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Here Comes the Chillai Kalan Srinagar Shivers At Minus 6.2°C



KO Photo | Abid Bhat

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A day before the harshest winter period in Kashmir 'Chillai Kalan', temperature plunged several degrees below freezing point across Kashmir valley, with Srinagar witnessing its coldest night of the season so far, officials said on Friday.

Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 6.2 degrees Celsius, slightly down from minus 6 degrees Celsius the previous night, the officials said.

The night temperature on Thursday was 4.2 degrees below the season's normal, they said. The biting cold conditions led

to the freezing of water supply lines in many areas and the fringes of water bodies, including the Dal Lake, they added.

The prolonged dry spell in the city and other areas in the plains has exacerbated ailments like cough and common cold, the officials said.

In South Kashmir, Pahalgam registered a low of minus 8.2 degrees Celsius, down from the previous night's minus 6.8 degrees Celsius, the weather office said.

It said Gulmarg logged a minimum of minus 6 degrees Celsius, a degree down from the previous night.

A hamlet on the outskirts of Pampore town, Konibal, was the coldest weather | [More on P6](#)

Golden Spice In Peril


How Climate Change is Draining Kashmir's Saffron Legacy

Observer News Service

Srinagar: On a foggy December afternoon, sitting by his saffron fields in Pampore, Mohammad Yousuf gazes out at the dry, cracked soil, his thoughts drifting to a harvest season that passed him by. The fields have yielded little this year—far less than what he had hoped for.

"This land has given us everything, but now it feels like it's giving up," he said.

Kashmir's saffron cultivation, renowned for producing one of the world's most expensive spices, has been severely impacted by prolonged dry spells and climate change. In other words, the dry spell and climate change has spelled doom on this

65% 
Decline in Saffron Production
1990: 15.95 tonnes
2023: 2.6 tonnes


Shrinking Cultivation Area
1996-97: 5,707 hectares
2018-19: 2,387.71 hectares



priced crop.

Farmers in Pulwama and Budgam have observed significant declines in yield, with some reporting reductions of up to 70 percent compared to previous years.

"It was almost the dry season this year. Without water, how can we sustain our crops?" lamented Mohammad Yousuf.

The valley has experienced intense heat | [More on P6](#)

Winter Break In Colleges From Dec 27

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The government Friday announced winter break for degree colleges of Kashmir division and winter zones of Jammu division from January 27.

Besides, the government also announced winter break for colleges of summer zones of Jammu region from January 01 to January 10.

The Jammu and Kashmir Higher Education Department in an order said that the degree colleges falling in Kashmir division and winter zones of Jammu region shall observe winter vacation from December 27 to February 14.

The Kashmir University Wednesday also announced winter break for main and its satellite campuses January 01 to February 23.

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 | [More on P6](#)

GST Council Meeting In Jaisalmer Omar Praises Pre-budget Discussion

Observer News Service

Jaisalmer: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, attending the Goods and Services Tax (GST) meeting in Jaisalmer, lauded the platform for facilitating important discussions on tax reforms and pre-budget consultations.

Speaking to reporters, Abdullah highlighted the significance of the GST Council's work, describing it as a valuable opportunity for stakeholders.

"This gave people like us an opportunity to share insights. It's a constructive process that benefits everyone," Omar said. He expressed his appreciation for the region during his visit, adding, "It's my first time in Jodhpur, and



I hope to return someday for a vacation, but for now, work has brought me here."

When asked about the contentious 'One Nation, One Election' proposal, Omar remained guarded in his words. "For now, it's just been introduced. There's still

a discussion pending, and it will also need to be passed in several states along with Parliament," he said.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who met Union Home Minister Amit Shah Thursday, arrived in Jodhpur today before heading to Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, for a pre-budget discussion chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Sources earlier had said that the Chief Minister will attend the key conference with representatives from states and Union Territories, where he will push for adequate financial grants for Jammu and Kashmir in the upcoming fiscal year.

Upon his arrival in Jodhpur, CM Omar | [More on P6](#)

Frame Rules Of Procedure J&K Assembly To Form Panel Of Legislators



Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Speaker of the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly would soon set-up a committee of legislators to frame the Rules of Procedure for the Assembly, sources disclosed.

Sources said that the Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather would soon constitute a nine-member House committee comprising representatives of different parties to frame the Rules of functioning of the House. According to | [More on P6](#)

MeT Predicts Light Snowfall From Today

Ansar Hussain

The Meteorological department (MeT) has predicted light snowfall over a few higher reaches of north Kashmir from Saturday. Furthermore, the weather is expected to remain dry for the next 24 hours while light snowfall is expected over a few higher reaches on December 21 and 22, Director Meteorological | [More on P6](#)

6 'CHILLAI-KALAN', THE HARSHTEST 40-day winter period in Kashmir, begins today.

HC Quashes 2 PSA Detention Orders

M Ahmad

Srinagar: The failure on the part of detaining authority to supply the material on which the detention order renders same illegal and unsustainable in law, the High Court of J&K and Ladakh said on Friday as it quashed orders under Public Safety Act against two detainees and ordered their immediate release if not needed in any other case.

Allowing their separate petitions, a bench of Justice Sanjay Dhar quashed the detention orders against two residents of Srinagar, namely Shahid Shafi Sheikh and Muhammad Latief Dar.

The Court directed the authorities to release the | [More on P6](#)

Over 1 Lakh Transport Vehicles Declared Unfit In J&K

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Over one lakh vehicles falling under the category of End-of-Life Vehicles (ELVs) category have been declared unfit in Jammu and Kashmir, an official data shows.

Official data states that 110,793 transport vehicles lack valid fitness certificates, while 154,020 non-transport vehicles are not validly registered. Also, 7,742 vehicles have had their registration certificates cancelled till December 17 20204.

According to the Motor Vehicles (Registration and | [More on P6](#)



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'Diarrhoea Continues To Be 'Leading Killer' Among Children Under 5 And Elderly'

Press Trust Of India

Diarrhea and related infections continue to be a leading cause of death among children under five years and the elderly, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, even though deaths from these conditions have dropped globally by 60 per cent between 1990 to 2021, a study says.



Published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases journal, the study found that in 2021, diarrheal diseases -- infections that cause diarrhea -- were responsible for 12 lakh deaths worldwide, a significant decrease from 29 lakh deaths in 1990. These estimates are the latest and most comprehensive from the Global Burden of Disease (GBD), coordinated by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington, US. The findings suggest that health interventions, including oral re-

hydration therapy, improved sanitation, and global immunisation efforts against rotavirus (which causes diarrheal infections), are proving effective, researchers said. They also found that the largest decline in deaths occurred among children under five, although mortality rates remain highest in this age group. Individuals aged 70 years or older were the second most affected

aged 70 and older, with 476 deaths per 100,000 population.

The authors stated that preventive measures targeting key risk factors and infection-causing microbes could further reduce the global burden of diarrheal diseases.

"The new granular-level analysis in our study can help decision-makers better target and prioritise evidence-based strategies to fight diarrheal diseases," said Dr. Hmwe Hmwe Kyu, a study author and associate professor at IHME.

"Despite the encouraging progress made in combating diarrheal mortality, a multipronged approach is needed to simultaneously implement life-saving solutions while also prioritising preventive interventions to alleviate the burden on health systems," Dr. Kyu added. The authors also suggested that as more vaccines are added to the World Health Organisation's Expanded Programme on Immunisation, combining them could reduce manufacturing costs and make scheduling easier.

94% Of Indian Desk Workers Feel Urgency To Master AI: Report

IANS

Amid the rising influence of artificial intelligence (AI) in the workplace, 94 per cent of desk workers in India feel the urgency to

94 per cent workers are keen to skill up on AI, 40 per cent have spent less than five hours total learning how to use the technology. About 30 per cent of global workers said they've had no AI training at all, including no self-directed learning or



master the advanced technology, according to a report on Tuesday. Slack's new Workforce Index showed that AI adoption is on the rise in India with 61 per cent of Indian desk workers using AI in their jobs and 80 per cent excited about the prospect of AI replacing some tasks. India's progress in AI adoption underscores the growing prioritisation of AI among its executives, reflecting a heightened sense of urgency among business leaders to unlock its transformative potential. The report, based on a survey of 1,029 desk workers in India, showed that although

experimentation. "India's workforce is leading the way in AI adoption, with 61 per cent of desk workers already integrating AI into their roles. This enthusiasm highlights the transformative potential of AI and its alignment with leadership priorities for innovation and upskilling," said Rahul Sharma, Vice President - Sales, Salesforce India. "However, to fully harness AI's benefits, there remains uncertainty that agents can address. By introducing AI agents with clearly defined roles and guidelines, businesses can reduce worker anxiety and foster seamless integration into daily tasks," Sharma said.

From Office of the Advocate Ishfaq Rasool sheikh and Associates

In the case of Gulshan Begum W/O Farooq Ahmad Sheikh D/O Ab Gaffar Bhat R/O Resident Of Palhallan Pattan Baramulla

V/s Public at large (Caveator)

In the Petition in terms of Section 148-A The caveators have reason to believe that Non-Caveator may file any Application, Petition, Ap- peal, Suit or on any other type of proceeding before the Hon'ble Court and on the ground of distorted facts/misrepresentation and cooked story and may seed in obtaining some relief/order at their back/in exparte against the caveators and in such eventuality the caveators will be put in irrepa- rable loss and inconvenience. It would be proper that caveators be given an opportunity of being heard by the Hon'ble court before passing any order.

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

I have passed/appeared in Secondary School Examination (Class- 10th) under Roll No. 139009103 Session: Annual - Regular Year 2023 through the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education. Due to the error committed by the concerned School/parent/Board against my caste as Khan instead of Wani Now, I have applied for correction/rectification of error in the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education, New Campus Bemina, Srinagar, if any person has any objection in this regard, may file the same in the office of the Assistant Secretary, Certificates-KD within seven days from the date of Publication of this notice, after the expiry of said period no objection will be entertained.

Name: Adeeba Showkat F/N: Showkat Ahmad Khan M/N: Shaheena DOB: 16-10-2005 Residence: Elahi Bagh Mobile: 9906567756



mdl

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

Subject: Issuance of Registration orders in respect of delayed Birth

Public Notice

The registrar Births and deaths (EO Municipal Council Pattan/ Block Development Officer Lolpora) has submitted a case file pertaining to Birth of Nargis Fayaz D/o Fayaz Ahmad Bhat R/o New Colony Pattan Pattan District Baramulla with verified date of event (birth) as 17-11-1997 occurred at Home In this connection, if anybody having any objection to the issuance of said registration may contact this office within seven (07) days, after which no objections shall be entertained.

