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BOOK APPOINTMENT

Snow Likely In Next 24 Hrs: MeT



KO Photo | Abid Bhat

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The higher reaches of Kashmir received fresh snowfall on Wednesday, even as the minimum temperature increased across the valley, officials said. Gulmarg, Sonamarg and Gurez sector received fresh snowfall on Wednesday afternoon as intermittent snowfall continued in the other areas in the higher reaches of the valley, they said. The weather office said light

rain or snow is expected at scattered places, especially in the higher reaches of the valley till Thursday forenoon as a fresh western disturbance hit Jammu and Kashmir otherwise, the weather will stay mainly dry till December 18. An independent forecaster has predicted rains and snow showers at many places of Kashmir for the next 24 hours. According to the forecast, light to moderate [| More on P6](#)

HC Seeks J&K Govt's Response On Reservation Policy

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir High Court has issued a notice to the J&K government, seeking its response to a petition challenging the region's current reservation policy. The move comes amid ongoing public debate over the fairness and rationale of the policy.

The petition, filed by Dawar Ali with the support of the Jammu & Kashmir Civil Society, raises questions about the transparency and equity of the existing framework. The plea, listed as WP(C) 2864/2024 and CM(7835/2024), was argued by Team JUS Advocates & Solicitors Front from New Delhi, led by Advocate Junaid



Mohammad Junaid.

The petition demands the annulment of the current reservation policy and calls for the establishment of an independent panel to reform and rationalise the reservation system within a defined timeframe.

A bench comprising Justice Rajnesh Oswal and Justice Mohd Yousuf Wani directed the J&K government to submit its reply within three weeks. The court has also clubbed this case with a related petition, WP(C) 2762/2024. The next hearing has been

scheduled for December 27, 2024.

Advocate Junaid said it is important to ensure constitutional fairness in the reservation system. "This petition does not aim to target any specific group but seeks to uphold the rule of law and constitutional principles. A balanced and fair reservation policy is critical for justice and equity," he said.

The Jammu & Kashmir Civil Society, which has backed the petition, reiterated its demand for a transparent reservation policy. "The current system does not reflect the complexities and diversity of our society. We are advocating for a rationalised framework that is equitable and inclusive," said [| More on P6](#)

Smart India Hackathon Innovation Must Drive Social Change: LG

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Wednesday addressed the young innovators participating in 'Smart India Hackathon 2024 - Hardware Edition' Grand Finale at Galgotias University, Greater Noida.

In his keynote address, the Lieutenant Governor commended the pioneer initiative by Government of India, celebrating the spirit of innovation and collaboration, and providing a dynamic platform for brightest minds of the country to develop and showcase their creative solutions to real-world problems. "I see Smart India Hackathon as a powerful instrument to bridge the gap between educational institutions and industries," the Lieutenant Governor said.

In the next 4 days during the Hackathon, [| More on P6](#)

Winter Vacation for J&K Colleges Likely From Dec 27

Amid bone chilling winters, the Jammu and Kashmir Higher Education Department has proposed to announce 50-days winter vacations from December-27 for colleges of Kashmir division. Besides, the department has also proposed 10-days winter vacations for colleges of Jammu division.

Director Colleges of Jammu and Kashmir, Sheikh Ajaz Bashir said that the higher education department has [| More on P6](#)

6 LIGHT RAIN IS EXPECTED AT SOME PLAINS OF KASHMIR WITH SLIGHT possibility of season's first light snowfall at a few plains 45% chances during the next 24 hours."

LG To Determine Salaries Of J&K MLAs? Speaker Seeks Clarification From Govt

Agencies

Srinagar: Amid ambiguity over salaries of newly elected Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs), Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather has sought clarification from Jammu & Kashmir Government on the matter.

Sources within the J&K government disclosed that the Speaker has written to the administrative secretary, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs over the matter due to confusion

in the legal provisions regarding salaries of MLAs.

"The Speaker has asked the government to clarify in light of the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act, whose section 31 states that LG should determine salaries of MLAs till Jammu & Kashmir Assembly enacts law over the matter. However, the law regarding salaries of MLAs in erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir was protected under the Reorganisation Act," they said. [| More on P6](#)

Darbar Move Will Be Restored: Omar Abdullah Says Won't Allow Jammu's Uniqueness To Shrink

Observer News Service

Jammu: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday asserted that his government will restore Darbar move and said Jammu's uniqueness will not be allowed to diminish and Darbar move, an age-old practice under which the civil secretariat and other government offices used to function six months each in Srinagar and Jammu during summer and winter, respectively.

The practice, introduced by Dogra rulers nearly 150 years ago, was stopped by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha in June 2021, citing administration's complete transition to e-office which could help save Rs 200 crore per year. However, the decision came up for sharp criticism from various quarters including Jammu business community and politicians who termed the exercise as a bond between the two regions.

"Darbar move is an issue which I fail to understand why it was not projected during campaigning for assembly polls. The issue gained momentum only after the election result although we have



THE DARBAR MOVE SYMBOLIZES THE UNITY AND INCLUSIVITY of Jammu and Kashmir. It is a tradition that ensures governance remains accessible to both regions."

mentioned it in our manifesto and meetings," Omar said. "We assure you that the

Darbar move will be restored. Jammu has its own importance and we will not allow its uniqueness to diminish," he told reporters after chairing over a three-hour long meeting with representatives of civil society at his official residence here.

Omar said the government takes its own decision which does impact the public.

"After a decision, whether its impact is right or wrong, there is a need to get a feedback...sometimes it becomes difficult to get the [| More on P6](#)

263 Lives Lost To Natural Calamities In 5 Years

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir has seen a rising trend in fatalities caused by natural calamities over the past five years, data shows.

A total of 263 deaths have been reported due to disastrous weather events in Jammu and Kashmir over the five years from 2019-2023, as per official data.

As per the data from the Earth Sciences Ministry, over 200 people lost their lives between 2019 and 2023 due to events such as snowfall, flooding, lightning, and heavy rains.

In 2023, there were 54 fatalities: 9 due to snowfall, 5 due to lightning, and 40 from floods and heavy rains.

In 2022, 57 deaths were recorded: 3 due to snowfall, 4 from gales, 7 from lightning, and 43 caused by floods and heavy rains.

In 2021, 32 lives were lost: 4 due to snowfall, 2 from cold waves, 4 from lightning, 1 from

a hailstorm, and 21 from floods and heavy rains.

The government said that the India Meteorological Department (IMD), in coordination with research centers, has implemented

measures to improve monitoring and early warning systems for extreme weather events.

"It provides weather information to stakeholders, including government bodies, and issues forecasts, warnings, and color-coded alerts to aid disaster management," it said.

"IMD has developed tools like the online 'Climate Hazard & Vulnerability Atlas of India' and mobile apps such as 'Mausam,' 'Meghdoot,' and 'Damini' for weather forecasts, agromet advisories, and lightning alerts," it said. "These efforts are supported by preparedness meetings and collaborations to minimize the impact of extreme weather. Climate [| More on P6](#)

Kashmir Among Top 10 Most Googled Travel Destinations In 2024

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Kashmir ranks ninth among the most sought-after travel destinations in 2023, according to Google's compilation of the top 10 searched destinations by Indian users.

According to Google's Year in Search 2024, the other destinations that garnered the most searches from internet users include Azerbaijan, Bali, Manali, Kazakhstan, Jaipur, Georgia, Malaysia, Ayodhya, and south Goa. These trends reflect a marked increase in searches compared to 2023.

Google Trends is a powerful tool that analyzes a sample of Google web searches to provide insights into the relative popularity of search terms over a specific period. It offers



a valuable snapshot of the collective interests and search behaviors of users.

The influx of tourists in Jammu and Kashmir is all set to surpass all the previous records in winter as the highest number of visitors have already arrived in the union territory so far and local tourism players are expecting huge tourist influx during the winter season.

Notably, a report revealed that, Srinagar airport handled over one lakh passengers within in a span of 12 Days last month. Kashmir Valley experienced an unprecedented surge in tourism this year, with over 2.6 million visitors recorded from January 1 to September 30, 2024. According to the Tourism Department, the total number of tourists [| More on P6](#)

SMC On NGT's Radar As Joint Committee Flags Major Lapses

Case Listed For Hearing Today

Syed Mohammad Burhan

Srinagar: The Achan landfill site in Srinagar, long criticized for its environmental and health hazards, has once again come under scrutiny following an inspection by the Joint Committee, constituted by National Green Tribunal -NGT some months back after a petition was moved by Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat a noted RTI & Environmental Activist.

The Joint Committee was constituted by NGT in May this year after Raja Muzaffar Bhat moved a formal application before the tribunal against unscientific waste disposal at Achan Saidapora area of

Srinagar by Srinagar Municipal Corporation-SMC.

The Joint Committee comprising of members from Central Pollution Control Board, National Wetlands Committee under Ministry of Environment, JK Pollution Control Committee and Deputy Commissioner Srinagar had visited the site in July this year and prepared the report. The report was submitted before NGT a day before the case hearing on Wednesday a copy of which was accessed by Kashmir Observer

The report which is signed by Dr Narinder Sharma Regional Director CPCB Chandigarh, Prof Sanjay Deshmukh Mumbai University and Member National Wetlands Committee, Ghansham Singh, Member Secretary JK [| More on P6](#)

Govt Considers Satellite Phones For Trekkers In J&K

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Discussions between Union home and tourism ministries are at an advanced stage on allowing satellite phones for trekkers in no-network zones in the Kashmir valley, Tourism Director Raja Yaqoob Farooq said here on Wednesday.

"The tourism ministry, Government of India, has already taken up (the issue) with the MHA for different states, because tourists go there (on trek), but the network is not available there and so satellite phones (should) be allowed.

"This is at an advanced stage of discussion between the Ministry of Home (Affairs)

and the Ministry of Tourism," Farooq told reporters on the sidelines of a function to celebrate the International Mountain Day here.

Farooq said trekking is an important part of the valley's tourism and the department has identified 75 new tracks for trekking.

"Some of them have been started like the Kashmir great lakes (trek), which is our most sought after track. Then some in Gulmarg and Tarsar Marsar track. We are trying to map these," he added.

He said Jammu and Kashmir is a mountainous region, which opens the possibility of adventure tourism.

"We have mostly foreign trekkers during [| More on P6](#)



'Autistic Children Could Be Perceiving People's Faces Differently'



Press Trust Of India

Tracking eye movements in autistic children has revealed that they might be perceiving and processing people's faces differently, according to a new study. Researchers from the University of Houston, US, analysed social perception behaviour in almost 400 children, of whom 280 had autism, by monitoring eye movements as they looked at images. Children on the spectrum processed a face in an "exploratory" manner that included looking at regions that do not have social cues and require minimal gaze—rather than immediately fixating on specific facial regions of interest, the team found. Children not having the neurodevelopmental condition showed fewer exploratory patterns in eye movements. Autistic children are known to have trouble with social skills, including looking at another person in the eye while interacting with them. "In this study, our primary goal was to test the hypothesis that children with autism display

qualitatively distinct eye movement patterns during social perception," said Jason Griffin from the University of Houston, an author of the study published in the journal Biological Psychiatry. From the analysis, two patterns of eye movement emerged, said the psychology researcher. "A focused pattern was characterised by small face regions of interest that captured looking immediately. In contrast, an exploratory pattern was characterised by larger face regions of interest that included non-social objects and did not capture looking immediately," Griffin explained. The researchers found that autistic children were more likely to use this exploratory method, compared to the focused patterns. "Decreased likelihood of precisely looking at faces early in social visual processing may be an important feature of autism that is associated with autism-related symptomatology and may reflect less visual sensitivity to face information," the authors wrote. They said the study's findings could help improve facial processing in autistic children.

How Physical Activity Helps Muscles Produce Energy, Researchers Find New Process

Press Trust Of India

Researchers have identified a new process thought which physical exercise triggers the production of energy in muscles, even in those with genetic errors. Researchers said the results, published in the journal Nature Communications, could pave the way for treating disorders affecting one's muscles, such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease. "We have identified a new, important mechanism for energy production of the muscle cells and shown that it is activated by physical exercise—regardless of age, gender and state of health," Lykke Sylow, an associate professor at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, and corresponding author of the paper describing the findings, said.



