing LAC Tensions



#### KO VIEW

## Stop The Madness In Middle East

The situation in the Middle East is becoming fraught with every passing day. On Tuesday, Iran launched over 200 missiles at targets in Israel, in response to killing of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah and an Iranian commander in Lebanon. Earlier, Israel also assassinated Hamas political head Ismail Haniyeh during his visit to Iran. In recent weeks Israel has engaged in a series of reckless actions designed to plunge the region deeper into crisis. So far Iran had exercised restraint, but Israel mistook it as the country's weakness. Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu felt emboldened, warning at the UN that nowhere in the Middle East was beyond the reach of Israel, implying it can attack any country in the region, no matter the distance. He brazenly threatened to topple the Iranian regime, saying it will fall sooner than people think. These were explosive statements, and showed Israel is now hellbent on pursuing the hostilities in the region to the hilt. Netanyahu has already brought the situation to the brink by going on a killing spree of the leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah, among them Haniyeh and Nasrallah. Should Israel continue on this dangerous path, it could inevitably ignite the entire region.

However, while Israel is hurling the region inexorably towards annihilation, the powerful west is funding and arming it. It shows little urgency to restrain Netanyahu. On the other hand, the west threatens Iran with severe consequences for firing missiles at Iran in self defence.

The volatile situation erupted on October 7, 2023 after the Hamas attack inside Israel. Following day Israel invaded Gaza. Even since it has killed over 41,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and around 2,000 in Lebanon. The Palestinian territories have endured the longest occupation in modern history, a situation characterized by the expansion of Israeli settlements, security barriers, checkpoints, and the frequent use of force.

In recent years, geopolitical realignments in the region have taken place, such as the Israel-Arab reconciliation and the Iran-Saudi détente. Yet, these developments have conspicuously skirted the core issue—the occupation of Palestine. This original sin of West Asia continues to fester, with no end in sight.

To achieve lasting peace and stability in the region, it is imperative that the international community addresses the Palestinian question. Military interventions alone are cosmetic solutions that do not address the root cause of the conflict. The United States, as a key player in the region, must take a bold and courageous step forward.

Over the past year, the US has time and again been urged to recognize an independent and democratic Palestinian state living alongside a secure Israel, soon after the violence subsides. It is argued that once a Palestinian state under occupation gains international recognition, the negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian representatives for a lasting resolution can commence. But Israel will have none of it. It also refused the recent offer by the Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, that Arab and Muslim countries will guarantee Israel's security if Jerusalem agrees to allow the establishment of a Palestinian state on the pre-1967 lines. This proposal may appear idealistic in the current climate of conflict and distrust, but it is the only viable path forward. The two-state solution, despite its challenges and setbacks, enjoys higher support among both Israelis and Palestinians than any other alternative. The status quo is unsustainable and detrimental to all parties involved. To avoid further bloodshed and suffering, it is imperative that we tackle the root of the problem—the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is time to shift our focus towards a future where two states, Israel and Palestine, coexist in peace, security, and prosperity. Meanwhile, the west should prevail on Israel not to respond to Iran's attack, as it could again compel Iran to retaliate in kind, triggering a devastating all out war.

Dipak Kurmi

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Despite setbacks at Doklam in Bhutan and eastern Ladakh, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has adapted by encroaching upon Bhutan in the Chumbi valley and exploiting favorable terrain along the LAC in Ladakh

As the standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh persists, India maintains a firm position on the border dispute. National Security Adviser Ajit Doval recently underscored this stance during a discussion with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at a BRICS NSA meeting. Doval stressed that achieving peace and upholding respect for the LAC are essential steps towards normalizing relations between India and China.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has consistently reiterated India's position during his discussions with his Chinese counterpart at recent meetings, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Kazakhstan and the ASEAN Plus gathering in Laos in July. Speaking at the Global Centre for Security Policy in Geneva a few days ago, Jaishankar noted that while negotiations are ongoing, approximately 75 percent of the disengagement issues along the LAC have been addressed. He emphasized that despite ongoing military tensions between the two nations, the broader bilateral relationship cannot remain unaffected by these conflicts.

The political leadership has clearly outlined the current situation, future expectations, and conditions necessary for peace. Like S. Jaishankar, Wang Yi, a seasoned career diplomat, has skillfully navigated delicate scenarios. However, Beijing's approach has often been ambiguous, focusing on diplomatic niceties while the state-controlled Chinese media sometimes distorts the details of bilateral discussions to project a moral high ground. Although there are signs of progress in addressing issues in Ladakh, it is crucial to remain cautious when dealing with China.

China has a history of provoking conflicts, demonstrating military strength, and intimidating its neighbors, particularly those with claims in the South China Sea (SCS). Its diplomatic approach often involves bullying tactics, whether targeting Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, or the WHO. However, China may not have anticipated India's firm stance in the ongoing border dispute. China's difficulty in dominating the conflict with India has become a significant frustration. Beijing is likely in-

tent on settling the LAC disputes on its own terms. Despite setbacks at Doklam in Bhutan and eastern Ladakh, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has adapted by encroaching upon Bhutan in the Chumbi valley and exploiting favorable terrain along the LAC in Ladakh.

Among China's numerous security concerns, including the Taiwan issue and sovereignty disputes with the Philippines, Vietnam, and other ASEAN nations in the South China Sea (SCS), the Himalayan border dispute with India stands out as particularly challenging due to India's capability to effectively counter Chinese actions. While the disparity between India and China in terms of comprehensive national power—including military strength, technology, and economic prowess—often worries India, an armed conflict across the LAC remains an impractical option for China. As Prime Minister Modi remarked to Russia about “this not being an era of war,” this sentiment is equally relevant to Communist China. Instead, China will likely pursue incremental gains through border skirmishes while simultaneously promoting narratives of peace and engagement. This strategy allows China to maintain its contested claims and keeps India occupied to some extent.

India's best course of action involves addressing the LAC in a comprehensive manner rather than approaching it in isolated segments. The establishment of theater commands, which has been under consideration for some time, is now beginning to take form.

Before the joint tri-services structure is fully realized, it is crucial for the Army to adopt a comprehensive strategy across its formations, spanning from eastern Arunachal to Ladakh. The challenging terrain in regions such as Kameng, Subansiri, and extending to the Lohit valley presents tactical advantages that can be leveraged by our forces.

The watershed in Sikkim, particularly in the eastern region overlooking the Chumbi Valley, is arguably the most strategically significant area from India's perspective. Any challenges posed by the PLA in Ladakh or other regions should be met with a decisive display of strength in these advantageous

locations, signaling our intent through clear, reciprocal measures. This strategy will only be successful if the LAC is viewed holistically rather than being analyzed in isolated sectors.

Aside from the tactical pre-emption demonstrated by our occupation of key positions on the Kailash Range, which forced the PLA to retreat, our response to Chinese maneuvers along the LAC has largely been reactive. Although the terrain along the LAC generally benefits the PLA by facilitating quicker troop deployments and logistical support due to superior infrastructure, the geographical disadvantages are mitigated by our determined military efforts, particularly in the eastern sector. Progress is being made in addressing the previously slow development of border infrastructure, overcoming the challenges posed by the terrain.

The Chinese are known for frequently shifting their demands and disregarding border peace agreements. They typically adopt an aggressive stance in disputes, using bullying tactics to intimidate their opponents. Despite this, the current Chinese leadership acknowledges and respects the resolve and strength of adversaries who stand firm. This respect for a steadfast opponent will influence their approach. Nevertheless, given the current geopolitical landscape and the interests of major powers, India may find itself largely on its own in confronting its northern neighbor.

India would benefit from taking a nuanced position on Tibet and Taiwan, while also becoming more vocal about the Uighur situation in Xinjiang.

Being proactive for us doesn't mean being confrontational but rather anticipating and outmaneuvering China's strategies through well-planned actions. It also requires maintaining credible deterrence capabilities to effectively counter China. Our approach should combine proactive diplomacy with the robust efforts of our military along the borders, defining our policy toward Beijing.