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

Subject: Issuance of Registration orders in respect of delayed Birth

Public Notice

The registrar Births and deaths (EO Municipal Council Pattan/ Block Development Officer Lolpora) has submitted a case file pertaining to Birth of Aahira Jan D/o Tawseef Ahmad Bhat R/o Khambiyar Pattan Tehsil Pattan District Baramulla with verified date of event (birth) as 03-07-2021 occurred at -- In this connection, if anybody having any objection to the issuance of said registration may contact this office within seven (07) days, after which no objections shall be entertained.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the public that we have changed the name of our pharmacy from Rizvis Pharmacy Chemists and Druggists (bearing License Nos. RLF20JK2023003316 & RLF21JK2023003304) to Multicare Pharmacy Chemists and Druggists. If anyone has any objections regarding this change, they are requested to contact Drug Office Budgam within 7 days at 9541388813.

bmg_r

THE JAMMU & KASHMIR BOARD OF SCHOOL EDUCATION NEW CAMPUS, BEMINA, SRINAGAR

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have passed/appeared in SSE/HSE-1/NSE-11 (Class 11/11th/2th) under Roll No. 139009103 Session Annual/Regular Year 2023 through The Jammu & Kashmir Board of School Education. The error has been committed by the Khan instead of Wani Now I have applied for correction in The Jammu & Kashmir Board of School Education, New Campus, Bemina, Srinagar. If any person has any objection in this regard may file the same in the office of the Assistant Secretary, Certificates Kashmir Division within seven days from the date of publication of this notice, after that expiry of said period, no objection will be entertained.

The correction particulars be recorded as under Father's Name: Showkat Ahmad Khan Mother's Name: Shaheena Date of Birth: 16-10-2005 Residence: Elahi Bagh



Media Line

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Tilgam Executive Magistrate 1st Class

Application of Dalbeer Singh S/o Bhuinder Singh R/o Dardpora Tehsil Pattan for obtaining RBA certificate

PUBLIC NOTICE

General Public is hereby informed through this notice that the applicant file is currently under process in the office of undersigned regarding obtaining RBA certificate. According to the field staffs report the applicants are permanent resident of village Dardpora tehsil Pattan District Baramulla and have been residing here from more than 15 years and has not migrated from the said village the annual family income of the applicant from all sources is Rs 761700/- . Family details of the applicant are give below.

S.No	Name	Parentage	Age	Occupation
01	Prathipal Singh	Hari Singh	80	Retired Employee
02	Mahini Kour	W/o Prathipal Singh	75	H/ work
03	Bopinder Singh	S/o --	50	Employee
04	Daljeet kour	W/o Bopinder Singh	48	H/W
05	Dalbeer Singh	s/o Bopinder Singh	25	Student
06	Bavneed Kour	D/o Bopinder Singh	17	--

In this connection If any person(s) has any objection(s) he/ she can visit the undersigned's office within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection will be considered.

fko

Naib Tehsildar

PUBLIC NOTICE

In Adhaar & School Records my name has been wrongly written as Umaiya Javeed while my correct name is Umaiya Rameez which needs to be corrected. If anybody has any objection he/she may contact Concerned Adhaar Centre or Kashmir Cambridge School Tukroo Shopian within 7 days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

fko

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

Subject: Issuance of Registration orders in respect of delayed Birth

Public Notice

The registrar Births and deaths (EO Municipal Council Pattan/ Block Development Officer Lolpora) has submitted a case file pertaining to Birth of Abu Bakar S/o Arif Ahmad Mir R/o Manglora Tehsil Kunzar District Baramulla with verified date of event (birth) as 19-05-2022 occurred at SDH Pattan In this connection, if anybody having any objection to the issuance of said registration may contact this office within seven (07) days, after which no objections shall be entertained.

fko

Executive Magistrate 1st Class Naib Tehsildar Pattan

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

Subject: Issuance of Registration orders in respect of delayed Birth

Public Notice

The registrar Births and deaths (EO Municipal Council Pattan/ Block Development Officer Lolpora) has submitted a case file pertaining to Birth of Sabik Ramzan S/o Mohammad Ramzan KhandayR/o Zangam Tehsil Pattan District Baramulla with verified date of event (birth) as 01-01-2009 occurred at Home In this connection, if anybody having any objection to the issuance of said registration may contact this office within seven (07) days, after which no objections shall be entertained.

fko

Executive Magistrate 1st Class Naib Tehsildar Pattan

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MUSHTAQ KALASH-PURI	KALASHPORA	HABBAKADAL NEWS AGENCY	HAB-BAKADAL
ALTAF NEWS AGENCY	FATEHKADAL	FAROOQ NEW AGENCY	GOJWARA
JEELANI NEW AGENCY	KHAWAJA BAZAR	DAR NEWS AGENCY	QAMAR-WARI
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Water Scarcity Hits Some Localities Of Nishat

Agencies

Srinagar: Residents in multiple areas of Nishat, on the outskirts of Srinagar, are grappling with acute water scarcity, causing inconvenience to their daily lives.

The affected areas include Brein, Ishber, and Gupkar Mohalla, where residents report inconsistent water supply over the past few weeks.

Local residents expressed growing frustration. "We are forced to fetch water from nearby streams and wells. The situation is unbearable, especially during the

winter when water is a basic necessity," said Ghulam Rasool, a resident of Brein.

Another resident, Shaista Akhtar, highlighted the difficulties faced by women in managing household chores. "We are spending hours waiting for water tankers or collecting water from distant sources. It's a daily struggle, and no permanent solution has been provided so far," she said.

An official from the Public Health Engineering Department acknowledged the problem, attributing it to the ongoing repair work on the main water pipeline. [KNT]

"Parking First, E-Challans Later!"

KTMF Expresses Concerns Over ITMS E-Challan System Without Adequate Infrastructure

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Kashmir Traders and Manufacturers Federation (KTMF), President Mohammad Sadiq Baqal, has voiced serious concerns over the introduction of the Intelligent Traffic Management System (ITMS) and the e-challan system by the traffic department in Srinagar district. While acknowledging the need for modern traffic management solutions, Mr. Baqal emphasized that the implementation of this system must be preceded by adequate infrastructure and stakeholder engagement.

"We are not against the ITMS e-challan system," said Mr. Baqal. "However, the fundamental issue lies in the lack of proper parking facilities in the busy areas of Srinagar city, particularly in the century-old markets, bazaars, downtown,

and civil lines areas. Without addressing these issues, the e-challan system only adds to the hardships faced by shopkeepers and customers alike."

The KTMF President highlighted that the government has been repeatedly approached with representations to resolve the parking crisis in Srinagar city. Yet, no tangible steps have been taken to provide parking spaces, particularly in the old city of Shehr-I-Khaas and civil lines areas.

"Shopkeepers are already grappling with financial difficulties and low sales," he noted. "Now, the e-challan system is creating additional problems. Vehicles parked for just a few minutes to facilitate shopping are photographed and e-challans are issued online. This approach, implemented without consulting stakeholders, is unfair to both shopkeepers and customers."



PICT: Abid Bhat/KO

Parts Of Dal Lake Freeze Amidst Minus Temperatures In Kashmir

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The ongoing cold wave in Srinagar and elsewhere has affected the water supply at multiple places across the Valley as the supply pipes and taps froze in the night amidst the sub-zero temperatures in Kashmir.

City residents in Old City areas including Habba Kadal and other parts complained that they didn't get the water supply till the afternoon today.

"Most of the pipelines froze due to the below freezing temperatures. We didn't get the water supply till the afternoon hours today," Muhammad Shafi, a local from Karfali Mohalla, said.

He said that the taps were running dry again today, leaving the people to lurch at large.

One of the residents from Batamalo area stated that

Similar reports were also received from other parts of the Valley. Meanwhile the parts of Dal Lake also froze today amidst the coldest night of season in Srinagar at minus 6.2 degree Celsius. The people living in the houseboats were seen making their way through the water body today after the below normal temperatures froze the Dal Lake today. Meanwhile, an official from the Jal Shakti department told KNO that the supply was provided to the people except the Gupkar line due to some issues. However, he said that the supply could have got affected due to the frozen pipes. "The pipes could have got blocked due to the freezing temperatures that's why the people may have not received the water supply," he said—(KNO)

they faced inconvenience in the morning after the tank filled with water was frozen, causing hardships to them.

“Most of the pipelines froze due to the below freezing temperatures. We didn't get the water supply till the afternoon hours today

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have lost my passport bearing no: Y5169057. Now I have applied for the duplicate of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Regional Passport Office Srinagar within 7 days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Sahil Aabas Malla
Son Of Ghulam Haider Malla.
Ro Hasanabad Rainawari Sgr
Passport no. Y5169057q

fko

**NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE**

Sr. DSTE/FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders on <https://www.ireps.gov.in> against Tender Notice No. 433-Sig-T-40-24-25. Closing Date/Time 13.01.2025 at 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 tender, 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 online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft Banker cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed. NIT HEADER

Contract Type	Works
Name of work	(i) Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) of KYOSAN Make Electronic Interlocking systems installed at Banga, Bahram, Nawashahar & Pathankot stations of Firozpur Division for Three (03) Years. (ii) Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) of UFSBI systems of Deltron make installed over Firozpur Division for Three (03) Years.
Tender Closing Date & Time	13.01.2025 at 15:00 hrs.
Date & Time of Uploading Tender	20.12.2024 at 17:54 hrs.
Advertised Value(₹)	(i) ₹3,33,74,888.88 (ii) ₹81,29,211.84
Earnest Money(₹)	(i) ₹3,16,900/- (ii) ₹1,62,600/-
Bidding Start Date as per IREPS	30.12.2024
Period of Completion	(i) 36 Months (ii) 36 Months

Tender Notice No.: 433-Sig-T-40-24-25 Date: 20.12.2024 3912/2024
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

**NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE**

Tender Notice No:- 770-W/169/WA-1/FZR-273-2024-25-ADEN-JRC & 274-2024-25-ADEN-JRC 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 10.01.2025 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 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 online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

Tender Type	Tendering Section	Bidding System
Open	Works	Single Bid System
Date of Uploading Tenders	Bid Starting Date	Bid Closing Date/Time
19.12.2024	27.12.2024	10.01.2025

S. No.	Tender No.	Details of Tender
1	273-2024-25-ADEN-JRC	Construction of left over works of Covered Shed on LHS C-118, C-124 & C-125, approach road, retaining wall, recharge well, height gauge, and other allied works related to LHS works at C-118 LHS on JRC-PTK Section. Advertised Value (Rs.) Validity of Offer Period of Completion 5,84,94,016.94 60 Days 9 Months
2	274-2024-25-ADEN-JRC	Construction of CC channel between tracks in various yards in the jurisdiction of ADEN/JRC Advertised Value (Rs.) Validity of Offer Period of Completion 14,99,959.66 60 Days 6 Months

3899/2024
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Condolence

With profound grief and sorrow, we inform the sad demise of **Smt. Sita Devi, wife of Shri Hans Raj Parihar, who works at SP College, Srinagar.** She passed away on Wednesday, 18th December 2024.

A condolence meeting was led by All Jammu and Kashmir Colleges Non-Teaching Employees Association President, Javed Ahmad Akhoun and attended by senior members, including the Vice President, General Secretary, Joint Secretary, and other key figures within the organization.