The team showed that a protein, vital to the newly discovered process and named 'SLIRP', played a key role in producing energy, which is known to occur in cells' energy factory—the mitochondria.

They further found that through fitness, or aerobic, training, the SLIRP protein's role in energy production could be dodged. "Our research shows that exercise can counteract genetic errors in muscular

energy production. If this (SLIRP) protein is missing, exercise can activate alternative processes which recreate the muscle's energy capacity and circumvent the genetic error," first author, Tang Cam Phung Pham, a postdoctoral

researcher at the University of Copenhagen, said. The results showed how useful exercise can be in overcoming genetic errors, Cam Phung Pham said. The study could help develop a drug that mimics the health benefits of physical training in people who are unable to exercise, according to Sylow. "It opens up the possibility of developing new treatments for more than 200 different disorders related to defects in the muscles' energy production," Sylow said. "This includes rare mitochondrial genetic disorders as well as more common diseases such as diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease and neurodegenerative disorders—in which (a) lower muscle function is associated with increased mortality," the corresponding author said.

Gene Mutation Likely Cause Of Autism In Early Childhood: Study

Press Trust Of India

Autism, a developmental disorder that causes functional abnormalities in brain development, is influenced by a combination of genetic and environmental factors, with symptoms appearing in early childhood, according to a study by the Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology on Monday. The complexities of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) include single-gene mutations in early developmental genes, with symptoms often manifesting as early as the age of two, the study noted, as per an RGCN release. The latest study, led by Dr Jackson James and his team at BRIC-RGCN, has been published in the prestigious journal iScience. The research identified a novel mutation in the Tlx3 gene linked to abnormal cerebellum development—a major region of the hindbrain responsible for balance, motor coordination, and other complex functions—and autism, the release said.

The study demonstrated that deleting the Tlx3 gene in the cerebellum of a transgenic mouse embryo (genetically modified through engineering techniques) disrupts cerebellar function.



When these embryos were allowed to develop into adulthood, the mice exhibited hallmark autistic traits, including social skill deficits, repetitive behaviours, and motor function abnormalities, the release added. In collaboration with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research—Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (CSIR-IGIB), New Delhi, the RGCN team assessed the prevalence of this mutation in humans. They identified

TLX3 mutation variants linked to nine ASD cases and other comorbid neurodevelopmental conditions. Dr James emphasised the need for a genome-wide global cohort analysis to determine the frequency of this TLX3 mutation and its association with specific populations, such as Indians and others. These findings highlight how dysregulation of this embryonic gene contributes to ASD in early childhood, the release said. RGCN Director Prof Chandrabhas Narayana stated, "Autism is a serious childhood issue worldwide. In India, it has also emerged as a significant challenge for researchers and the medical fraternity due to its wide social and medical ramifications. The RGCN study provides new insights into this behavioural disorder." ASDs lead to behavioural deficits, including lack of social cognition and restricted or repetitive behaviours, desires, communication, or actions in individuals, the release said.

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Srinagar - 190002
Contact: 7780829196 inf

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S/o Mohammad Ramzan Rather
R/O Zeathyar Nishat Srinagar ird

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Notice for General Public

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Class 10th
Year & Session Annual Regular 2019
Registration: N18441450039
Name : Fazil Fayaz
Father's Name: Fayaz Ahmad Dar
Mother's Name : Shareefa Begum
Date of Birth:- 08-05-2005



Residence:- Managam Wagoora Baramulla
According to the candidate concerned has approach to this office for issuance of Duplicate Qualification /Marks Certificate/s, so before the same is processed and provided to the candidate, under rules, anybody having any objection in this regard, shall bring into the notice of Assistant Secretary of Certificate as well as Assistant Secretary Examination Unit I & III KD within the period of 10 & 7 days respectively, from the date of publication of this notice. (Besides the above referred "Qualification / Marks Certificate/s" bearing No: be treated as "CANCELLED")
No: F(Cer is-I-DQC)/B/KD/
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Stray Dogs Create Nuisance At Lal Chowk, Tourists Call For Action

Agencies

Srinagar: Tourists visiting the Lal Chowk in Srinagar have raised concerns over the presence of stray dogs near the city center, particularly around the clock tower. The issue has become a source of frustration for visitors who come to the popular spot to take selfies and soak in the city's ambiance.

According to tourists, scores of stray dogs can be seen roaming the area during the morning hours, creating an unsettling environment.

"We came here to capture memories and enjoy the charm of Lal Chowk, but the presence of so many dogs makes it difficult," said Pooja Sharma, a tourist from Delhi.

Another visitor, Rajesh Kumar, expressed similar concerns: "The area is beautiful and has great historical significance, but the stray dogs make it hard to relax and explore freely. We were hesitant to even step closer to the clock tower."

Tourists have appealed to local authorities to take immediate steps to address the issue. "Lal Chowk is a major attraction for visitors. Authorities must ensure it remains dog-free so that tourists can enjoy the experience without any unease," said Anil Gupta, another tourist.

Locals and shopkeepers also urged the Srinagar Municipal Corporation to implement effective measures to manage the stray dog population in the area. [KNT]



Paucity Of Funds Delay Major Projects Under Srinagar Smart City

Agencies

Srinagar: Several key projects under the Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL) initiative are facing significant delays due to a shortage of funds. The projects, primarily located in the old Srinagar city areas such as Zaina Kadal, MR Gunj, Nowhatta, and Nala Mar Road, are at a standstill, with contractors reluctant to continue work over unpaid liabilities.

One of the contractors said that liabilities worth Rs 50 crore are pending. "Payments have not been made for months. Until these liabilities are cleared, it is challenging to move forward," he said.

The delays are casting doubt on the completion of projects by the initial March 2025 deadline. These projects include critical infrastructure and heritage preservation efforts, such as work around the historic Jamia Masjid and other heritage sites in the downtown area.

“Payments have not been made for months. Until these liabilities are cleared, it is challenging to move forward”

Out of the Rs 1,000 crore allocated by the Central Government for SSCL projects, approximately 75% of the funds have been utilized. However, the remaining 25% of funds are yet to be released, leading to a financial crunch that has hindered progress.

"The shortage of funds is a major bottleneck. We are striving to address the issue and ensure the projects resume as soon as possible," admitted an official from SSCL.

"These projects were meant to enhance our living standards and preserve our heritage, but the current situation is disappointing," said a resident of Zaina Kadal. [KNT]

CRPF Organizes Free Medical Camp

Agencies

Srinagar: Lal Chowk, the bustling commercial heart of Srinagar, came alive with activity today as the 132nd Battalion of the CRPF organized a free medical camp for the general public.

The medical camp attracted passersby, local residents, and people from different parts of the valley, underscoring its role as a central hub for community engagement.

The camp provided essential medical services, including check-ups and consultations, ensuring accessible healthcare for all.

Officials from the CRPF leading the initiative

emphasized its purpose. "Our aim is to provide healthcare and free medical check-ups to residents while strengthening and smoothing the relationship between the security forces and the public," said a CRPF official.

Local residents expressed their gratitude for the initiative. "Lal Chowk is a busy area, and this camp has made it easier for people from different parts of the valley to access health facilities without any trouble," said one resident.

Another local said, "I came here with my father for a check-up. The doctors were very helpful, and it's heartening to see such camps being organized in a busy area like Lal Chowk"—(KNO)

FSD Conducts Inspection In City

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Food Safety Department, Drug and Food Control Organization, Wednesday conducted an intensive inspection and sampling drive targeting Nanwaei (Kashmiri roti makers) in Srinagar city.

An official said that the primary objective of this drive was to ensure the sanitary hygiene and quality of roti being sold to consumers.

Some Nanwaei were found violating sanitary standards, prompting the imposition of compounds under Section 69.

The drive aimed to verify the quality standards of Kashmiri roti, with samples of Maida and

prepared dough lifted for analytical purposes.

Assistant Commissioner of Food Safety, Yameen ul Nabi, assured that the drive will continue across Srinagar city, and anyone found violating hygiene and sanitary standards will be dealt with under the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act.

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HIGHWAY STATUS

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



HIJRI CALENDAR

09 Jumada al-Sani
1446

PRAYERS	
FAJR	5: 54
ZUHR	12:22
ASR	3: 45
Magrib	5:25
ISHA	6: 50

This Day In History

- 627 -Battle at Nineveh: Byzantine Emperor Heraclius beats Sassanid forces during Byzantine-Sassanid War
- 1098 -1st Crusaders capture & plunder Mara Syria
- 1408 -Order of the Dragon: The Order of the Dragon was first created on December 12, 1408 by Emperor Sigismund, then King of Hungary, and his wife Queen Barbara of Celje following the battle for possession of Bosnia.
- 1474 - Isabella crowns herself queen of Castile & Aragon
- 1479 - Jews are expelled from Schlettstadt Alsace by Emperor Frederick III
- 1524 - Pope Clement VII approves Organization of Jewish Community of Rome
- 1527 - Composer Adrian Willaert moves from Milan to Venice
- 1653 - English "Barebones" Parliament ends
- 1677 - Brandenburgs army occupies Stettin
- 1694 - The Royal Society censures Edmond Halley for suggesting in a paper titled 'Some considerations about the cause of the universal deluge' that the story of Noah's flood could be an account of a cometary impact
- 1643 - English Civil War: The Battle of Alton takes place in Hampshire.
- 1668 - Jean Racine's "Britannicus" premieres in Paris.
- 1734 - Britain & Russia sign trade agreement
- 1861 - Battle of Alleghany Summit, WV
- 1862 - Battle of Fredericksburg, VA (Marye's Heights)
- 1864 - Battle of Ft McAllister, GA
- 1916 - Avalanche kills 10,000 Austrian & Italian troops in 24 hrs in Tyrol.
- 1918 - US army of occupation crosses Rhine, enters Germany.
- 1920 - League of nations establishes International Court of Justice in The Hague.
- 1920 - Netherland breaks contact with Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia & Slavia. forbid National Front & Netherland Union.
- 1941 - Lawine battlers destroy Haaraz, Peru; about 3,000 die.
- 1962 - Relay 1 communication satellite launched.
- 1966 - 1st US bombing of Hanoi part of Operation Rolling Thunder during the Vietnam War.
- 2008 - Andrei Klepach, a deputy economics minister of Russia, states that Russia has entered the recession, with two quarters of contraction expected, meaning Russia will fall short of reaching the 6.8% growth forecast for 2008
- 2013 - The United States announces sanctions on the two dozen companies who assisted Iran with their nuclear program
- 2014 - UN climate change talks in Peru continue past scheduled time as negotiations continue to stall
- 2014 - Over 200 pro-democracy activists arrested in Hong Kong
- 2015 - COP21 climate change summit in Paris reaches a deal between 195 countries to limit the rise in the global average temperature to less than 2°C above pre-industrial levels
- 2015 - First women ever elected in Saudi Arabia in municipal council elections
- 2016 - Bill English is sworn in as New Zealand Prime Minister, succeeding John Key
- 2016 - Paolo Gentiloni is sworn in as Prime Minister of Italy, succeeding Matteo Renzi
- 2018 - British Prime Minister Theresa May survives 200-117 no-confidence vote from her own Conservative Party
- 2018 - China built 88 out of world's 143 skyscrapers in 2018 more than any country ever (buildings over 200 meters/656 ft)
- 2018 - Seven mass graves in former Islamic State area discovered containing hundreds of bodies, some tortured, near Albu Kamal, eastern Syria
- 2019 - British General Election won by Boris Johnson's Conservative Party in landslide win with 80 seat majority. Scottish National Party also wins 48 of 59 seats in Scotland.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE

Tender Notice No:- 770-W/169/WA-1/FZR- 258-2024-25-ADEN-PTK & 259-2024-25-ADEN-JAT acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites open tenders (E-Tenders) against below titled tenders and available on www.ireps.gov.in with closing date 01.01.2025 up to 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to the closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against these tenders, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through payment modes available on the IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card, etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker cheques, Deposit receipts, FDR, etc. are not allowed.

