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CHILLAI KALAN BREAKS RECORDS

Coldest December Night In 3 Decades

Second-lowest In 133 Years

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The 40-day harsh winter period, Chillai Kalan, began with an intense cold wave across Kashmir, as Srinagar recorded its coldest December night in over three decades at minus 8.5°C. This marks the second-lowest December temperature recorded in the last 133 years.

The all-time lowest December temperature in Srinagar was recorded on December 13, 1934, at minus 12.8°C, while the now-third lowest was minus 7.9°C, observed on December 13, 1986.

The intense cold wave continues in Kashmir for weeks, with no major weather activity expected until the end of the



PTI Photo

month. In Qazigund, the mercury dropped to minus 8.2°C, the lowest of the season so far. Pahalgam, a popular tourist

destination, recorded minus 8.6°C. The coldest place in the Valley was Anantnag, where the temperature plunged to minus 10.5°C, followed closely

by Shopian at minus 10.4°C and Pulwama at minus 10.3°C. Kulgam recorded a minimum of minus 6.8°C. Chillai Kalan extends from

December 13, 1934: **-12.8°C**

December 13, 1986: **-7.9°C**

TEMPERATURE RECORDINGS

Anantnag: **-10.5°C**

Shopian: **-10.4°C**

Pulwama: **-10.3°C**

Qazigund: **-8.2°C**

Pahalgam: **-8.6°C**

Kulgam: **-6.8°C**

December 21 to January 31. It is followed by Chillai Khurd (Small Cold) from January 31 to February 19 and Chillai Bacha (Baby Cold) from February 20 to March 02.

The Meteorological Department (MeT) has predicted light snowfall in some higher reaches of | [More on PIO](#)

WHEN THE COLD STRIKES

The Silent Danger Of Heart Attacks During Extreme Cold

Observer News Service

Srinagar: As Kashmir enters the grip of winter, with temperatures already dropping sharply, a silent danger begins to creep in. For many, the season brings more than just a chill—it brings a hidden danger that strikes without warning.

As the mercury falls, heart attacks become an unexpected and deadly companion of winter's frost.

Extremely cold weather appears to increase the risk of dying from heart failure by 37 percent, according to international

research published in the American Heart Association journal Circulation.

But why does this happen? Kashmir Observer spoke with experts to understand the reasons behind this alarming trend.

According to doctors, when it's cold, blood vessels constrict (narrow), which makes the heart work harder to pump blood through the body. This can increase blood pressure and put extra strain on the heart, leading to a higher risk of heart attacks, especially in individuals with existing heart conditions.

"Cold | [More on PIO](#)

DHSK Issues Safety Guidelines

The Directorate of Health Services Kashmir (DHSK) has issued a detailed advisory to safeguard the public, particularly high-risk groups, during the winter season. The advisory outlines potential health risks, symptoms to watch

for, and measures to mitigate the impact of extreme cold weather. The advisory defines a cold wave as a weather phenomenon marked by a significant drop in air temperature, sometimes accompanied by frost and hazardous

conditions like icing. DHSK has urged people to stay informed about weather updates and district-specific warnings to prepare adequately for the challenging conditions. Among those identified as high-risk groups are homeless | [More on PIO](#)

PM Modi Arrives In Kuwait

First Indian PM To Do So In 43 Yrs



Press Trust Of India

Kuwait: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday arrived here in the Gulf nation on a two-day visit where he will meet the Indian diaspora and hold talks with Kuwaiti leadership to "strengthen the India-Kuwait friendship across

various sectors".

Modi is visiting Kuwait at the invitation of Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His visit to Kuwait will be the first of any Indian Prime Minister to the Gulf nation in 43 years.

"Landed in Kuwait to a warm welcome. This is | [More on PIO](#)

New Business Rules In The Works: NC Led Panel Finalises Draft

Agencies

Srinagar: The cabinet sub-committee, constituted by the National Conference-led government, has prepared a draft of business rules, which is currently under discussion, sources said. Sources said that the CSC, headed by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary and comprising Ministers Javed Rana and Sakina Ittoo, has developed the draft of business rules, and it is being discussed at various levels.

According to sources, the CSC has examined the business rules that were in effect in the erstwhile state of Jammu & Kashmir, as well as the Transaction of Business of the Government of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir Rules, 2019, which were unveiled by the Union



Home Ministry in 2020, along with subsequent amendments made in 2023 and 2024.

Two of the three ministers on the CSC, who wished to remain anonymous, stated that the work of the CSC is in its final stages and that it would soon submit its report to the cabinet. "The cabinet sub-committee is

expected to meet again soon to finalize its recommendations," they said, adding that the CSC has only met once.

According to the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act, the Lieutenant Governor must make business rules on the advice of the council of ministers. As per | [More on PIO](#)

No GST Hike On Kashmir Shawls: Omar

Observer News Service

Srinagar: In a major relief for artisans and traders in Kashmir's iconic handloom industry, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has confirmed that there will be no hike in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on shawls this year. The announcement comes amid growing speculation about potential increases in taxation on Kashmir's traditional products, which include the highly prized Pashmina shawls.

Addressing the issue on X (formerly Twitter), the Chief Minister sought to put an end to the rumors surrounding the GST hike. "There had been a lot of speculation that GST on shawls will be hiked, so we had come prepared to ensure that wouldn't happen. Thankfully, it wasn't taken up, and we will also ensure that in the future also, something like this is not



considered," he said. The clarification has been warmly welcomed by artisans and business stakeholders within Kashmir's handloom and handicraft sector. The industry, renowned globally for its exquisite craftsmanship, was anxiously awaiting confirmation on the GST issue, fearing that an increase would further burden a sector already | [More on PIO](#)

IT Raids Uncover Rs 800 Cr Hawala Network

KCI Emporium Under Scanner Over Dubai Property Links

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Income Tax Department conducted raids on the KCI Emporium Group, a prominent business entity in Kashmir, as part of a broader investigation into illegal financial activities linked to Dubai property investments. The operation, carried out on Wednesday, simultaneously targeted premises in Srinagar, Mumbai, and Delhi.

Preliminary findings revealed that certain individuals from Kashmir had been involved in hawala cash transactions to fund investments in Dubai-based properties. Among the evidence seized were records indicating property deals within the Kashmir Valley amounting to over Rs 500 crores, with a significant portion involving large cash



components. Additionally, more than Rs 1 crore in cash was confiscated during the searches.

The investigation has uncovered a larger network connecting middlemen and investors across India, with total Dubai property investments exceeding Rs 800 crores. Individuals from Srinagar to Hyderabad are now under scrutiny by the Income Tax Department for tax evasion and the use of unaccounted funds in real estate deals.

The Income Tax Department said that a probe under the Income Tax Act, 1961, and the Black Money Act, 2015, has been underway in this regard.

Farooq Shaw, owner of KCI Emporium, which operates showrooms in five-star hotels across India and abroad, is under scrutiny for his alleged involvement.

The raids also targeted the residences of Waseem Ahmad Dar, a 39-year-old property dealer, and Taha Majeed Dar, a 35-year-old employee of the Power Development Department, in Srinagar's Hyderpora area.

KCI Emporium is a residential complex located in Nishat, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir. Developed by KCI Projects Pvt. Ltd., the project offers residential apartments | [More on PIO](#)

Centre Okays Rs 85 Cr For J&K's Colleges, Varsitys

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Union Ministry for Education, has approved projects worth Rs 85 crore under the Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) for nine higher education institutions in Jammu & Kashmir.

The decision, taken during the third Project Approval Board (PAB) meeting announced on December 20, 2024, underscores the government's commitment



towards transforming higher education infrastructure and fostering inclusivity and excellence in the region. Among the sanctioned | [More on PIO](#)

LG Lauds Jammu Varsity For A++ NAAC Grade

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Saturday extended his heartiest congratulations to the Vice Chancellor, faculty, staff, scholars and students of University of Jammu for attaining the coveted | [More on PIO](#)

SIM Card Vendors Under Police Scrutiny In Kashmir

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Police on Saturday conducted a comprehensive inspection of SIM card vendors in several districts of Kashmir to prevent their misuse and ensure strict compliance with the established regulations, officials said.

The drives were carried out in Srinagar, Ganderbal, Anantnag, Budgam, Pulwama and Bandipora districts of the Valley, a police spokesman said. The initiative is aimed to ensure that SIM cards are issued strictly in accordance with the prescribed rules, he said.

Special teams from each police station in all the five zones of Srinagar district were deployed to carry out the drive within their respective jurisdictions.

On the first day of the drive, scrutiny of more than 100 SIM card vendors was conducted to verify that cards are being issued only to individuals with genuine credentials, the spokesman said.

The drive is part of an ongoing effort to promote lawful usage of SIM cards and strengthen accountability of the vendors, he said.

The spokesman said similar drives were also conducted in Ganderbal, Anantnag, Budgam, Pulwama and Bandipora districts of the Valley with focus on verifying adherence to know your customer (KYC) norms, proper documentation, and preventing unauthorised issuance of SIM cards.

During the drive, credentials of SIM cards issued to various subscribers by the vendors were checked randomly viz-a-viz that of the end users, | [More on PIO](#)

Skill Development Training For Youth Concludes Successfully

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The closing ceremony for the software developer training and service technician home appliances training was held at Hotel Hill Star, Buchwara, under the aegis of the Srinagar Sector, Ministry of Home Affairs.

The event was attended by Awadhesh Kumar, Second-In-Command of 61 BN CRPF, Rinki Kumari DC, Sajid Dar, Former Head Coach of the Indian Women's Football Team, Saleem, Director of Wyath Services, and officials of Wyath Service Private Limited.

The training program saw the successful completion of 20 students, including 12 girls. This initiative, designed to enhance the skills

of youth, aims to contribute to building a resilient, inclusive society and foster national development.

The program is part of CRPF's ongoing commitment to promoting community development and creating employment opportunities for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir.

In his address, Awadhesh Kumar assured that CRPF would continue to support youth empowerment initiatives in the future.

He expressed gratitude to the Director of Wyath Services for their cooperation in the successful completion of the skill development program and thanked all trainers for their dedication to developing specialized skills in the youth.

WORLD MEDITATION DAY:

CRPF Organizes Meditation Session In Alliance With 'Art Of Living'

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Regional CRPF Wives Welfare Association, Group Centre CRPF Srinagar, in collaboration with the Art of Living, today hosted a meditation session at the GC CRPF campus in Humhama, Srinagar, to mark World Meditation Day.

The one-hour group meditation session was conducted by an Art of Living faculty member Manjeet Singh while DIG GC CRPF Rajesh Kumar, officers, jawans, and their family members enthusiastically participated in it.

The aim of the session was the introduction of participants to meditation and how it can help diminish stress levels and promote overall mental wellness.

The event also included practical techniques for calming the mind, improving focus, and fostering emotional resilience.

Notably, DIG Rajesh Kumar shared insights, stressing how meditation has been instrumental in managing the challenges of a demanding profession. "Meditation helps us stay calm, focused, and balanced despite the immense challenges we face in our line of duty," he said.

Manjeet Singh, faculty member, Art of Living, while speaking at the event highlighted meditation importance for soldiers. "Meditation builds inner strength and resilience, essential for our brave soldiers and their families," he said.

On the occasion, a CRPF officer Ashok Kumar said, "As a soldier, our job often takes a toll on our mental health. This session is like a breath of fresh air."

Another participant said, "It was a very much-needed experience for all of us." After this session, I am feeling more relaxed and comfortable.



PEOPLE LIGHT DIYAS as part of a custom to celebrate Misha Sahab's Urs in Rainwari, Old City, on Saturday. KO PHOTO, ABID BHAT

PM's Cut-out Adorned With 'Pheran' In Srinagar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A life-size cut-out of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on display in Srinagar's Lal Chowk was adorned with a 'pheran' - a traditional Kashmiri cloak - on International Pheran Day on Saturday.

A local poet from Budgam district in central Kashmir, Jamal Ali Karbala, alias Jamal Budgami, draped a beige pheran over the life-size cut-out of the Prime Minister, attracting a large number of onlookers, including tourists.