During the session, special prayers were offered for the peace of the departed soul, as well as for strength and patience for the grieving family to endure this immense loss.

President All Jammu and Kashmir Colleges Non-Teaching Employees Association, Javed Ahmad Akhoun have also extended his sympathies to the bereaved family and also prayed to Almighty to bestow courage to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss.

**JAVED AHMAD AKHOON
PRESIDENT
ALL J&K CNTEA**

inf

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- PATTAN: 01954-293507
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HIGHWAY STATUS

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

HIJRI CALENDAR
18 Jumada al-Sani
1446

PRAYERS

FAJR	6: 02
ZUHR	12:28
ASR	3: 48
Magrib	5:29
ISHA	6: 55

This Day In History

- 1866 - Fetterman Massacre: Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho Indians kill all 81 US Army soldiers in the worst military disaster ever suffered by the U.S. Army on the Great Plains
- 1894 - Mackenzie Bowell becomes the 5th Prime Minister of Canada
- 1898 - French Scientists Pierre and Marie Curie discover radium
- 1906 - British Parliament pass two important pieces of social legislation: The Trades Disputes Bill, legalizing peaceful picketing, and The Workmen's Compensation Act, broadening employers' liability for accidents
- 1907 - Dutch government of De Master falls due to war budget
- 1910 - Explosion in coal mine in Hulton England, 344 mine workers dies
- 1912 - Denmark, Norway & Sweden declare neutrality in Comende war
- 923 -- Nepal changes from British protectorate to independent nation
- 1932 Giants sign former outfielder Billy Southworth as a coach
- 1933 - Dried human blood serum 1st prepared, University of Pennsylvania
- 1933 Fox Films signs Shirley Temple aged 5, to a studio contract
- 1933 Newfoundland reverts to being a crown colony of Great Britain
- 1936 Bradman's 2nd consecutive Test Cricket duck! Australia all out for 80
- 1937 - The first full-length animated feature film and the earliest in the Walt Disney Animated Classics series, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", premieres at the Carthay Circle Theatre
- 1937 - Chicago Black Hawks left wing Paul Thompson becomes first player in NHL history to score a goal against his brother; scores on bro Cecil of the Boston Bruins with just 9 seconds left in regulation; Bruins win though, 2-1
- 1939 - Adolf Hitler names Adolf Eichmann leader of "Referat IV B", responsible for evictions and Jewish immigration

From KO Archives

Mehdi Hasan Anxious To Sing Again

Mubashir Hasan

LAHORE- Severe mental stress, excessive use of pan with tobacco contents, smoking and fluctuating blood pressure are some of the factors which led to severe paralysis stroke to world's renowned singer and Ghazal Maestro, Mehdi Hasan who is currently under treatment at Sheikh Zaid Hospital here.

This is what his doctors said while talking to The Nation newspaper on Monday. This did not come as a surprise to the great singer as he had already suffered a mild stroke of paralysis almost a year back when he was in India in connection with some musical concert. He has been under treatment since then complaining

weakness in his right leg, his son Kamran told this scribe. "I underwent a similar low intensity attack of paralysis as far back as in 1968 but recovered soon by the grace of God Almighty, Mehdi Hasan himself told in a stumbling tone while recalling his past medical history.

"The stroke affected left side of his brain where lies the speech area and thus paralyzed the rightside of the body including the tongue", said Dr.Farrukh Iqbal who is closely monitoring the health of the great singer of the subcontinent. Khan Sahib is also suffering from asthma and has difficulty in breathing, he further said, adding that he is being nebulized every six hours to ease his breathing.

Kashmir Observer, 21 December, 1998)

University of Kashmir

NIRF Rankings Reveal Deeper Institutional Challenges

Muhammad Tahir

University of Kashmir's (KU) performance in the 2024 National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) shows concerning trends that merit serious attention from policymakers and educational administrators. Over the past five years, KU has struggled to maintain its competitive edge despite substantial financial resources.

While KU secured the 14th position in the newly introduced 'Top 50 State Public Universities' category in NIRF 2024, there is more to this achievement than meets the eye. The university has slipped 11 positions in the Overall Ranking and 12 spots in the Top 100 University category compared to the previous year. This decline is particularly worrying for an institution with a 76-year legacy and substantial financial resources.

Year	Overall Ranking	Top 100 University Ranking
2020	78	48
2021	76	48
2022	84	53
2023	58	33
2024	69	45
	-11	-12

Mixed Performance

KU's teaching metrics show modest progress, with a 0.5-point overall gain in Teaching, Learning & Resources (TLR). Two factors drove this improvement: Faculty-Student Ratio rose by 0.78 points, while Faculty Quality and Experience increased by 0.14 points. These gains likely reflect recent recruitment efforts, which expanded the teaching staff from 552 to 644 between 2021 and 2024.

Despite these positive developments, KU lost ground in other areas: Financial Resources and Utilization (FRU) sub-parameter.

KU's Resource Efficiency Challenge

Perhaps the most striking finding is what might be termed the "efficiency gap" in KU's resource utilization. With an annual FRU of approximately Rs 375 crore, KU outspends several better-performing institutions. Yet, this financial advantage has not resulted in proportional improvements in key performance metrics.

While KU's operational expenditure increased by 21.80% over three years (from Rs 276 crores to Rs 337 crores), its academic expenditure saw only a modest 6.80% rise (from Rs 35 crores to Rs 37 crores). This disparity raises questions about the institution's spending priorities and efficiency in resource allocation.

The NIRF measures FRU using two main factors:

- Academic expenditure (ACE): Average yearly capital spending per student.
- Operational expenditure (OPE): Average yearly recurring costs per student.

These calculations exclude hostel maintenance and related services.

Over the last three years (2020-2023), KU's spending per student has grown by 23% to Rs 3.85 lakh. While day-to-day operational costs per student jumped by nearly 23% to Rs 3.46 lakh, academic investments saw a modest 9.31% rise to Rs 39,000 per student. But here is the catch: despite spending more overall, KU's FRU score actually dropped by 1.89 points this year. This drop may reflect reduced spending across several key areas.

Year	FRU	OPE	ACE
2020-21	3122478996	2767439508	355039488
2021-22	3263259942	2981543835	371716107
2022-23	3749820022	3370639248	379180774
	+20%	+21.80%	+6.80%

The numbers become even more concerning when looking at academic spending. As student enrolment grew from 9,380 to 9,730 between 2021 to 2023, academic expenditure per student unexpectedly fell from Rs 39,628 to Rs 38,970 - a 1.66% decline. This raises important questions about resource allocation: shouldn't adding 350 more students lead to increased academic investment, not less?

The Research Conundrum

KU's Research and Professional Practice (RPP) score increased by 4.32 points year-over-year. However, this improvement is primarily due to the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) sub-parameter, which inflated the score to 31.25 points. When considering only the original four sub-parameters, KU's performance actually declined by 0.09 points to 26.84, indicating that the overall increase does not reflect genuine improvement in core research practices.

Despite a 1.2-point increase in Publication score, KU's Quality of Publication score dropped by 0.93 points. Given NIRF's strong emphasis on RPP scores and its reliance on Scopus and Web of Science databases, KU should incentivize its faculty to publish in these indexed journals rather than predatory ones. A 2021 study found that about two-thirds of KU's social sciences publications appeared in predatory journals, which do not contribute to RPP scores. The focus should shift from quantity to quality in research output.

KU scored just 0.50 points in Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) for 2024. While this, perhaps, reflects a patent from Dr. Shabir Ahmad Parah and his team from the Department of Electronics and Instrumentation Technology, recent patents for water tank cleaning technology and smart room heater is expected to improve KU's IPR score in the next NIRF ranking, as these fall outside the current three-year assessment period (2020-2022).

Project Funding and Consultancy

KU's Footprint of Projects and Professional Practice (FPPP) score



dropped 0.37 points this year, reflecting sharp declines in both funding and consultancy. Research funding at KU has plummeted by 68% - from Rs 40.91 crore for 82 projects in FY 2020-21 to Rs 13.25 crore for 84 projects in FY 2022-23. Consultancy projects have seen an even steeper decline of 79%.

These figures suggest a significant weakening of the university's research ecosystem. This decline has broader implications since funded research, which help generate new empirical data, often leads to high-quality publications in prestigious journals. To improve its Research and Professional Practice score, KU must actively pursue diverse funding sources beyond ICSSR to retain intellectual property rights and data usage and focus on converting research projects into impactful publications.

The Employment Challenge

The placement figures paint a troubling picture at KU. With less than 15% of its students securing jobs through campus recruitment, KU lags far behind its peer institutions. Anna University, Panjab University, University of Kerala, and Jadavpur University all boast placement rates above 40% - nearly triple KU's performance. This falls drastically short of UGC's 2018 'Quality Mandate' target of 50% placement. What makes this even more concerning is that KU ranks second highest in faculty-student ratio among these institutions (excluding PhD scholars), and third highest when including doctoral students. Despite this advantage in teaching resources, the university's placement outcomes remain disappointingly low.

Anna University, operating on about half of KU's FRU (Rs 23,000 per student), achieves a 60% placement rate for postgraduates. Even more impressive is Jadavpur University, which manages 68% placement despite spending just Rs 20,000 per student - less than half of KU's investment.

University Name	PG (2-year program) Students Graduated	Placement	Selected for Higher Education
University of Kashmir	2729	426 (15%)	318 (11%)
Anna University	886	532 (60%)	36 (4%)
Panjab University	2105	925 (43%)	582 (62%)
Kerala University	1914	881 (46%)	843 (44%)
Jadavpur University	1448	999 (68%)	449 (31%)

Despite higher spending per student, KU's placement record raises serious questions about how effectively these resources are being used to prepare students for the job market. In a region already grappling with 18% unemployment - more than double the all-India average of 8% - KU's placement struggles are particularly concerning. While the valley's limited private sector poses challenges, this alone does not explain the full picture. Other universities in moderately industrialized states, like Odisha, have managed to secure jobs for over 80% of their postgraduates. KU's low placement rates may be contributing to J&K's growing educated unemployment crisis. For a premier institution in the region, this calls for an urgent rethinking of how academic programs align with employment opportunities.

KU's Image Problem

KU reputation among employers and academics remains a major concern. Scoring just 30.53 out of 100 in perception ratings, KU lags far behind its peers - Panjab University (69.13) and Jadavpur University (86.62). This score, based on feedback from a large category of employers, professionals and academic peers, represents a critical area for improvement if KU aims to climb the rankings.

To improve its Perception score KU needs to strategically focus on key areas. To enhance visibility among employers, KU can strengthen collaboration with industry through partnerships with leading private organizations. Introducing 'Industry PhD program' can help aligning doctoral research with industry needs. This will allow KU attract partnerships with companies, offering students valuable industry exposure and improving their job prospects. Regular and deeper interactions with employers and recruiters, regular feedback sessions, and tailored training programs for students can help in aligning KU's curriculum with industry needs, thereby improving employer and peer perception of KU. Effective communication and branding, including a strong online presence and media engagement, are crucial to positively influence perception of KU among the stakeholders.