Tender Type	Tendering Section	Bidding System
Open	Works	Two Packet System
Date of Uploading Tenders	Bid Starting Date	Bid Closing Date/Time
09.12.2024	18.12.2024	01.01.2025

S. No.	Tender No.	Details of Tender
1.	258-2024-25-ADEN-PTK	Supply, installation, and commissioning of track based Electronic type rail gauge face lubricator 16 nos (16x12x5yrs=960 month) in the section of ADEN/PTK under the jurisdiction of Sr. DEN-II/FZR for 5 years
	Advertised Value (Rs.)	Validity of Offer
	2,16,94,877.40	90 Days
	Period of Completion	60 Months
2.	259-2024-25-ADEN-JAT	Supply, installation, and commissioning of track-based Electronic type rail gauge face lubricator 68 nos (68x12x5yrs=4080 month) in the section of ADEN/JAT under the jurisdiction of Sr. DEN-II/FZR for 5 years.
	Advertised Value (Rs.)	Validity of Offer
	8,91,26,503.20	90 Days
	Period of Completion	60 Months

NOTE: Contractors are advised to check the IREPS website for any corrigendum issued against this tender before submitting the bids.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 3792/24

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE

DEN-III/FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites Open tenders (E-Tenders) against below titled tenders and available on www.ireps.gov.in with closing date 01.01.2025 up to 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tenders and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through only payment modes available on www.ireps.gov.in portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc Manual payments through Demand draft Banker Cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc are not allowed. For more information log on to www.ireps.gov.in

Tender Type	Tendering Section	Bidding System
Open	Works	Single Bid System
Date of Uploading Tenders	Bid Starting Date	Bid Closing Date/Time
09.12.2024	18.12.2024	01.01.2025/ 15:00 Hrs

S.No.	Tender No.	Details of Tender
1.	261-2024-25-DEN-III-FZR	Supply, installation and commissioning of trackbased Electronic type rail gauge face lubricator 36 nos. in the jurisdiction of DEN-III/FZR for 5 years.
	Advertised Value (Rs.)	Earnest Money
	4,78,46,503.20/-	3,89,200.00/-
	Validity of offer	Period of completion
	90 Days	60 Months

Special Technical Criteria:- "Only RDSO Approved/Development Vendors for Track based Lubricators can participate with this tender. Copy of approval certificate with validity date is to be submitted along with the tender."

Note : 1. Before bidding, bidders to check for any corrigendum issued against tender. Tender No: 261-2024-25-DEN-III-FZR Date: 10.12.2024

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 3797/24



OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

8 WEEK FREE GROUP THERAPY

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

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

KASHMIR (Kashmir American Society of Healthcare)
Medical Education & Research
in collaboration with
HPVT (Help Poor Voluntary Trust)
is initiating a **free 8 weeks Group therapy** for the individuals suffering with OCD by
a team of counselling clinical psychologists led by leading consultant clinical psychologist of J&K.



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

You do not have to fight your battles alone.

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

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

9070806160

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KO VIEW

Rising Drug Abuse

A data point that also reflects the growing drug abuse in Jammu and Kashmir, over 31,000 individuals have been treated for drug de-addiction under initiatives like the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR) and the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA) during 2023-24. The programmes run by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment focus on preventive education, awareness generation, rehabilitation, and treatment facilities. They have so far covered over 98 lakh people in the region, including 8 lakh youth and 9 lakh women.

While the ministry's initiatives are welcome, the scale of the drug addiction in Kashmir is troubling. This is an alarming number and must otherwise prompt an immediate government response with a proper roadmap to address the situation. But that hasn't happened.

Last year, a study found that around 52,000 people alone are using IV Heroin, among whom 34 percent are unmarried. What is more, while a study of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Delhi said that Punjab has 1.2 percent of opiate users, Kashmir study has revealed the percentage at 2.87 percent. Another addiction that has caught on is the growing use of synthetic heroin in recent years. Incidentally, 90 percent of all users are young men, with a mean age of about 28 years.

The Jammu and Kashmir Police have ramped up their efforts to combat drug abuse and trafficking, conducting multiple operations that have resulted in arrests, confiscation of contraband substances, and the seizure of vehicles involved in the illegal narcotics trade across the region.

The problem of drug abuse in Kashmir is complex and multifaceted, with a range of factors contributing to its prevalence. One of the key drivers of drug use in the region is poverty and unemployment, which leave many young people feeling hopeless and marginalized. In addition, the ongoing conflict in the region has created a climate of fear and instability, which has further exacerbated the problem.

This calls for a pro-active government response to the lingering crisis. It needs both security and social intervention. According to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the union government has collaborated with international law enforcement agencies, including signing of an MoU with Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Force and participating in forums like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. At a community level, we also need to step up and face the humongous problem head on.



Did you know?

Understanding Shariah-Compliant Investments: Aligning Finance with Islamic Principles

Irshad Mushtaq

Shariah, an Arabic term, represents the Islamic religious law governing daily life, particularly finance. It dictates that any form of interest, whether given or taken, is strictly prohibited. For instance, obtaining a car loan, business loan, home loan paying interest or earning through savings or fixed deposits is not permissible under Islamic law. Instead, Islamic finance models offer alternatives, such as consumers paying rent instead of traditional EMI.

Moreover, Shariah law restricts investments in businesses generating income from alcohol, pork products, gambling, or harmful goods. Conversely, sectors like FMCG, technology, and pharma, which do not intersect with interest-based banking or defense products, align with Shariah principles. This compliance has led to the creation of Shariah-compliant funds.

In India, options like the Tata Ethical Fund, Tarus, and Nippon ETF adhere to these laws. Notably, Quantum Ethical Funds offers a new fund offering at Rs 10 per unit. Historically, these Shariah funds have yielded higher returns compared to fixed deposits, insurance, or gold, making them a compelling choice for investors who are committed to their moral and religious values.

Investing in Shariah funds requires a mindset shift, emphasizing long-term growth, especially through systematic investment plans (SIPs). Such investments are seen as an optimal strategy for wealth creation and preservation.

Additionally, entities like AMFI, SEBI, fund managers, AMC, and the financial ministry play pivotal roles in ensuring the safety, security, and transparency of digital holdings in Shariah-compliant investments. This advisory and technological support bolsters investor confidence in aligning financial goals with ethical and religious beliefs.

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

Brain Rot in Kashmir?

How the word-of-the year for 2024 played out in the digital use/overuse patterns in Kashmir

Zahid Ahmad Lone

In today's hyper connected world, mobile phones and the internet have become indispensable tools for communication, education, and entertainment. While these technological advancements have brought immense benefits, they have also given rise to a phenomenon colloquially referred to as "Brain Rot." This term encapsulates the mental fatigue, cognitive decline, and emotional detachment that result from excessive screen time and digital dependency. Recently, Oxford dictionary declared "Brain Rot" as its "Word of the Year" as well. According to Oxford University Press, "The term increased in usage frequency by 230% between 2023 and 2024." It also traces the roots of the term back to Walden by Henry David Thoreau in 1854, who wrote:

"While England endeavours to cure the potato rot, will not any endeavour to cure the brain-rot - which prevails so much more widely and fatally?"

In Kashmir, the effects of mobile and internet overuse are becoming increasingly apparent. The region, which experienced prolonged internet shutdowns post-2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic, witnessed a surge in digital dependency once connectivity was restored. This sudden shift has had significant repercussions on cognitive health, particularly among youth. This article delves into the cognitive, social, and cultural impacts of this emerging issue in Kashmir and explores potential solutions to mitigate its effects.

The term "Brain Rot" is not a clinical diagnosis but a popular expression that describes the deterioration of cognitive functioning caused by excessive digital consumption. Common symptoms include reduced attention span, impaired memory, mental fatigue, and difficulty in concentrating. Studies in neuroscience suggest that excessive screen time alters the brain's structure and function, particularly the prefrontal cortex, which governs decision-making, attention, and self-regulation.

The dopamine system is another critical area affected by overuse of digital devices. The instant gratification provided by social media notifications, online games, and binge-worthy content creates a feedback loop that conditions the brain to crave more. This, in turn, can lead to compulsive behaviour, making it difficult for individuals to disengage from their devices. Over time, this dependency contributes to mental exhaustion and hampers overall productivity.

In Kashmir, the issue of digital dependency has unique dimensions. The region experienced one of the world's longest internet shutdowns in 2019, leaving residents disconnected from the global digital ecosystem. However, once connectivity was restored, there was a rapid surge in internet usage. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this trend, as online platforms became the primary mode of education, work, and social interaction.

Today, mobile phones and the internet have become ubiquitous in Kashmir, with youth being the most affected demographic. A significant portion of their day is spent scrolling through social media, watching short-form videos, or engaging in online gaming. While these activities provide entertainment and a sense of community, they also contribute to "Brain Rot," as the constant bombardment of information overwhelms cognitive resources.

The consequences are evident in academic settings, where students struggle with reduced attention spans and declining performance. Teachers often report that students are more distracted and less engaged in physical or creative activities. Moreover, this digital dependency is not limited to youth; adults, too, find themselves glued to their screens, often at the expense of family time and real-life interactions.

The pervasive use of mobile phones and the internet has far-reaching implications for Kashmir's social fabric. One of the most noticeable changes is the decline in real-life communication. Families that once bonded over shared meals and stories now find themselves isolated, each member absorbed in their own digital world. The loss of face-to-face interaction has led to weakened relationships and a sense of emotional detachment.

Culturally, the overuse of digital devices has led to a disconnection from Kashmir's rich heritage. Traditional activities such as storytelling, music, and outdoor games are gradually being replaced by virtual engagements. This shift is particularly concerning for the younger generation, who are losing touch with their cultural roots. For instance, fewer children are learning Kashmiri folk songs or participating in tradi-



This image is AI generated

Efforts must be made to revive traditional Kashmiri activities and integrate them into daily life. Schools and community organizations can play a vital role by organizing workshops on Kashmiri music, crafts, and storytelling. By providing alternatives to digital entertainment, these initiatives can help reconnect individuals with their cultural heritage

tional art forms, as their interests are increasingly shaped by global digital trends.

The psychological toll is equally concerning. Social media platforms, while providing a space for expression, often exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. The curated images and idealized lifestyles presented online create unrealistic expectations, leading to anxiety and depression. Additionally, the constant exposure to negative news and online trolling further compounds mental health issues.

Tackling the issue of "Brain Rot" requires a multi-faceted approach involving individuals, families, educators, and policymakers.

Encouraging individuals to take regular breaks from their screens is essential. Educational institutions can implement "digital detox" days, where students are encouraged to engage in offline activities such as reading,

sports, or creative arts. Similarly, families can establish "no-screen" zones or designate specific times for device-free interactions.

Efforts must be made to revive traditional Kashmiri activities and integrate them into daily life. Schools and community organizations can play a vital role by organizing workshops on Kashmiri music, crafts, and storytelling. By providing alternatives to digital entertainment, these initiatives can help reconnect individuals with their cultural heritage.

Awareness campaigns highlighting the cognitive and psychological impacts of excessive screen time can help individuals make informed choices. Policymakers and non-governmental organizations can collaborate to disseminate information through workshops, social media, and traditional media channels.

While it is impossible to eliminate all harmful online content, regulatory measures can ensure that vulnerable populations, particularly children and adolescents, are protected. Parental control tools, age-appropriate filters, and stricter guidelines for online platforms can help mitigate the risks associated with digital overuse.

Communities and local governments can invest in creating spaces for outdoor activities, such as parks, sports facilities, and cultural centers. Providing accessible and engaging alternatives to screen time can significantly reduce digital dependency.

The phenomenon of "Brain Rot" due to overuse of mobile phones and the internet is a pressing issue that demands immediate attention. In Kashmir, where digital connectivity has become a lifeline, the challenge lies in striking a balance between the benefits of technology and its potential harms.

Addressing this issue requires collective effort from all stakeholders. Individuals must take responsibility for their digital habits, families need to foster healthier communication patterns, educators should emphasize the importance of cognitive well-being, and policymakers must create a conducive environment for balanced digital usage.

Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that technology serves as a tool for empowerment rather than a source of cognitive decline. By fostering a culture of mindful and balanced digital consumption, Kashmir can safeguard the cognitive and cultural health of its population, ensuring a brighter future for generations to come.