*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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## Did you know? Investing Requires Business-like Approach

Irshad Mushtaq

Analyze market trends, assess risks, and create a strategy. Treat your investments as a business for long-term success!  
Investing in financial assets is remarkably similar to investing in your own business. Just as you wouldn't start a manufacturing company without due diligence, careful planning, and expert consultation, the same meticulous approach should be applied to financial investments. Here's why developing an “investment brain” is crucial before diving into any financial products.

#### Knowledge is Key

Much like running a successful business requires a wealth of knowledge and experience, successful investing also demands a deep understanding of the market. Before making investments, take the time to research and understand which companies and sectors are poised for growth. Education and continuous learning are essential to making informed decisions that will help your investments outpace market benchmarks, such as the Nifty index, over the long term.

#### The Journey of Learning

Building investment knowledge is a journey, not an overnight achievement. It requires considerable effort, ongoing education, and the willingness to learn from various sources. Historically, the Nifty index has grown from 1,400 points 20 years ago to approximately 26,000 points today. This dramatic rise underscores the importance of strategic investment choices over time.

#### Quality Over Quantity

In any stock market, not every listed stock is suitable for investment. In fact, roughly 95% of stocks may not be good investment choices. In India, with around 5,000 listed stocks, this means focusing on the top 5-10%, or about 500 stocks, that show promise. Identifying these stocks requires solid learning, education, and a clear understanding of market dynamics.

#### Professional Guidance is Valuable

Operating an airplane or helicopter without training is perilous, just as taking medicine without consulting a doctor is unsafe. Similarly, investing money without adequate knowledge is likely to result in losses. Don't hesitate to pay for professional financial advice. Trusted, experienced advisors can provide invaluable insights and guidance, ensuring your investments are sound and aligned with your wealth-building goals.

#### Conclusion

The ultimate goal is to grow your wealth, not to lose it. Applying a business-like approach to financial investments, emphasizing education, due diligence, and professional consultation, can significantly enhance your chances of success. Remember, it's better to invest wisely with expert advice than to risk your money on uninformed decisions.

Learn from the insights of @Irshad Mushtaq, Writer, Investor, Entrepreneur & Founder of M I Securities! Connect for valuable financial advice at misecurities@bp.sharekhan.com

# Animals Need Our Compassion

Sahil Sajad

In recent years, the love and compassion for animals has seen a significant rise, not just globally but also in Kashmir. More and more people have begun keeping pets, with Persian cats and dogs becoming beloved companions in many households. The therapeutic benefits of pets—reducing stress and providing comfort—are well-known, but among all animals, horses hold a uniquely profound place in both our history and hearts.

Horses have long been associated with nobility and strength, revered by kings and emperors alike. In times past, they were symbols of royalty, power, and prestige. Maharajas of India, Mughal emperors, and British aristocrats all regarded horses as a mark of status and grandeur. While the advent of modern vehicles may have replaced them for many, horses have once again found their place, not just among the wealthy but in the daily lives of people in Kashmir's scenic landscapes like Pahalgam and Gulmarg. Here, they are a vital part of the economy, offering rides to tourists and serving as loyal companions for local communities.

For the Gujjar and Bakarwal communities, horses, along with mules and donkeys, are much more than just animals—they are lifelines. These animals carry their burdens, both literally and figuratively, as the communities move between lowlands and highlands in their search for greener pastures. Horses and mules transport not only people but also heavy loads like food, tents, firewood, and supplies—things that are essential for survival in the remote, mountainous regions where modern vehicles cannot go. In many ways, these animals are the heartbeat of their nomadic existence, tirelessly walking through rough terrain, helping their owners maintain their traditional way of life.

But despite their deep bond with humans and their long history of service, many horses are abandoned when they are no longer "useful." It is a heartbreaking reality. While many pet owners ensure that their dogs and cats are well-cared for and receive medical attention when needed, horses, often injured or sick, are left behind, forgotten



and discarded. These noble creatures, once symbols of strength and beauty, suffer alone, enduring unimaginable pain with no one to help them.

I recently witnessed such a tragedy near my home. A horse lay in excruciating pain, with a broken hip and fractured leg, immobile for days without food or water. People passed by, murmuring their sympathies, but no one stopped to ease the animal's suffering. Days went by, and still the horse lay there, unnoticed by those who had once relied on it for transport and work. The neglect was unbearable to witness, a silent scream of pain that echoed through the cold air.

It wasn't until two compassionate young women—Dr Ar-beena Altaf and her friend Dr Arooj Ashiq—saw the horse's agony and could not walk away. They brought food and water, staying with the animal, watching over it when no one else would. It was only through their relentless efforts that a vet was finally contacted. Dr. Peerzada

**We must also take action when we see an animal in pain, whether it is a pet or a stray. A simple act of kindness—a bowl of water, a call to a vet—can mean the difference between life and death for a creature in need**

Suhail Ahmad (VAS) arrived and began treatment, but it was too late. As the treatment unfolded, it became painfully clear that the horse's condition was far too se-

vere to recover from. Despite all efforts, the injuries were beyond healing, and it was evident that keeping the animal alive would only prolong its suffering. In this moment of deep sorrow, the Director of Animal Husbandry in Anantnag was approached for help. With compassion and urgency, they took immediate action, seeking permission from the Deputy Commissioner of Anantnag for euthanasia. The municipal committee also stepped in, offering their assistance to ensure the horse's remains were handled with dignity and respect.

What followed was a collective effort of kindness. The entire process—permission, euthanasia, and the respectful disposal—was completed the same day. Though it was heartbreaking to let the animal go, it was comforting to see people come together in such a thoughtful and humane way. The willingness of everyone involved to ease the horse's pain and ensure a peaceful end brought a small sense of solace in an otherwise heavy moment.

It was a reminder that, even in the face of loss, compassion and cooperation can shine through, offering some solace amidst the sadness. The loss left a deep sorrow in the hearts of those who had shown it kindness, a reminder that love and care for animals should never be based on their utility to us.

From an Islamic perspective, horses have always been held in high regard. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) praised the care of animals, especially horses, and referred to them as a source of blessings. Islam teaches us that all creatures, great and small, deserve kindness. The Prophet said, "Whoever is kind to the creatures of God is kind to himself," emphasizing that compassion should be universal and without bias. Horses, in particular, have been honored in Islamic tradition not only for their strength and grace but for their loyalty and service to mankind. They are a reminder of the dignity of all living beings, and it is our duty as humans to care for them.

True compassion is not selective. It is not only about caring for the pets that live inside our homes, those that we play with and pamper. Compassion must extend to the animals that serve us in silence—the ones that work tirelessly to carry our burdens, the ones that suffer alone when we no longer find them useful. The way we treat these animals is a reflection of our humanity.

In Kashmir, where the people are known for their warmth and hospitality, it is disheartening to witness the cruel neglect of animals, especially the horses, mules, and donkeys that are abandoned when they are injured or no longer able to work. Nomadic communities like the Bakarwals, who rely on these animals for their livelihood, sometimes leave them behind or worse, slaughter them when they are no longer able to serve their purpose. This inhumane treatment cannot continue. These animals are not disposable—they are living beings that feel pain and suffering just like we do.

It is time for us to recognize our responsibility toward all animals, not just the ones that bring us joy. We must advocate for stronger laws to protect them, ensuring that no animal is left to suffer in silence. We must also take action when we see an animal in pain, whether it is a pet or a stray. A simple act of kindness—a bowl of water, a call to a vet—can mean the difference between life and death for a creature in need.

The story of that injured horse lingers in my mind, a poignant reminder of how easily we forget the lives that serve us. I urge everyone, in Kashmir and beyond, to remember that compassion is not selective. Whenever you see an animal in pain, do not look away. Help in any way you can. If you cannot, then contact someone who can. Every life matters, and our humanity is measured by how we treat those who cannot speak for themselves.