"We have been celebrating Pheran Day for the last four years, and this is the second time we've adorned Modi ji with a pheran. We also lit 'izband' (harmala seeds) and showered sweets on him," Budgami, who claims to be the chairman of the All India Modi Fans Association, told reporters.

Izband seeds are traditionally placed on hot charcoal or in a Kangri



(Kashmiri fire-pot), where they explode and release a fragrant smoke. The smoke is believed to ward off evil. "We want the pheran to become famous worldwide and are celebrating Pheran Day along with Modi ji," Budgami said. He added that the aim behind adorning Modi with a pheran "is to make him focus on Kashmir more seriously."

DC Presides Over Awareness Camp Under Mission YUVA At Harwan

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In order to spread awareness about Mission YUVA programme to promote entrepreneurship at grassroots level, an awareness programme was held here at Harwan Block of Srinagar District.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar Dr Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat presided over the awareness programme organised by District Employment Office in collaboration with District Administration Srinagar.

Besides, members of District Development Council Srinagar including Ali Mohammad, Shabir Ahmad, Mohammad Shaban and Shaista Jan, the awareness programme witnessed overwhelming participation of local youth.

Addressing the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted the objectives of the Mission YUVA. He said initiative had been launched by the government for creating new



micro-enterprises, expanding existing ones & collectives, and promoting new enterprises based on innovative ideas in J&K with a view to create sustainable employment opportunities at grassroots level.

He added that the strategy is to build an ecosystem for developing entrepreneurial culture, facilitate capacity building, and provide opportunities to create job providers rather than job seekers.

The DC also highlighted the importance of Mission Yuva in equipping young minds with essential

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE MOST GRACIOUS THE MOST MERCIFUL

December 19, 2024

RASM-E-CHAHARUM

With Profound grief and sorrow, We inform the sad demise of Mr. Manzoor Ahmad Shah, S/o Gul Mohammad Shah, R/o New Colony Bijbehara Near Oxford High School, May Almighty Allah accord peace to the departed soul. His congregational Fateha khawani will be held on (Monday) 23 december at 10:30 am at ancestral graveyard astan aalia baba naseem din gazi bijbehara

For directions please call Reese at 9419008192, 7780890649 jma

Government of Jammu & Kashmir
eomckhrew@gmail.com

DIRECTORATE OF URBAN LOCAL BODIES KASHMIR
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE KHREW

Subject:- Declaration of Municipal Committee Khrew as Manual Scavenging free and invitation of objections thereof.

PUBLIC NOTICE

In pursuance of Government Order dated: 20.10.2023 of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP(C) No 324/2020 filed by Dr. Balram Singh and the Guideline for Survey of Manual Scavengers issued by the Government of India vide letter dated: 1st Feb. 2024, the survey of Manual Scavengers has been undertaken and completed and no Manual Scavengers have been found within the territorial jurisdiction of Municipal Committee Khrew.

In accordance with this, objection, if any regarding this declaration are hereby invited from the general public or claimants. Such objections must be submitted in writing to the Office of the undersigned or before the office of the District Social Welfare Officer Pulwama within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice.

The objections may be submitted in person or sent via mail on eomckhrew@gmail.com/Dswopulwama@gmail.com. After the stipulated period no objections whatsoever shall be entertained, Municipal Committee Khrew will be officially declared/notified as Manual Scavenging Free.

No. MC/KH/2024/1430-34
Dated: 19/12/2024
DIPK-NB-2908-24
DT: 21/12/2024

Sd/-
Executive Officer
Municipal Committee
Khrew.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR
OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER
DISTRICT INDUSTRIES CENTRE, ANANTNAG
(NEAR HEAD POST OFFICE, ANANTNAG)
Email Id: dicplananantnag@gmail.com Contact No.: +91-1932-294595

PUBLIC NOTICE

M/s Bhasin Fabricators, I.E Vessu registered provisionally with this office under No: 01/014/11/08952/Prov dated: 18-08-2020 for the Line of Activity "Manufacturing / Fabrication of Pre-Fabricated Huts, tanks, Stainless Steel, Gates/ Grills, Iron / Steel Frame for Doors / Windows, Bridges and Bridge Section, Fabricated Metal Products" as the proprietary concern of Chander Bhan Bhasin S/o: Ascharaj Lal Bhasin R/o: Gogji Bagh Srinagar.

The validity of HM -1 of the instant unit has been extended up to 24-04-2025 vide order No: 04 DI&C of 2024 dated: 22-04-2024.

The proprietor has mooted an application to the office of the General Manager, DIG, Anantnag, wherein he has requested to change in line of activity to "Storage and Warehouse Facility" and change in name and style to "Bhasin Tranquil Warehouse".

Any person(s) / Organization, Department having any objections in this behalf should convey in writing to the General Manager, District Industries Centre Anantnag within Seven (07) days from the date of publication of this Notice. After expiry of the time frame no Objection shall be entertained

No: DICA/Dev/2024/2238
Dated: 19/12/2024

DIPK-9826-24
DT: 21/12/2024

General Manager,
District Industries Centre,
Anantnag

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

AIRPORTS
SHIEKH UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

RAILWAYS

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

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

PRAYERS

FAJR 6:03
ZUHR 12:28
ASR 3:49
Magrib 5:30
ISHA 6:55

HIJRI CALENDAR
19 Jumada al-Sani
1446

This Day In History

- 1790 - Supposedly impenetrable Turkish fortress of Izmail stormed and captured by Suvorov and his Russian armies during the Russo-Turkish War (1787-1792).
- 1807 - US Congress passes Embargo Act, prohibiting American ships from trading in all foreign ports, as a result of involvement in hostilities between France and Britain.
- 1810 - British frigate HMS Minotaur sinks killing 480
- 1814 - Samuel Marsden of the Church Missionary Society arrives in the Bay of Islands, New Zealand to establish the country's first mission station; Sheep, cattle, horses and poultry are introduced.
- 1849 - The execution of Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky is called off at the last second.
- 1851 - The first freight train is operated in Roorkee, India.
- 1882 - 1st string of Christmas tree lights created by Thomas Edison
- 1890 - Cornwallis Valley Railway begins operation between Kingsport and Kentville, Nova Scotia.
- 1915 - Organized baseball & Federal League sign a peace treaty at Cincinnati.
- 1917 - Flanders declares its independence, under Pieter Tack
- 1930 - Convention of Economic Rapprochement/Oslo Agreements signed between some European countries in response to the Great Depression.
- 1939 - 99 die in 2nd wreck at Friedrichshafen Germany
- 1940 - World War II: Himare is captured by the Greek army.
- 1941 - Japans invasion leader lands on Luzon, Philippines
- 1941 - Tito establishes 1st Proletarian Brigade in Yugoslavia
- 1942 - World War II: Adolf Hitler signs the order to develop the V-2 rocket as a weapon.
- get permission to use synthetic rubber for baseball core.
- 1950 - 2 self-propelled trains of Long Island RR collide, killing 77.
- 1956 - Last British & French troops leave Egypt.
- 1963 - Official 30-day mourning period for President John F. Kennedy ends.
- 1963 - Cruise ship Lakonia burns 180 miles north of Madeira with the loss of 128 lives.
- 1964 - First flight of the SR-71 (Blackbird).
- 1971 - UN General Assembly ratifies former Austrian President Kurt Waldheim as Secretary-General.
- 1971 - USSR performs underground nuclear test.
- 1972 6.25 earthquake strikes Managua Nicaragua, 12,000+ killed
- 1974 - 2nd cease-fire between IRA & British; lasts until approx April 1975.
- 1974 - Referenda in Comoros-3 islands for independence, 1 stays French.
- 1974 - Iraq announces plans to increase its oil production capacity.

From KO Archives

Kangri Claims Its First Victim

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: With the new millennium a leap away, Kashmiris still have to cling to a kangri, thanks to the 'development' the place has witnessed.

One Mohammad Sultan Lone of Lal Bazar; Srinagar died here last night after his kangri overturned while he was asleep. Police believes that smoke from the smouldering bedding suffocated the man to death.

Lone, a government employee went to bed taking a kangri to warm up his bedding. He fell asleep and during the night hours the kangri overturned, setting his bedding on fire. The smoke that accumulated in the room is being cited as the apparent cause of his death, Police Station Soura has started investigations into the matter.

The family members came to know about his death only in the morning hours when they went up to his room to enquire as to why he had not woken up. They found him dead in the burnt out bedding. He had also suffered some burn injuries

(Kashmir Observer, 22 December, 1998)

Five Dead In Car Ramming In Crowded German Christmas Market

Agencies

Berlin: At least five people were killed and more than 200 others were injured after a car rammings into a crowded Christmas market in the city of Magdeburg, the capital of the central German state of Saxony-Anhalt.

Governor Reiner Haseloff on Saturday said the preliminary death toll had risen from two to five and that many people were critically wounded.

Officials described the incident as an intentional attack

very worried about them.”

Speaking of the suspect, Haseloff said police believed him to have acted alone. “As far as we know, there is no further danger to the city,” he told reporters.

Suspect identified

The interior minister for Saxony-Anhalt, Tamara Zieschang, identified the suspect as a 50-year-old from Saudi Arabia who arrived in Germany in 2006. He was previously unknown to security services.

Local media said the suspect was Taleb A., a psychiatry



and announced that the driver had been taken into custody at the scene. An investigation is under way.

Local media reports indicate the car involved was seen driving at high speeds before striking the crowd at about 7pm [18:00 GMT] on Friday.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited the scene on Saturday and offered his condolences to the families of the victims.

“What a terrible act it is to injure and kill so many people there with such brutality,” he said. “Nearly 40 are so seriously injured that we must be

and psychotherapy specialist.

A spokesperson for a specialist rehabilitation clinic for criminals with addictions in Bernburg confirmed that the suspect had worked as a psychiatrist for them, but had not been at work since October due to sickness and holiday leave.

Saudi Arabia’s foreign ministry has condemned the attack. “The Kingdom affirms its position in rejecting violence and expresses its sympathy and sincere condolences to the families of the deceased and to the Federal Republic of Germany,” it said in a statement.



Pope Says Gaza A Cruelty, Not War

Catholic bishop of Jerusalem, known as a patriarch, had tried to enter the Gaza Strip on Friday to visit Catholics there, but was denied entry

wanted to say this because it touches the heart.”

The pope, as leader of the 1.4-billion-member Roman Catholic Church, is usually careful about taking sides in conflicts, but he has recently been more outspoken about Israel’s military campaign against Palestinian militant group Hamas.

In book excerpts published last month, the pontiff said some international experts said that “what is happening in Gaza has the characteristics of a genocide”.

Israeli Minister of Diaspora Affairs Amichai Chikli sharply criticised those comments in an unusual open letter published by Italian newspaper Il Foglio on Friday. Chikli said the pope’s remarks amounted to a “trivialisation” of the term genocide.

Francis also said on Saturday that the Catholic bishop of Jerusalem, known as a patriarch, had tried to enter the Gaza Strip on Friday to visit Catholics there, but was denied entry.

The patriarch’s office told Reuters it was not able to com-

ment on the pope’s remarks about the patriarch being denied entry.

Israeli officials were not immediately reachable for comment on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, and the Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The war began when Hamas-led Palestinian militants attacked southern Israeli communities on Oct. 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking more than 250 hostages back to Gaza, according to Israeli authorities.

Israel’s retaliatory campaign, which it says is aimed at eliminating Hamas, has killed more than 45,000 people, mostly civilians, according to authorities in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip. The campaign has displaced nearly the entire population and left much of the enclave in ruins.

Israel says that at least a third of the dead have been militants and it says it tries to avoid harm to civilians but is battling militants who it accuses of embedding among the population in dense urban areas. Hamas rejects this.

Agencies

Vatican City : Pope Francis on Saturday again condemned Israeli airstrikes in Gaza, a day after an Israeli government minister publicly denounced the pontiff for suggesting the global community should study whether the military offensive there constitutes a genocide of the Palestinian people.