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. The author is a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Kashmir



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All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name and address, even if a pseudonym is used. Letters are edited as clarity, space and accuracy of expression require. Our publishing a letter does not mean we agree with everything or even anything in it. -EDITOR

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Declining Book Reading Culture

THE editorial page came up with something special. I, as a student, had almost forgotten about the decline in book reading culture in Kashmir. The main cause behind it is the

mushrooming growth of the Internet. However, the diverse opinions on the page nudged me and compelled me to read these at the earliest. Though I shared my views regarding this, I was enthusiastic to know what others

think about it. From academicians to budding writers and students, everyone shared their ideas. Variety of opinions opened the closed doors of the mind and I began to ponder over the reality of book reading culture in

Kashmir. In short, congratulations to the authors and the team of the Kashmir Observer for this out-of-box idea. Let the book reading culture prevail again in the age of the Internet.

Syed Mustafa Ahmad

Psychology in Schools

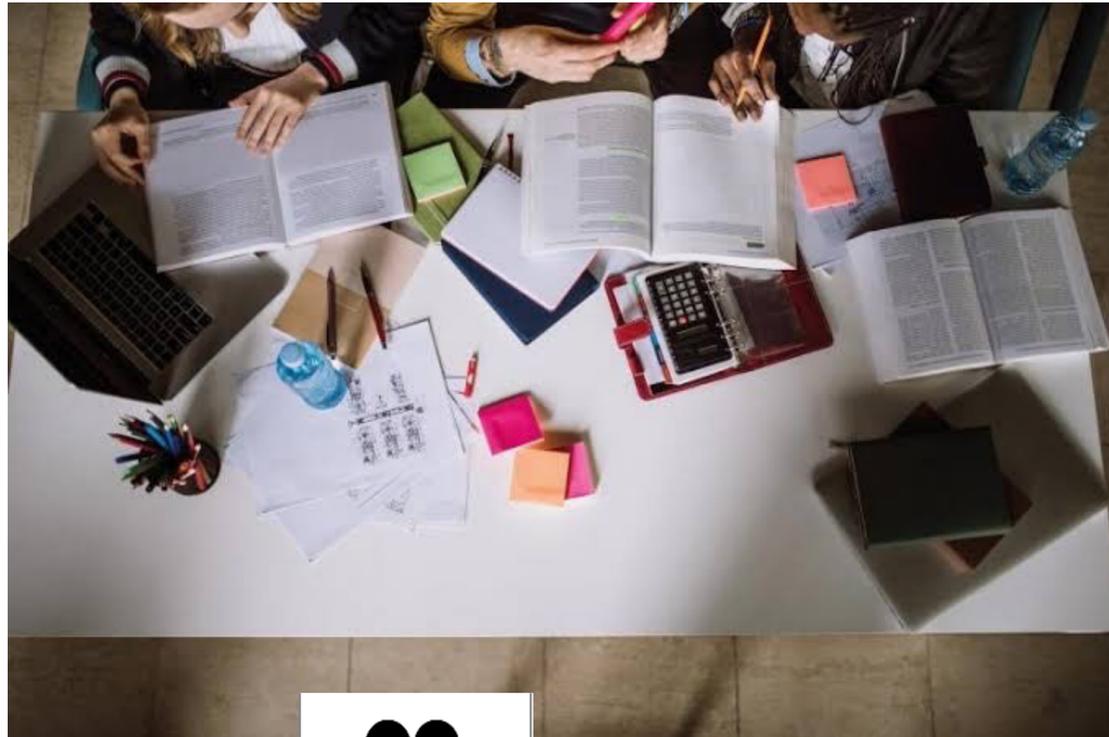
Arshid Qalmi

The inclusion of psychology as a core subject in higher secondary schools in Jammu and Kashmir is crucial for addressing the unique challenges faced by adolescents in the region. With its deep socio-political complexities, cultural diversity, and exposure to prolonged discord, the youth of Jammu and Kashmir are at a greater risk of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and trauma.

Introducing psychology into school curricula can empower students to better understand themselves, navigate these challenges, and contribute positively to their communities.

Adolescents in Jammu and Kashmir grow up in an environment shaped by political unrest, economic uncertainty, and rapid technological shifts. These factors, compounded by societal expectations and peer pressure, place a significant psychological burden on them. A 2018 study conducted by Dr. Arshid Hussain at the Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Srinagar, revealed that over 40% of adolescents in the region exhibit symptoms of severe psychological distress. Addressing these mental health challenges requires not just clinical interventions but preventive measures rooted in education. Psychology as a subject can play a transformative role in fostering emotional resilience and normalizing conversations about mental health, breaking the stigma surrounding it.

The multicultural fabric of Jammu and Kashmir also necessitates education that promotes empathy and social harmony. In a region often divided by cultural and political lines, it is imperative to equip students with tools to appreciate diversity and engage respectfully with others. Studies in social psychology underline that an understanding of group dynamics and cultural differences can significantly reduce biases and foster peaceful co-existence. Through psychology, students can learn these principles, becoming ambassadors of



unity and understanding in their communities.

Beyond mental health and social cohesion, the practical career potential of psychology makes it a valuable addition to the curriculum. Globally, psychology-related fields such as counseling, clinical psychology, organizational psychology, and educational psychology are in high demand. Locally, the shortage of trained mental health professionals in Jammu and Kashmir further highlights the need for homegrown talent in this field. The region currently has a disproportionate number of mental health professionals to its population, with the World Health Organization (WHO) estimating only one psychiatrist per 100,000 people in the region. Ex-



Exposing students to psychology at the school level can inspire many to pursue careers in mental health, addressing this gap while creating a workforce attuned to the region's unique needs

posing students to psychology at the school level can inspire many to pursue careers in mental health, addressing this gap while creating a workforce attuned to the region's unique needs.

Globally and nationally, the integration of psychology into education aligns with modern pedagogical goals. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes holistic and multidisciplinary education, focusing on life skills, emotional intelligence, and mental well-being. By integrating psychology into higher secondary education, Jammu and Kashmir can position itself as a frontrunner in implementing NEP's vision. Psychology's blend of theory and practical application makes it an ideal discipline for fostering critical think-

ing, emotional intelligence, and resilience, qualities essential for navigating both academic and personal challenges.

To effectively implement psychology as a core subject, several key measures are recommended. The curriculum must address the region's specific challenges, including discord-related trauma, substance abuse, and social media induced stress. Practical components such as role plays, group discussions, and case studies can make the subject more engaging and relatable for students. Equipping teachers with specialized training is equally important. Promoting in-service psychology teachers to the role of lecturers can ensure that experienced professionals guide students, while also offering growth opportuni-

ties for educators.

Infrastructure development is another critical aspect. Schools must be equipped with psychology labs, digital resources, and updated textbooks to facilitate an immersive learning experience. Awareness campaigns targeting parents, educators, and students can help overcome resistance to change and create a supportive environment for the subject's inclusion. Collaboration with local mental health organizations and institutions like the Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Srinagar, can further enhance the program's effectiveness.

Jammu and Kashmir faces specific adolescent challenges, including rising cases of substance abuse and phone addiction. A recent report by the Directorate of Health Services, Kashmir, revealed a worrying trend of increasing drug dependency among the region's youth. Incorporating psychology into education can help students understand and address such issues, both at a personal level and as peer mentors. Additionally, psychology can equip students to navigate the digital age more effectively, helping them balance screen time and social media use with their mental well-being.

The introduction of psychology as a core subject is not merely an academic reform; it is a societal necessity. By empowering students with the tools to understand human behavior and mental processes, fostering emotional resilience, and opening doors to diverse career opportunities, psychology has the potential to transform the educational landscape of Jammu and Kashmir. More importantly, it can contribute to the broader goal of building a generation equipped to create a harmonious, inclusive, and mentally healthy society. Psychology, in this context, is more than a subject, it is a pathway to empowerment and progress.

The author can be reached out for feedback at Aqalmi309@gmail.com

Artificial Intelligence

Beyond the Cognitive Horizon

Jessica Koehler

Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies have become increasingly integrated into everyday life in recent years. From AI-powered personal assistants on smartphones to recommendation systems on social media and online shopping platforms, these tools influence how we think, remember, and make choices. As AI advances rapidly, researchers in cognitive psychology are paying closer attention to how these systems affect human cognition and decision-making. Three areas of particular interest are cognitive offloading, the interplay between AI systems and cognitive biases, and the potential for AI-driven cognitive training interventions.

Cognitive Offloading in the Age of AI

Cognitive offloading refers to the process of using external tools and resources—such as notebooks, smartphones, and now AI-driven systems—to store information or accomplish cognitive tasks that would otherwise be handled by the human brain. Historically, humans have relied on external aids (e.g., written records and calculators) to augment memory and decision-making. The rise of AI amplifies this process, potentially reducing the mental effort required for information retrieval and problem-solving.

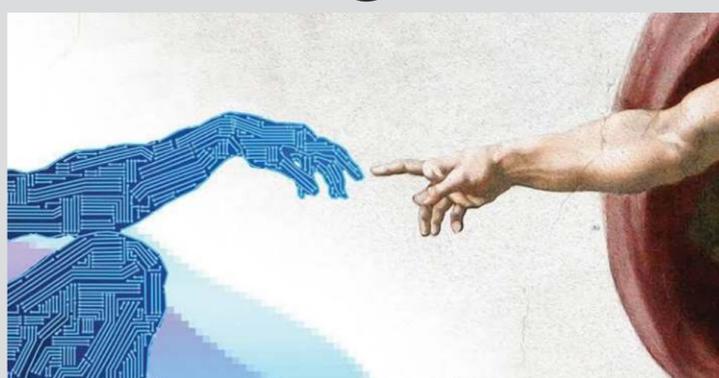
For instance, AI-assisted search engines and virtual assistants like ChatGPT or voice-driven devices (e.g., Amazon's Alexa or Google Assistant) allow users to query information instantly rather

than relying on their own memory or analytic capabilities. While this can be highly convenient and free up cognitive resources for more complex tasks, it can also lead to diminished memory retention over time. Sparrow, Liu, and Wegner (2011) demonstrated that when information is readily accessible online, people are less likely to remember it as thoroughly. In the context of AI, this dynamic may intensify: if we know ChatGPT can provide immediate summaries, we may rely less on internalizing details. Over time, such reliance could reshape our mental habits, encouraging a "use it or lose it" approach to certain cognitive skills.

On the positive side, cognitive offloading through AI can be strategic. If individuals use AI to handle routine or mundane tasks, they can potentially allocate their cognitive effort toward more meaningful, creative, or strategic thinking. The challenge for researchers is to understand where to strike a balance: to identify when AI enhances cognitive functioning by offloading trivial tasks, and when it undermines our capacity to learn and remember important information.

AI and Cognitive Biases

Human decision-making is vulnerable to cognitive biases—systematic deviations from rational judgment. Confirmation bias, availability bias, and anchoring bias are just a few examples. Today's AI systems, especially those involved in personalized recommendations, can either mitigate or exacerbate these biases.



On one hand, AI could provide balanced perspectives and highlight information that counters our pre-existing beliefs, potentially reducing the impact of confirmation bias. However, many algorithms are designed to maximize user engagement, rather than to ensure informational diversity or accuracy. Personalized recommendation engines on social media platforms often show users content that aligns with their previously demonstrated interests, reinforcing their existing viewpoints. This "echo chamber" effect can intensify biases, making it harder for individuals to consider alternative perspectives or make fully informed decisions.

Sociologist Zeynep Tufekci (2015) has argued that algorithmic systems can generate "algorithmic harms" by shaping the flow of information in ways that subtly influence our perceptions and choices. These platforms may be inadvertently pushing users toward more polarized content,

Cognitive Training and Enhancement Through AI

AI also holds promise as a tool for cognitive training and enhancement. By adapting difficulty levels, providing immediate feedback, and tailoring exercises to individual needs, AI-driven learning systems can strengthen cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and problem-solving skills. In educational contexts, AI can help learners master material more efficiently by iden-

tifying their weak points and offering targeted practice. In therapeutic settings, AI-driven applications can support rehabilitation programs, helping patients with cognitive impairments regain certain mental functions.

For example, AI-based memory training platforms might use spaced repetition algorithms—techniques that present information at strategically determined intervals—to optimize retention. Similarly, language learning apps with AI tutors can monitor a learner's progress and dynamically adjust the difficulty of lessons, encouraging sustained engagement and efficient skill acquisition. Moreover, as AI models like ChatGPT improve, they may serve as interactive tutors or "thought partners," stimulating critical thinking through debate or discussion-like interfaces.