The Private Sector Challenge

Lovely Professional University (LPU), established just 18 years

ago, has shown remarkable progress in NIRF rankings, jumping from 78th position in 2020 to 27th in 2024. Similarly, SRM Institute of Science & Technology has climbed from 35th to 12th place. Meanwhile, KU's advancement has been minimal, improving by only three positions over five years before its recent decline.

Money does not seem to be the issue. KU's Rs 375 crore budget actually exceeds LPU's Rs 367 crore. The message is clear: it is not about how much you spend, but how effectively you use those resources.

As competition within the higher education sector intensifies, KU must not only improve its absolute performance but also keep pace with the rapid advancements of newer, more agile institutions. This requires innovative approaches to education delivery, research output, and stakeholder engagement to reverse the current negative trend in rankings.

Falling Short of Legacy

Despite impressive credentials - 644 experienced faculty members, 1,160 full-time PhD students, and over 540 PhD graduates in three years - Kashmir University's research standing falls short of expectations. The university's absence from NIRF's 'Top 50 Research Institutions' list stands in stark contrast to peer institutions like Panjab University, Jadavpur University, and Anna University.

This underperformance extends to specific departments. The 50-year-old Law Department fails to crack the 'Top 30 in Law', while the 33-year-old School of Business remains outside the Top 100 in Management, lagging behind even relatively new business school at LPU.

The research quality at KU's Law Department and School of Business raises serious concerns. A telling example: The Business School's publication list on its website consists entirely of works from Notion Press, a self-publishing company. Similarly, three out of four books listed on the Law Department's website are self-published through the same platform. This reliance on vanity publishing, rather than peer-reviewed academic outlets, not only hurts KU's NIRF rankings but also damages the academic reputation of these departments. It raises serious questions about research standards and academic rigor at these flagship departments.

Year	Kashmir University	Panjab University	Anna University	Jadavpur University
2021	Nil	28	32	17
2022	Nil	29	21	13
2023	Nil	33	13	19
2024	Nil	35	17	21

The Way Forward

Strong rankings boost prestige and appeal, while poor performance risks decreased interest, reduced funding (in some cases), and a weakened reputation. This makes the university's competitiveness and growth contingent on its ranking. Therefore, KU must adopt a strategic approach to improve its rankings and fulfill its potential.

First and foremost, KU must develop a 'comprehensive strategic document' to guide the university toward academic excellence. It is not merely about increasing spending, but about making targeted investments in priority areas, identifying where immediate interventions are needed, and ensuring that these investments yield optimal outcomes.

Without strategic planning, efficient resource utilization, and a culture of academic excellence, even well-funded institutions risk falling behind in the increasingly competitive higher education landscape. KU stands at a critical crossroads. As newer institutions demonstrate remarkable agility in climbing the NIRF rankings, KU must move beyond merely increasing expenditure to implementing strategic reforms. The success of private institutions offers valuable lessons in adaptation and innovation.

The performance of private institutions in the NIRF rankings raises some questions. What strategies are these newer institutions employing to achieve such significant improvements? How can provincial universities like KU adapt to the competitive tertiary education landscape? What other factors, apart from financial resources, are contributing to these ranking disparities? For KU, although located in a specific regional and political context, these trends signal an urgent need for strategic planning. The university must identify areas where it lags behind its competitors within SPU category and accordingly frame and implement targeted initiatives to improve its performance across key NIRF parameters.

To this end, the following recommendations are crucial:

- KU must ensure that its financial investments lead to tangible improvements in key ranking parameters, particularly in areas that directly impact academic and research excellence.
- It must invest in modern facilities to drive innovation and increase the potential for patents.
- It must incentivize high-impact research and address insufficient research output. One way to do it is to establish awards for outstanding research contributions.
- It can recruit a large pool of postdoctoral research fellows on short-term but well-paid contracts. Postdoctoral fellows are often eager and highly productive researchers. With their expertise, they can help attract research grants and funding, as well as mentor junior scholars. This can create a thriving research culture within the institute.
- It must develop a well-thought out strategic plan to enhance the university's perception among employers and academic peers. It can initiate targeted and long-term programs to improve the university's reputation within academic and professional circles.
- It should develop deeper ties with industry for internships, placements, and collaborative projects to create more job opportunities for its graduates. Introducing Industry PhDs can improve graduate outcomes by providing relevant skills and valuable industry connections to enhance employability.

The path forward requires more than incremental changes. KU must transform its approach to education delivery, research output, and stakeholder engagement. In today's competitive academic landscape, maintaining the status quo is not an option. The university needs decisive action to reverse its ranking decline and ensure sustained progress in academic excellence. This strategic overhaul is challenging but essential for KU to reclaim its position as a leading institution of higher learning.

Kashmir in Memory, Poetry and Translation

In Conversation with Neerja Mattoo

Bilal Wagay

Neerja Mattoo is a distinguished academic, writer, and translator whose work has been pivotal in bringing Kashmiri culture and literature to a wider audience. A former professor of English at Government College for Women, Srinagar, Mattoo has dedicated her life to preserving and showcasing the rich literary traditions of Kashmir, particularly the voices of women. Her acclaimed translations, such as "The Mystic and the Lyric" and "The Stranger Beside Me", illuminate the depth of Kashmiri poetry and prose, bridging the gap between the region's unique heritage and global readers.

Besides, her testimony is a living embodiment of the minority community's persecution, violence and memory.

This interview of Mattoo with Bilal Wagay for *Kashmir Observer*, will explore Mattoo's literary journey, her contributions to reviving Kashmiri women's narratives, her role in fostering cross-cultural understanding through her works, Pandit exodus and the current hindutva narrative to appropriate Pandit question. By highlighting her legacy, we aim to inspire readers to delve into the heart of Kashmiri identity through her lens.

1. What inspired you to focus on translating and preserving Kashmiri literature, particularly women's narratives?

In 1985, I was at a seminar in Delhi University with a colleague of mine from the college. In a break we were speaking to each other in Kashmiri when a Professor from Delhi University asked us which language we were speaking because he had never heard it before. We answered that it is Kashmiri to which he responded with surprise, "Is Kashmiri a language?"

I was dismayed that our language which had a history of more than a thousand years was not even heard of in parts of our country. It was to answer his question that I decided to translate from Kashmiri into English, so that the rest of the country should become aware of our rich literature. I wanted the world to know the powerful voices of women writers from the fourteenth century onwards who enriched the Kashmiri language and literature. Besides, when militancy struck Kashmir in the early nineties, it seemed that everything in Kashmir was being destroyed, and I wanted to preserve some of our rich literary legacy.

2. It is said that in Kashmir, personal is political. How has your upbringing in Kashmir shaped your literary sensibilities and creative vision?

I grew up in a Kashmir that was syncretic, where different communities didn't live in separate mohallas. Every neighbourhood had a mixed population, of course the Muslims were in a huge majority but there would always be a sprinkling of Kashmiri Pandit homes in every mo-

halla. We took this diversity for granted, enjoyed each other's festivals and spoke the same language. There was no concept of the Other. I grew up with the songs of Habba Khatoon and the vakhs of Lal Ded ringing in my ears. The folk singers would begin their performance with a Lal vakh and then go on to sing the lyrics of our women romantic poets like Arnimal. Later on, I paid serious attention to the thought contained in these and realised that they were such powerful voices in the two streams of poetry, mysticism and lyricism that they needed to be translated into English for a wider audience. I also wanted to dispel the notion of Kashmiri women as weak or tongue less.

3. What do you believe is unique about Kashmiri literature, especially its poetry and mysticism, that sets it apart from other regional literatures?

I haven't studied much regional literature but I know that mysticism is a very powerful stream



of the world. Whether it is located in the Christian, Sufi or Buddhist traditions. The experience described had similar tones so the vocabulary is available in all the languages which describe a mystic experience. So the challenge was only to find equally powerful vocabulary in English which fortunately was available in English poetry. But for me the most difficult part was to understand the language of Rupa Bhavani which was a mix of old Kashmiri and even Farsi. She was dense, her phrases cryptic even elliptical while conveying her mystical practices. Fortunately a scholar and

enough to her for enabling me to preserve the spiritual essence of her verses.

5. Short stories often reflect society's undercurrents. How do the narratives in *The Stranger Beside Me* mirror the socio-political and emotional realities of Kashmir?

Actually I have published four books of Kashmiri short stories translated into English: *The Stranger Beside Me*, *Contemporary Kashmiri Short Stories* (Sahitya Akademi), *Kath - Stories From Kashmir* (Sahitya Akademi) and *The Greatest Kashmiri Short Stories Ever Told* (Aleph). The first Kashmiri short story was written soon after the end of autocracy and feudalism in Kashmir. It was an era of hope and that is reflected in the first short stories written in the late forties. But the discontent and non-fulfilment of aspirations became a major theme of the stories written

in the fifties onwards.

The seeds of the discontent can be seen in the works of Ali Mohammad Lone, Amin Kamil, Akhtar Mohidin and Hari Krishan Kaul. An attempt to deal with unpleasant realities is made in the surrealist works of Hriday Kaul Bharati and Farooq Masoodi. The tearing apart of the social fabric in the nineties is very well depicted in the works of Rattan Lal Shant, Roop Krishna Bhat, Mushtaq Ahmad Mushtaq and Dheeba Nazir who honestly describe the plight of those forced to leave their motherland and live in a climatically and in other ways inhospitable terrain, longing for their natural habitat.

6. Many of your works bridge the gap between Kashmiri heritage and a global audience. How do you approach this balance?

Language is the most important tool in communication. English is a global language and translating the classic work of Kashmiri writers into English makes it available to a global leadership. One has to be faithful to the original, not add or delete anything, nor try to impose one's own feelings or ideas on the original.

7. Translation can sometimes dilute the essence of a text. How do you ensure the authenticity of the original work while translating?

In the beginning, I used to send my translation of a short story to the original writer and wait for his response. I was fortunate that most of these great short story writers were still alive. It was only after their approval that I proceeded. Besides, if one has the ability to think in two languages simultaneously, one's instinct should be the best judge.

8. Do you think enough is being done to promote Kashmiri literature on a national and global scale? If not, what can be done?

Translation can play a vital role in this as the world becomes aware of the rich literature used by Kashmiris, the interest will grow, as it already has. The BBC recently did a forum discussion on Lal Ded, in which, apart from me, American and British scholars who had studied Lal Ded participated.

9. How do you see the contemporary literary scene in Kashmir? Are young writers' poets carrying forward the legacy?

Yes, there are young poets, men and women who are writing to carry forward the two great streams of Kashmiri poetry, mystic and the lyrical. Bimla Raina and Azi Ded in the former, Rehman Rahi, Naseem Shafai and Nighat Sahiba in the latter. I find the literary scene is bright.