Francis opened his annual Christmas address to the Catholic cardinals who lead the Vatican’s various departments with what appeared to be a reference to Israeli airstrikes on Friday that killed at least 25 Palestinians in Gaza.

“Yesterday, children were bombed,” said the pope. “This is cruelty. This is not war. I

Pak Ballistic Missile Programme Threat To US: White House

Press Trust Of India

Washington: Asserting that Pakistan developing sophisticated missile technology will give it the capability to strike targets well beyond South Asia, including in the US, a top White House official said on Thursday that the Asian country’s actions are an emerging threat to the United States.

Such a remark by the top White House official comes a day after the US slapped sanctions on four Pakistani entities, including the state-owned aerospace and defence agency — National Development Complex (NDC) — on charges of them contributing to Pakistan’s ballistic-missile programme.

The other three entities are Akhtar and Sons Private Limited, Affiliates International and Rockside Enterprise. All three are based in Karachi. Based in Islamabad, the NDC is responsible for the ballistic-missile programme. It has worked to acquire items to

Such a remark by the top White House official comes a day after the US slapped sanctions on four Pakistani entities, including the state-owned aerospace and defence agency — National Development Complex (NDC) — on charges of them contributing to Pakistan’s ballistic-missile programme.

advance Pakistan’s long-range ballistic missile programme.

“So candidly, it is hard for us to see Pakistan’s actions as anything other than an emerging threat to the US,” the official said.

Terrorism Roars Back In Pakistan, 10 Years After A Campaign To End It

Agencies

KARACHI, Pakistan — Ten years have passed since Mr Ajoon Khan’s son died in a ghastly attack by the Pakistani Taliban that killed about 150 people, mostly children, at a military-run school in Peshawar, in north-western Pakistan.

But the pain of loss is unrelenting — it grows only deeper with time. Mr Khan, a lawyer, said he could never forget the parents sobbing and pleading outside the school gates, the soldiers storming the building, the children and the teachers fleeing in terror.

“It has been nearly a decade, but it feels like nothing has changed,” said Mr Khan last week, just before the Dec 16 anniversary of the death of his son, Asfand, who had been in the 10th grade.

“If you look at the security situation in the country, it feels that our children’s sacrifices were in vain.”

The brutal assault on the

school in Peshawar led to rare political unity in support of a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy for Pakistan and a vast military operation in the country’s former tribal areas near Afghanistan.

The efforts forced militants to retreat across the bor-

der and brought a degree of relative peace to Pakistan.

Large-scale terrorist attacks were significantly reduced, with fatalities dropping from 2,451 across 1,717 attacks in 2013 to 220 in 146 attacks in 2020. But the hard-won gains from Pakistan’s counter-insurgency offensive — a costly endeavour in money and lives — are now in jeopardy.

Over the past few years, violence by the Pakistani Tali-

“If you look at the security situation in the country, it feels that our children’s sacrifices were in vain.”

ban and other Islamic militant groups has surged in parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, in north-western Pakistan.

Experts attribute the increase to the Afghan Taliban’s seizure of power in neighbouring Afghanistan in August 2021. Simultaneously, ethnic

separatist groups in the south-western province of Baluchistan have regained momentum, increasingly targeting security forces and Chinese nationals involved in projects under the Belt and Road Initiative, China’s infrastructure investment programme.

The separatists accuse Pakistan’s government of allowing China to extract the region’s wealth.

Delhi L-G Gives Nod To ED To Prosecute Kejriwal In Excise Policy Case

Agencies

New Delhi: Ahead of the upcoming 2025 Delhi Assembly polls, Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena has granted permission to the Enforcement Directorate to prosecute AAP national convener and former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal in the excise policy case.

On December 5, the ED sought permission for sanction of prosecution against Kejriwal. The move comes after months of investigations into the Delhi Government’s excise policy, which has been at the centre of controversy and allegations of corruption.

Meanwhile, the Delhi High Court on Friday granted the ED additional time to file its reply to the petition filed by Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia. The petition challenges the trial court’s decision to take cognizance of the chargesheets in the Delhi excise liquor policy case.

The matter has been scheduled for hearing on February 5, by the Bench of Justice Manoj Kumar Ohri.

Recently, the Delhi High Court had issued a notice on a plea by Kejriwal and Sisodia, challenging the trial court’s decision to take cognizance of the ED’s chargesheet against them in the alleged excise policy case.

Kejriwal and Sisodia are currently out on bail in both the Enforcement Directorate and Central Bureau of Investigation cases related to the now-scrapped excise policy.

According to the ED, the excise policy was deliberately designed with loopholes to benefit AAP leaders and foster cartel formations. The ED accused the



AAP leaders of receiving kickbacks from liquor businesses in exchange for preferential treatment, including discounts, license fee waivers, and relief during the Covid-19 disruptions.

The ED further alleged that the “scam” involved awarding wholesale liquor distribution rights to private entities with a fixed 12% margin, in return for a 6% kickback. Additionally, AAP leaders were accused of influencing the outcome of elections in Punjab and Goa in early 2022.

Election Rule Tweaked To Restrict Public Inspection Of Electronic Records



Press Trust Of India

New Delhi The Central Government has tweaked an election rule to prevent public inspection of certain electronic documents such as CCTV camera and webcasting footage as well as video recordings of candidates to prevent their misuse.

Based on the recommendation of the Election Commission (EC), the Union Law Ministry on Friday amended Rule 93(2)(a) of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, to restrict the type of “papers” or documents open to public inspection.

According to Rule 93, all “papers” related to elections shall be open to public inspection.

The amendment inserts “as specified in these rules” after “papers”.

Law Ministry and EC officials separately explained that a court case was the “trigger” behind the amendment.

While documents such as nomination forms, appointment of election agents, re-

sults and election account statements are mentioned in the Conduct of Election Rules, electronic documents such as CCTV camera footage, webcasting footage and video recording of candidates during the Model Code of Conduct period are not covered.

“CCTV coverage, webcasting of polling stations are not carried out under Conduct of Election Rules but are the result of steps taken by the EC to ensure a level playing field,” a former EC official explained.

An EC functionary said, “There have been instances where such electronic records have been sought, citing the rules. The amendment ensures that only papers mentioned in the rules are available for public inspection and any other document which has no reference in the rules is not allowed for public inspection.”

EC functionaries said the misuse of CCTV camera footage from inside polling booths could compromise voter secrecy.

NEWS MAKERS

PM Modi Meets Kuwaiti Publisher of Mahabharata & Ramayana

Kuwait City: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday met two Kuwaiti nationals who translated and published India’s two iconic epics, Mahabharata and Ramayana in Arabic.

The Prime Minister also signed copies of the Arabic versions of the two epics.

Modi reached Kuwait on Saturday for a two-day visit. He is visiting Kuwait at the invitation of Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His visit is the first of any Indian Prime Minister to the Gulf nation in 43 years.

The last Indian prime minister to visit Kuwait was Indira Gandhi in 1981.



X along with pictures.

During Modi’s ‘Mann Ki Baat’ radio address in October, he highlighted their work and said that “this work is not just a translation, but a bridge

between two great cultures. It is developing a new understanding of Indian literature in the Arab world.”

On his arrival, Modi was warmly received by Sheikh Fa-

had Yousef Saud Al-Sabah First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Interior of Kuwait.

Modi also met Kuwait-based retired Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer Mangal Sain Handa.

“Delighted to have met Shri @MangalSainHanda Ji in Kuwait this afternoon. I admire his contribution to India and his passion for India’s development,” Modi posted on X.

On Friday, Handa’s granddaughter Shreya Juneja requested Modi to meet her Nanaji to which Modi replied, “Absolutely! I look forward to meeting @MangalSainHanda Ji in Kuwait today.”

“Humble request to Hon’ble PM @narendramodi to meet my 101-year-old Nanaji, ex-IFS officer, in Kuwait during tmrw’s interaction with the Indian Diaspora. Nana @MangalSainHanda is a great admirer of yours. Details have been emailed to your office,” Shreya Juneja, granddaughter of Handa posted on X on Friday.

Devotee Drops iPhone in Temple Hundial, Minister Says It's Temple Property

A devotee who has accidentally dropped his iPhone into the hundial of a temple here is in a peculiar situation. He wants it back, but the Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments department politely declined his request, saying it has now become temple property.

Immediately after realising his mistake, the devotee later identified as Dinesh, approached the officials of the Sri Kandaswamy temple, Thiruporur, and pleaded that his iPhone which inadvertently fell into the offering box when he was making a donation be returned to him.

On Friday, after opening the offering box, the temple administration contacted him saying the gadget was found in the hundial and he was free to retrieve only the data from it. However, Dinesh refused to accept and insisted that his phone be returned to him.

When this issue was taken to the notice of the HR & CE Minister P K Sekar Babu on Saturday he replied “anything that is de-

posited into the offering box, even if it be an arbitrary action, goes into god’s account.” “As per the practises and tradition at the temples, any offerings made into the hundial directly goes into the account of the deity of that temple. Rules do not permit the administration to return the offerings back to the devotees,” Babu told reporters here.

He would discuss with the department officials to see if there was any possibility to compensate the devotee and accordingly make a decision, the Minister said after inspecting the construction of the Arulmigu Mariamman temple in Madhavaram, here, and the renovation of temple tank belonging to the Arulmigu Kailasanathar temple in Venugopal Nagar, here at an estimated cost of Rs 2.5 crore.

This incident is not the first such one in the state. According to a senior HR & CE official a devotee S Sangeetha from Alappuzha in Kerala unwittingly dropped her 1.75 sovereign gold chain into the hundial of the renowned Sri Dhandayuthapani Swamy temple in Palani in May 2023.

District Magistrates' Role in Environmental Degradation of J&K

Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat

“
The NGT's orders issued in the last 3 to 4 years make it clear that District Magistrates in J&K have failed to enforce the Minor Mineral concession Rules 2016, guidelines of State Environmental Impact Assessment, Water Prevention and Control of Pollution Act 1974, Municipal Solid Waste Rules 2016

On November 2nd 2022, the Deputy Commissioner Budgam vide his official communication number DDCB/Permission / 11140-41 gave his endorsement for lifting 15000 metric tons (MTs) of riverbed material in Sukhnag nallah for a period of 20 days with effect from 20.10.2024 to 12.11.2024 against an advance royalty payment of Rs 165750. There were 18 guidelines given to the permit holder by the District Mineral Officer (DMO) which are mentioned in the order. This includes the direction for the leaseholder not to get involved in any illegal methods and to abide by J&K Minor Mineral Concession Rules 2016 and Mines and Mineral (Dev & Regulation) Act 1957. Like other rules and orders, these rulings are orders misused in such a way that the illegal riverbed mining work never comes to an end. Even as I am writing this article, illegal mining is going on in Sukhnag Nallah, Beerwah which is a designated Trout Fish stream of J&K.

What is a Disposal Permit?

According to Rule 2 sub rule XIX the disposal permit is defined as:

“Means a permit granted for removal of minor minerals from the Agriculture, Horticulture, State, Kahcharai, Shamilat, Forest land, where minor minerals have been deposited due to weathering. However, Kahcharai and Shamilat lands shall be governed by J&K Land Revenue Act.”

According to Section 3 (e) of Mines and Mineral (Development & Regulation) Act of 1957 the Minor Minerals are defined as:

“Building stones, gravel, ordinary clay, ordinary sand other than sand used for prescribed purposes, and any other mineral which the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, declare to be a minor mineral.”

But in most cases, “Disposal Permits” are given for lifting such riverbed material or clay / soil which hasn't been deposited due to weathering, landslides or flooding. Under the garb of these disposal permits, illegal riverbed/clay mining is done in rivers, mountains and Karewas of J&K. This is simply the misuse of official positions by Deputy Commissioners and other Govt officers/engineers. With respect to Kahcharai and State Land, permissions are given by Revenue Department officers like Deputy Commissioners, SDMs and Tehsildars in clear violation of J&K Land Revenue Act 1996, as the mining changes the



shape and size of the land parcel which doesn't then match with the land revenue record whether the maps (lathas) or digital mapping.