While research in this area is ongoing, preliminary evidence suggests that AI-driven cognitive interventions could

be effective. As philosopher of technology John Danaher (2018) points out, AI systems have the potential to augment human cognitive capacities by acting as supportive assistants. However, the success of these interventions will depend on careful implementation. If they become too intrusive or fail to consider human motivational and emotional factors, the benefits of AI-driven cognitive training may be limited.

Ethical and Practical Considerations

As AI increasingly shapes human cognition, several ethical and practical considerations arise. One concern is the risk of cognitive dependency—what happens when individuals become so reliant on AI-driven tools that they struggle to function without them? Should critical decision-making be left to algorithms, especially in high-stakes domains like healthcare, finance, or criminal justice? There is a delicate balance between using AI as a cognitive aid and ensuring that humans retain robust mental skills and the ability to question, reflect, and deliberate independently.

Another concern is the transparency and fairness of AI systems. Cognitive psychologists, ethicists, and technologists must collaborate to ensure that AI does not exploit cognitive vulnerabilities or reinforce harmful biases. Instead, AI design should be informed by psychological insights into how people learn, reason, and make decisions. The goal should be to create AI systems that support

constructive cognitive processes—encouraging critical thinking, providing balanced information, and motivating skill development—rather than simply exploiting user engagement or convenience.

Looking Ahead

The integration of AI into daily life is still in its early stages, and we are only beginning to understand how these systems influence human cognition and decision-making. Future research will likely explore several key questions: What cognitive skills might deteriorate as a result of AI reliance, and which new skills might emerge? How can we design AI systems that align with human cognitive strengths rather than magnifying our weaknesses? In what ways can policymakers and educational systems prepare individuals to use AI ethically, effectively, and thoughtfully?

As we navigate these challenges, one thing is clear: AI's impact on cognition is profound and multifaceted. By studying how AI interacts with memory, biases, and learning processes, psychologists can help guide the responsible development and use of these technologies. Ultimately, the goal should be to ensure that AI serves as a tool for cognitive empowerment—an ally in our pursuit of knowledge, understanding, and informed decision-making—rather than a force that diminishes our mental capacities or constrains our thinking.

The article was originally published by Psychology Today

US, Israel Orchestrated Syria Crisis: Khamenei

Agencies

Tehran: Iran's Supreme Leader Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday that the political upheaval in Syria was the result of a joint "plot" by the United States and Israel and that the events in the Arab country were orchestrated in American and Israeli command centers.

His remarks came amidst widespread perceptions of pro-Iran governments overthrow as a significant blow to the Iran-led "Axis of Resistance," a political and military alliance opposing Israeli and US influence in the region.

The Iranian leader said although "one of Syria's neighbours ... has played and is playing a clear role" in that regard, the main "factors, conspirators, plotters and command room" were in the United States and Israel. He stressed, "We have evidence (for this), which does not leave any room for doubt".

Dismissing speculations about the weakening of the resistance front in the aftermath of fall of Damascus, the Iranian leader

assured that the resistance front would only get stronger.

While Iran's leader did not name the neighboring country, his comments appeared to reference Turkey, a NATO member and long standing supporter of Syrian rebel groups. Turkey is widely believed to be the main backer of Hayat Tahrir al Sham which has overtaken Damascus. Ankara has conducted several cross-border incursions in northern Syria and remains a key player in the region's dynamics.

Iran has invested billions of dollars in supporting the Syrian government during country's civil war, deploying Islamic Revolutionary Guard forces to maintain foothold in the strategically situated Arab country bordering Israel and Lebanon. Syria has acted as a main supply route for Iran's allies like Hezbollah in Lebanon and Palestinian groups in Gaza.

Despite the fall of a friendly government in Syria, Ayatollah Khamenei insisted that Iran's regional alliance remains resilient, stating, "The more pressure



you exert, the stronger the resistance becomes. Iran is strong and powerful—and will become even stronger."

Hours after the fall of Bashar al Assad, Iran said it expected relations with Damascus to continue based on the two countries' "far-sighted and wise approach" and called for the establishment of an inclusive government representing all segments of Syrian society.

Plea for Lebanon and preparations for Syria

Iran leader revealed that top officials of the armed forces had written to him, pleading to go to Lebanon because they could not bear what was happening to the country and Hezbollah under an Israeli onslaught.

"Compare this with an army that cannot endure and flees," Ayatollah Khamenei said, apparently referring to the Syrian army which disintegrated in the face of advancing militants.

Ayatollah Khamenei also

said Iran had made all preparations to assist Syria, but the US and the Israeli regime closed all air and land routes to the Arab country.

"We were ready even under the difficult circumstances. They came to me and said they had prepared all the means needed for the Syrians and were ready to go. But the skies were closed, the land was closed. The Zionist regime and the US closed both the skies of Syria and the land routes; it was not possible" to go, he said.

If the Syrians "had had a say against the enemy, the enemy could not have closed their skies, nor could it have closed their land routes and we could have helped them", Iran leader added.

Ayatollah Khamenei touched on divisions among the rebel groups in Syria, saying each group has its own agenda and all seek to stake out their own turf.

Ultimately, the Iran leader said, they will be evicted from Syria by the "zealous Syrian youth, so will the Americans who seek to strengthen their foothold in the country".

Bhartiya Bhasha Utsav-2024

CUKashmir VC launches my language, my signature campaign

Ganderbal, Dec 11: Under the Bhartiya Bhasha Utsav-2024 and to uphold the spirit of "Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat," the Department of Students Welfare (DSW), Central University of Kashmir (CUKashmir) in association with other teaching departments organised several events across all the campuses here Wednesday.

Vice-Chancellor, Prof. A Ravinder Nath, launched the "My Language My Signature Campaign" at varsity's Green Campus. The event was held to encourage the students to develop a tradition of signing in their mother tongue wherever possible.

Addressing the participants, Vice-Chancellor, Prof. A Ravinder Nath, said, the primary objective of the initiative is to celebrate the diversity in unity of Indian languages, to encourage the building of deeper connections in the hearts and minds of youth and promote multilingualism as envisaged in the NEP-2020.

Dean Academic Affairs, Prof.

Shahid Rasool, Dean School of Business Studies, Prof. Fayaz Ahmad Nikka, Registrar, Prof. M Afzal Zargar, Dean DSW, Dr. Irfan Alam, faculty members, research scholars and students also participated in the campaign.

Meanwhile, the departments of Urdu and Kashmir, DSW in association with the Bhartiya Bhasha Samvardhan Samiti-II (Kashmiri) organised a lecture on "Expression and Communication: Problems and Possibilities," at varsity's Arts Campus. The lecture was delivered by Prof. Shafi Shauq, former Head Deptt of Kashmiri and Dean Arts and Languages, University of Kashmir.

In his address, Prof. Shafi Shauq said, "expression and communication are fundamental to human interaction, shaping relationships, societies, and cultures." "However, they are often fraught with challenges. Misinterpretation, language barriers, and emotional restraint can hinder effective communication.

CONTD. FROM 3RD PAGE

Snow Likely

snowfall is expected at higher reaches including Gulmarg, Sonamarg, Doodhpatri, Pahalgam, Peer Ki Gali, Sinthan top, Razdan top, Zojila pass and other upper reaches during the period.

"Light rain is expected at some plains of Kashmir with slight possibility of season's first light snowfall at a few plains 45% chances during the next 24 hours," the forecast reads.

Meanwhile, the night temperatures increased across the valley, including Srinagar, owing to overcast skies. However, the minimum temperature continued to settle below the freezing point across the Kashmir valley.

Srinagar city recorded a minimum temperature of minus 3 degrees Celsius, up from the season's lowest of minus 5.4 degrees Celsius the previous night.

Gulmarg recorded a low of minus 6 degrees Celsius, an increase of three degrees from last night.

Pahalgam, which serves as the base camp for the annual Amarnath Yatra, recorded a low of minus 1.8 degrees Celsius, a huge improvement from the previous night's minus 8.4 degrees Celsius, they said.

Qazigund, the gateway town to Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 4.4 degrees Celsius, while Kupwara in north Kashmir registered a minimum of minus 4.5 degrees Celsius, and Kokernag in south Kashmir minus two degrees Celsius.

While the higher reaches of Kashmir have experienced snowfall, there has been no snowfall in the plains so far this season.

Kashmir is reeling under cold conditions and the valley is bracing for the 40-day harshest winter period which will begin on December 21.

Winter Vacation

sent a proposal of vacations to the government and was waiting for the final decision.

"As per the academic planner, we have sent a proposal to the government wherein we have anticipated that the 50-days winter vacations shall be announced for the colleges of Kashmir region from December-27 to February-14," he said.

The Director Colleges further said that it has also asked deans of the universities not to conduct any sort of exams during the vacation period.

In the meantime, the department of higher education in a Uniform Academic Calendar for all academic activities across Jammu and Kashmir said it has been observed that examinations are sometimes scheduled during the vacation period.

"This practice not only disrupts the planned break for students and faculty but also leads to logistical challenges for the colleges," it reads.

It further states that the extreme climatic conditions during peak winter/summer months, when the winter zone experiences severe cold waves and dense fog and the summer zone experiences scorching heat waves thus making it difficult for students and faculty to commute and to carry out any academic activity during the period.

"Considering the challenges, deans of universities are requested to ensure that no examinations are scheduled during vacation periods. This will help maintain the integrity of the academic calendar, ensuring that students and faculty can enjoy their well-deserved breaks without disruption. Additionally, it will mitigate the difficulties posed by severe climatic conditions, ensuring a smoother, more comfortable academic experience for all involved," it reads.

About the heating arrangements for students and staff of the colleges of Kashmir region, an official said, "We have already notified that there shall be proper heating arrangements for them."

Pertinently, the School Education Department earlier this week announced winter vacations in phased manner from December-10 and December-16 respectively in the Kashmir division and winter zones of Jammu division.

Principal Secretary School Education Department Suresh Kumar Gupta in an order had said that for students upto 5th standard, the vacations shall begin from December-10 to February-28 and in case of students from 6th standard to 12th standard, the vacation shall begin from December-16 to February-28-2025.

HC Seeks J&K

Imtiyaz Chesti, Chairman of the Civil Society group.

Innovation Must

participants from across the country will work on critical problem statements to develop successful innovation.

Highlighting the transformation in innovation landscape of the country in the past 10 years, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Lieutenant Governor said, India has emerged as one of the global leaders in new inventions, which are seen as critical to the future well-being of society and to drive the nation's economic growth.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor called upon the youth to translate their ideas into socially useful and commercially viable applications and ensure that fruits of new inventions reach all sections.

"Your courage, dedication, talent and zeal to explore the unknown will give new impetus to the journey of Developed India," the Lieutenant Governor told the Youth.

"We need cutting edge technologies to be the leading nation in technological inventions and at the same time we need environment-friendly innovations for sustainable development. To achieve the goal of a Developed Nation by 2047, we need knowledge, capability and commitment of innovators, collaborations, support for new ideas, discoveries, marketing and commercialization of innovations," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said new innovations are touching the lives of common man in ways that we cannot even fully imagine today. Our focus should also be on innovations that would benefit society at large like water and energy conservation, waste management, precision agriculture and e-governance, he added. He also asked the young innovators to explore diverse areas in the Agriculture sector pertaining to soil health, pest infestation, climate change, real time data etc.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasised that inclusive development and economic growth should be the main aim behind every innovation.

"Innovation should lead us to social change and drive India's economic growth. Augmented Reality (AR) in Industry 4.0 technology should contribute to design, product development, maintenance and quality control in different sectors and help our manufacturers and find solutions to their operational problems and production downtime," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He further highlighted that better system integration and smart factories will be the most dynamic aspect of Industry 4.0 involving physical equipment and digital tools and also it will be the best example of collaboration between human and technology.

"For Industry 4.0 Factories and to mitigate the social challenges of food, water, environment and energy, we need intelligent and integrated devices. All the core components of Industry 4.0 technologies, Internet of Things, Big Data, Augmented Reality, Cloud Computing, Artificial Intelligence, Advanced Robotics, additive manufacturing and Simulation will profoundly impact traditional area of space, atomic energy and defence technologies," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor underscored the need to strengthen the partnership between academia, industry and policymakers to provide solutions to the challenges of society and the nation. He further asked the mentors and faculty members to encourage students to focus on "Problem First" and promote entrepreneurship ecosystem in the Universities' campuses.