10. With the socio-political changes in Kashmir, do you think literature still holds the same power to preserve the region's identity and heritage?

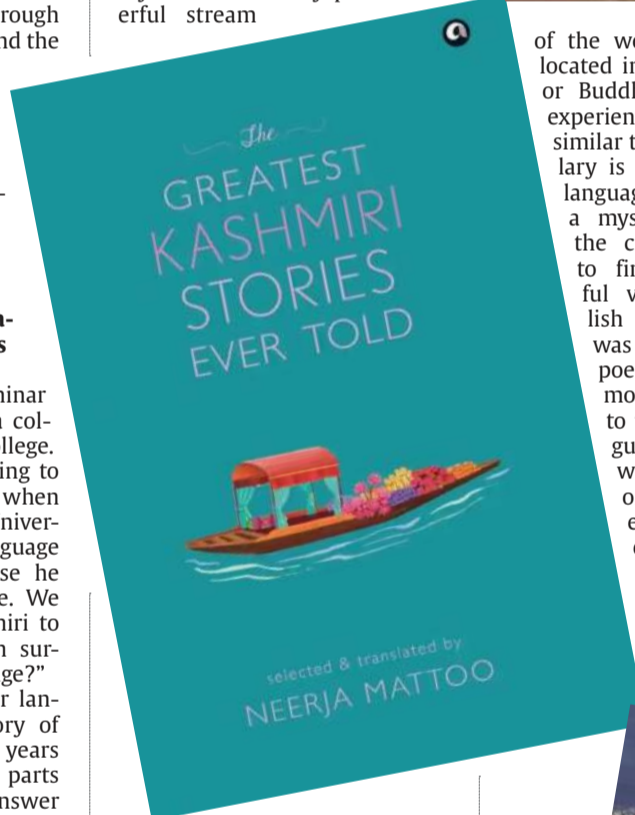
Literature is an authentic record of events in different eras. So its importance cannot be overestimated. Voices though they may seem quiet at times are lurking on the sides.

11. As a Kashmiri Pandit, do you see memory as a timeless emblem of resilience and resistance?

It holds true not only for Kashmiri Pandits, but for all Kashmiris irrespective of their religion. Memory cannot be erased and preserving it in literature has been the work of most Kashmiri poets and short story writers at present. I believe in the saying, "Those who refuse to learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

PICTURE CREDITS: SOURCED FROM THE AUTHOR

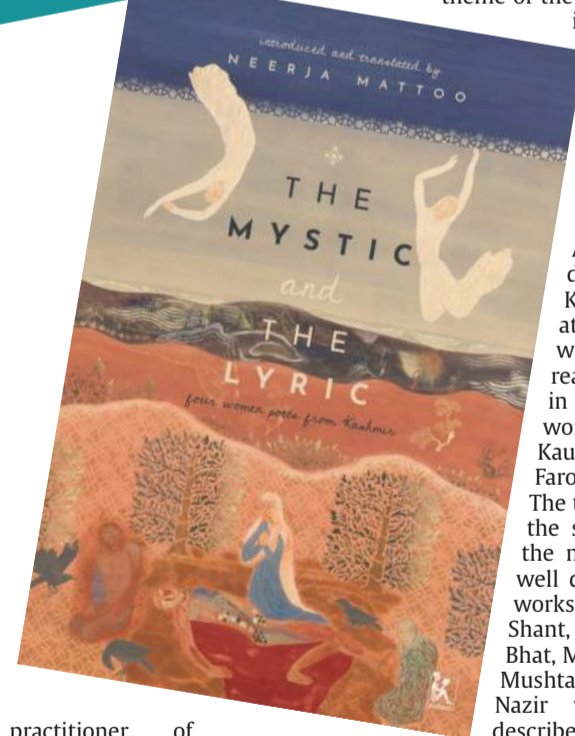
The author is an academic and freelance writer



in many Indian languages. Women poets like Akka Mahadevi, Andal, Meera Bai are very well known and have been translated from Tamil and Hindi respectively. There is much in common but Lal Ded's mysticism soars above all as the expression of profound experience and practice conveyed to the masses in their own idiom and familiar metaphors taken from the subaltern life. There are common experiences of suffering as a woman but the fact that the Kashmiri women poets articulate their experiences boldly and shame the men by exposing their cruelty sets them apart. This is what prompted me to write the book, "The Mystic and the Lyric".

4. What were some of the challenges you faced while translating centuries-old mystic poetry into English? How did you preserve its spiritual essence?

Mysticism is a common theme in most sophisticated literatures



practitioner of Kashmir Saivism from Austria, Bettina Bauemer whose middle name now is Sharada, helped me to unravel the till then obscure meaning. I cannot be grateful



Literature is an authentic record of events in different eras. So its importance cannot be overestimated. Voices though they may seem quiet at times are lurking on the sides



LAL DED'S MYSTICISM SOARS ABOVE ALL AS THE EXPRESSION OF PROFOUND EXPERIENCE AND PRACTICE CONVEYED TO THE MASSES IN THEIR OWN IDIOM AND FAMILIAR METAPHORS TAKEN FROM THE SUBALTERN LIFE. There are common experiences of suffering as a woman but the fact that the Kashmiri women poets articulate their experiences boldly and shame the men by exposing their cruelty sets them apart

IUST Launches 100-Hour Infosys-AI Training Program

Awantipora, December 20: Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) today launched the 100-hour Infosys-AI Training Program, a transformative initiative under the Finishing School for Employability by Infosys Foundation, in collaboration with ICT Academy. This specialized program by IUST's Department of Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) is tailored for students of the School of Engineering and Technology and aims to equip them with cutting-edge skills in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and soft skills to make them industry-ready.



The inaugural session witnessed the presence of dignitaries, including Mr. Lovetesh Kumar, Senior Manager at ICT Academy and Head of the Infosys Foundation Jammu & Kashmir Initiative; Prof. Ayaz Hassan Moon, Dean of Academic Affairs; Prof. Abdul Wahid, Registrar of IUST; and Dr. Kaiser Giri, Dean

of the School of Engineering and Technology. Also in attendance were Mr. Imran, Coordinator from ICT Academy; Dr. Nissar Paul, the program's soft skills trainer; faculty members; Heads of Departments; and students.

During the inaugural ceremony, Mr. Lovetesh Kumar elaborated on the objectives of

the 100-hour AI training program, which integrates technical and soft skills training. He stressed how the program aims to foster critical thinking, enhance practical expertise in AI and ML, and empower students to meet industry demands effectively.

Prof. Ayaz Hassan Moon, Dean

of Academic Affairs, spoke about the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence in reshaping industries globally, and He encouraged students to take full advantage of this unique opportunity to develop industry-relevant skills that will pave the way for promising career prospects. Prof. Abdul Wahid, Registrar of

IUST, lauded the initiative as a model collaboration between academia and industry, noting that such programs not only enhance technical competencies but also instill confidence and professionalism in students.

Highlighting the program's role in bridging academia and industry, Dr. Sajaad Ahmad Lone, Head of Computer Science and Engineering, expressed gratitude to Infosys and ICT Academy for their collaborative efforts. Dr. Lone emphasized the importance of aligning academic learning with industry requirements and preparing students for future challenges in the technology-driven world. Dr. Nissar Paul aims to strengthen communication, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities, further enhancing the employability of participants. Mr. Imran, Coordinator from ICT Academy, commended the students' enthusiasm and assured continuous support from ICT Academy in facilitating such impactful programs.

Cab driver stabbed to death following dispute over Rs 400 fare in Delhi

New Delhi, Dec 20: A 26-year-old cab driver was stabbed to death by a passenger and his friends after they picked up a fight over the fare of Rs 400 in northeast Delhi's Sonia Vihar area, police said on Thursday.

The incident took place on the intervening night of December 17 and 18.

Sandeep, who drove a taxi for Rapido, was found injured in a pool of blood at the roadside near Sonia Vihar Pusta, police said in a statement.

Sandeep told police that he brought three passengers -- Deepanshu alias Ashu, Rahul and Mayank -- from Noida. After reaching Pusta 2 in Sonia Vihar, the ride was completed.

Sandeep told police the accused did not want to pay the fare of Rs 400 and started fighting with him.

During the fight one of their associates Nikhil and a minor

allegedly stabbed Sandeep in his head and abdomen. Later, Sandeep succumbed to his injuries during the treatment, police said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (northeast) Rakesh Paweriya said during investigation, the CCTV footage near the spot was checked. During further investigations, it was found that the cab was booked in the name of one Prateek.

"Prateek revealed that on December 17, he along with Deepanshu, Rahul, Mayank, Nikhil, and one minor met in Kondli where they consumed liquor. Thereafter, he booked a cab for Deepanshu, Rahul and Mayank as they live in the Sonia Vihar area," Paweriya said.

At the instance of Prateek, Deepanshu was arrested and he disclosed that his friend Nikhil, who later joined them during the fight, allegedly stabbed Sandeep.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Srinagar Shivers

station in the valley as the minimum settled at the low of minus 9.2 degrees Celsius, the office said.

The minimum temperature in Qazigund was minus 7.6 degrees Celsius, minus 6.5 degrees Celsius in Kupwara in north Kashmir and minus 5.8 degrees in Kokernag of south Kashmir minus, the weather department said.

However, the minimum temperature is likely to fall further in the valley and there will be a cold wave at isolated to scattered places during the next few days, the department said.

'Chillai-Kalan', the harshest 40-day winter period in Kashmir, begins on Saturday. During this period the chances of snowfall are most frequent and the temperature drops considerably.

It ends on January 31 next year, but the cold wave continues with a 20-day long 'Chillai-Khurd' and a 10-day long 'Chillai-Bachha'.

MeT Predicts

department (MeT), Dr Mukhtar Ahmad told Kashmir Observer.

From December 23 to 24, a dry weather condition is expected in J&K followed by a light snowfall over higher reaches towards 27th late evening or night to 28th forenoon, he said, adding that the weather would remain generally dry on December 29 & 30.

He added that the light snow is also expected at a few higher reaches on December 31st.

Furthermore, the MeT in its advisory has said that the cold wave is expected to continue at isolated to scattered places.

In view of fresh snowfall, sub-freezing temperature & icy conditions over roads of important passes and higher reaches, the tourists, travelers and transporters are advised to follow administration and traffic advisory.

Pertinently, Kashmir parts, mostly plains, are experiencing the prolonged dry spell

while the deficit rainfall in this season starting from October 01, 2024 to December 18, 2024 increasing to 78 per cent across Jammu and Kashmir. The increase in the deficit precipitation has been witnessed amidst no forecast of any major wet spell for the next ten days in Jammu and Kashmir.

Moreover, the MeT Director said the situation is expected to continue for the next few days, but the night temperatures would likely improve between December 27 and 31st.

"We have seen such conditions in the past as well and today the prolonged dry spell, snowfall in the higher reaches and the impact of La Nina is leading to the present situation," he said.