Environmental Clearance

From 2019 onwards, the Geology and Mining Department has e-auctioned mining blocks in rivers and streams. The leaseholders/project proponents are supposed to follow J&K Minor Mineral Concession Rules 2016 and also obtain Environmental Clearance from the State Environmental Impact Assessment Authority. There are more than 70 specific and standard conditions that have to be adhered to by project proponents. The Specific Condition No.53 of the environmental clearance document mandates that Riverbed Mining must be conducted manually and further mentioned that JCBs, L&T cranes etc should not be allowed at all. But this order isn't enforced on the ground neither by District Magistrates nor by District Mining Officers.

This author had to seek intervention of the National Green Tribunal to stop the use of the heavy machines in Doodh Ganga, Shali Ganga, Sukhnag, Romshi, Sasara and other streams during last 4 years and the District Magistrates failed to even act on my repeated pleas and requests.

In Pulwama, the work has been controlled after the intervention of Dy CM Surinder Choudhary recently whom I had alerted through social media. But the illegal work in Sukhnag Budgam continues with RBM worth Rs 20 to 30 lakhs being looted on a daily basis without even having the required

Environmental Clearance.

The work in Shali Ganga and Doodh Ganga was halted on the orders of NGT but even after getting the order, I had to ensure its enforcement as well. The work and job which Govt officials have to do is being done by me and my associates. What kind of governance is this?

With respect to Sukhnag river in Beerwah, it was not even e-auctioned and riverbed mining has been done by the Geology & Mining Department and all the illegal work is done under the garb of Disposal Permits for which green signal has been given by local administration.

NGT on Clay Mining

In June this year, the NGT took serious note of illegal clay mining in the Karewas of Budgam, issued a notice to the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Government, represented by the Chief Secretary, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), and construction company NKC Projects Pvt Ltd. This action follows allegations of environmental damage and disruption to local agriculture land due to the construction of the Srinagar Ring Road. The notice was issued by a three-member Principal Bench of the NGT, chaired by Justice Prakash Shrivastava, Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi Judicial Member, and Dr Afroz Ahmad, NGT's Expert Member. The application was moved by residents of Wathoora, Budgam, including Bashir Ahmad Bhat, through their counsels, Advocate Saurabh Sharma and Advocate Bijay Kumar as their apple / plum orchards were huge-

ly impacted with dust pollution and water logging around under-construction Srinagar Ring Road project. The matter was referred to the J & K Pollution Control Committee which submitted a report before the NGT recently and the farmers' allegations have been upheld. The report that was reflected in the NGT's order dated 12.12.2024 reads:

“The Air Quality Monitoring was carried out by the Air tab J&K PCC, Kashmir within the orchard of the applicant. As per the report the value of PM10 is 148.18 ug/m3 and of PM2.5 is 68.07 ug/m3 which is above the prescribed standards.”

The J&K Pollution Control Committee's report is self explanatory and it is a clear indication that illegal mining in Karewas is causing dust pollution and air pollution in the area and this is affecting the apple and plum orchards of farmers in many areas of Budgam.

Conclusion

I believe the National Green Tribunal (NGT) is doing the work which is supposed to be done by District Magistrates and local administration vis a vis enforcing the laws and rules governing minor minerals and their extraction. The NGT's orders issued in the last 3 to 4 years make it clear that District Magistrates in J&K have failed to enforce the Minor Mineral concession Rules 2016, guidelines of State Environmental Impact Assessment, Water Prevention and Control of Pollution Act 1974, Municipal Solid Waste Rules 2016. This is reflected in the fact that NGT has imposed huge penalties on J&K Govt and made them give administrative approval for a mega project worth Rs 140 Crores for restoration of Doodh Ganga. The DCs, by failing to act in many cases, have made themselves collaborators in the crime as well and the cause behind this negligence must be investigated. I would request the NGT to apprise the CBI as well because the destruction caused in our rivers is massive and there has been huge corruption in giving disposal permits by Govt authorities across J&K.

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

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Can Trump Save Dollar Hegemony?

If Trump were to retaliate against the BRICS with 100% tariffs, the move could backfire.

Jeffrey Frankel

In 2023, the leaders of Brazil and the other BRICS countries at the time — China, India, Russia, and South Africa — discussed collaboration on a new shared currency. Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has been a vocal proponent of an alternative to the US dollar, the dominant global currency for the past 75 years, and Russian President Vladimir Putin publicly promoted the idea during the BRICS summit in October by brandishing a symbolic BRICS banknote. The bloc's new members — Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates — would presumably also be included in the new joint currency.

The proposed challenge to the dollar has already drawn the ire of US President-elect Donald Trump, who has threatened to impose punitive tariffs of 100% on countries that move away from the greenback. Two weeks ago, Trump warned BRICS countries against creating or supporting an alternative reserve currency. “We require a commitment from these countries that they will neither create a new BRICS currency nor back any other currency to replace the mighty US dollar, or they will face 100% tariffs,” he declared on Truth Social, his social media platform.

This ultimatum follows Trump's threats to impose a 25% tariff on Mexico and Canada if they fail to curb fentanyl smuggling into the United States, a 60% tariff on Chinese goods, and a 10-20% tariff on other trade partners. Despite Trump's bluster, these increasingly extreme threats will not result in one of his self-proclaimed successful “deals”.

While Trump's rhetoric suggests he views a BRICS currency as a serious threat, such a project is likely to fail anyway, regardless of his actions or ultimatums.

If the proposed currency is intended to exist alongside BRICS countries' national currencies,

it will not gain traction. A successful international currency requires a home base. That is why English, not Esperanto, became the world's lingua franca, and why the special drawing right (SDR) — the International Monetary Fund's reserve asset, whose value is based on a basket of major currencies — has not been successful as an international currency.

For a BRICS unit to compete with the US dollar, then, member countries would need to form a full-fledged monetary union, relinquishing their national currencies and establishing a unified

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We require a commitment from these countries that they will neither create a new BRICS currency nor back any other currency to replace the mighty US dollar, or they will face 100% tariffs

central bank to oversee the new money.

But the BRICS economies differ too much from each other for a monetary union to function effectively. Successful monetary unions are typically formed by small, interconnected economies that trade extensively with one another and share common goals, cultural ties, correlated business cycles, and relatively integrated labour markets.

When member economies are too dissimilar, one may enter a recession while another overheats. In a monetary union, member states must give up control over their money supply, interest rates, and the exchange rate, limiting their ability to respond to cyclical economic fluctuations. In the absence of alternative adjustment mechanisms such as increased labour mobility and a strong political commitment, these disparities can lead to significant discord and needless macroeconomic instability.

Examples of successful monetary unions include the CFA franc zones, comprising West African and Central African states that use a com-

mon currency pegged to the euro, and the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union, which consists of English-speaking islands like Anguilla, Antigua, and Barbuda. These work because their members are small neighbouring countries that share cultural and historical roots. The largest member of the CFA, for example, is Côte d'Ivoire, whose GDP is smaller than that of Buffalo, New York.

The notable exception, of course, is the eurozone. But although it consists of relatively large economies, its 20 members also share borders, maintain integrated economies, and are bound

by a shared commitment to the vision of a peaceful, unified Europe. Even so, European countries like the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Norway have chosen to remain outside the eurozone, and peripheral members such as Greece have struggled to adapt to the constraints of the euro's monetary straitjacket.

Some regional blocs have long discussed adopting a common currency but made little progress. In 2001, the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council announced plans to establish a currency union by 2010, but the plan failed to materialise. If even the small, culturally aligned, and cyclically correlated GCC countries have been unwilling to relinquish their monetary sovereignty, the proposed BRICS currency stands little chance.

Many of the BRICS+ countries are large. They span four continents. They speak different languages. And their borders have historically been sources of conflict rather than economic integration. China and India, for example, were

locked in a protracted military standoff along their shared Himalayan border before reaching a fragile truce in October.

There is also little correlation among the BRICS economies' business cycles. Rising world energy prices benefit oil-producing countries like Russia, Brazil, Iran, and the UAE, while putting pressure on energy-importing countries such as China and India. This dynamic makes the BRICS far less suited for a monetary union than the GCC countries.

To be sure, a gradual global shift away from the dollar is already underway. This process, while slow, has gained momentum in recent years, driven partly by the US's increasingly frequent use of financial sanctions. But if the Trump administration were to retaliate against the BRICS with 100% tariffs, the move could backfire, prompting central banks to turn to the renminbi, smaller currencies, or even gold for their international reserves.

Trump's clumsy efforts to enforce the international use of the dollar are at odds with his other stated objectives, such as improving the US trade balance by devaluing the dollar against the renminbi and the currencies of other countries that run bilateral surpluses with the US. Talking down the dollar aligns with other inflationary Trump promises, such as his threats to weaken the Federal Reserve's independence and his proposed mass deportations. But an international reserve currency that is prone to inflation and depreciation is hardly attractive. Trump's tariff threats won't resolve that contradiction.

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. The article was originally published by Financial Express

Handling Substance Abuse in Kashmir

In conversation with Dr Akhtar Purvez

Syed Mohammad Burhan Rizvi

Substance abuse is a serious problem affecting a large number of people especially youth in Kashmir and is taxing the already existing healthcare and social systems in the region. With this alarming trend, Kashmir Observer sat down with Dr. Akhtar Purvez, an addiction specialist and physician-scientist, author.

Born in Kashmir, he is currently in Lincoln Memorial University, USA, as Clinical Adjunct Professor. He brings with him a wealth of expertise in addiction medicine and health policy advocacy.

On his recent visit to the Kashmir Valley, Dr. Purvez shared his opinion on the diverse realities of substance abuse, its prevalence, causes, and the urgent need for concerted action. He highlighted evidence-based strategies for prevention, education, and community support in this interesting exposé. Just recently, Dr. Purvez spent some time at the Valley discussing potentially heated topics about drug abuse.

Let's get in on this important discourse with Dr. Purvez, who throws light on the very serious situation regarding substance abuse in Kashmir and measures that can be taken to tackle such an issue.

KO: You would know that we commonly refer to it as drug addiction, but it compasses much more. Please help us understand the terminology better:

AP: According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders or DSM-5, a substance use disorder (SUD) is a medical condition that involves a pattern of substance use that leads to clinically significant impairment or distress. It is a chronic disease characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use despite adverse consequences.

KO: What is the prevalence of SUD?

AP: Here are the numbers. Worldwide, the World Health Organization (WHO) reports that approximately 5.5% of the global population aged 15-64 used drugs at least once in 2020. In the United States, in 2021, about 61.2 million people aged 12 or older (21.9% of the population) used illicit drugs in the past year. In India, a 2019 survey by the

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment found that about 2.8% of Indians aged 10-75 years (31 million individuals) were current users of illicit drugs. In Kashmir, recent studies indicate a significant rise in substance abuse.

A 2022 survey by the Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (IMHANS) in Srinagar revealed that Jammu and Kashmir has even surpassed Punjab, known as the drug menace capital of India. Official figures from the Jammu and Kashmir Government indicate that 41,110 affected sought treatment for drug abuse in Kashmir in 2022, nearly double the number from the previous year, which was 23,403.

KO: What are the Common Sources of Substance Abuse?

AP: Substance abuse often stems from prescription medications especially drugs prescribed for chronic pain, such as opioids, can lead to dependency if misused. These include medications like codeine, hydrocodone, oxycodone and morphine. Some of these are usually prescribed for short-term use for post-operative pain or after acute injuries.

Then there are illicit drugs that are substances obtained from street dealers, including heroin and synthetic opioids like fentanyl.

KO: What is the extent of annual drug-related deaths? What are the global and regional Statistics?

Worldwide, WHO estimated approximately 500,000 deaths globally in 2019 due to drug use, with opioids accounting for the majority.

In the United States, in 2022, there were about 107,500 overdose deaths. If we put that in perspective, that means a staggering number of almost 300 deaths PER day. That is, despite very advanced infrastructure and systems in place there to limit morbidity and mortality.

In developing countries, the situation is worse. In India, specific national statistics on drug-related deaths are limited; however, the increasing prevalence of substance abuse suggests a rising trend.