The Lieutenant Governor also emphasised the role of educational institutions in establishing India as a Knowledge economy and stressed on implementation of National Education Policy 2020 in letter and spirit.

The Chancellor of the Galgotias University, on the request of Lieutenant Governor, announced a 50 percent scholarship for the students from J&K.

Ashok Bajpai, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha; Suneel Galgotia, Chancellor, Galgotias University; Dr. K. Mallikharjuna Babu, Vice Chancellor, faculty members, students of the University, prominent citizens and young innovators from various regions were present.

Speaker Seeks

Under section 31 of J&K Reorganisation Act, LG should determine salaries of MLAs until J&K Assembly would enact a law on the matter.

"Members of the Legislative Assembly shall be entitled to receive such salaries and allowances as may from time to time be determined by the Legislative Assembly by law and, until provision in that behalf is so made, such salaries and allowances as the Lieutenant Governor may, by order determine," reads the Act.

Interestingly, the law governing salaries of MLAs in the erstwhile State of J&K was kept intact through the same Reorganisation Act-2019.

The "Salaries and Allowances of Members of Jammu and Kashmir State Legislature XIX of 1960" was among 166 state laws which were made applicable to J&K UT through Reorganisation Act.

Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather said that he has written to the government over the matter.

"I am hopeful that they will soon get their salaries," he said.

In the erstwhile state, each MLA was entitled to salary and allowances of Rs 1.60 lakh per month after it was doubled during the PDP-BJP rule in 2016.(KNO)

Darbar Move

right feedback within the government system because mostly you are surrounded by people who only praise you. So when a meeting of civil society takes place like this, mostly the participants come without any agenda and put forth their feedback and suggestions which turns out to be beneficial," he said.

The purpose of this meeting was to get feedback and suggestions as well so that those are implemented, Omar said.

The chief minister said such meetings will be convened twice a year both in Jammu and Srinagar -- one in summer and another in winter.

"A lot of issues came up during the meeting. As I said in the meeting, all the issues raised were noted down and we will inform the participants about the action taken report in the next meeting," he said.

Addressing concerns of regional bias, he stated, "This government is not just for those who voted for the National Conference; it is the government of every citizen of Jammu and Kashmir. Despite attempts by some to play with emotions of Jammu after the elections and harping on the issue of regional divide, we have consistently prioritized inclusivity and equity."

The Chief Minister highlighted his deliberate decision to appoint a Deputy Chief Minister from Jammu, not out of compulsion but to underscore that Jammu is as integral to this government as Kashmir.

Addressing the concerns about the Darbar Move, the Chief Minister reaffirmed his government's commitment to restore this biannual administrative tradition.

"Some things cannot be weighed merely in financial terms. The Darbar Move symbolizes the unity and inclusivity of Jammu and Kashmir. It is a tradition that ensures governance remains accessible to both regions."

He dismissed financial arguments against this 150 year old practice which has now been stopped, stating, "The role of the government is not to focus solely on profit. Our responsibility is to serve and ensure balanced development across regions. Ending the Darbar Move would only alienate the people of the two regions from one another and harm the collective unity we strive to preserve."

The event brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including representatives of women's organizations, non-governmental organizations, ex-servicemen, Kashmiri Pandits, traders, hoteliers, tourism players, transport associations, religious leaders, pensioners, senior folk singers, Sikh representatives, RTI activists, and leaders from various political parties.

The Chief Minister expressed concern over Jammu's limited share of the burgeoning tourism industry and laid out plans to diversify the region's economy.

"Over one crore pilgrims visit Mata Vaishno Devi annually, but we have yet to tap into even 15% of this potential to promote tourism in Jammu. If we can redirect a fraction of these pilgrims, Jammu's economy can transform," he noted.

He announced plans to establish a craft & culture fair modeled on the Surajkund Mela, to showcase the region's rich heritage and boost tourism. The initiative will involve collaboration between industries, farmers, cultural representatives, and tourism stakeholders, he stated.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah highlighted several key issues raised during the interaction and outlined his government's commitment to addressing them.

He said that Smart City projects are nearing completion and there is no scope for this government to do any course correction but we shall take new initiatives for Jammu and Srinagar, which aim to modernize the city's infrastructure and enhance its livability.

The government, he said, will resolve the shortage of Punjabi teachers in schools catering to Sikh children and address some of their genuine concerns.

Acknowledging the challenges faced by the Kashmiri Pandit community, the Chief Minister stated, "While their return depends on restoring a sense of security among the community, we are committed to improving their living conditions and addressing their grievances."

The Chief Minister emphasized the need for regular dialogue with civil society to maintain a pulse on ground realities. Unlike in the past, when such meetings were convened only during crises, he committed to holding biannual interactions—twice each in both the regions of Jammu and Kashmir.

"Our goal is to maintain a continuous dialogue with you. By our next meeting, we will present an action-taken report outlining the progress on issues discussed today," he assured.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah thanked the participants for accepting his invitation, emphasizing the significance of such meetings for the government authorities to receive valuable feedback from outside four walls of their offices.

"Whether you benefit from these meetings or not, my colleagues and I certainly do. These interactions provide us with an opportunity to hear your thoughts on our work and governance directly," he said.

In his closing remarks, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah expressed gratitude to the participants for their valuable insights and suggestions.

"Your feedback and ground realities help us improve our governance. I hope that when we meet again, you will continue to provide your constructive input to guide us in serving Jammu and Kashmir better," he said.

On the occasion, the civil society members hailed the initiative and termed it as a step towards transparent and inclusive governance, and said the much needed interaction has set the tone for fostering stronger ties between the government and the people it serves.

263 Lives Lost

change impacts, including rising temperatures and severe weather, are also monitored and documented in reports like the Climate Change Assessment Report," it added. (KNO)

Kashmir Among

reached 2,628,509, including 35,254 foreign visitors, underscoring the region's growing international appeal as a prime tourist destination.

Reports reveal that the recently held Legends League Cricket event in Srinagar has boosted the region's tourism prospects. Kashmir Marathon 2024, held on October 20, has equally attracted visitors from various parts of the country and worldwide as it was a mega marathon and a lot of foreign athletics have participated in the marathon.

The hosting of the G20 meeting in Srinagar last year, especially the third tourism working group meeting, also is said to have played a pivotal role in boosting foreign tourist attraction to the region.

The tourism industry stands as the second-largest sector in Kashmir after horticulture, contributing significantly to the local economy. While horticulture generates an estimated Rs 10,000 crore annually, tourism injects approximately INR 8,000 crore into the local economy. This economic impact extends beyond orchard owners to sustain various stakeholders, including hoteliers, houseboat owners, tour guides, and artisans involved in handicrafts.

An official said there is a steady rise in

foreign tourist arrivals to Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in Gulmarg. He mentioned that the previous year saw a significant number of international skiers, enjoying the region's slopes, and there is optimism for a similar or greater influx this year.

"Year-on-year, we are witnessing an increase in foreign tourists, which is a testament to the global appeal of Gulmarg as a winter destination. We are prepared to welcome them with enhanced facilities and safety measures," he said.

He said that like previous years, the Tourism department has planned a grand festival for Christmas and New Year, while necessary tenders have been floated, and the work allotments will be finalized soon.

SMC On NGT's

Pollution Control Committee-JKPC and Dr Bilal Mohiudeen Deputy Commissioner / District Magistrate Srinagar reveals massive apses in waste management, highlighting the dire need for immediate action to address the escalating crisis.

According to the committee's observations, Srinagar generates approximately 600 metric tons (MT) of waste daily. However, only 5 percent of this waste is segregated at the household level, with around 100 MT being manually segregated at the site. The remaining 475 MT of mixed, unsegregated waste is dumped daily at the landfill, resulting in an estimated accumulation of 14 lakh MT of legacy waste over the past eight years.

A critical issue identified during the inspection was the complete non-functionality of several key waste processing facilities. The mechanical segregator, with a capacity of 100 tons per day, was found out of order, forcing workers to rely on inefficient manual segregation. Additionally, all three leachate treatment plants-LTPs, with a combined capacity of 120 kiloliters per day -KLD were non-operational, as were borewells meant to monitor groundwater quality.

Other defunct facilities included a fecal sewage treatment plant with a capacity of 130 KLD per day and a septage treatment plant, both of which are vital for managing waste byproducts.

According to the Joint Committee report, the lack of functional leachate collection systems has led to untreated leachate flowing directly into a drain connected to Anchar Lake, situated just 500 meters from the landfill.

"This poses a severe threat to the lake's fragile ecosystem and compromises the safety of groundwater in the area. The green belt around the site, intended to serve as a buffer zone to mitigate environmental damage, was found insufficient, while the access roads leading to the site were in a deteriorated state, further complicating waste management operations." The joint committee report states.

Pertinently, the local residents of Achan Saidpora, particularly members of the Social Welfare Committee of Zoonimar had submitted a memorandum during the inspection, voicing their concerns about the severe health risks posed by the landfill.

"Foul odors and pollution emanating from the site have led to widespread complaints of respiratory and other health issues. The residents called for immediate remediation of the legacy waste and urgent measures to reduce water and air pollution caused by the dumping practices," the members had urged in a memorandum.

Govt Considers

our trekking season as well as in the ski season, it is all because of the mountains," he said. Without giving figures, Farooq said Kashmir has recorded the highest-ever foreign tourist arrival this year.

"Every day we have a good number of foreign tourists arriving here, and we have more than 200-300 foreign tourists arriving here on a daily basis, which sometimes goes up to 500 despite our limitations of less rainfall or snow so far. Last year, 2.3 million tourists, excluding Amarnath Yatris, visited Kashmir and we expect to surpass it this year," he said.

Talking about new adventure activities, Farooq said the department started rafting in Gurez this year.

"We have received a proposal from the World Rafting Federation for holding the world rafting championship and the government is exploring that option," he added.

Syed Shahnawaz Bukhari Assumes Charge Of Joint Director Information Kashmir



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Syed Shahnawaz Bukhari assumed the charge of Joint Director Information Kashmir on Wednesday. Deputy Director Information & PR, Ahsan ul Haq Chishti; Cultural Officer, Burhan Husain and other senior officers extended warm welcome to the incoming Joint Director Information and congratulated him on assuming the charge of the department.

After assuming the charge, Syed Shahnawaz Bukhari held an introductory meeting of the officers and officials of different units of the department, and also took first hand appraisal of the functioning of the department. On the occasion, the JD emphasised the importance of teamwork and urged the staff to work collectively to enhance the department's outreach and efficiency in delivering its objectives.

Qazi Irfan Takes Over As RTO Kashmir

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Qazi Irfan (KAS) has taken over as Regional Transport Officer, Kashmir. After assuming charge, he chaired an introductory meeting with employees, reviewing the office's overall functioning. He emphasized the importance of teamwork and cooperation in delivering Public services, urging officers to col-



laborate and maintain high coordination levels to boost work efficiency.

NDPS Act

Police Attach Property Worth Rs 15 Lakhs In Handwara

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In a significant crackdown on drug trafficking, Police in Handwara on Wednesday said to have attached two-story building comprising of two shops and one Hall belonging to a notorious drug peddler namely Reyaz Ahmad Lone son of Sonullah Lone resident of Badrah Payeen under section 68-F of NDPS Act 1985. "The property was identified as illegally acquired property during the course of investigation/enquiry conducted by Kralgund Police Station. The property was prima facie acquired from illicit trafficking of Narcotic drugs and Psychotropic Substances by the owner. The said notorious drug peddler was involved in case FIR No. 84/2020 U/S 8/21 NDPS Act of Police Station Kralgund.



The notorious drug peddler is currently under detention at Kot-Bhalwal Jammu under PIT-NDPS Act," a police spokesman said in a statement. "This operation reaffirms the commitment of Police to combat the drug menace. Local people of the area hailed the initiative of Police with regard to the attachment of immovable properties which has been raised/ used from illicit trafficking of narcotics by the drug peddler in the Police District Handwara," police said.