How Climate

since June, with temperatures reaching 34°C. On July 3, 2024, Kashmir recorded a temperature of 35.6°C, the highest in the last 25 years.

"The dry spells have become longer, and the rains, when they come, are too heavy, washing away what little we have left. It's heartbreaking to see our fields barren," said Shakeela Begum, a grower from Pulwama.

Official data indicates that saffron production over the past two decades has decreased by 65 percent, dropping from 15.95 tonnes in 1990 to 2.6 tonnes in 2023-24. Additionally, the area under saffron cultivation has shrunk from 5,707 hectares in 1996-97 to 2,387.71 hectares in 2018-19.

In response to these challenges, the government introduced a drip irrigation system in 2010 as part of the Rs 412-crore National Saffron Mission to combat prolonged dry spells.

"The National Saffron Mission had good intentions, but the implementation faced technical and logistical challenges. We are working to address these issues," admitted an official from the Agriculture Department.

The ongoing crisis has serious implications

not only for the saffron growers but also for the regional economy. Saffron, often referred to as the "golden spice," is an integral part of Kashmir's agricultural heritage, and its decline threatens the livelihoods of thousands of farmers who depend on it for their income.

"We used to produce enough to support our families, but now, I have had to borrow money just to survive. This isn't just about saffron—it's about our lives," said Abdul Ghani, a seasoned grower in Budgam.

Climate experts have also weighed in on the issue. "The rising temperatures and changing rainfall patterns are not temporary. The government and farmers must adapt quickly to preserve this iconic crop," said Dr. Farooq Ahmad, a leading climate expert in the region.

The challenges faced by Kashmir's saffron farmers due to prolonged dry spells and climate change highlight the urgent need for effective government interventions and climate-resilient farming practices.

"We have invested significantly in infrastructure and research, but changing climate dynamics require long-term and collaborative solutions. Farmers also need to adopt modern practices," said a senior official in the Horticulture Ministry. (inputs from KINS)

Winter Break

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.

Omar Praises

Abdullah was warmly welcomed by Devendra Budhiya, the National President of Vishnoi Mahasabha, and his associates.

Speaking about the discussion, CM had said,

"This pre-budget meeting with the Union Finance Minister is a crucial opportunity for me to highlight the needs of Jammu and Kashmir's business community, traders, and craftsmen. I aim to address our region's financial concerns and advocate for policies that support its growth."

J&K Assembly

sources, the committee will consist mostly of experienced lawmakers who are well-versed with procedures governing functioning of the Assembly.

The exercise would be undertaken in light of provisions of Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act-2019, which empower the Assembly to make Rules for conduct of its business.

According to section 46 of Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act-2019, the Legislative Assembly may make rules for regulating, subject to the provisions of this Act, its procedure and the conduct of its business.

The Reorganisation Act also provides that until these rules are made, the rules of procedure and standing orders in force immediately before the commencement of this Act, with respect to the Legislative Assembly of the existing State of Jammu and Kashmir shall have effect in relation to the Legislative Assembly of the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir subject to such modifications and adaptations as may be made therein by the Speaker of Legislative Assembly. (KNO)

HC Quashes 2 PSA

detainees from the preventive custody forthwith provided they were not required in connection with any other case.

Sheikh was booked under PSA in terms of an order passed by District Magistrate Srinagar on August 30, 2022, while Dar was placed under "preventive detention" by virtue of an order issued by the Magistrate on 19.08.2019.

"The unexplained delay in execution of the warrant of detention upon the petitioner renders the subjective satisfaction of the detaining authority doubtful. Consequently, the impugned order of detention has been rendered unsustainable in law", the Court said in response to one of the grounds raised by the detainee against his detention.

In reply to another ground of the challenge to the detention order, the court pointed out that the detainee could not be expected to make an effective and purposeful representation which is his constitutional right guaranteed under Article 22(5) of the Constitution of India, unless and until the material, on which the detention was based, was supplied to him.

"The failure on the part of detaining authority to supply the material renders the detention order illegal and unsustainable in law," the court said and quashed the detention against Sheikh. Similarly the court quashed the detention of Dar under PSA and ordered his release if not needed in any case.

Over 1 Lakh

Functions of Vehicle Scrapping Facility) Rules, 2021, and the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, ELVs are defined as vehicles that are either no longer validly registered, declared unfit through Automated Fitness Centres, or have had their registrations cancelled.

Vehicles not tested within 180 days of the last fitness test or the expiration of their fitness certificate also qualify as ELVs.

As per the rules notified by the Central government, these vehicles are to be scrapped at Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities (RVSFs).

The establishment of such facilities and strict enforcement of the scrapping process will not only reduce road hazards but also contribute to environmental sustainability by ensuring the responsible disposal and recycling of vehicle components.



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Div Com Reviews Arrangements For Celebration Of Republic Day-2025



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: With an aim to ensure smooth and hassle free celebration of ensuing Republic Day-2024 in Kashmir, the Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Vijay Kumar Bidhuri Friday chaired a high level meeting of concerned Officers to review the civil and security arrangements to be put in place. The meeting was attended by, CEO SSCL/ Commissioner SMC, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Director School Education Kashmir, Director Health Services Kashmir Director Floriculture, Chief Engineers of PWD (R&B), KPDCL, PHE, UEED, MED Kashmir; Joint Director Information Kashmir, HoDs and representatives of Hospitality & Protocol, Fire & Emergency Services, Academy of Art Culture & Languages Kashmir, Regional Transport, J&K Sports Council, Youth Services & Sports, State Motors Garages, SMC and officers of other departments besides, senior officers of security agencies including BSF, CRPF and Police also attended the meeting in person.

Deputy Commissioners of other districts and other officers attended the meeting through video conferencing. The meeting was informed that the main event for the celebration of Republic Day shall be held at Bakshi Stadium, Srinagar. Addressing the meeting, Div Com emphasized on all concerned Officers to ensure meticulous arrangements for smooth and successful conduct of the event. He also stressed on close synergy between line departments to avoid any glitch. Bidhuri issued slew of instructions for selection of contingents, display of cultural programmes,

transportation & accommodation facilities for student participants, traffic management, security arrangements, refreshment, illumination of government buildings and other important arrangements for smooth conduct of the event.

KPDCL authorities were directed for proper illumination of main Government buildings, besides un-interrupted power supply to the main function venue on the said date.

The Div Com directed the PW(R&B) department to make comprehensive seating and heating arrangements for participants at the event.

For the live commentary, Div Com directed concerned departments including police, Information and Radio Kashmir to deputee expert commentators.

Div Com also directed Director Floriculture to make more decorative and creative floral arrangements for the event in consonance with the past practice.

Moreover, he asked all departments to conduct special cleanliness and sanitation drives within the office premises in view of celebrations.

Also, he directed the Director Health to deploy doctors, paramedical team and ambulance besides first aid team at the venue of Republic Day Celebration in case of any exigency. He also directed SMC and MED for making arrangements of snow clearance at the main function venue including parking places, roads leading to the selected venues in case of snowfall.

Further, he exhorted upon all concerned officers to ensure that all necessary arrangements are put in place well in time for smooth and successful celebration of the Republic Day.

Information Department Condolences With Ex- Jt. Director Inam Ul Haq Siddiqui

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Information Department today extended heartfelt condolences to Ex-Joint Director Information Kashmir, Inam ul Haq Siddiqui over the demise of his beloved father who passed away after a brief illness.

On the occasion, officials of the Information department held a condolence meet and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and courage to the family to bear the irreparable loss.

They also expressed solidarity and sympathy with Siddiqui at this point of grief & sorrow.

Tractor Driver Killed In Road Accident In North Kashmir

Agencies

BANDIPORA: A 35-year-old man lost his life, and his son sustained injuries in a road accident in the Nowgam Sonawari area of North Kashmir's Bandipora district on Friday.

Eyewitnesses said that a tractor rolled down into a gorge,

resulting in the death of driver Muhammad Yousuf Malla, a resident of Nowgam Sonawari, on the spot. His injured son was immediately shifted to the Community Health Centre (CHC) Sumbal for treatment. Police have taken cognizance of the incident and registered a case under relevant sections of law. (CNS)

Govt Committed To Safeguard Kashmir's Handicrafts

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu & Kashmir Government has assured to safeguard the interests of Kashmir's famed handicraft and handloom sector, which is directly linked to the livelihood of lakhs of artisans associated with the heritage craft, a spokesman said on Friday.

Responding to certain reports that have appeared in a section of the media with regard to proposed revision of tax slab in the upcoming GST Council meeting, a Government spokesman today clarified that the UT Government has already taken up the matter with the Union Ministry for Commerce & Industry, requesting therein for lowering the GST rate structure from existing 12% to 5% uniformly, including shawls priced above Rs.1,000, with the objective of reducing the tax burden on this artisan-driven industry and supporting marketability.

The spokesman described Handicrafts as a labour-intensive industry which constitutes 80% of the human workforce. He further stated that all efforts shall be made to revive the handicrafts sector, keeping in view the stiff competition from global markets and machine-made imitations.

Power Perils...

Unending Saga Of Unscheduled Outages, Distress Cuts In Kashmir

Agencies

SRINAGAR: With the onset of Chilly-Kalan—the 40 harshest winter days, people of many areas in Kashmir continue to face the unscheduled outages in both 'metered and non-metered' locales.

The electricity consumers of different areas said that the Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL) was unable to cater the least expected services to them or were 'making concocted promises' which the DISCOM couldn't deliver.

One of the locals of Kani Mazar in Downtown, Furqan Farooq said that the area is facing long durational power cuts.

Although the Power Development Department (PDD) has installed smart meters in our area, we continue to face unscheduled power outages. It seems that KPDCL has either failed to deliver the promised electricity as per the ongoing curtailment schedule or is making concocted promises to its consumers which the DISCOM is unable to cater."

He said, "In the bone chilling winters, we are being forced to use frosty water."

Another local of Fateh Kadal, Imtiaz Mir said, "Despite facing the extra power curtailment, the power voltage is extremely low during the peak hours."

"This year, the power curtailment has increased further in comparison to the previous years," Mir said, adding that, "We have a COPD patient at home and ironically the unscheduled power cuts and the low voltage are putting their lives at risk."



In the meantime, consumers of different areas of south Kashmir's Pulwama and Shopian districts narrated the same ordeal—saying, "PDD has miserably failed to provide any sort of relief to the electricity consumers."

One of the locals in Pulwama said, "Kashmir is reeling under intense cold for a month now and the authorities seem to least bothered about them in providing any sort of relief with regard to the unscheduled power cuts."

The residents of different places in north Kashmir and central Kashmir also expressed resentments against the unscheduled outages and extra curtailments.

Top officials of PDD informed KNO that, "Power demand is gradually increasing because of the intense cold weather conditions."

"If there are any areas that are facing unscheduled power outages and distress cuts, we will work on streamlining the issue," the official said.

The official further said, "Recently, we have increased the power supply by 100 to 150 Megawatts (MWs). Besides, we are also working on minimizing the AT&C losses so that our consumers will get uninterrupted power supply as per the schedule program."