In Kashmir valley, while exact figures are scarce, the surge in substance abuse indicates a growing number of drug-related fatalities.



KO: What are the substances commonly abused and associated with higher mortality?

Certain substances are more frequently abused and linked to higher death rates: A common, and damaging culprit includes heroin, prescription painkillers, and synthetic opioids like fentanyl. Then there are stimulants such as cocaine and methamphetamine.

Other groups include benzodiazepines that are often prescribed for anxiety but can be addictive.

In the U.S., synthetic opioids, primarily fentanyl, were involved in over 70,000 overdose deaths in 2021.

KO: What are the risks associated with substance use disorder

AP: Substance use poses several risks that include health complications such as cardiovascular diseases, liver damage, and mental health disorders. An overdose can potentially lead to death.

In addition, there are multiple social issues such as strained relationships, unemployment, theft, and other legal issues.

KO: What is the Impact of online information and social media

AP: While the internet may be a useful source of reliable informa-



tion, it can also provide false and biased information that may be harmful. In addition, social media may provide easy access to information about the sources, availability and access to substances and drugs that might be abused.

KO: What is the relationship of the lack of healthcare access and substance abuse rates

Limited access to healthcare can lead to higher substance abuse rates due to untreated mental health issues. Individuals may turn to substances for relief. There may also be a lack of preventive services including absence of education and early intervention.

KO: What are long-term risks of prolonged self-medication including abusive and other substances

AP: In general, various forms of self-medication may result in drug resistance, especially with antibiotics.

They may cause organ damage inadvertently or deliberately consumed medications such as acetaminophen like Crocin and NSAIDs like ibuprofen (Brufen).

They may also lead to dependency, leading to addiction and serious health complications. A single episode, especially involving higher dose, mixed substances including alcohol may result in respiratory arrest and death.

KO: What are the avenues to reduce risks of self-medication

AP: To minimize risks, patients should consult healthcare professionals before taking any medication. They should follow prescription instructions and adhere to prescribed dosages and durations. They also need to avoid sharing medications with others. In addition, we need to avoid mixing prescription medications with unknown herbs, other substances and alcohol.

KO: What would be the educational resources and campaigns that may help reduce the extent of abuse and limit morbidity and mortality:

AP: Effective measures are varied and include public awareness campaigns that highlight the dangers of substance abuse. We also need school programs that educate youth about drug risks. Community workshops will help provide information and support. In addition, mental health support programs would be an essential part and a cornerstone in many situations.

KO: What kind of Support can healthcare systems and organizations offer?

AP: To combat substance abuse, healthcare systems should offer accessible treatment and counseling services. Pharmacies should monitor prescription drug use and provide patient education. In many developed countries, they also have to put each patient's prescription information into a database that is available to healthcare providers also.

NGOs may run education, rehabilitation programs and support groups.

Governments can implement policies to control drug distribution and fund prevention programs. For example, a Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PMP or PDMP) is embedded in the system in many developed countries including in the United States.

Before a prescription for a scheduled medication is prescribed, the patient's full prescription history has to be reviewed.

Media plays a role in spreading awareness and accurate information. For example, they need to play a role by producing and showing documentaries and feature movies that highlight these serious issues.

Addressing substance abuse requires a multifaceted approach involving education, healthcare access, legalization and community support.

Human lives are precious, and we should do everything we can to protect and preserve them.

Dr. Akhtar Purvez is an accomplished Kashmir-born physician-scientist and an addiction specialist who is a Clinical Adjunct Professor at Lincoln Memorial University in the United States of America. He is a healthcare policy advocate, researcher and author of two best-selling books 'Managing Chronic Pain in An Age of Addiction' and 'The Brain behind Pain'.

HUMILITY IN APOLOGY

The Power of Saying 'I Am Sorry'

Dr. Fiaz Maqbool Fazili

The simple act of saying "I am sorry" carries an immense power, one that can mend broken relationships, heal emotional wounds, and foster reconciliation. Apology, when offered sincerely, reflects a profound humility and an acknowledgment of one's responsibility in causing hurt or harm. It is not merely a social nicety; it is a courageous act of self-awareness and moral strength. This essay delves into the transformative power of apology, the humility it entails, and the impact it has on individuals and society as a whole.

The Essence of Apology: At its core, an apology is an acknowledgment of a mistake or wrongdoing.

It is a personal expression of regret, often accompanied by a willingness to make amends. A genuine apology requires the individual to confront their own flaws, admit their responsibility, and express a heartfelt intention to avoid repeating the mistake. It is an act of vulnerability that demonstrates respect for the feelings and dignity of others.

In its simplest form, an apology consists of three key elements: acknowledgment of the mistake, expression of remorse, and a commitment to change. These components signal sincerity and show that the individual values the relationship over their ego or pride.

Humility in Apology: Saying "I am sorry" requires humility, a trait that stands in stark contrast to arrogance and defensiveness. Humility involves recognizing that one is not infallible and that making mistakes is an inherent part of being human. It also requires the courage to prioritize relationships over self-justification.

Humility in apology is particularly powerful because it disarms anger and opens the door for dialogue.

When someone admits their fault with a

humble heart, it becomes difficult for the aggrieved party to remain resentful. This humility also fosters mutual respect, as it shows that the apologizer values the relationship enough to put aside their pride.

The Transformative Power of Apology: The act of apologizing has a ripple effect, extending beyond the immediate situation to impact personal growth, relationships, and even broader social dynamics.

1. Healing Emotional Wounds: An apology can act as a balm for emotional wounds, soothing the pain of betrayal, misunderstanding, or neglect. It provides validation to the aggrieved party, assuring them that their feelings matter. This validation can accelerate emotional healing and restore trust.

2. Strengthening Relationships: Apologies strengthen the bonds between individuals by fostering understanding and empathy. They demonstrate a willingness to take responsibility, which builds trust.

In relationships, whether personal or professional, the ability to apologize sincerely can mean the difference between a temporary setback and a permanent rift.

3. Promoting Personal Growth: On a personal level, the practice of apologizing helps individuals grow emotionally and morally. It requires self-reflection, which cultivates greater self-awareness.

Over time, this habit of introspection can lead to a deeper understanding of one's actions and their impact on others.

4. Resolving Conflicts: Apologies are essential in conflict resolution. They help de-escalate tensions and create a foundation for constructive dialogue. Whether in families, workplaces, or communities, a sincere apology can diffuse anger and pave the way for mutual understanding.

Why Apologizing Can Be Difficult? Apology: Despite its numerous benefits, apologize-



ing is not always easy. Several factors contribute to the reluctance to apologize:

1. Fear of Losing Face: Many people fear that apologizing will make them appear weak or incompetent. This fear stems from a misunderstanding of humility, which is often confused with humiliation.

2. Ego and Pride-Ego is one of the biggest barriers to apologizing. Admitting a mistake requires setting aside one's pride, which can be challenging for individuals who equate self-worth with being right.

3. Lack of Emotional Awareness: Some individuals struggle to recognize when their actions have hurt others. This lack of emotional awareness can prevent them from seeing the need for an apology.

4. Miscommunication: In some cases, the reluctance to apologize stems from a genuine belief that one is not at fault.

Miscommunication or differing perspectives can make it difficult to acknowledge a mistake.

The Role of Sincerity: A key ingredient in a powerful apology is sincerity. A half-hearted or insincere apology can do more harm than

good, as it may come across as dismissive or manipulative. Sincerity involves genuine remorse, an honest acknowledgment of the harm caused, and a clear intention to make amends. An effective apology also avoids justifications or excuses. Statements like "I'm sorry, but..." dilute the sincerity of the apology and can make the recipient feel invalidated.

Cultural and Religious Perspectives on Apology: Different cultures and religions emphasize the importance of apology as a moral and social duty. In Islam, for instance, seeking forgiveness is a core tenet. The Quran encourages believers to seek forgiveness from Allah and from those they have wronged. Similarly, in Christianity, confession and repentance are central to spiritual growth and reconciliation.

In many Eastern philosophies, such as Buddhism, the concept of atonement is deeply linked to the idea of karma. Acknowledging one's mistakes and making amends is seen as essential to restoring harmony and balance.

These cultural and religious teachings underscore the universal significance of apology as a pathway to inner peace and social harmony.

Practical Tips for Effective Apologies: Making an effective apology requires thoughtfulness and empathy. Here are some practical tips:

1. Be Specific: Clearly state what you are apologizing for. This shows that you understand the impact of your actions.

2. Express Genuine Regret: Use language that conveys genuine remorse, such as "I deeply regret..." or "I am truly sorry for..."

3. Avoid Defensiveness: Resist the urge to justify your actions or shift blame. Focus on the feelings of the other person.

4. Offer to Make Amends: Where possible, take concrete steps to address the harm caused. This reinforces the sincerity of your apology.

5. Choose the Right Time and Place (environment): Apologies are most effective when delivered in a private, calm setting where both parties can communicate openly.

The Impact of Forgiveness on the Recipient: While the focus of this essay is on the power of apology, it is worth noting that the recipient's response is equally important. Forgiveness is a powerful act that complements the apology and completes the cycle of reconciliation. Forgiveness does not mean condoning the wrongdoing but rather choosing to release resentment and move forward. The humility required to apologize often inspires a similar humility in the recipient, creating a virtuous cycle of mutual respect and understanding.

The Role of Apology in Society: On a societal level, the practice of apologizing has the potential to address larger issues of injustice and inequality. Public apologies from leaders and institutions can validate the grievances of marginalized communities and pave the way for healing and reconciliation. For example, apologies for historical injustices, such as colonization or systemic discrimination, are important steps toward restoring trust and fostering social cohesion. While apologies alone cannot undo the harm, they are an essential starting point for meaningful dialogue and change.

The power of apology lies in its ability to transcend individual egos and foster connection, understanding, and healing. It is an act of humility that acknowledges the shared humanity of all people. While saying "I am sorry" may seem simple, it requires courage, sincerity, and emotional intelligence. In a world often marred by conflict and misunderstanding, the humility to apologize and the willingness to forgive are invaluable virtues. By embracing the power of apology, individuals can not only mend their relationships but also contribute to a more compassionate and harmonious society.

(Author besides being a Surgeon at Mubarak Hospital, is a Counsellor very active in positive perception management of various moral, social and religious issues. He can be reached at drfiazfazili@gmail.com & twitter @drfiazfazili)

'Man-made Products - Buildings, Plastics - Could Be Storing 8.4 Bn Tonnes of Carbon'

Press Trust Of India

About 8.4 billion tonnes of carbon is estimated to have been accumulated and stored in long-lasting products from around the world made by humans, such as plastics and buildings, between 1995 and 2019, according to a study.

Researchers at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands said this 'fossil carbon' added to the 'technosphere' -- the sum of all human-made objects, both in use and discarded -- equals around 93 per cent of carbon dioxide emissions from around the world in 2019.

They added that the carbon locked up in the 'technosphere' has a huge potential to add to greenhouse gas emissions.

Increasing the lifetime of products and recycling rates are two ways to reduce the amount of fossil carbon entering waste streams, the researchers suggested.

"Over these 25 years (1995-2019), 8.4 billion tons of fossil carbon have accumulated, with approximately 0.4 billion tons added each year, with a huge potential



Over these 25 years (1995-2019), 8.4 billion tons of fossil carbon have accumulated, with approximately 0.4 billion tons added each year, with a huge potential for further contribution to anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions

for further contribution to anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions," the authors wrote in the study published in the journal Cell Reports Sustainability.

Ecological economist and senior author Klaus Hubacek, University of Groningen, said, "We have accumulated more carbon in human-made stuff on the

planet than there is carbon in the natural world, but we completely overlook it, and those stocks get bigger and bigger."

"The message is to look at stocks rather than just flows," Hubacek said.

To estimate these stocks, the researchers used publicly available data on inputs and outputs of mate-

rial from different economic sectors for 2011 -- the only year for which such data exists at the global level.

The team then calculated the amount of carbon flowing in and out of the sectors by using the average carbon content of different products. For example, plastics are estimated to contain 74 per cent fossil

carbon on average.