Forest Officer Attached For Misconduct With MLA

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu & Kashmir Forest Department has attached Range Officer Javed Ahmad Natkhan (Grade I) of the Tangmarg/Gulmarg Range to the office of the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Special Division Tangmarg following allegations of misconduct and

misbehavior with the Hon'ble MLA of the area. The action was initiated under instructions from the Hon'ble Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment, and Tribal Affairs. A summary inquiry into the incident has been ordered, with the Conservator of Forests tasked to submit a report within two days—(KNO)

Tourists Embrace Kashmiri Hospitality Amid Chilly Weather

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Tourists visiting Kashmir are soaking in the region's breathtaking beauty and renowned hospitality, even as the valley braces for the season's first snowfall. Despite the chill, the warmth of local hospitality has left visitors enchanted, making their stay a truly memorable experience. Many tourists can be seen enjoying the serenity of the world-famous Dal Lake, where picturesque houseboats and the backdrop of majestic mountains create a stunning winter landscape. A tourist enjoying a steaming cup of coffee by the lake said, "We came here hoping to witness the magic of snowfall. The

scenery is already heavenly, and we can only imagine how spectacular it will look under a blanket of snow." Tarun Kumar, a visitor from Delhi, said the highlight of his trip was the allure of the lake and the charm of the houseboats. "The people here are incredibly welcoming, and the food is simply amazing. Even in this cold weather, it feels cosy and comforting," he said. Director Tourism, Raja Yaqoob said there is an increasing influx of visitors, including international tourists. "Despite the delayed snowfall this year, we are welcoming 200-500 international tourists daily," he said. Meanwhile, the anticipation of snowfall is adding to the excitement of tourists—(KNO)

PM Modi Interacts With Innovators Via Video Conferencing At NIT Srinagar



Press Information Bureau

SRINAGAR: Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacted with young innovators during the 7th edition of Grand Finale of the 7th edition of Smart India Hackathon (SIH) 2024, including the SIH team at NIT Srinagar, via video conferencing mode. For the first time, NIT Srinagar is hosting the Grand Finale, which commenced on Wednesday as one of 51 centers across the nation.

During the event, the SIH team from BMS Institute of Technology, Bangalore, led by Syeeda Aiemen D Saleem, shared their project ideas with PM Modi. The Prime Minister also interacted with Mohammad Ali Mohammad Al, a participant from Yemen and praised the culture, diversity of India. Over 1,300 student teams participated in this nationwide event. Union Minister for Education, Dharmendra Pradhan, virtually inaugurated SIH 2024, highlighting the transformative power of education in fostering innovation and building an Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Director NIT Srinagar, Prof. Binod Kumar Kanojija was the Chief Guest on the occasion and stressed the institute's commitment to excellence. He underscored the importance of SIH in bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world problem-solving. "The institute is dedicated to nurturing a culture of innovation, fostering entrepreneurship, and preparing students for a technology-driven future," Prof. Kanojija said. Chairman of Core Committee for SIH 2024, Prof. G.A. Harmain, said that it is the first time NIT Srinagar is hosting the Grand Finale of SIH Software Edition.

He welcomed 25 exceptional teams from 21 states, emphasizing their potential to shape India's future through technology and creativity. Pratap Sanap, Nodal Head 1 for SIH, provided an insightful overview of the hackathon, highlighting its role in fostering innovation and collaboration. A formal vote of thanks was presented by Prof. Atikur Rahman, Registrar of NIT Srinagar. He praised the organizing team, led by Director Prof. Kanojija, for their efforts in making the event a success. "As one of the 51 nodal centers, NIT Srinagar has emerged as a hub for innovation, hosting 25 teams to develop real-world solutions. The institute is known for its academic excellence and state-of-the-art

facilities," Prof. Rahman said. The inaugural ceremony at NIT Srinagar featured a traditional Lamp Lighting and Isbandh Ceremony, symbolizing knowledge and purity, and followed by welcome by Dr. Janani L., Assistant Professor, Department of Civil Engineering. Earlier the event began with a welcome address by Dr. Abhay Jere, Vice Chairman of AICTE and Chief Innovation Officer at the Ministry of Education's Innovation Cell. Prof. T.G. Sitharam, Chairman of AICTE, emphasized the council's vision for promoting educational excellence. This year's edition of SIH has seen a remarkable 240% increase in internal hackathons, growing from 900 in 2023 to over 2,247 in 2024, making it the largest edition to date. More than 86,000 teams participated at the institute level, with around 49,000 advancing to the national-level rounds. The hackathon addressed 250 problem statements submitted by 54 ministries, departments, state governments, PSUs, and industries. These challenges spanned 17 sectors of national importance, including healthcare, sustainability, smart technologies, education, disaster management, and agriculture.

Snow Blankets Sonamarg Again

Agencies

GANDERBAL: The higher reaches of Kashmir including a tourist destination, Sonamarg experienced fresh snowfall on Wednesday while as per the forecast; a few areas of plains would likely receive the season's first snowfall in the next 24 hours. Almost four inches of snowfall accumulated at the picturesque Sonamarg area today, bringing down the mercury further across the Valley. An independent forecaster has predicted rains and snow showers at many places of Kashmir for the next 24 hours. According to the forecast, light to moderate snowfall is expected at higher reaches including Gulmarg, Sonamarg, Doodhpatri, Pahalgam, Peer Ki Gali, Sinthan top, Razdan top, Zojila pass and other upper reaches during the period. "Light rain is expected at some plains of Kashmir with slight possibility of season's first light snowfall at a few plains



45% chances during the next 24 hours," the forecast reads. The local Meteorological department has however predicted no significant weather activity till December 20th. In its advisory, the Met has predicted cold & dry weather over many stations during the next 10 days and appealed the tourists, travelers and transporters to follow administration and traffic advisory. In the meantime, the minimum temperature improved across Kashmir following the season's lowest temperature at many places on the previous night. Against previous night's minus 5.4 degree Celsius, Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, has recorded a low of minus 3.3 degree Celsius. Gulmarg, a famous ski-resort, recorded the night temperature of minus 6.0 degree Celsius while in Pahalgam, the mercury settled at minus 1.8 degree Celsius. Qazigund, a gateway of Kashmir, has recorded a low of minus 4.4 degree Celsius while Kupwara in north Kashmir and Kokernag in South Kashmir recorded a low of minus 4.5 degree Celsius and 2.0 degree Celsius respectively—(KNO)

Gulmarg Expected To Attract More Tourists This Year: Govt

Agencies

SRINAGAR: With the fresh snowfall turning picturesque Gulmarg into a winter wonderland, the destination is abuzz with the activities as the preparations are in full swing to welcome the visitors from across the globe, ahead of the Christmas and New Year festivities. Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, in a press briefing highlighted the extensive measures being undertaken to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all. He said there is a steady rise in foreign tourist arrivals to Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in Gulmarg. He mentioned that the previous year saw a significant number of international skiers, enjoying the region's slopes, and there is optimism for a similar or greater influx this year. "Year-on-year, we are witnessing an increase in foreign tourists, which is a testament to the global appeal of Gulmarg as a winter destination. We are



prepared to welcome them with enhanced facilities and safety measures," the DC said. He said that like previous years, the Tourism department has planned a grand festival for Christmas and New Year, while necessary tenders have been floated, and the work allotments will be finalized soon. Sherpa assured that all facilities for tourists and attendees will be prioritized. He added that the district administration

would extend full support to the Tourism Department to make the celebrations seamless. "Safety measures remain a top priority, particularly for skiing enthusiasts," DC Shera said, while reflecting on the tragic incident last year involving a foreign skier. He urged tourists to adhere to designated tracks that are equipped with avalanche mitigation measures. "Our teams will ensure all precautions, but I strongly urge

'Dry Weather Triggers Surge In Respiratory Ailments'

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Prolonged dry weather and chilly temperatures in Kashmir have led to a surge in respiratory ailments, with hospitals witnessing an increase in outpatient and inpatient visits, noted Pulmonologist and Head of the Chest Disease Hospital, Dr Naveed Nazir, said on Monday. Dr Naveed said the cold and dry air has worsened symptoms such as cough, breathlessness, chest tightness and wheezing, particularly among individuals with pre-existing respiratory conditions like asthma, bronchitis, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). "The dry air and fluctuating temperatures are aggravating respiratory issues. The lack of moisture in the air irritates the respiratory tract, making patients more prone to complications," he said. The noted pulmonologist said hospitals across the valley have recorded a 30-40% increase in respiratory cases, with elderly, children and people with weakened immune systems being the most affected. Dr Naveed urged people to

take precautions to avoid exacerbating respiratory problems. He advised wearing adequate winter clothing and limiting outdoor activities during the extreme cold, especially in the early mornings and late evenings. The doctor also called for ensuring proper ventilation at home and cautioned against the use of unventilated gas heaters, which he said can emit harmful gases and make indoor air overly dry. "Keep your homes warm but ensure adequate ventilation to maintain air quality," he added. Dr Naveed recommended that patients with chronic respiratory illnesses adhere to prescribed medications and maintain regular check-ups. He suggested vaccinations against pneumonia and influenza for higher-risk persons to reduce the chances of severe complications. He called for adopting a healthy lifestyle, including the consumption of lukewarm water and a balanced diet, to strengthen the respiratory immune system. "The public must act responsibly and take preventive measures to minimise the risk of respiratory ailments during this harsh weather," Dr Naveed said—(KNO)

Govt School Students To Receive Textbooks Soon: Sakina Itoo

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: view of commencement of the new academic year, Education Minister, Sakina Itoo Wednesday said that the process of distribution of textbooks will start soon. The minister said that the government will deliver the textbooks to the deserving students at earliest. Itoo said, "We are in the process of distributing free textbooks to the students. We will soon begin distributing the textbooks."

She further said that some textbooks were already available in the stores at JKBOSE. In the meantime, officials of JKBOSE said that some textbooks were already available in the stores at Jammu and Kashmir divisions respectively. "We have ordered publishing of the books as per the requisitions received by the concerned Chief Education Officers (CEOs)," the official said. He said, "We have received some of the titles and soon we will



start the distribution process." Pertinently, the academics of the students in government schools has been badly hit in previous years as the students enrolled in these institutions usually receive free textbooks very late even after commencement of new academic sessions. In 2023, the department couldn't deliver free textbooks despite the passage of around two months since the new academic session started in schools. The delay in distribution of the textbooks in schools had previously left the students at the receiving end as the department has failed to distribute the textbooks in schools on time.

Overnight Blaze Renders 4 Families Homeless In Kulgam

Observer News Service

KULGAM: Three residential houses were completely gutted in a massive overnight blaze, rendering four families homeless in Nagam village of Damhal Hajipora in south Kashmir's Kulgam district, officials said Wednesday. An official said that the fire broke out from a residential house and later spread to two others, damaging three houses where four families were residing, along with two cow sheds. He said that fire tenders were immediately dispatched to the spot; however, the houses were reduced to ashes before the fire



was brought under control. "The flames took everything we had in minutes. In this cold, we are left with nothing but the hope of support from our government," said a distraught local resident.

skiers to avoid unprepared tracks, as they pose significant risks," he said. Addressing concerns, Sherpa said that traffic congestion and road accessibility are being closely managed. "In Gulmarg sub-division, at least 20 snow cutters are ready to clear roads promptly, and over 80 quintals of salt have been procured to address frosty conditions. These efforts will mitigate sliding issues and ensure smooth travel," he assured. The Baramulla's DC also highlighted the enhanced facilities being put in place to ensure a comfortable experience for tourists visiting Gulmarg during the festive season. He stated that the district administration has taken significant measures to address challenges like low voltage and water scarcity. "We have augmented the power stations to resolve low voltage issues and deployed additional water tankers to mitigate drinking water challenges. These efforts aim to ensure that tourists face no inconvenience during their stay," the DC said. Speaking about the prestigious Khelo India Winter Games, he expressed pride in Baramulla's role as a host for the national event. He mentioned that while preparations are ongoing, the final decision on hosting depends on adequate snowfall. "We are hopeful of early snowfall, as it is essential for the games. Once the requisite snow is available, further arrangements will proceed accordingly," he noted. Hoteliers and stakeholders in the tourism industry are hopeful of a busy season, with the snowfall providing a much-needed boost. "The fresh snow has drawn more visitors already, and with the planned events, we expect a much better influx this year," said a local hotel owner. Tourists have already started flocking to the snow-covered meadows and slopes of Gulmarg, soaking in the serene beauty and thrilling winter sports—(KNO)

BGT 3rd Test: Gabba Pitch To Have Traditional Pace & Bounce, Says Curator

Press Trust of India

BRISBANE: The pitch for the third Test between India and Australia at the Gabba is expected to have traditional pace and bounce considering the game is scheduled in the early part of the summer and not post Christmas.