Let us rise to the call of compassion that exists in all of us and honor the animals that share this earth with us. Whether they are pets or strays, strong or weak, they deserve our care, our respect, and our love.

*The author is a student at SKAUST Kashmir*

# When the Story Is the Cure

Ross Gormley

Every medical technology already harbors a placebo response by virtue of its intensity. A sham surgery is more powerful than a saline injection; a saline injection is more powerful than a sugar pill. Some argue that the placebo response solves for cognitive dissonance. The more involved the intervention, the more the patient thinks, Gosh, I hope this treatment works—hence why a higher price paid for the intervention can mean a greater placebo response. Similarly, studies show the more expensive you think a bottle of wine is, the more you will enjoy it. The price of this pill or wine is a suggestion of its value, raising your expectation of its efficacy or taste. Because the brain is a prediction machine, the stated price is priming you to interpret the stimulus accordingly.

But every technology has its limits. After all, a pill is just a pill, right? Not quite. Even that small pill is inevitably wrapped up in a story that a person, a doctor, and a society tell about it. For example, a larger pill is more powerful than a smaller one. The color, too, can influence the placebo response. "Red, yellow, and orange are associated with a stimulant effect, while blue and green are related to a tranquilizing effect," wrote researcher Dr. A. J. de Craen. If something so insignificant as the size and color of a pill can influence the placebo response, consider the potential of the millions of other factors around this theater of care: the doctor's clothing, the office layout, the advertise-

ments around the drug, what your friends and family say about the drug. Add all these factors up and you get the drug's verisimilitude.

Bear with me... verisimilitude (verum, meaning truth and similitude meaning likeness) is the general believability or realism of a work of fiction. There are two types of verisimilitude. Cultural verisimilitude has a writer craft a story that aligns with the structures and boundaries of the real world (the story must be plausible within the world at large) while generic verisimilitude is the quality of realism within the story itself (is there internal consistency of character and plot). Verisimilitude is best achieved through the specificity of detail in the story. This aligns with the writerly maxim the more specific you go, the more universal the story becomes. In that tension between specificity and universality is a quality of a believability. The goal of fiction is, according to Samuel Coleridge Taylor, the suspension of disbelief, that feeling of losing yourself in a good book or movie. Verisimilitude is what allows for that suspension. It is a reflection of your confidence in the story's reality.

We live in a confidence economy. The power of a dollar bill comes not from an intrinsic value in the paper itself but rather from our confidence in the institutions that manage the economy; our world responds by collectively believing that bill is worth a certain amount. In the same way, confidence, achieved through good storytelling, confers economic potential, so too does storying confer medical



potential in a pill. Some scholars (Irving Kirsch, most notably) argue that the bulk of Prozac's benefit comes from a placebo response. This explains why research suggests that the efficacy of Prozac has increased over time. Nothing in the pill's recipe or in our biology has changed. Rather, more people take Prozac now and believe in its power. We know that placebos have a strong peer pressure effect. If your neighbors take Prozac and claim great healing powers, the suggestion of its efficacy is greater, in turn raising your expectation of its powers to lift your depression. (Unfortunately, the opposite is true with the placebo effect.)

Hope is a close cousin of expectation and may be even more powerful in harnessing a placebo response. Compared to expectation, hope is a more personal and private act; hope, too, depends on uncertainty, implying some degree of irrationality, while expectation hinges on the amount of available evidence. I can hope to be cured of cancer, but if given enough evidence I will certainly expect it. The essential difference between the two is the degree of emotionality involved. Expectation is cold, clinical, even entitled, while hope implies a warm yearning. The former is passive and the latter active. Hope aligns with belief, as belief requires the

absence of proof (if there were proof of a higher spiritual being, I would no longer need to believe in that being). In one study, patients told they might not have received the active drug in the trial demonstrated the most powerful placebo response to it, suggesting that hope itself fueled the power of the drug. In other words, when facing more uncertainty, these patients had a greater hope to see a difference in themselves—and they did.

But even in the absence of evidence, hope is strengthened by confidence and confidence by verisimilitude. Clinicians must use emotion to suggest this confidence, precisely at the

point where the evidence stops. "Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out," wrote Vaclav Havel. In other words, hope depends on a degree of cultural and generic verisimilitude. How you convey that verisimilitude is through story.

In Biographia Literaria, Coleridge calls the suspension of disbelief an act of "poetic faith"—a beautiful synonym for the placebo response. (When I hear "poetic faith," I think of leaping in the same way hope implies a degree of irrationality: confidence in the treatment, but also in spite of its evidence.) Consider the neuro-

logical mechanism of the placebo response observed in patients suffering from chronic pain, as discovered by the researcher Tor Wager. Pain from the body typically is processed first by the primitive regions of the brain, then disseminated forward to the prefrontal cortex, the logic center of the brain that makes humans human. When patients in pain experience symptom relief from a placebo response, fMRI brain scans show that the pain signals work backward, starting from the prefrontal cortex and working backward. In other words, fiction (this pill will help me) clashes with biological fact (my back hurts). Somewhere in that collision between the two is what you actually end up feeling.

Hope is irrational. Yes, it depends on evidence, but more so on emotion—empathy and compassion. This is perhaps why patients' perception of empathy in their doctor quickened their ability to heal. Norman Cousins was cured into this in 1979 when he wrote, "The human body experiences a powerful gravitational pull in the direction of hope. That is why the patient's hopes are the physician's secret weapon. They are the hidden ingredients in any prescription."

Of course, hope, empathy, and compassion alone are never enough. Doctors can learn from storytellers—those involved in this theater of care—while storytellers can learn from doctors. Fiction and fact thrive best in dialogue.

*The article was originally published by Psychology Today*

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

## J&K Busy Creating

in their eyes." "The great festival of democracy concluded in Jammu and Kashmir yesterday. First, the Lok Sabha elections were held in May and the assembly elections were conducted peacefully and in a free and fair manner. This has become the centre of discussion not only in India but in the whole world," Sinha said.

Referring to the huge participation of people in the assembly polls, the LG said 1.40 crore citizens of the Union territory have reiterated their faith in the constitutional values and have pledged to contribute to the development of the beautiful Jammu and Kashmir and the country through their voting.

"This in itself is proof of the fact that in the last four to five years, great success has been achieved in establishing a fear-free Jammu and Kashmir. Today, I would like to urge the young generation that we have to maintain the pace of peace and progress. We have to dedicate ourselves to selfless service," he said.

The work done in the last five years under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whether it is the empowerment of democracy at the grassroots level or the conduct of peaceful elections, or development work, is a proof of the fact that "J-K is now busy creating a new history by forgetting its past".

Lakhs of youth have started businesses in the last few years, thousands of youth are running their own start-ups and one-third of these start-ups are led by our daughters. Schools are functional throughout the year, he said.

Sinha said attempts are being made to mislead some youth, but "I want to tell them that society always disintegrates due to violence".

## 'Gandhiji's Ideals

of Gandhi Jayanti and the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri.

Paying tributes to Mahatma Gandhi, the LG said the leadership, ideals and values of Bapu has inspired the entire country to come together for the cause of independence and build a nation that will make a lasting contribution to peace and progress of the world.

Observing that Gandhiji's ideals of truth, non-violence, compassion and kindness present the solutions to all the challenges before the tumultuous world, the LG called upon the people to spread Bapu's vision all over the world to make this planet a peaceful and a better place.

"Bapu's dream was that India would become a ray of hope for humanity and it will be a peaceful, self-reliant and developed nation. The responsibility of fulfilling these dreams rests on 140 crore Indians and the younger generation will have to play a bigger role in this journey," the LG said.

Highlighting the transformational work done in the last five years in J&K, the LG said, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, empowerment of grassroots democracy and violence-free elections is a testament that Jammu Kashmir is shedding the past and creating a new future.