The analysis considered not only final products such as durable plastics and bitumen (used in roads) but also fossil carbon-based feedstocks that are used as intermediate products in different industries, the researchers said.

They found that in 2011, nine per cent of fossil carbon was accumulated in long-lasting products within the technosphere -- and if this were to be emitted as the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, it would roughly equal the European Union's emissions that year (3.7 gigatonnes vs. 3.8 gigatonnes).

Further, buildings and infrastructure were found to account for the highest stored amounts of fossil carbon (34 per cent).

In terms of the type of products, rubber and plastic products accounted for 30 per cent of the accumulated fossil carbon, followed by bitumen (24 per cent), and machinery and equipment (16 per cent), the researchers found.

The 2011 figures were extrapolated to estimate how much fossil carbon flowed into the technosphere between 1995 and 2019, using monetary data during the time

One In Every 127 People Globally Had Autism In 2021, Study Estimates

Press Trust Of India

A study has estimated that one in every 127 people globally, or 6.18 crore individuals, had autism in 2021, with the neurodevelopmental condition featuring among the top 10 causes of

Global Burden of Diseases (GBD) Study, the largest and most comprehensive ones to assess health loss around the world over time, according to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, University of Washington, US, which coordinates it.



non-fatal health burden in youth aged under 20 years.

The disorder is associated with repetitive behaviour and affected social skills. Signs, which can begin to show as early as 12 months of age, include poor non-verbal communication, such as avoiding eye contact and not responding to their name.

Published in the Lancet Psychiatry journal, the results showed that globally, autism cases among men were over twice of those in women -- 1,065 cases for every one lakh men and 508 for every one lakh women.

The estimates come from the

"An estimated 61.8 million individuals (one in every 127 people) were on the autism spectrum globally in 2021," the authors wrote.

Regions such as high-income Asia Pacific, including Japan, revealed the highest prevalence (1,560 per one lakh population), while Tropical Latin America and Bangladesh reported the lowest, researchers said.

The findings underscored the importance of early detection and support to autistic young people and their caregivers globally, the authors said.

Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology of Kashmir
Estates Wing, Main Campus Shalimar - 190 025
Notice Inviting e-Tender E-NIT No. (77) of 2024-25 Dated:18.12.2024

For and on behalf of Vice-Chancellor, SKUAST(K), e-tenders (single-cover system) are invited on percentage basis from approved and eligible Civil Contractors whose cards are valid up to 31-03-2025 registered with State PWD, CPWD, Railways and other State/ Central Govt. departments for the following work:-

S.No	Name of the work	Estimate d Cost (in lacs)	Earnest Money (In Rs.)	Class of Contractor	Cost of Tender document	Time of completion
1.	Refurbishment of Boys Hostels for Better Ambiance at FoA Wadura, SKUAST-K. (HADP)	35.01	70,020	A & B Class	1000/-	40 Days
2.	Refurbishment of Girls Hostels for better Ambiance at FoA Wadura, SKUAST-K. (HADP)	15.36	30,720	B & C Class	750	30 Days

a) Position of AAA: Accorded
b) Position of T.S: Sanctioned
c) Position of funds: Available

1. The Bidding document consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, set of terms and conditions and other details can be downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per following schedule:-

1.	Date of issue of Tender Notice	18.12.2024
2.	Date of start of downloading	18.12.2024
3.	Pre-bid meeting date	NA
4.	Bid submission start Date	18.12.2024
5.	Bid submission end date	24.12.2024 (18.00 PM)
6.	Date & Time of opening of Technical bid (online)	26.12.2024 (11.30 AM)
7.	Date of opening of Financial bid of qualifying bidders (online)	27.12.2024

Further information can be had from the office of the undersigned.

Sd/-Estates officer
SKUAST-Kashmir

No. Au/Estates/e-NIT(77)/852
DIPK-NB-2925/24
Dated: 21.12.2024

Tel -0194-2416090 email:eomcganderbal@gmail.com

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR
OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL GANDERBAL

Sub: Declaration of Manual scavenging free and objections thereof.

NOTICE

In compliance to the letter No: DULB/Plg/996/2024-25/38018-59, dated: 19.12.2024 issued by Director Urban Local Bodies Kashmir regarding declaration of Manual Scavengers' free town and In pursuance of order dated: 20.10.2023 of Hon'ble Supreme Court WP (C) 324/2020 titled by Dr. Balram Singh and the Guideline for Survey of Manual Scavengers issued by the Government of India vide letter dated: 1st Feb-2024, the survey of Manual Scavengers have been undertaken and completed and no Manual Scavengers have been found in the Town

In accordance with this objections, if any regarding the declaration are hereby invited from the general public or claimants. Such objections must be submitted in writing to the office of undersigned within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice.

The objections may be submitted in person or sent via email: eomcganderbal@gmail.com. After the stipulated time period, no objections will be received the town will be officially and formally notified as Manual Scavenging Free Town

Chief Executive Officer
Municipal Council Ganderbal

No: MC/Gbl/2024/11927-930
DIPK-NB-2930/24
Dated: 21.12.2024

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

ANANTNAG MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Subject: Tender Notice for hiring of machinery/vehicles for snow clearance during 2024 winters.

e-Auction Notice No. AMC/Winters/2024/
Dated: .12.2024

For and on behalf of the Government of J&K UT, term e- tenders (in a two-cover system) are invited from the firms/interested parties/agencies for hiring of machinery/vehicles for clearance of snow during 2024-25 winters within Municipal limits of Anantnag.

Scope of Work:
Deployment of Back Hoe Loaders/Excavators, Tractors with attachments and tipper for snow clearance across Municipal Limits of Anantnag.
Snow removal during and after snowfall events to maintain clear pathways/Roads/lanes.
Clearing snow accumulated in intersections, turns, and other critical areas.
Emergency response to heavy snowfall or unexpected weather events.
24/7 availability of Machinery during snowfall events and immediate deployment upon request from Anantnag Municipal Council.

S. No	Name of the vehicle	Rate to be quoted in Indian rupees	Availability
01.	Back Hoe Loaders/Excavators	Per Hour including Fuel.	24x7
02.	Tractors with attachments	Per Day/Night including Fuel.	
03	Dumpers	Per Trip including Fuel.	

The tender documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, bill of quantities (BOQ) set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be sought/downloaded from the official website www.jktenders.gov.in as per the schedule of dates given below;

01.	Date of issue of tender notice	21.12.2024
02.	Online tender down/start date.	21.12.2024
03.	On line tender submission end date	27.12.2024
04.	Date and time of opening of Technical document online (cover list)	27.12.2024
05.	Date and time of opening of financial document online (cover 2nd)	After evaluation of cover 1st in the office of Chief Executive Officer Anantnag Municipal Council.
06.	Submission of CDR	The bidder shall be bound to accompany his bids/ offers with CDR of Rs. 10,000/= (Ten Thousand Only) pledged to Accounts Officer MC Anantnag without which offers shall be liable for rejection.
07.	Tenure of engagement	As per requirement w.e.f. 27th December 2024 to 31st March 2025.

Sd/-
Chief Executive Officer,
Municipal Council Anantnag.

DIPK-NB-2935/24
dated: 21-12-2024

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
SEWERAGE & DRAINAGE DIVISION No.II. SRINAGAR.

Phone/ Fax No. 0194-2950058
email : exdrainage@gmail.com
GIST OF
TENDER NOTICE No:-17/e-Tendering OF 2024-25

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor of J&K State/ Srinagar Municipal Corporation, e- tenders are invited on Percentage basis from the Registered PWD Civil Contractors whose Registration cards are valid in terms of standing rules, for the below mentioned works strictly as per the terms and conditions given hereunder:-

Sl. No.	Name of work	Estt. Cost of work incld. Deptt. materials (Amount in lacs)	Earnest Money	Class of Contractor	Time of completion.	Cost of Tender Document in the shape of Treasury Challan) (Rs.)	Head of Account
01	Construction of cement concrete drain Including Manholes at Sector 12 lane No: 02 Hamdania Colony Srinagar Phase-I	23.94	Rs.47880/-	BEE/ CEE	45 Days	Rs.1000/-	Capex Budget 2024-25 (AFA)

The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per the schedule of dates given hereunder:-

01.	Date of issue of Tender Notice	21-12-2024
02.	Period of down loading of bidding documents	23-12-2024 from 1100 A.M. to 13-01-2025 upto 4.00 PM
03.	Bid Submission Start Date	23-12-2024 from 11.30 AM
04.	Bid Submission end Date	13-01-2025 upto 4.00 PM
05.	Date & time of opening of Bids on line	14-01-2025 at 11.30 AM in the office of Engineer, Sewerage & Drainage Division No. II, SMC, Daresh Kadal or any subsequent date convenient date to the tender Opening Authority
06.	List of soft copies to be uploaded	Scanned copy of Treasury challan (cost of tender document) with Sl. No. of NIT/work

Scanned copy of CDR/ FDR (Earnest Money)
Scanned copy of GST Registration with latest clearance and PAN Card
Scanned copy of Enlistment card with its validity, verification Cell No. and e-mail address BOQ

Note No.

01- In case the bid is found Abnormally Low Bids (ALB's), the bidder will have to give rate analyses for the price bid and if the bidder substantially failed to demonstrate its capability to deliver the contact at the offered price, the proposal/ Bid may be rejected.

02- The successful bidder has to produce/ deposit Performance security i.e. 05% (Five Percent) of the value of contract in shape of FDR/CDR pledged to Executive Engineer Sewerage & Drainage Division 2nd. SMC Srinagar within three days after opening the bids. The performance security shall be released after the Defective Liability (DLP) period of the work

03- In addition to above (01), in case of ALB's, the Successful bidder may have to produce/ deposit additional performance security in shape of FDR/CDR pledged to Executive Engineer Sewerage & Drainage Division 2nd. SMC Srinagar as admissible under rules.

04- The Additional Performance Security (if any) shall be released as per the report/ recommendation of AEE concerned and the Earnest Money will be released after the issuance of Allotment.

05- In case of tie bids the department shall identify the tied bidder and shall select the LI based on the draw lots, in presence of tied bidders, if they chose to be present

06- The Successful Bidder has to produce Hard Copies within three days after opening of Bids.

07- Bidders are advised to read the Bid Document (NIT) carefully before participate in the Bidding process.

08- Treasury Challan (Tender Document Fee) should be a fresh i.e. between the date of issue of tender notice & bid submission end date.

No: 3980
DIPK-9885/24
Dated:- 21.12.2024

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
S&D Division IInd, Sgr.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Coldest December

north Kashmir until tomorrow (Sunday) morning, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad, Director of the MeT Department, said the weather is expected to remain dry between December 23 and December 26.

"From late December 27 to the forenoon of December 28, light rain is likely in Jammu plains, with light snow in higher reaches of Chenab Valley and the Pir Panjal region," he said. "The weather is expected to remain dry again on December 29 and 30, with light snowfall possible in a few higher-altitude areas thereafter."

The MeT has issued an advisory predicting a slight rise in minimum temperatures by 1-2°C over the next two days, followed by another drop of 2-3°C by December 26. Tourists, travellers and transporters have been advised to exercise caution, given the sub-freezing temperatures, icy road conditions and the possibility of fresh snowfall in higher reaches.

DHSK Issues

individuals, the elderly, economically disadvantaged people, disabled individuals, pregnant and lactating mothers, children, outdoor workers, managers of night shelters, farmers, and individuals who use illicit drugs. These groups are particularly vulnerable to the adverse health effects of prolonged exposure to extreme cold.

The DHSK has warned that intense cold can lead to serious health conditions such as hypothermia, frostbite, and other cold-related injuries like immersion foot and chilblain. Hypothermia, a medical emergency, can be life-threatening if not addressed promptly. Symptoms of hypothermia in adults include shivering, memory loss, exhaustion, slurred speech, confusion, drowsiness, and fumbling hands. In infants, it manifests as bright red, cold skin and low energy. The advisory stressed the importance of immediate action, including moving the affected person to a warm shelter, removing wet clothing, and warming their body with blankets or skin-to-skin contact. Emergency medical attention is essential for severe cases.