In order to minimize the unscheduled power and distress power cuts in Kashmir valley, the Power Development Department has recently increased the power supply by nearly 100-150 MWs.

"Recently, some important decisions were taken by the Chief Minister Omar Abdullah regarding the electricity issues in Jammu and Kashmir. We have implemented those decisions to reduce the power cuts," the official had said.

He said, "KPDCL was receiving 1500 MWs of power and now it has been further increased to 1600-1650 MWs to address the unscheduled and distress power cuts. The same amount of power is already being supplied."—(KNO)

NGT Directs JKPC to Provide List Of Legal & Illegal Stone Crushing Units

Observer News Service

NEW DELHI: The National Green Tribunal -NGT in a landmark order has issued notice to J&K Government on illegal stone crushers operating in Doda district on the banks of Chenab river especially. The tribunal has also directed the J&K Pollution Control Committee -JKPC to provide a list of all the legal and illegal stone crushing units operating in the district.

This matter came up for hearing before NGT's Principal Bench in New Delhi on 14.12.2024. The bench of Justice Prakash Srivastava (NGT Chairperson) and Dr Senthil Veil (Expert Member) while hearing the application filed by noted activist Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat through his counsel Advocate Saurabh Sharma directed the Member Secretary J&K Pollution control Committee -JKPC to file a comprehensive report disclosing the details of all the legal and illegal stone crushers operating in district Doda.

"He will supply an advance copy of the report to the counsel for the applicant, who, on receipt of the same, will take appropriate steps to impede the concerned violating stone crushers and serve them. Respondent No. 5 (Member Secretary JKPC) will also submit a report disclosing the extent of illegal mining and dumping of muck in the Chenab River, which is being done in the district concerned" reads the order.

The petitioner in the case Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat raised the grievance against the illegal operation of about 10-12 stone crushers in district Doda J&K and alleged that these stone crushers are located near the banks of Chenab around Doda town within a radius of 5 to 6 km. The applicant has further alleged that illegal stone material is



excavated from surrounding mountains in the district of Doda on Doda-Kishtwar Road and Doda-Jammu Road, and this excavated material is used by illegal stone crushers.

The counsel of the petitioner Advocate Saurabh Sharma during the hearing informed the NGT bench that the illegal stone crushers are dumping muck into River Chenab and causing environmental hazards and also these stone crushers were causing air pollution in the area. He also said that Doda town falls under seismic zone and there were instances of land sinking in the past and illegal mining in mountains would have disastrous consequences in the area. The case is again listed for hearing on April 14th 2025.

CHILLA-I-KALAN:

Severe Cold Exacerbates Respiratory Issues, Say Doctors

Agencies

SRINAGAR: As the harshest part of winter, Chilla-i-Kalan, begins in Kashmir with temperatures already below freezing, doctors have advised extra precautions to avoid respiratory and other illnesses.

Dr Murtaza Ahmad, a general physician at the Directorate of Health Services Kashmir (DHSK) said the ongoing severe cold wave in Kashmir can exacerbate respiratory issues, particularly among children and the elderly.

He said children and the elderly are more vulnerable due to weaker immune systems. "Children's immune systems are still developing, making them less effective at fighting off infections like colds, flu or pneumonia, while ageing leads to a decline in immune function, reducing the ability of elderly individuals to combat respiratory infections," he said.

Dr Showkat, a child specialist, said that children's smaller airways are more prone to inflammation and blockage caused by cold air. Meanwhile, chronic conditions like asthma, bronchitis or COPD are common among elderly people, and cold weather further exacerbates these issues by constricting airways.

"Breathing in cold air can cause bronchospasm (tightening of airway muscles), leading to difficulty in breathing, particularly in children and the elderly," he said.

Children with conditions like asthma or allergies are at higher risk of exacerbations during cold weather, while elders with

chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease or emphysema are more susceptible to respiratory problems.

Dr Showkat further said that children's bodies are less efficient at maintaining core temperature. This, he said, increases the risk of hypothermia, which can worsen respiratory distress. Similarly, ageing reduces the body's ability to sense and respond to temperature changes and leads to complications.

Doctors have advised people to keep living spaces warm but well-ventilated to avoid indoor pollution, ensure children and elderly people dress in warm, layered clothing, provide a balanced diet with plenty of fluids and immunity-boosting foods, avoid outdoor exposure during extremely cold or foggy conditions and seek medical advice at the first sign of respiratory distress.

They said children and elderly persons should avoid unnecessary outdoor activities, especially during early mornings and late evenings when temperatures are lowest. "Maintaining hydration, nutrition, proper ventilation and vigilance for symptoms of hypothermia or frostbite—such as shivering, numbness, or confusion—is crucial," they added. "Immediate medical attention must be paid if these symptoms occur."

Chilla-i-Kalan, the 40-day period marking the harshest phase of winter in Kashmir, begins annually on December 21 and lasts until January 31. During this time, temperatures often plunge below freezing point, freezing water bodies like Dal Lake and water supply lines in several areas—(KNO)

No Compromise On Gulmarg's Ecology: GDA CEO



Agencies

SRINAGAR: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Gulmarg Development Authority (GDA), Tariq Hussain on Friday said the administration is committed to preserving Gulmarg's ecology and ensuring a seamless tourist experience as the region gears up for the peak winter season.

The GDA CEO warned that nobody will be allowed to disturb Gulmarg's ecology. He urged local stakeholders and service providers to regulate their trade practices.

"Tourists should be able to enjoy Gulmarg's natural potential without any disturbances. Our efforts are directed at preserving and maintaining the environment and ecosystem of this world-renowned destination," he added.

Acknowledging Gulmarg's status as a premier tourist attraction, he said the GDA is working on several fronts to

enhance the tourist experience while focusing on development. "We are geared up for winter preparations, including traffic management, road clearance, skiing slopes, cable car operations and accommodations," he said.

Hussain also highlighted the need to address the challenges posed by unorganised service sectors, which, while providing employment, require better regulation to ensure smooth operations. He said maintaining Gulmarg's hospitality reputation is crucial.

We are known for our hospitality globally, and it must be upheld. Tourists should feel welcomed at every step of their journey here," he said.

The officer called for cooperation among departments, stakeholders and tourists, terming it key to a "United Gulmarg".

Addressing concerns about grievances, he assured that the administration is prepared to redress any issues promptly—(KNO)

'Hormonal Imbalance, Sedentary Lifestyle Leading To Rising PCOD Cases In J&K'

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Hormonal imbalance and sedentary lifestyles are some of the major reasons behind the rising cases of Polycystic Ovarian Disease (PCOD) in Kashmir, doctors said. However, with timely medication and lifestyle changes, PCOD can be managed effectively, they added.

Dr Barjasta Bahar, a gynaecologist at DHSK said that PCOD occurs when the ovaries produce excessive amounts of male hormones (androgens), which leads to the formation of multiple cysts in the ovaries. "These cysts are immature follicles that fail to release eggs during the menstrual cycle, disrupting ovulation," she said. She added that the major

causes of PCOD are hormonal imbalances, such as excessive androgen production disrupting normal ovulation, poor diet, lack of physical activity, obesity, insulin resistance and genetic factors.

Dr Bahar said that PCOD can lead to infertility as difficulties in ovulation make it harder to conceive. It can also cause irregular periods, weight gain, acne, excessive hair growth and mental health issues.

Dr Rukhsana, another gynaecologist, said that PCOD has long-term health risks, including Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and endometrial cancer. "Regular exercise and a balanced diet help regulate hormones and insulin levels," she said,

adding, "People should focus on foods with a low glycemic index, such as whole grains, lean proteins and vegetables, and avoid processed foods and sugary snacks."

Dr Rukhsana also underlined the importance of staying active, managing stress and ensuring early diagnosis and regular monitoring to prevent complications.

Doctors said that hormonal therapy, insulin-sensitising drugs and other prescribed medications can help regulate periods and alleviate symptoms.

They said that PCOD is a manageable condition, adding that with lifestyle changes and timely medical interventions, women can reduce its impact on their lives and overall health—(KNO)

Overflow In Filtration Plant At Malshahibagh Causes Widespread Damage

Agencies

GANDERBAL: The residents of Malshahibagh in Ganderbal district have expressed concerns over the recent overflow of the local filtration plant, which they claim has caused significant damage to the nearby paddy fields and orchards.

Locals report that the overflow, which occurred unexpectedly, has resulted in extensive waterlogging, affecting agricultural productivity in the area. The flooding has particularly impacted paddy fields and orchards, leading to substantial financial losses

for farmers and residents.

According to the affected residents, the employees at the filtration plant appeared indifferent to the situation, leaving the community to deal with the aftermath.

"We have been left to suffer while the authorities do nothing. Our crops are ruined, and no one is taking responsibility," a local farmer said highlighting the frustration of the community.

The residents have appealed to the authorities to investigate the cause of the overflow and take immediate action to prevent further damage.

In response to the al-

legations, the concerned Junior Engineer (JE) denied any connection between the overflow and the filtration plant's operations. "This is not an overflow from our filtration plant," the JE said.

About the possible cause of the damage, the JE suggested other factors might be responsible. "We are conducting a thorough investigation to ensure the issue is addressed," the JE added.

The situation has sparked concern among local farmers, who are urging the authorities to address the issue promptly and prevent future incidents—(KNO)

I Will Be With You At MCG: Ashwin Tells Virat Kohli

Press Trust of India

CHENNAI: "I will be walking out with you to bat at the MCG," R Ashwin told Virat Kohli in a short note on X Friday, a subtle and endearing demonstration of their closeness in the team.

Ashwin, who announced a surprise retirement from international cricket after the drawn third Test against Australia in Brisbane, was thanking his teammate of 14 years for his stirring tribute to the ace spinner a day earlier.

"I've played with you for 14 years and when you told me today you're retiring, it made me a bit emotional and the flashbacks of all those years playing together came to me. I've enjoyed every bit of the journey with you ashwin," Kohli wrote hours after Ashwin announced his decision on Wednesday.

Responding to Kohli, Ashwin said, "Thanks buddy! Like I told you, I will be walking out



with you to bat at the MCG." India and Australia are due to go head to head in the third Test in Melbourne from December 26.

Though it was not clear what exactly Ashwin meant, netizens assumed that the

great off-spinner was referring to their very brief but significant partnership in the famous win over Pakistan at a packed Melbourne Cricket Ground in the 2022 T20 World Cup.

Ashwin joined Kohli at the crease during the final two

balls of India's thrilling 160-run chase against their arch-rivals.

India were left with a daunting task of scoring 48 runs in the last three overs of the match with Kohli going strong. At the end of the game, they were both unbeaten in which Kohli struck

a match-winning 82 and Ashwin remained not out on 1.

In Brisbane, some time before he accompanied skipper Rohit Sharma to the post-match press conference to announce his retirement at the end of the third Test, Ashwin was seen engaged in an emotional conversation with Kohli during which the batting maestro expressed his surprise even as the ace spinner wiped his eyes.