"Life and work of Gandhiji is shaping the new Jammu Kashmir today. The world has recently witnessed historic, free, peaceful and fair assembly elections. 1 crore 40 lakh citizens have reiterated their faith in the values of the Constitution and have resolved to contribute to the development of this beautiful Union Territory and the country," the LG said.

He said the young generation in J&K now understand the importance of peace and democratic values and hence today they do not have tools of destruction in their hands but instruments of creation. "Our youth are determined to follow the path of truth and non-violence and to build a prosperous society," he said.

The LG also appreciated the School Education Department and students from schools across J&K for their cleanliness endeavours like adopting a local water body, local park or a local heritage site to undertake cleanliness drive twice every month, as a mark of respect to Mahatma Gandhi.

He urged the people, especially the youth to identify one place in all the cities and villages and dedicate one day of the month for activities like cleanliness drives and Shramdaan.

The LG also appealed to all sections of the society to take inspiration from Bapu's life and work towards public welfare.

On the occasion, the LG felicitated the students who have excelled in various competitions as a part of Gandhi Jayanti celebration.

The event also featured the enthralling performances from Artists and Students depicting the life of Mahatma Gandhi.

Alok Kumar, Principal Secretary, Department of School Education & Department of Higher Education; senior officials; heads of educational institutions; students, teachers, youth and prominent citizens from across the UT joined the celebration, in person and through virtual mode.

## ECI Revises

polling, held on September 18, saw an estimated 61.38 per cent voter turnout followed by 57.31 per cent in the second phase, while the final phase registered 69.65 per cent.

The highest turnout was recorded in the Marh assembly segment of Jammu district, with 81.47 per cent of registered voters exercising their franchise. The other notable turnout figures included Chhamb (80.34 per cent), Akhnoor (79.73 per cent), and Gurez (78.04 per cent).

The lowest voter turnout was recorded in the Sopore assembly segment in Baramulla district, where 45.32 per cent of registered voters cast their votes followed by 53.90 per cent in the Baramulla segment.

According to the Election Commission data, the overall polling percentage in the three phases was 63.45 per cent.

The officials said the polling went off peacefully in all segments, including special polling stations along the International Border and Line of Control (LoC), with no untoward incidents reported.

In the recently held parliamentary polls,

the turnout in the seven districts that went to polls in the final phase on Tuesday was recorded at 66.78 per cent. The turnout in phases 1 and 2 was also higher than in the Lok Sabha elections. While seven districts in phase 1 recorded 61.38 per cent turnout, the figure was 60 per cent in the general elections.

Similarly, six districts that went to polls in phase 2 recorded 57.31 per cent polling as compared to 52.17 per cent turnout in the Lok Sabha polls, according to available data.

However, compared to the 2014 assembly elections, the third phase of polls in 40 assembly segments across seven districts -- Jammu, Udhampur, Kathua and Samba in the Jammu region and Baramulla, Bandipora, and Kupwara in north Kashmir -- recorded a marked dip in the overall percentage, which was attributed mostly to ongoing farming activities.

The majority of seats in the third phase registered a drop of 1 to 15 per cent compared to 2014 except for Sopore, Baramulla and Pattan constituencies, where the figures have increased this time.

Sopore, once a terrorist and separatist stronghold, recorded the lowest turnout of 41.44 per cent, but it was far better than the 2014 polls when the seat recorded 30.79 per cent voting, the EC data showed. Baramulla, a traditional boycott bastion, recorded a 47.95 per cent turnout as against 39.73 per cent in 2014, while Pattan saw 60.87 per cent polling compared to 58.72 per cent in the last assembly polls.

The polling began at 7 am amid tight security and concluded at 6 pm, sealing the fate of 415 candidates, including two former deputy chief ministers Tara Chand and Muzaffar Baig, and several former ministers and legislators. The votes will be counted on October 8.

Long queues outside polling stations since early morning marked the enthusiasm among people, who voted for the first time in the assembly elections after the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019.

## KPs Record Over

where significant participation was also observed among the migrant Kashmiri Pandits, reflecting their commitment to electoral engagement despite the challenges of displacement. In the second phase, nearly 40 per cent of eligible Kashmiri Pandits cast their ballots across the polling stations in Jammu, Delhi and Udhampur. The second phase of the assembly elections covered central Kashmir, including Srinagar, Budgam and Ganderbal districts on September 25.

Similarly, over 31 per cent migrants exercise their franchise in the first phase of polling for 16 assembly segments spread over four districts of South Kashmir at polling stations in Jammu, Delhi and Udhampur on September 18.

The final phase elections, spanning multiple phases across various districts, have seen a total of 239 candidates, including prominent leaders from various political parties, vying for seats.

The final phase of polling marks a crucial step towards determining the political landscape in Jammu and Kashmir, with voter turnout figures indicating widespread participation across diverse communities, the officials said.

The voting process, conducted under stringent security measures, aims to ensure democratic representation for all segments of society, including displaced communities like the Kashmiri Pandits who have historically played a significant role in the region's political dynamics.

## All 16 Reserved

for Scheduled Tribes (ST) and seven for Scheduled Castes (SC). This development

has introduced new challenges and opportunities, especially for the Gujjar and Pahari communities, key players in the region's politics. According to information available with Kashmir InDepth News Service (KINS), all the reserved seats recorded over 70% voter turnout.

Marh assembly constituency, which reported the highest voter turnout of 81.47%, is also a SC-reserved seat.

As many as 1.6 million people from the Pahari ethnic group were added to the ST list in Jammu and Kashmir when the Rajya Sabha passed the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribe Amendment Bill in February 2024. This move extended reservation benefits to four ethnic groups just ahead of the elections, a step seen by many as part of the BJP's strategy to strengthen its electoral base in the region.

The voter turnout for the first phase was 61.38%, dropped to 57.31% in the second phase, and then increased to 69.65% in the final phase. Overall, the voter turnout was 62.78%.

The National Conference (NC) and Congress contested the elections jointly, while the BJP opted to run independently in Jammu but aligned with some candidates in Kashmir, fielding candidates in select constituencies. The political contest in Kashmir was primarily between the NC, People's Democratic Party (PDP), and smaller parties or independent candidates, while in Jammu, the battle appeared to be between Congress and BJP for most seats. (KINS)

## All Eyes On

candidates contested as independents but they were of the opinion that had the union government lifted the ban on their organization, they would have contested over 50 seats in the UT.

This Assembly election was first for a couple of parties, J&K Apni Party led by former minister and PDPian Syed Muhammad Altaf Bukhari and Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) led by former congressman Ghulam Nabi Azad, which came into existence after the August 5, 2019 decision of abrogation of Article 370 and 35A, and their presence, especially in Kashmir region and Chenab valley of Jammu region, was visible.

During the campaigning there was a visible regional divide between Kashmir valley and Jammu region and even the BJP leaders from Jammu mince no words to seek votes on the name of Dogra Hindu CM from Jammu.

This election, held in three phases, was incident free and no untoward incident happened anywhere in the UT and the Election Commission of India (ECI) tried their best to make it free and fair.

To enhance participation of more people into the electoral process, things like home voting for 85 plus voters and persons with disability, postal ballots for government employees working outside their home districts and advance postal ballot voting for employees appointed on election duty were witnessed which saw huge participation.(KNO)

## BJP's Surankote

left a void which is very hard to fill," Raina said.

"Saddened to know about the death of Syed Mushtaq Bukhari sahab. May Allah Ta'ala grant him jannat & give his family strength to bear this loss," Mehbooba Mufti said in a post on 'X'.

"Very sorry to hear about the death of senior BJP leader Mushtaq Bukhari earlier today. His death is a loss to his party & the Pahadi people whose cause he pleaded. May Allah grant him a place in Jannat. My condolences to his family," the former CM Omar Abdullah said in a post on

## X. 'Unpredictable As Weather

and the BJP. The unpredictability of political affiliations here is as changeable as the valley's weather, which can be harsh and white in winter or vibrant and red like Chinar leaves in the autumn."