The DHSK has recommended several preventive measures to prepare for and combat the cold wave. These include stocking adequate winter clothing and emergency supplies such as food, water, and medicines. People are advised to wear multiple layers of loose-fitting, warm clothing, cover extremities like the head, neck, hands, and feet, and eat a healthy diet rich in Vitamin C to boost immunity. Drinking warm fluids regularly and keeping the skin moisturized are also advised to maintain body heat and protect against dryness.

The advisory also issued crucial warnings, urging people to avoid prolonged exposure to cold, refrain from consuming alcohol, and not ignore signs of shivering, which indicates the body is losing heat. It warns against massaging frostbitten areas or burning candles or wood in unventilated spaces, which could lead to carbon monoxide poisoning. DHSK has also urged residents to remain vigilant for symptoms of frostbite or hypothermia and to seek medical attention immediately if such symptoms occur. The detailed guidelines are a timely reminder for the people of Kashmir to take every possible precaution to protect themselves and their families from the cold wave, particularly the

vulnerable sections of society.

The Silent Danger

weather increases the workload on the heart, leading to higher stress levels. For those who are already susceptible to heart attacks, this can lead to more significant issues," said Dr Irfan, a cardiologist at GMC Srinagar

Dr. Irfan identified eight factors that can lead to heart attacks.

The first is uncontrolled blood sugar. When individuals cannot keep their sugar levels in check, it can increase the risk of a heart attack. He noted that in many cases, patients are unaware that their sugar levels have risen.

The second factor is uncontrolled blood pressure. If patients do not take their medication on time, they become more vulnerable to heart attacks. Many patients mistakenly believe that if diagnosed with essential hypertension, they can stop taking their medication, but they often need to continue lifelong treatment, which they sometimes neglect, leading to heart attacks.

Other reasons include excessive smoking and an unfavorable lipid profile, especially high cholesterol in the body.

Dr. Irfan emphasized that these four factors are the primary contributors to heart attacks. Furthermore, a lack of physical exercise, inadequate fiber intake from fruits and vegetables, family history of heart diseases, and mental stress are significant contributors. In Kashmir, mental stress appears to be a significant issue; as the mental stress level increases, so does the risk of heart attacks.

The medical experts maintain that 40-days of extreme cold in the Valley is crucial for such patients and people should take extra care of their patients.

Dr. Upendra Kaul, Kashmir's top cardiologist, told Kashmir Observer that reason for the increase in heart attacks and other ailments can be attributed to multiple factors including less physical activity during winters, excessive food.

"Because of this the weight goes high which raises the cholesterol level among the people. People have to realise that whether it's summer or winter, they shouldn't skip exercise. The people of Kashmir should make it a habit. They need to burn their calories every day," Dr. Kaul added.

Cold temperatures can increase blood clotting, which can lead to blockages in the arteries, increasing the risk of a heart attack or stroke.

Experts also said that patients with respiratory illness are also prone to developing heart ailments during winter.

The doctors said that air quality in Kashmir has been deteriorating over the past few years due to the increasing number of vehicles, construction activities, brick kilns, cement production and other factors that emit pollutants, which have polluted the air.

"This could be contributing to a rise in the number of heart attack cases in the valley," they said. "There is an urgent need to control air pollution to reduce the number of heart attack cases in the community and save precious human lives."

Notably, the warning signs of a heart under stress are often ignored, leaving many vulnerable to the cruel effects of the cold. With the chill deepening the question remains: how do we protect ourselves when winter's icy grip tightens around us?

PM Modi Arrives

the first visit by an Indian PM in

43 years, and it will undoubtedly strengthen the India-Kuwait friendship across various sectors. I look forward to the programmes scheduled for later today and tomorrow," Prime Minister Modi posted on X.

On his arrival, Modi was warmly received by Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defence & Interior of Kuwait.

"A new chapter in the making! PM @narendramodi arrives in Kuwait to a ceremonial welcome. Warmly received by H.E Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah First Deputy PM, Minister of Defence & Interior of Kuwait, H.E. Abdullah Ali Al-Yahya, FM of Kuwait & several other Ministers & dignitaries at the airport," Ministry of External Affairs official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a post on X.

During the visit, Modi will hold discussions with the leadership of Kuwait and also interact with the Indian community.

In his departure statement, he said his talks with top Kuwaiti leadership would be an opportunity to chalk out a roadmap for a futuristic partnership between India and Kuwait.

"We deeply value the historical connection with Kuwait that has been nurtured over generations. We are not just strong trade and energy partners but also have shared interest in peace, security, stability and prosperity in the West Asia region," he said.

Modi said he was looking forward to his meetings with the Emir, the Crown Prince and the prime minister of Kuwait.

He will also attend the opening ceremony of the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup here in Kuwait.

The last Indian prime minister to visit Kuwait was Indira Gandhi in 1981.

India is among the top trading partners of Kuwait. He would also meet the vibrant Indian diaspora here. The Indian community is the largest expatriate community in Kuwait.

Indians constitute 21 per cent (1 million) of the total population of Kuwait and 30 per cent of its work-force (approx 9 lakhs). Indian workers top the Private Sector as well as domestic sector (DSW) work force list, according to Indian Embassy in Kuwait.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the diaspora has filled Kuwait's canvas with the colours of Indian skills and assured that India has the manpower, skills and technology needed by a 'New Kuwait'.

"It takes you four hours to reach here from India but it took four decades for an Indian PM to travel to Kuwait," he said.

Greeting the gathering for the series of festivals that would be celebrated over next few weeks, Modi said, "You all have come from different parts of India, but looking at all of you, it feels like a mini India has gathered here."

"Every year, hundreds of Indians come to Kuwait; you have added Indian touch to Kuwaiti society. You have filled Kuwait's canvas with colours of Indian skills, mixed with the essence of India's talent, technology and tradition," he added.

India has manpower, skills and technology needed by 'New Kuwait', he added.

New Business

Section 55 of the Act, the Lieutenant Governor shall make rules on the advice of the Council of Ministers for the allocation of business to the Ministers and for the more convenient transaction of business with the Ministers,

including the procedure to be adopted in case of a difference of opinion between the Lieutenant Governor and the Council of Ministers or a Minister.

A senior bureaucrat said that the Union Government framed business rules for Jammu & Kashmir in 2020 by invoking the proclamation dated October 31, 2019, issued under Section 73 of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019. "Under the Proclamation, the President of India assumed all the powers and functions of the government of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and all powers vested in or exercisable by the Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The said proclamation also suspended Section 55 of the Reorganisation Act to the extent of acting on the advice of the council of ministers," he said. (KNO)

No GST Hike

facing several challenges.

A potential rise in GST could have posed severe difficulties for the handloom sector, which is grappling with issues such as a decline in demand, growing competition from machine-made imitations, and rising production costs. Business chambers in Kashmir had previously voiced concerns, highlighting the negative impact that a higher GST rate would have on the industry, which is a major source of livelihood for thousands of artisans and traders in the region.

Earlier on Friday, responding to certain reports appearing in a section of media regarding the proposed revision of tax slab in the upcoming GST Council meeting, a spokesperson of the Jammu and Kashmir government clarified that the UT administration had already taken up the matter with the Union Ministry for Commerce & Industry.

The spokesperson said they have requested the Union government to lower the GST rate structure from the existing 12% to 5% uniformly, including shawls priced above Rs 1,000 to reduce the tax burden on this artisan-driven industry and support marketability.

PDP President Mehbooba Mufti had expressed concern over the news about proposed GST hike on Kashmiri shawls, warning that such a move could spell the end of the traditional craft. She appealed to Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to address the issue, accusing the central government of trying to reduce the region's economic independence by making its people reliant solely on tourism.

"The Kashmiri shawl is renowned worldwide. However, previous decisions, such as the National Conference government's ban on Shahtoosh, caused significant economic losses. Now, increasing the GST on shawls to 28 percent will effectively kill this art form," she said.

Jammu and Kashmir People's Conference (JKPC) president and MLA Handwara, Sajad Lone also strongly opposed the news about increase in GST on handmade Kashmiri shawls, terming it an "oversight" with potentially devastating consequences for artisans and the centuries-old shawl industry.

Lone underscored the cultural and historical significance of the Kashmiri shawl, describing it as more than a mere product. "The Kashmiri shawl embodies our history and serves as an ambassador of our artistry. It provides livelihood to thousands of skilled artisans," he said.

IT Raids Uncover

and has been in the spotlight for reasons beyond its real estate offerings, sources told Kashmir Observer.

Gibran Makhdoomi, the promoter/director of KCI Projects Pvt. Ltd., and Parvez Ahmad Nengroo, the former Chairman of J&K Bank, are key figures associated with the project. Nengroo is allegedly involved in a loan scandal tied to the KCI project.

The controversy centers around allegations that J&K Bank extended undue financial favors to KCI Projects Pvt. Ltd., leading to substantial financial losses. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) are currently investigating the matter.

Centre Okays

projects, Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University in Rajouri will receive Rs 20 crore to strengthen its infrastructure.

Additionally, five new girls' hostels will be constructed in the focus districts of Bandipora, Baramulla, Kulgam, Ramban and Udhampur, each allocated Rs 10 crore to promote gender equity. Three Government Degree Colleges in Bandipora, Sogam Kupwara and Nowshera will also receive Rs 5 crore each for infrastructure development and upgradation.

PM-USHA, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under the Ministry of Education, has been designed to address critical gaps in the higher education sector by enhancing infrastructure, curriculum reform, accreditation and employability. Aligned with the principles of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the scheme aims to ensure equitable access to quality education, particularly for underrepresented groups, thereby fostering a more inclusive and dynamic higher education ecosystem. These recent sanctions are part of a broader vision to make education a driver of social and economic transformation, bridging regional disparities and empowering students with the skills needed for a rapidly changing world.

The Higher Education Department of Jammu & Kashmir had earlier submitted a comprehensive proposal for 47 institutions, with a total estimated cost of Rs 585 crore. Including the latest approvals, 18 institutions including Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University and several colleges, have been sanctioned under PM-USHA across three PAB meetings held in 2024. The cumulative funding now stands at 155 crore, marking a significant milestone in addressing the infrastructural and academic needs of the region. The establishment of new hostels and upgraded facilities will not only enhance the quality of education but also support gender inclusion, a critical aspect of NEP 2020's vision for equitable development.

NEP 2020 emphasizes a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to education, prioritizing equity, inclusivity and excellence. PM-USHA serves as a key enabler in realizing this vision by bridging infrastructural gaps and promoting reforms that align with global standards. The projects sanctioned for Jammu & Kashmir are expected to create an environment conducive to innovation, learning and employability, ensuring that students from all sections of society have access to quality education.

LG Lauds

A++ Grade from NAAC, securing an exceptional score of 3.72.

In a social media post, the Lieutenant Governor said the outstanding accomplishment of the University of Jammu has made J&K proud.

The Lieutenant Governor posted on X, "The University of Jammu has achieved the prestigious A++ Grade with a CGPA of 3.72 on a seven-point scale by NAAC. Heartiest congratulations to the Vice Chancellor, faculty, staff, scholars and students for this outstanding accomplishment. You've made J&K proud."

Jammu University's reform-driven futuristic vision underscores its commitment to fostering academic excellence, goal oriented research, innovative capacity & holistic development of students to make them enlightened citizens. My best wishes to all for success in your mission," he added.

Vice Chancellor JU, Prof. Umesh Rai in a press conference said, "This is a marked improvement over the last accreditation Cycle (Cycle III), wherein it had attained an A+ grade with CGPA of 3.51, thereby exhibiting its commitment to quality sustenance and quality enhancement".

"The A++ grade reflects the unwavering commitment of our faculty, officers, staff, scholars, students, and alumni. It is a testament to our shared vision of transforming the University of Jammu into a global hub for academic and research excellence," said Prof. Rai.

He elaborated on the transformative initiatives undertaken by the University, including the promotion of interdisciplinary research, strengthening academic frameworks, and adopting best practices.

"This recognition by NAAC is not just a milestone but a motivation to further our commitment to quality, innovation, inclusivity, and enhancing societal impact," he emphasized.