At the end of the conversation, which took place inside the Indian dressing room, both were seen hugging each other.

It was this dressing room discussion that sparked speculations about a possible retirement announcement by the seasoned spinner.

Ashwin landed in Chennai on Thursday and received a warm welcome from his family and friends.

During a glorious career, Ashwin featured in 106 Tests, picked up a whopping 537 wickets, including 37 five-wicket hauls, and scored 3,503 runs.

Short TAKES

BCCI SGM To Elect Shah, Shelar's Replacement On Jan 12

The BCCI will hold a Special General Meeting (SGM) in Mumbai on January 12 to elect its new secretary and treasurer after the two posts were vacated by Jay Shah and Ashish Shelar respectively earlier this month.

The BCCI constitution states that any post lying vacant should be filled within 45 days by calling a Special General Meeting. The upcoming BCCI SGM will be held within 43 days of the deadline.

Shah has already taken over as the youngest chairman of ICC on December 1 and Shelar, a seasoned BJP politician, has been sworn in as a cabinet minister in the recently-formed Maharashtra government.

As per the Lodha Committee reforms accepted by the Supreme Court, one person can't hold two positions. Shah, who still had a year left in his BCCI tenure before the mandatory cooling off period, relinquished his post as required.

Shelar, who has been a Maharashtra BJP president, had to quit the BCCI post as Lodha Reforms do not allow any minister or public servant to be an office-bearer.

It is expected that the choice of both secretary and treasurer will be a unanimous one.

Afghan Pacer Farooqi Fined For Showing Dissent



Afghanistan left-arm pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi has been fined 15 per cent of his match fee for showing dissent at an umpire's decision during the second ODI of the three-match series against Zimbabwe in Harare. Farooqi was penalised for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct.

The violation falls under Article 2.8 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which addresses "showing dissent at an umpire's decision during an international match."

The incident occurred in the fifth over of Zimbabwe's innings on Thursday when Farooqi showed dissent after an LBW appeal against Craig Ervine was turned down.

Farooqi gestured for a review despite the absence of DRS in the match.

In addition, one demerit point has been added to Farooqi's disciplinary record, for whom it was the first offence in a 24-month period. Farooqi admitted the offence and accepted the sanction.

Afghanistan delivered a dominant performance in the second ODI, thrashing Zimbabwe by 232 runs -- their largest victory by runs in the format.

The third ODI of the series will be played here on Saturday.

Man City Defender Ruben Dias To Miss Up To 4 Weeks

Manchester City's troubled season was dealt another blow Friday with confirmation that defender Ruben Dias will be out for up to four weeks because of a muscle injury.

Four-time defending Premier League champion City has lost eight and won just one of its last 11 games in all competitions.

Manager Pep Guardiola has cited injuries to key players such as Rodri as a factor in his team's troubles and the loss of Dias compounds his problems.

Guardiola said Dias' injury occurred during Sunday's 2-1 loss to Manchester United.

"After 75 minutes against United he felt something. He's strong and wanted to stay on the pitch, but now he's injured," Guardiola told a news conference.

Goalkeeper Ederson is also a doubt for Saturday's game against Aston Villa, he said, but John Stones, Mateo Kovacic and Manuel Akanji could feature. Rico Lewis is available again after suspension.

"The more players that come back the better," Guardiola said.

Gulmarg Braces Up For Khelo India Winter Games



Agencies

SRINAGAR: The preparations for the fifth edition of Khelo India Winter Games are in full swing at Gulmarg with officials claiming that the successful event in the last couple of years have brought the number of tourist up at the famous ski-resort of Kashmir.

"After the first successful Khelo India Winter Games in 2020, the Gulmarg has wit-

nessed a rise in the footfall of tourists with many people getting fascinated with the destination's potential of hosting the winter games related to the snow," the officials said.

They said such is the potential of Gulmarg that it is hosting the event for the fifth time in February next year, commencing on February 22 and culminating on February 25. The officials further di-

vised that the preparations are going on at present to make the event grand success in which skiing, mountaineering and other programmes are expected. "Above 1000 participants are expected in the event, who will participate in different games," he said.

Pertinently, for the first time, a drone show is all set to take center-stage in the upcoming Khelo India Winter Games.

The annual event has been hosted at Gulmarg since 2020 under Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan and with an aim to showcase the potential of the place to emerge as one of the best snow-resort in South Asia.

The Khelo India Winter Games will once again be held in two legs as the government has announced that Ladakh will host the ice events from January 23 to 27, while J&K will host the snow events from February 22 to 25. (KNO)

Other Than Gulmarg, 5 More Places To Offer Skiing Courses

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The authorities in J&K have identified five locations other than Gulmarg to host the skiing courses in this winter season.

A top official said five locations have been identified across J&K where the skiing courses will be organised this winter.

He revealed that three des-

tinations in Kashmir including Yousmarg, Doodhpathri and Sonamarg and two places in Jammu division including Bhandarwah and Patni Top will host the skiing courses this season.

"The skiing courses were being only organized at Gulmarg so far, but this winter we have planned to increase the number of places for such courses and have identified

five destinations where people can enroll themselves for the skiing courses," the official said.

He added that the preparations in this regard are going on and would be completed soon.

Pertinently, the skiing courses are being organised after the major snowfall occurs at Gulmarg in which a large number of people from across the country participate. (KNO)

BGT: Teenage Sensation Konstas Called Up For Boxing Day Tests



Press Trust of India

MELBOURNE: Teenage sensation Sam Konstas was handed a maiden call up as Australia on Friday dropped rookie opener Nathan McSweeney for the final two Test matches of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India.

The 19-year-old is set to become Australia's youngest Test batting debutant in over 70 years.

If Konstas, who turned 19 on October 2, is selected in the playing XI in the Boxing Day Test, he would become Australia's youngest Test debutant since captain Pat Cummins, who was 18 years and 193 days old when he made his debut against South Africa in Johannesburg in 2011.

The teenager would also become the youngest specialist batter to debut for Australia since Ian Craig when he played against South Africa at the MCG in 1953 aged 17 years 239 days.

Konstas' inclusion follows a series of disappointing performances from the Australian top order in the first three Tests especially McSweeney.

The 25-year-old, who made his Test debut in the series-opener in Perth, failed to score a single half century and could only manage scores of 10, 0, 39, 10 not out, 9 and 4 in his six innings and was dismissed by Indian pace Jasprit Bumrah spearhead four times.

Konstas had been in the reckoning to partner experienced Usman Khawaja after grabbing the attention of Cricket Australia's selection committee following his twin Sheffield Shield centuries for New South Wales.

He had scored an unbeaten 73 at the MCG against India A while notching up a ton (107) in the Prime Ministers XI pink ball game against India in Canberra.

Konstas' inclusion follows a warning from former pacer Merv Hughes, who cautioned selectors against making any changes to the batting lineup for the Boxing Day Test.

The former selector said it would have been a "panic call" move from Australia to add Konstas in the squad.

Pacer Jhye Richardson has also been included in the 15-member squad in place of Josh Hazlewood, who has been ruled out due to a calf injury.

Richardson, who himself has overcome a series of injuries, has not featured in a Test match since his three appearances during the 2021-22 Ashes series.

Australia squad for 4th and 5th Test:

Pat Cummins (c), Sean Abbott, Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Travis Head (vc), Josh Inglis, Usman Khawaja, Sam Konstas, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Marsh, Jhye Richardson, Steve Smith (vc), Mitchell Starc, Beau Webster.

Best Is Yet To Come, Says Arteta As He Marks Five Years At Arsenal

Agencies

LONDON: Five years to the day since Mikel Arteta was appointed Arsenal manager, the Spaniard said on Friday that the best is yet to come as he aims for more silverware to complement his rebuilding efforts at the North London club.

Arteta took over a fractured club that was drifting away from the Premier League's elite and won the FA Cup in his first season before eventually establishing their return to the Champions League after a six-year absence.

Arsenal have not won the league since the 2003-04 season but Arteta also transformed the side into title contenders that came close in the last two campaigns, finishing second twice and narrowly missing out to champions Manchester City.

"I'm grateful to be in the position I am in. I have a lot



to learn and improve. The best is yet to come," Arteta told reporters.

"What we want is the big trophies, without losing the rest of the things we have built. That's very important.

"The unity and the connections and the fact that we are competing on big fronts right now. We haven't managed to do that in the past years. That's positive, but there's still a lot to do."

Once a former skipper at

Arsenal, where he ended his playing career, Arteta honed his skills in management as an assistant to Pep Guardiola at City.

Although he was overlooked in favour of Unai Emery when Arsenal chose Arsene Wenger's successor, Arteta got the job in December 2019 and proved he was capable in his first managerial role.

"It's gone so fast to be fair. I've enjoyed every minute of it. We've had bumps in the road and good mo-

ments - that's what it's about. I'm here because I'm so passionate about what I do because I love this football club," he said.

"I want the best of that and try to give the best version every day. I think about what is the best possible manager for Arsenal Football Club and for the players and I try to become that."

Having beaten Crystal Palace in the League Cup quarter-final on Wednesday, Arsenal play them again in the league on Saturday.

Arsenal are third in the standings, six points behind Liverpool, while Palace are 15th.

"It is different (when you face the same team again). We analysed them so you don't have to do that too much. I'm sure both teams will adjust a few things," Arteta said.

"We know what it is to go to Selhurst Park and we have prepared for that."

New Knockout Format For European Football Competitions Debuts

Agencies

NYON: Ahead of the Champions League finishing its first-ever opening league phase in January, the new format for European competitions took shape Friday with the draw for knockout playoffs in the third-tier Conference League.

The 16 teams that placed from ninth to 24th in the single-league, 36-team standings that finished Thursday were paired in a seeded bracket like a tennis tournament.

Eight winners of two-leg playoffs on Feb. 13 and 20 will advance to the round of 16 scheduled in March, joining league leader Chelsea, third-place Fiorentina and the other top-eight finishers. Fiorentina lost in the past two finals of the Conference League.

The playoff pairings included Champions League regular Copenhagen hosting European newcomer Heiden-



heim, Gent hosting Real Betis, and Celje of Slovenia playing at home first against Cypriot club APOEL, which was a Champions League quarterfinalist in 2012.

Cyprus is the only country with three teams left in the competition and Friday's draw set up a domestic derby between Omonoia and Pafos.

Shamrock Rovers is the

first Irish team to advance to the knockout stage of a UEFA competition and will play the first leg in Norway against Molde.

Molde's passage to the knockout phase was the most dramatic Thursday in the last round of the league phase.

Molde scored a stoppage-time goal to beat Mlada Boleslav 4-3 and rise from 27th to 23rd in the

standings. That goal also eliminated Mlada, which dropped to 27th, and Hearts which fell to 25th and was eliminated on the tiebreaker of total goals scored.

The Champions League and Europa League have their draws for the knockout playoff rounds on Jan. 31, after completing their eight-round league phase program that week.