The region's complex political history traces back to 1987, when the National Conference faced off against the Muslim United Front, a coalition of religious groups. The election was marked by allegations of rigging, which many believe fueled the insurgency that followed. Fast forward to 2014, and the political landscape shifted dramatically again when the PDP formed a government with the BJP. That alliance, however, was fraught with challenges, from controversial policies regarding stone-pelters to the fallout from the killing of militant commander Burhan Wani, which drew one of the largest crowds ever seen for a funeral in the valley.

The elections being held now are the first since the removal of Article 370, and they are being viewed as a critical test of the public's sentiment toward the decision.

Political analysts describe this election as emotionally charged, with voter turnout reminiscent of the significant participation seen in 1984 and 1987. For many in the region, these elections will be their first experience at the polls, having grown up amid decades of conflict.

"While Srinagar has traditionally been the heart of political activity, it is Jammu that may hold the key to deciding the election's outcome this time around. The performance of various parties in Jammu could very well dictate the political calculations in the valley," said Avinash, a Jammu-based political commentator.

Amidst this backdrop, small parties and independent candidates are likely to emerge as kingmakers. Figures like Sajjad Lone and Engineer Rashid, who beat former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah while incarcerated in Tihar Jail, are poised to play pivotal roles. Their influence, along with the involvement of former ministers, religious leaders, and even relatives of former militants, could tip the balance in what promises to be a fragmented and coalition-driven political scene.

Political experts anticipate that the next government may be a "multigrain khichdi" — a coalition of parties with vastly different ideologies, each willing to make compromises in exchange for power. Whether it's a national party joining hands with a regional force or an unexpected alliance of sworn enemies, the only certainty is that the future of Jammu & Kashmir's politics is as unpredictable as ever. (KNO)

## Doors Open

Sonam Wangchuck and other Ladakhis in Delhi, the JKPCC chief said the prevailing atmosphere in India created by the BJP and its subsidiaries is not allowing any right-thinking voice to emerge.

"The government has kept the prison for any person belonging to any religion or region if he does not subscribe to the ideology of the BJP and RSS," he said.

Karra claimed there was no "actual peace" in J&K, "but an atmosphere of fear and oppression".

"The calm which they (BJP) are glorifying as peace is not peace. Peace lies in your hearts and minds, but here there is no peace in any person's heart and mind. There is fear.

"J&K is being run through jackboot policy, and if there is no misadventure in the mandate given by the people, then it is a clear-cut mandate against this oppression, jackboot policy,

anti-people policies and interference in religious affairs," he said.

## Srinagar Resident

redressed 583 cases via The National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCCRP) and recovered Rs 2 crore, besides redressing miscellaneous cases.

Off late, the Police Cyber Cell has issued a detailed advisory. The advisory stresses upon the need to avoid scanning unknown QR codes, warns against engaging with suspicious offers, and urges people to protect their personal information such as passwords and PIN codes. However, despite public awareness campaigns and collaboration with National Agencies, the challenges remain daunting as online scammers find new ways to dupe netizens.

Muneeb Amin Bhat, a cybersecurity analyst and ethical hacker recognized by NASA and Apple's Hall of Fame believes that people of all educational backgrounds lack cyber awareness.

"I have come across many cases where people were duped in lakhs. The scammers play with emotions and feelings of victims. Most of the scammers, especially professionals, do not leave footprints," he said.

According to him, people should not share OTP, reply to messages seeking personal documents, details, click unwanted links, and install applications which make privacy vulnerable to prevent oneself from falling prey to phishing.

With the diffusion of mobile and internet penetration in society, the techie suggests that the government should create awareness at institutional levels like schools to colleges.

Recently, SP Oswal, chairman and managing director of the Vardhman Group was duped of Rs 7 crore. The textile manufacturer was put under "digital arrest." He was duped through an elaborate act in which a fraudster impersonating Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud, a fake virtual courtroom and documents closely resembles original ones. He too had received a phone call asking him to press a certain number. Police have managed to freeze these accounts and recover over Rs 5 crore so far.

Notably, last month, the Cyber Cell of Jammu and Kashmir successfully recovered a significant portion of the defrauded funds. They resolved an online fraud case involving Rs 96,000 within an impressive eight hours, recovering a substantial Rs 85,799.

Zubair Ahmed too remains hopeful, drawing inspiration from a friend's recent experience in recovering nearly Rs 70,000 after falling victim to an online scam.

Officials at the Cyber Cell Kashmir refused to discuss developments in the case. The story will be updated as new information comes in.

## Mirwaiz Files

urgency memo," the Hurriyat claimed. The separatist amalgam said it was hopeful that the high court would provide much-needed relief to the Mirwaiz "in view of laws of natural justice and human rights also enshrined in the Constitution".

He also appealed to the legal fraternity, political organisations and human rights groups to raise their voice over the issue.

## Israel's Deadliest

of Lebanon early on Tuesday morning. The IDF has long warned an invasion was possible in order to push Hezbollah back from the border and allow 60,000 citizens to return to their homes in the north.

Meanwhile, the death toll from Israeli aerial assaults across Lebanon since early October 2023 has passed the 1,700 mark with nearly 8,770 injured, according to Lebanese government data. In response, Hezbollah has fired barrages of rockets and drones towards Israeli targets.



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## LG Grieved Over Demise Of Syed Mushtaq Bukhari

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Wednesday expressed his grief over the demise of prominent Pahadi leader Syed Mushtaq Ahmed Bukhari.

In a condolence message, the Lt Governor said, "Deeply pained to learn of the demise of Shri Syed Mushtaq Ahmed Bukhari, a prominent Pahadi leader. He will be remembered



for his commitment to the welfare of people and upliftment of weaker sections of society. My condolences to his family.

## GSI Conducts Swachhata Hi Seva Campaign At Shyok-Nubra Valley In Ladakh



Observer News Service

**NUBRA:** As part of the Government of India's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan initiative, the Geological Survey of India (GSI) conducted a successful Swachhata / cleanliness drive at the Geoheritage Site "Land of Cold Desert, Shyok-Nubra valley" on 01-10-2024. This initiative was part of the "Swachhata Hi Seva" campaign, which ran from 17th September to 1st October, 2024, aligning with the theme "Swabhav Swachhata - Sanskaar Swachhata" that emphasizes cleanliness as an inherent behavior. The Swachhata Hi Seva 2024 campaign is a nationwide initiative that aims to promote cleanliness and a healthier India through a collaborative approach and focusing on three key pillars: Swachhata Ki Bhagi-daari, Sampurna Swachhata including Swachhata Lakshit Ekayi and Safai Mitra Suraksha Shivirs. The campaign is part of extensive cleanliness drives by GSI accompanied by plantation activities, and outreach programs for maintaining the environmental aesthetics, sustainable geotourism development and geoheritage conservation.

The Swachhata Campaign witnessed a collaborative effort for the cleanliness drive, bringing together the personnel from Geological Survey of India (GSI), Department of Geology and Mining (DGM), UT, Ladakh, Local administration officials, representatives from Indian Army, Diskit Gonpa, Diskit degree College, inter-college, students, other participating organizations and local people. Hon'ble Secretary, Govt. of India, Ministry of Mines, New Delhi, Shri V.L. Kantha Rao, graced the occasion and participated in the Swachhata Campaign as the Chief Guest. Shri Rajinder Kumar, Additional Director General and Head of Department (HOD) of the Geological Survey of India, Northern

Region, Lucknow, and Shri. P.S. Misra, Dy. Director General SU: UT: J&K, and UT: Ladakh also joined the Swachhata Campaign, participating alongside the Hon'ble Secretary, Ministry of Mines. The campaign witnessed the successful cleanliness drive at Nubra Valley's breathtaking Land of Cold Desert, Shyok-Nubra valley Geo-Tourist Site. The Secretary, Ministry of Mines emphasized on the importance of Swachhata Hi Seva and asked the participants and students to adopt the SHS mission today and tomorrow.