India's famous win at the Gabba on their previous tour came when the game was scheduled in the second half of the series. A Rishabh Pant special ensured India a back-to-back series win Down Under with Australia left licking their wounds. It was the hosts' first loss at the venue since 1988.

Since then Australia have lost to the West Indies at the 'fortress' and no wonder the players prefer to play at the Gabba at the start of the summer and not at end of it.

"Different times of year definitely makes it different, it can be a slightly different pitch," Gabba curator David Sandurski was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au ahead of the third Test beginning Saturday.



"Pitches later in the season might have a bit more wear and tear while ones early in the season usually are a bit fresher and might have a bit more in them. Generally speaking, we still prepare the pitch the exact

same way every time to try and get the same good carry, pace and bounce that the Gabba is known for. We are just trying to make a traditional Gabba wicket like we do each year," he said.

The five-match series is locked at 1-1 following Australia's comprehensive win in the pink ball Test at Adelaide.

As many as 15 wickets fell on the opening day of a domestic pink ball game last month and the curator said the surface would be similar to that.

"The aim is to be similar to that wicket where there was a good balance between bat and ball. Hopefully there is a bit in it for everyone," Sandurski added.

INDIAN TEAMS LANDS IN BRISBANE

The BCCI on Wednesday posted a video of the India players' arrival in Brisbane from Adelaide.

India won the opening Test in Perth by 295 runs before succumbing to the moving pink ball in Adelaide.

Short TAKES

Brook Displaces Root At Top Of Test Batter Rankings

Charismatic England batter Joe Root's reign at the top of the ICC Test batting rankings ended on Wednesday with compatriot Harry Brook taking the No.1 spot, while India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and spinner Ravindra Jadeja held on to their top positions in the bowlers' and all-rounders' charts respectively in the longest format.

Brook, 25, overtook Root following his eighth Test century against New Zealand in Wellington last week, with the right-handed player now enjoying a slender one-point advantage over his more experienced teammate at the top of the latest ICC rankings.

Brook has a total of 898 rating points, one more than Root, and joins Indian legend Sachin Tendulkar with the equal 34th highest rating of all time for Test batters.

Root had held on to the top spot since July this year when he displaced former New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson from the No. 1 position.

Brook scored 123 and 55 in England's massive 323-run victory over New Zealand, while Root had innings of 3 and 106 in the same Test.

Bumrah maintained his No.1 position at the top of the Test bowlers' rankings with 890 rating points. The Indian has some tough competition from South Africa quick Kagiso Rabada (856) and Australian pace bowler Josh Hazlewood (851).

Pakistan Pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi Scripts History

Seamer Shaheen Afridi etched his name in the annals of history by becoming the first Pakistani bowler to take 100 wickets in each format of international cricket.

In the first innings of the opening T20I against South Africa in Durban on Tuesday, Shaheen struck once in the powerplay, then in the middle phase and once towards the end to complete a three-wicket haul and arrive at the rare feat.

With a three-wicket haul, Shaheen completed 100 T20I wickets and became the first Pakistan bowler to have 100 wickets in each format. Apart from T20Is, the 24-year-old left-arm seamer boasts 112 scalps in ODIs and 116 in Test cricket.

With his record-shattering spell, he also became the third Pakistani bowler to achieve 100 T20I wickets, behind Haris Rauf and Shadab Khan.

Shaheen hit the three-digit figure milestone in his 74th T20I game for Pakistan. He became the second-fastest to take 100 T20I wickets for Pakistan after scorching pacer Haris Rauf, who achieved the feat in 71 T20I matches.

Shaheen is also the youngest to achieve the feat and joined New Zealand's Tim Southee, Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan, and Sri Lanka's Lasith Malinga.

Manchester United Host Young South Asian Players

Despite a combined population of nearly 1.6 billion people and a deeply engrained passion for football, there are no players from India or Thailand in England's Premier League, but Manchester United are hoping that may soon change.

The club and sponsor Apollo Tyres invited six young players from India, Nepal, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates, from an original pool of 15,000, to Old Trafford last week to work on their skills with United coaches as part of the 'United We Play' initiative to empower footballers from untapped communities.

Former United player Louis Saha kicked off the fourth edition of the programme a year ago in Kolkata, India. Former United captain Gary Neville oversaw the grand finale of the competition, from which the half dozen players were chosen, in Chandigarh in October.

More than 100 coaches in India and elsewhere also participated in the club's United Soccer Schools training sessions.

While former FIFA boss Sepp Blatter called India a "sleeping giant," the country's staggering population has yet to translate into global football success. The national men's team is ranked 125th in the world and India have never played in a World Cup.

Khelo India Winter Games: Leh To Host In Jan, Gulmarg In Feb



Observer News Service

NEW DELHI: The Khelo India Winter Games dates have been announced. Ladakh will host the ice events from January 23 to 27, 2025, while J&K's Gulmarg will host the snow events from February 22 to 25.

The Winter Games will flag-off the Khelo India season with the Youth & Para Games scheduled in Bihar in April next year. The Khelo India University games are also on the cards.

The Khelo India Winter Games started in 2020. Almost 1000 athletes, including 306 women, took part in the inaugural edition. The participation has increased over the years. More than 1350 athletes in 2021 and 1500-plus in 2022 highlighted the growing attraction of the

Games in J&K.

The 2024 iteration of KIWG saw participation of 1200-plus participants including more than 700 athletes, 141 support staff, 113 technical officials, 250-plus volunteer and sports specific volunteers and a total of 136 medals at stake.

This (2024) was also the first time Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, along with Sports Authority of India managed the technical conduct of the Games in association with the National Sports Federations and Indian Olympic Association.

"We are once looking ahead to an exciting season of Khelo India Games. The Winter Games will be important because India needs to find the best

athletes to represent the country at the 2026 Winter Olympics," said Union Sports Minister, Dr Mansukh Mandaviya.

This will be the second year running that Ladakh will host a portion of the Khelo India Winter Games. Before the 2024 edition, J&K used to host all the events. Leh successfully hosted ice events like skating and hockey in February 2024. Gulmarg, like always, hosted the snow events like skiing and snowboarding.

"It is our endeavor to promote winter sports and encourage more athletes to take up skiing and skating. We have already seen many athletes from remote Himalayan villages participating in these Games. That's very encouraging," said Dr Mandaviya.

J&K Football Team Leaves For Santosh Trophy Final Round



Observer News Service

JAMMU: Minister for Youth Services and Sports Satish Sharma and Advisor to Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani on Wednesday flagged off J&K senior men's football team for its participation in the final round of prestigious Santosh Trophy.

The event, held at Mini Stadium, Parade Jammu, was also attended by Secretary, Youth Services and Sports, Sarmad Hafeez, Director General, Youth Services and Sports, Tara Singh, and Secretary, J&K Sports Council, Nuzhat Gul, along with other senior officials.

The final round of the Santosh Trophy is scheduled to be held in Telangana, where the J&K team will compete against top teams from across the country. To mark the occasion, a friendly match

between the J&K Police Team and the J&K Santosh Trophy Team was played in front of the dignitaries.

As part of the ceremony, the Sports Minister and Advisor to CM distributed sports kits among the athletes from various Khelo India centres in J&K.

Satish Sharma congratulated the team for their exceptional performance in the preliminary round held in Punjab, which secured their qualification for the finals. He praised the J&K Sports Council for organising a high-quality coaching camp and providing the necessary technical and infrastructural support to the players.

Nasir Aslam Sogami lauded the athletes for their dedication and wished them success in the upcoming matches. Highlighting the global appeal of football, he expressed

pride in the achievements of players and assured full government support in transforming the J&K into a hub for sports excellence.

The coaching camp for the final round was held at Mini Stadium, Parade Jammu, under the guidance of former international footballer and renowned coach Mehrajuddin Wadoo, along with chief football coach Satpal Singh Kala. The J&K Sports Council ensured that players received residential facilities, infrastructure and other necessary resources under the directions of the Secretary, J&K Sports Council.

The players, fueled with determination, expressed optimism about their performance and aimed to achieve better results as they have prepared to compete against the nation's best football teams.

FIFA Names Saudi Arabia As 2034 World Cup Host; Spain, Portugal & Morocco To Co-Host 2030 Edition

Agencies

ZURICH: Saudi Arabia has been officially confirmed by FIFA as host of the 2034 World Cup in men's soccer, giving the oil-rich kingdom its biggest prize yet for massive spending on global sports driven by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The Saudi bid was the only candidate and was acclaimed by the applause of more than 200 FIFA member federations. They took part remotely in an online meeting hosted in Zurich on Wednesday by the soccer body's president Gianni Infantino.

"The vote of the congress is loud and clear," said Infantino, who had asked officials on a bank of screens to clap their hands at head level to show their support.

The decision was combined with approving the only candidate to host the 2030 World Cup. Spain, Portugal and Morocco will co-host in a six-na-

tion project, with Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay each getting one of the 104 games.

The South American connection will mark the centenary of Uruguay hosting the first World Cup in 1930.

The decisions complete a mostly opaque 15-month bid process which Infantino helped steer toward Saudi Arabia without a rival candidate, without taking questions, and which human rights groups warn will put the lives of migrant workers at risk.

FIFA and Saudi officials have said hosting the 2034 tournament can accelerate change, including more freedoms and rights for women.

A fast-track path to victory was cleared last year by FIFA accepting the three-continent hosting plan for the 2030 World Cup. It meant only soccer federations in Asia and Oceania were eligible for the 2034 contest, and FIFA gave them less than four weeks to declare.

Only Saudi Arabia did. Saudi Arabia's win will kick off a decade of scrutiny on labor laws and treatment of workers mostly from South Asia needed to help build and upgrade 15 stadiums, plus hotels and transport networks ahead of the 104-game tournament.

One of the stadiums is planned to be 350 meters (yards) above the ground in Neom — a futuristic city that does not yet exist — and another named for the crown prince is designed to be atop a 200-meter cliff near Riyadh.

During the bid campaign, FIFA has accepted limited scrutiny of Saudi Arabia's human rights record that was widely criticized this year at the United Nations.

Saudi and international rights groups and activists warned FIFA it has not learned the lessons of Qatar's much-criticized preparations to host the 2022 World Cup.

FIFA made a "reckless deci-

sion" to approve Saudi Arabia without getting public assurances to protect human rights, an international collective of rights groups said in a statement.

"At every stage of this bidding process, FIFA has shown its commitment to human rights to be a sham," said Amnesty International's head of labor rights and sport, Steve Cockburn.

The kingdom plans to spend tens of billion of dollars on projects related to the World Cup as part of the crown prince's sweeping Vision 2030 project that aims to modernize Saudi society and economy. At its core is spending on sports by the \$900 billion sovereign wealth operation, the Public Investment Fund, which he oversees. Critics have called it "sportswashing" of the kingdom's reputation.

The prince, known as MBS, has built close working ties to Infantino since 2017 — aligning with the organizer of sport's

most-watched event rather than directly confronting the established system as it did with the disruptive LIV Golf project.

The result for Saudi Arabia and FIFA has been smooth progress toward the win Wednesday with limited pushback from soccer officials, though some from women international players.

The steady flow of Saudi cash into international soccer is set to increase.

FIFA created a new and higher World Cup sponsor category for state oil firm Aramco, and Saudi funding is set to underwrite the 2025 Club World Cup in the United States that is a pet project for Infantino.

North American soccer body CONCACAF signed a multi-year deal with PIF, Saudi stadiums host Super Cup games for Italy and Spain, and nearly 50 FIFA member federations have signed working agreements with Saudi counterparts.

Lavish spending by PIF-owned Saudi clubs in the past two years buying and paying players — including Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar, Karim Benzema and Sadio Mané — put hundreds of millions of dollars into European soccer.

That influence could be key in talks to agree which months to play the 2034 World Cup. The November-December slot taken by Qatar in 2022 to avoid extreme midsummer heat is complicated in 2034 by the holy month of Ramadan through mid-December and Riyadh hosting the multi-sport Asian Games.

Still, January 2034 could be an option — and likely better for European clubs and leagues — after the International Olympic Committee said it saw few issues in clashing with the Salt Lake Winter Games opening Feb. 10, 2034. The IOC also has a major commercial deal with Saudi Arabia, to host the new Esports Olympics.