The breathtaking Ladakh region is renowned for its remote mountain beauty, rich culture, and stunning geological marvels. The Geoheritage Site "Land of Cold Desert, Shyok-Nubra Valley" of the UT: Ladakh has been recognized by the Geological Survey of India, Ministry of Mines, Government of India, for its exceptional geological significance. Such geoheritage sites are treasure troves of geo-relics, phenomena, and geological structures that hold national and international interest.

Located at the confluence of the Shyok and Nubra rivers near Diskit, the Shyok-Nubra valley boasts unique geological features. The presence of sand dunes, reminiscent of Rajasthan's deserts, attracts tourists who can experience the thrill of double-hump camel rides. At an altitude of 3048 m above mean sea level, these dunes are the largest in the Trans-Himalayan region. These sand dunes hold particular interest for geologists, indicating climatic variations in this high-altitude terrain. Situated along the riverbanks, they offer valuable insights into Quaternary geological studies. The Shyok-Nubra valley also exposes an ophiolite rock bearing suture zone, immensely important for understanding the Himalayan evolution and journey of the Indian tectonic plate.

## Proposed Pulwama Maternity Hospital Nowhere In Sight

Agencies

**PULWAMA:** Nearly six years have passed since the government identified land in south Kashmir's Pulwama district for a 100-bed maternity hospital, yet no progress has been made on the project.

A health official said that 112 kanals of land was earmarked at Sirnoo, near Pulwama town, to address the increasing health concerns of women in south Kashmir, particularly in Pulwama and Shopian districts. However, the official said that the only visible action taken so far has been the erection of a notice board at the proposed site.

"This has been a longstanding demand of the residents of Pulwama and Shopian for a maternity hospital to reduce referrals to hospitals in Srinagar or MCH Anantnag, but it appears that the project has been abandoned," officials said.

They said that if the hospital were established, it would alleviate pressure on LD Hospital and provide accessible facilities for the people of Pulwama and Shopian.

Locals expressed frustration over the lack of progress. "We have approached various authorities regarding the maternity hospital, but after over six years,

the project remains nonexistent," said Attallah, a local.

He said the women face challenges due to the absence of a dedicated maternity hospital in Pulwama and Shopian. "Such facilities should be available in every district," he said.

Attallah said the previous government had proposed a site in Chandgam, which is far from the town; however, following persistent protests, the current location was chosen.

Residents said the establishment of this facility would save both time and money, as they currently have to transport patients to Srinagar or private clinics for maternity care. "We urge the higher authorities to expedite the process and initiate construction so that locals can breathe a sigh of relief," they said.

Three years ago, the District Development Council of Pulwama also passed a resolution for the construction of the maternity hospital in the area.

Meanwhile, an official from the Directorate of Health Services Kashmir (DHSK) said the proposal has been forwarded to higher authorities but has not yet received administrative approval. "The project is under active consideration by the government and is expected to be approved soon," the official assured—(KNO)

## Shia, Sunni Join Congregational Fatiha For Sayyed Nasrallah

Dabirah Hassan

**SRINAGAR:** In a display of solidarity, both Shia and Sunni communities came together for a congregational Fatiha to honor Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, who was assassinated on 27th September by Israel in Lebanon. The congregational Fatiha was observed across Kashmir, drawing participants from both sects.

Largest gathering was witnessed at Bemina where speakers hailed the supreme sacrifice of Sayyed Nasrallah in defence of the oppressed people.

Dr. Sameer Siddiqui, a noted Islamic scholar, addressing the congregation said, "Most of the Palestinians are Sunni, but Hassan Nasrallah did not see their sect; he sacrificed everything for them. It is difficult to find a person who has done so much for Muslim unity. Ismail Haniyeh is Sunni, and Hassan Nasrallah is Shia, but both shared a close bond. This serves as a lesson for us to free ourselves from sectarian divisions and send a message to our enemies that we are one."



Expressing deep sorrow over the loss, Maulana Masroor Abbas Ansari, a noted Shia cleric, remarked, "We promised Hassan Nasrallah to follow in his footsteps. His mission is now our mission. Israel may have taken one Nasrallah from us, but now from every household, a Nasrallah will emerge."

Aga Ruhullah, a member of parliament, noted that Hassan Nasrallah's assassination does not only affect Lebanon or the Muslim community; it impacts all who walk the path of truth. "The oppressed are also grieving. We express our condolences to the people of

Lebanon." Mirwaiz North Kashmir, Maulana Hassan Afzal Firdousi, emphasized that Hassan Nasrallah is not just a leader of the Shia community, but also a leader for Sunnis. "His assassination is a loss for both communities. We are 200 crore Muslims all over the world, and all are Nasrallah."

Hakim Abdul Rasheed, a senior member of the Unity Council, added, "We should not label Nasrallah as belonging to a particular community; he is an asset for both. He is our leader, as he was safeguarding Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is our First Qibla.

## Political Insight Key To Nasrallah's Success, Says Aga Ruhullah Mehdi

Syed Mohammad Burhan

**SRINAGAR:** Member of Parliament and Senior National Conference leader, Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi paid rich tributes to Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah on Wednesday.

Addressing Majlis e Tahreem, Sayyed-e-Moqavimat Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah organized by the Majlis Ulama-e-Imamia at Imamia Park at Zadibal Mehdi spoke in depth on the life and legacy of Nasrallah and the essence of political wisdom in leadership, particularly in the context of the Muslim world.

In his address, Ruhullah emphasized that martyrdom is not the goal for a believer but a divine reward for those who walk the path of truth throughout their lives. "Martyrdom is a gift from Allah. It is a prize given to someone who has done something truly special, while many may seek the honor of martyrdom, it is only through the practice of Godly principles that earns this reward," Mehdi said.

Citing the Quran, Mehdi reflected on the formation of Hezbollah, explaining that when certain divine principles are followed in letter and spirit, they give rise to a group like Hezbollah. "Without practicing the teachings of the Quran, we cannot claim to be the Party of God, or Hezbollah," he remarked, urging believers to live by these principles every day.

Ruhullah spoke extensively about Hassan Nasrallah's journey, acknowledging the Hezbollah leader's rise to prominence after the martyrdom of Syed Abbas Mousavi in Lebanon. Describing Nasrallah's ascension,



Ruhullah said, "At just 32 years old, Nasrallah took charge in a Lebanon marred by problems of all sorts. Despite these challenges, he led Hezbollah to heights previously unseen." Mehdi credited Nasrallah's political wisdom for Hezbollah's success, emphasizing that such insight has been scarce in the Muslim Ummah since the inception of Islam.

Drawing a historical comparison, Ruhullah invoked the era of Imam Ali (a.s.), stating that while some figures like Abu Musa Ashari may have apparently excelled in prayer and supplication, they lacked political insight.

"History shows us that Abu Musa Ashari left Imam Ali alone during a critical time, while a companion like Maalik-e-shtar stood by the Imam during the most difficult moments. Maalik e Shtar had political wisdom, something that Abu Musa Ashari did not possess. Similarly, it was Nasrallah's political wisdom that made him stand apart."

Ruhullah further referenced the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, noting his emphasis on the importance of political wisdom. "We need to have political wisdom," Ruhullah quoted Khamenei, linking the Hezbollah leader's successes to this

quality. "That is what Hassan Nasrallah had in abundance."

Hezbollah's transformation under Nasrallah's leadership was another key theme in Ruhullah's address. Over the course of a decade, Nasrallah was able to consolidate Hezbollah's strength to the point where it became "a state within a state." Ruhullah praised Nasrallah's ability to turn Hezbollah from a group established to defend community interests into the strongest political party in Lebanon, a feat accomplished in a country governed by non-Islamic principles.

According to Ruhullah, Hezbollah, under Nasrallah's leadership, stood as a formidable force and achieved what many believed to be impossible – the defeat of Israel in the 2006 war," Ruhullah said. He went on to state, "Nasrallah's leadership was so effective because people like him are owned by Allah. His support came from all quarters, which is why Hezbollah was able to achieve such historic victories."

In concluding his tribute, Ruhullah underscored the significance of Hassan Nasrallah's contributions not only to Lebanon but to the wider Muslim world.

"Hassan Nasrallah is a symbol of political wisdom, strength, and resistance. He is a shining example of what can be achieved when divine principles are practiced with conviction and insight," Mehdi said.

Nasrallah achieved all these achievements in a non-muslim country while practicing Islamic principles. "Nasrallah showed us that we cannot afford to stay away from the political arena which determines our fate."

## Writer From Pampore Launches First Kashmiri Novel 'Malaal'

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** A 27-year-old writer from the Pampore area of south Kashmir's Pulwama district has released her first book titled 'Malaal'.

Shabrose Mehak, daughter of Sheikh Abdul Ahad and a resident of Khrew in Pampore, has published her first novel in the Kashmiri language after completing her master's in English and a B.Ed.

Mehak said she began writing a diary at a young age, around 10, where she expressed her emotions and daily experiences. "I have always had an interest in literature. I wanted to learn the basics of story writing, which led me to shift my focus from BSc to English literature for my post-graduation," she explained.

Mehak said that while she wrote poems and short stories

in English and Urdu, she was never satisfied with her work. "I was captivated by the sensitivity and flow of English literature. It made me realise that being a native speaker enhances free expression," she said. "I took the pen and page and decided to write in my own language, Kashmiri, but initially struggled to start my story."

Despite her challenges in crafting a narrative in Kashmiri, Mehak felt a strong desire to succeed. "There were times I considered abandoning the idea and writing in English instead, but I prayed for guidance to make this step easier for me," she recalled. "If I had chosen English, I might have completed the novel in six months, but I dedicated one and a half years to creating a Kashmiri novel that the current generation would enjoy."

'Malaal' is a romantic novel that explores themes of

love, loss and liberation. "Set against the lush valleys of Kashmir, it tells the poignant story of Mehrosh, Posh and Aadan—the mysterious figure—navigating the complexities of childhood, adolescence, and adulthood," she said.

The narrative unveils the darker aspects of a society shaped by patriarchal and matriarchal influences. "Amid Kashmir's breathtaking beauty, 'Malaal' brings to light the silenced voices of women and marginalised communities through the intertwined lives of the main characters," she added.

The story reveals the fears, pretensions and vulnerabilities that define the characters' journeys. "Will Mehrosh, Posh and Aadan find the courage to break free from societal expectations, or will tradition silence their voices forever?" Mehak posed.

## 'RESTORING HOPE FOR DEAF CHILDREN' Over 40 Cochlear Implants Performed at GMC Srinagar

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** While the Ayushman Bharat (Golden Card) scheme may offer some financial respite for various medical treatments in Jammu & Kashmir, many high-cost procedures remain out of reach for the majority.

Cochlear implant surgeries, which restore hearing for deaf children, stand as one of the most expensive treatments available in the region.

The costs for this surgery can start at over Rs 6 lakh, an amount that majority of the families in Kashmir region cannot afford.

Though the government-backed Assistance to Disabled Persons (ADIP) scheme provides financial aid, it sets strict criteria, limiting assistance to the affected families.

GMC Srinagar's Cochlear Implant efforts Since resuming cochlear implant surgeries in 2022, the ENT Department at Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar has performed over 40 procedures, infusing a listening ability to deaf children.

The department currently has more than 50-60 children registered for cochlear implant surgeries. Out of these, 25 are medically 'fit' for implant procedure.

The data reveals that the treatment for 10-15 of registered patients, as per the preliminary evaluation, will be conducted under the Assistance to Disabled Persons (ADIP) scheme, which provides financial aid for such procedures, while remaining are falling under self-sponsored category.

Dr Manzoor Latoo, the head of GMC Srinagar's ENT Department, explained to KNO that the procedure is specifically designed for children who are deaf. He said that to be eligible, the child must be between the ages of one and five, stating that the early intervention is crucial for the development of hearing.

"The aim is to let these affected children live normal lives, with the ability to hear," he said.

Challenges of high-cost treatment and financial support

Doctors in the department said the device used for Cochlear implant surgery was costly, causing a financial burden to the affected families as the device costs in lakhs of rupees.

"This cost can be out of reach for many families. Thankfully, the department offers support

for those from low-income backgrounds. Under the ADIP scheme, children who meet specific criteria can receive the implant for free", Dr Latoo said.

He said that since the restart in 2022, initial surgeries were done in collaboration with the experts from AIIMS, New Delhi.

A cochlear implant is a small, complex electronic device that can help to provide a sense of sound to a person who is profoundly deaf or severely hard-of-hearing.

According to the doctor, their Department at SMHS Srinagar is equipped with a maximum of necessary rehabilitation facilities with access to best possible post-operative care and therapy for the children who undergo the procedures.

The road ahead Although no formal research or data is available to estimate the number of children in the region who require cochlear implants, experts, however, believe that those affected could benefit from the procedure, which can have significant positive changes in their lives.

Advocate Zahoor, a social activist argues that even families earning just above set threshold criteria will struggle to afford such high-cost treatments.

"This income limit prevents many from accessing life-changing surgeries that would restore their children's ability to hear," he said. "There should be no cap on the amount. If someone needs Rs 1 crore for treatment and insurance cover is only for Rs 5 lakh, how can the individual get treated?"

He said there are so many patients who prefer not to take up their medical treatment just because of the costs involved, which they cannot afford.

"The government should reverse the existing health insurance scheme, so as to make it open and available for all medical treatments with no capping on the cashless treatment," Adv Zahoor suggested.

Activists also highlighted that comparatively, states like Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat have implemented more comprehensive support systems for patients needing cochlear implants.

They urged the Jammu & Kashmir government to adopt a similar approach to provide widespread assistance to affected families.

Notably, the procedures were restarted under the guidance of Dr Manzoor Ahmad Latoo under the mentorship of Prof (Dr) Alok Thakar, Head of ENT at AIIMS, New Delhi—(KNO)

## Sonamarg Records Rise In Tourist Surge In Last 5 Years



Agencies

**GANDERBAL:** Sonamarg— a picturesque place in Central Kashmir's Ganderbal district has been witnessing a flow of tourists in the past five years and the foothall has gone up to six lakhs by this year.

The number of tourists has increased by 11 per cent and revenue by 1800% at the tourist place.

According to the details available, the number of tourists at Sonamarg has increased from 58,309 in 2019 to 6,61,539 by 2024.

In terms of revenue, a significant progress has also been made; in 2020, the income was Rs 1.63 lacs, which increased to Rs 3.51 lacs in 2021, Rs 9.7 lacs in 2022, Rs 25.8 lacs in 2023 and by 2024, it reached Rs 30.68 lacs.

According to the reports in 2020, a modern Solid Waste Management Plant was established in Sarbal Sonamarg to

scientifically dispose of waste, which includes an electromagnetic disintegrator with an 11 metric ton capacity, a 5-MT auto insta-composter, and a segregator.

An official said currently around 1,270 rooms are available for tourists in Sonamarg, which includes both government and private hotels, and camping sites have also been developed.

These steps are propelling Sonamarg towards further growth in the field of tourism, establishing it as a major tourist destination.

An official told KNO that no applications were received for new hostel registrations during 2023-24, and details regarding the registration of horse riders and snow bikers are not available as it is a matter under the Department of Tourism.

Under this department, 25 assets have been created, out of which 19 have been outsourced so far—(KNO)

## Bumrah Regains Top Spot In ICC Test Rankings, Jaiswal Up To No. 3

Press Trust of India

**DUBAI:** India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah is back at the summit of the ICC Test bowling rankings following his match haul of six wickets in the second Test against Bangladesh in Kanpur.

The 30-year-old replaced his Indian teammate Ravichandran Ashwin — the Player of the Series against Bangladesh — at the top of the chart. Spinner Ravindra Jadeja maintained his sixth place while fellow spinner Kuldeep Yadav stayed on 16th position.

In batting, the Player of the Match from the Kanpur Test, Yashasvi Jaiswal, moved to a career-high third position after just 11 Tests. Jaiswal played scintillating knocks of 72 and 51 and helped India win the rain-marred match by seven wickets. With 792 rating points, the 22-year-old is behind second-placed



Kane Williamson (829) and Joe Root (899).

Also, veteran Indian bats-

man Virat Kohli is back in the top 10, gaining six places to rise to the sixth position after knocks of 47 and 29 in Kanpur. Rishabh Pant, too, remained in the top 10, dropping three spots to ninth, with skipper Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill on 15th and 16th, respectively.

As for the all-rounders, there has been no significant change in the rankings, with Jadeja holding the top spot, followed by Ashwin at second and Axar Patel at seventh.

In team rankings, India were in the second spot with 120 rating points, separated from leader Australia by four points, while England remained in the third place with 108 points.

Meanwhile, the Indians continued to rule the World Test Championship (WTC) table, having a point percentage of 74.24 per cent after 11 fixtures, above second-placed Australia (62.50 per cent in 12 Tests).

### Hot TAKES

## Babar Azam Resigns As Pakistan Captain

Press Trust of India

**B**abar Azam has tendered his resignation for the second time as Pakistan's captain with Mohammad Rizwan likely to replace him in limited-overs formats later this month.



Babar released a statement on X around midnight on Wednesday announcing he had informed the Pakistan Cricket Board and team management about his desire to quit sometime last month.

While Babar did not state when he had informed the board and team management about his decision to quit, the 29-year-old said he wanted to focus on his batting while shedding off the workload as a skipper.

"I'm sharing some news with you today. I have decided to resign as captain of the Pakistan men's cricket team, effective as of my notification to the PCB and Team Management last month," Babar wrote.

"It's been an honour to lead this team, but it's time for me to step down and focus on my playing role," he added.

Babar said captaincy had been a "rewarding experience" but also added a "significant workload" for him.

"Captaincy has been a rewarding experience, but it's added a significant workload. I want to prioritise my performance, enjoy my batting, and spend quality time with my family, which brings me joy," he said.

"By stepping down, I will gain clarity moving forward and focus more energy on my game and personal growth."

"I'm grateful for your unwavering support and belief in me. Your enthusiasm has meant the world to me. I'm proud of what we've achieved together and excited to continue contributing to the team as a player," he added.

## Downtown Heroes Hammered 6-0 In I-League 3 Playoffs

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Continuing their dismal form in the 2024-25 I-League 3 Playoffs, the Downtown Heroes FC were dominated 6-0 by Karbi Anglong Morning Star FC on Wednesday at Naihati Stadium in Kolkata, West Bengal.

The heavy defeat marked the Heroes' third straight playoffs defeat in Group A.

Downtown was resilient in the first 40 minutes of the 9:00 AM kick-off, going toe-to-toe with the Assamese champions. However, Morning Star scored two quick-fire goals near the end of the first half to put the contest to bed. H Robinson Khongsai opened the score in the 43rd minute,



while Sharangthem Rajdan Singh made it 2-0 in the 45th.

The second half saw the Heroes allow four goals in the 53rd, 71st, 76th and 81st minute. The team's left wing-back Amit Tudu was also shown a straight red card in the 87th minute.

The Ajaz Ahmed Bhat-coached Downtown will now play its final playoff game against Group A leaders Diamond Harbour Football Club (played three, won three) on October 4. The game kicks off at 3:00 PM.

## Women's T20 WC: 'No Shortcuts To Toppling Australia,' Says Smriti



Press Trust of India

**SHARJAH:** There are no shortcuts to beating Australia and every team has to give its best if it aspires to overcome the six-time world champions, said India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana ahead of the Women's T20 World Cup which begins on Thursday.

Australia's dominance in the global showpiece has been unrivalled with the team winning the last three editions of the tournament.

With charismatic former skipper Meg Lanning calling it a day following the victory in South Africa about 18 months ago, Alyssa Healy has taken over the captaincy as Australia aim to maintain their dominance in global events.

"Every game in the World Cup is important, and you have to give your 100 per cent in each one. New Zealand and Sri Lanka are strong teams, but with Australia, you know you can't afford to make mistakes," said Mandhana as India gear up to take on New Zealand in a Group A match here on Friday.

"You have to bring your best game on that particular day to get the better of them. There's always excitement when facing Australia because they're such a good team, and beating them is a great challenge," added

the India vice-captain.

She added that the clash against Pakistan always brings out a lot of passionate response from the players. The arch-rival will lock horns here on October 6.

"I think the India-Pakistan rivalry is more about the emotions of the fans than anything else. It's not like the players don't talk to each other; it's the emotions from both nations that make it so intense," Mandhana said.

"For me, every World Cup match is special, and we put the same amount of effort into each game. But there's definitely a lot of emotion attached to the India-Pakistan games," said the veteran of 141 T20s.

Mandhana said that playing Pakistan in the afternoon heat of Dubai would be a challenge and that her team had a couple of sessions lined up to acclimatise to the conditions.

"The afternoon game is going to be a challenge due to the heat, but when you play for India, there are no excuses. You have to prepare well, and I think we have a couple of afternoon sessions lined up to help us get used to the conditions."

"By the time we face Pakistan, I'm sure we'll be ready. Mentally, we need to stay strong and keep pushing, staying hydrated is key," she said.

## Srinagar Premier League: J&K Police Defeats Jhelum FC 5-1

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The "My Youth My Pride" Srinagar Premier League 2024 saw an exciting encounter between J&K Police XI and Jhelum FC on Wednesday at TRC Turf here.

The game began on a thrilling note as Police forward Hamim opened the scoring in the 4th minute of the game. Soon after, Jahangir made it 2-0 to Police in the 11th minute. However, Jhelum FC hit back with a 12th-minute penalty, slotted home by Hayat, to make it 2-1.



With the game being played on tenderhooks, J&K Police's Hayat put his team two-goals ahead in the 45th minute.

In the second half, Hamim scored his brace in the 69th

minute. Amir made it 5-1 in the 90th to see off the contest for J&K Police. In Thursday's game, Kashmir Avengers FC will take on Galaxy FC, with kick off at 4:00 PM.

## Saka Says This Is Arsenal's Year

Agencies

**A**rsenal can go all the way and end their 21-year wait for a Premier League title this season, winger Bukayo Saka said after his side beat Ligue 1 champions Paris St Germain 2-0 in the Champions League on Tuesday.



Arsenal finished runners-up in 2022-23 and took the Premier League title race to the final day last season before once again finishing second behind Manchester City.

The north London side are in the mix this season, sitting third in the league standings, and their impressive victory over French heavyweights PSG underlined their title credentials, with Kai Havertz and Saka scoring in the match.

"I don't want to put too much pressure on us but I do think that this is the year (that we can win the title)," Saka told CBS Sports.

"I think we've been close the last two years and we're getting closer but this hopefully will be the year." Saka, who has established himself as a key player at Arsenal and was their top-scorer in the Premier League last season, said the club's near misses had left him hungry for success.

"Previous years, I've come runners-up a lot. It's just that spirit in me that I want to win this season and of course, I believe in myself a lot," the 23-year-old told Amazon Prime.

"With those two things, it helps. We believe in ourselves, we believe we're a top team. We showed that tonight (against PSG). I did tell the boys we have to make a statement when big teams are coming to the Emirates."

### PODCAST

#### INVESTMENT OPTIONS

KASHMIR OBSERVER

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In our latest podcast, we present Irshad Mushtaq, founder of MI Securities. In addition, he is a financial expert who has helped countless individuals and businesses navigate complex financial landscapes. In this episode, we discussed different investment strategies, personal finance tips, and wealth building. The full video will be released soon on our YouTube channel. Subscribe Kashmir Observer channel for the latest updates.