Prof. Rai acknowledged the support of the Lieutenant Governor and Chancellor, Manoj Sinha; Chief Minister and Pro Vice Chancellor, Omar Abdullah; Higher Education Minister, Sakina Itoo; and Vice Chairman, Higher Education Council Prof. Dinesh Singh.

"Their visionary guidance has been instrumental in enabling the University to achieve this remarkable feat," he added.

The Vice-Chancellor also thanked the NAAC Peer Team for their rigorous evaluation and insightful recommendations during their visit.

"This is not the culmination of our journey but the beginning of new aspirations to set higher benchmarks in the field of higher education," Prof. Rai added.

SIM Card Vendors

the spokesman said. Special police teams directed the vendors for proper maintenance of records regarding issuances of SIM cards to subscribers as per telecom guidelines and security protocols governing the subject.

Necessary legal action will be initiated against SIM card vendors found violating the rules governing the subject, the spokesman said.

Police remain committed to safeguard the public and maintain the integrity of communication networks to prevent misuse of SIM cards for criminal activities, he said, adding that inspections will continue in the coming days to achieve the mandatory objective of security of all citizens. headline



27th year OF PUBLICATION

KASHMIR OBSERVER®

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Boxing Day Test: Jadeja Says Top-Order Needs To Fire

Press Trust of India

MELBOURNE: Star all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja has called for an improved performance from India's batting unit in the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne, saying the lack of runs from the top-order builds pressure on the lower-order.

Jadeja played a crucial role in the rain-hit third Test against Australia at Brisbane, scoring a gritty 77 in the first innings which helped India secure a draw.

"Top-order runs are very important when you play outside India, especially in Australia and South Africa. When the top order doesn't score runs, the responsibility and pressure increase on the lower order," he said, during an interaction at the MCG on Saturday.

"Hopefully, the top-order and the middle-order does well in this Test. As a team, we need the top order to perform. If everyone contributes in the batting unit, the team will do well."

India's top-order struggled



in Brisbane, barring opener KL Rahul, who scored a valiant 84. The rest of the top and middle order crumbled, but Jadeja, playing his first match of the tour, kept India afloat.

The match was eventually saved by the last-wicket stand

between Jasprit Bumrah and Akash Deep, who produced a heroic partnership to avoid the follow-on.

While Washington Sundar was preferred in the opening Test in Perth, Ravichandran Ashwin featured in the second

Test in Adelaide.

Jadeja said missing the first two matches worked to his advantage as it allowed him to acclimatize to the conditions and prepare for the Gabba Test.

"I got a nice few days to un-

derstand and get used to the conditions. I was here so many days, I used to bowl and bat on the tracks here. I got more familiar with the conditions here," he said.

"All my handwork in the nets helped me in the match and I played as per my plans."

India had secured a massive 295-run win at Perth, but Australia levelled the series with a commanding 10-wicket victory in the Pink Ball Test at Adelaide.

With the series tied 1-1, India needs just one win in the remaining matches to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Jadeja emphasized the significance of the Boxing Day Test.

"It's good that we are 1-1 after three Tests. The next two games will be very interesting too. If we win even one Test, we'll retain the trophy because we won the last two series.

"It's a good opportunity to make that one good effort. We'll see what happens in the last match but this is a very important and crucial match for us."

Short TAKES

Anmolpreet Smashes Fastest List A Hundred By An Indian

Anmolpreet Singh smashed the quickest List A hundred by an Indian, a 35-ball effort, to guide Punjab to an easy nine-wicket win over Arunachal Pradesh in a Group C Vijay Hazare match here on Saturday.

Anmolpreet, who went unsold in the recent IPL auction, broke the record of former India all-rounder Yusuf Pathan, who had scored a hundred off 40 balls for Baroda against Maharashtra in 2009-10.

This knock is also the third fastest List A hundred behind Aussie Jake Fraser-McGurk, who smashed a 29-ball ton for South Australia against Tasmania in 2023-24, and South African AB de Villiers' 31-ball hundred against the West Indies at Johannesburg in 2014-15.

The right-handed Anmolpreet made 115 off 45 balls (12x4, 9x6) as Punjab chased down a target of 165 in just 12.5 overs, reaching 167 for one.

After the early fall of skipper Abhishek Sharma (10), Anmolpreet and Prabhsimran Singh (35 not out, 25b) milked 153 runs for the unbroken second wicket alliance to guide Punjab home.

Earlier, Arunachal were bowled out for 164 with pacer Ashwani Kumar and leg-spinner Mayank Markande taking three wickets apiece.

Brief scores: Arunachal Pradesh: 164 all out in 48.4 overs (Tech Neri 42, Hardik Varma 38; Ashwani Kumar 3/37, Mayank Markande 3/31) lost to Punjab: 167/1 in 12.5 overs (Anmolpreet Singh 115 not out) by 9 wickets.



J&K Defeat Telangana 3-0 In Santosh Trophy Final Round



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: J&K senior men's football team secured its first final round Group A victory in the 78th National Football Championship for Santosh Trophy 2024-25 on Saturday, defeating hosts Telangana 3-0 at Deccan Arena in Hyderabad.

The J&K team got off to

a quick start in the early morning match, with Hayat Bashir finding the back of the net in the 5th minute. The squad took a 1-0 lead into the second half, before Arun Nagial calmed the nerves by making it 2-0 in the 70th minute. Captain Aakif Reshi sealed the game in the 88th minute, scoring the third goal.

Goalkeeper Majid also had an excellent outing, ensuring J&K registered its first win of the tournament. Aakif was named player of the match for his outstanding performance.

J&K, which had lost the opening two games of the final round, drew 1-1 against Manipur in its previous match.

J&K Football Association congratulated the team for the win, dedicating it to head coach Mehrajudin Wadoo, who, "despite suffering the heartbreaking loss of his beloved mother, remained a pillar of strength for the team."

"His telephonic guidance and steadfast support during such a challenging time exemplify extraordinary sportsmanship, resilience, and professionalism. This victory is dedicated to Mr. Mehrajudin Wadoo, as a tribute to his strength, excellence, and unwavering commitment to the game and his team," the FA said.

New Zealand Cricket Delegation In Pakistan To Assess Security Arrangements Ahead Of ODI Tri-Series



Press Trust of India

KARACHI: New Zealand Cricket (NZC) has sent a delegation to Pakistan to inspect security and other arrangements for a scheduled tri-series in January next year.

Besides hosts Pakistan and New Zealand, South Africa is the third team in the event. Pakistan is hosting the multi-team event as a curtain raiser to the ICC Champions Trophy in February and March.

The New Zealand delegation, including security expert Reg Dickason and New Zealand Players' Association representative Brad Rodden are in Karachi and Lahore to discuss security arrangements and other preparations for the event.

Around the same time, a high-powered delegation from the ICC also arrived in Pakistan to inspect ongoing preparations and other arrangements for the eight-team Champions Trophy.

The ICC delegation also visited the National Stadium in Karachi before going to Lahore and Rawalpindi.

A PCB official said the visits were

routine ahead of major events as Pakistan was going to be the centre of top cricket teams in February and March.

The New Zealand and ICC delegations keenly inspected the ongoing renovation and facelift process at the stadiums in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi on which the PCB is spending an amount of 12 billion rupees to get them ready for the Champions Trophy.

PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi said on Friday (December 20, 2024) that the board was ready to welcome and host all teams as construction work on the stadiums would be completed before given deadlines.

He also said that state-level security would be in place for all the teams visiting Pakistan and he will supervise this personally as federal minister for interior.

The NZC delegation also visited Rawalpindi Stadium and Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium as part of their assessment.

Pakistan will host New Zealand and South Africa for an ODI tri-series just days before the Champions Trophy, slated to be held from February 19 to March 9.

J&K Enter Quarter-Finals Of Sub Junior Softball National

Observer News Service

JAMMU: The J&K boys have won three league matches on the trot to seal a spot in the quarterfinals, while girls defeated formidable Maharashtra to enter the last eight stage of the ongoing 37th Sub Junior Na-

tional Softball Championship. The tournament is being organised by the Softball Association of Jammu and Kashmir, under the auspices of Softball Association of India and J&K Sports Council at MA Stadium, Jammu.

In the boys section, Jam-

mu and Kashmir thrashed Haryana by sixteen homes to two (16-2) in a one-sided affair; defeated Jharkhand by twelve homes to nil (12-0) and defeated Chandigarh in an easy contest by nine goals to one (9-1), thus qualifying for the quarter-finals.

Top Footballers Have Had Enough, As FIFA's New Tournament Sparks Revolt

Agencies

MANCHESTER: One of the most striking moments of soccer in 2024 was when Rodri hobbled onto a stage in Paris on crutches to receive the prestigious Ballon d'Or for best male player of the year.

The Manchester City and Spain midfielder had been one of the most outspoken critics against the increasingly congested soccer calendar, warning that the lack of downtime was detrimental to players' performance and health. Then, just a month before the Oct. 28 award ceremony, he tore his ACL during a seemingly routine run in a Premier League game against Arsenal.

Though such injuries have occurred throughout the history of the sport and aren't necessarily linked to overplaying, Rodri's season-ending injury became a visual representation of the physical toll of modern soccer at a time when the busy match schedule is facing legal challenges and the possibility of strike action.

Top footballers are now rou-

tinely playing more than 60 games per season for club and country, while the game is getting faster and more intense. Injuries are on the rise. Already pushed to their limits, some players say FIFA's newly expanded Club World Cup, to be held in the United States next year, is the last straw.

Players say they are "at breaking point, that they are at the limit, that it's actually too much," Alexander Bielefeld, from global players' union FIFPRO, told The Associated Press.

FIFA's New Addition To The Calendar

The new Club World Cup is a supersized version of what used to be a short tournament with only seven teams. The new edition includes 32 teams from around the world and will be held every four years, starting next summer in the United States from June 14 to July 13. As its name suggests, it's envisioned to be club version of the World Cup for national teams.

That means top players will have a monthlong tournament on top of their domestic league



season three out of every four years. With more games also added to the Champions League in Europe this season as well as the next World Cup in 2026, the soccer calendar is filling up quickly.

"It's something that worries us because we are the guys who suffer," Rodri said in September, just days before he was injured. He said players may have no choice but to refuse to play if

the trend continues.

FIFPRO says a significant number of players routinely play 60-70 matches a season. The union's recommended limit is 55.

Last season Julian Alvarez played 75 games for former club Manchester City and Argentina in 10 different competitions spanning the Premier League, Champions League, Copa America and Olympics.

The season before, Manchester United midfielder Bruno Fernandes played 70 times, including a run of 20 consecutive games.

Injuries Are A Concern

The Men's European Football Injury Index, an annual report by global insurance broker Howden, found there were 4,123 injuries in the top divisions of England, Spain, Germany, Italy and France last season. It said the number of injuries had risen year-on-year since the index was first published in 2021 and that "it would be fair to expect a continuation of this upwards trajectory."

Tony Strudwick, medical director for West Bromwich Albion and former head of performance for Manchester United, said injuries are on the rise despite advancements in sports science and medicine.

"That to me looks like there's a mismatch between what the players can physically tolerate and what they've been exposed to," he told The AP. "During the last eight seasons, incidents of hamstring injuries, in particular,

have increased."

Strudwick said the risk of too many games was ultimately injury and burnout. But he said players are unlikely to raise the issue with their clubs or national teams.

"Players are very reluctant to say they don't want to play and they're very, very tired. It takes a relatively brave person to do that," he said.

Manchester City played 61 games in the 2022-23 campaign when it won a trophy treble of the Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup.

This season that number could rise to 71 because of an expanded group stage and potential playoff in the Champions League and the Club World Cup. A heavy workload is also an issue in women's soccer, FIFPRO said earlier this week, though it noted that while some top players have a packed schedule, others don't get to play enough.

If successful, the Club World Cup could rival the Premier League and Champions League as one of the most lucrative and watched tournaments in club soccer. It has been backed by

clubs and next year's event is set to feature many of the biggest names in the sport, including Lionel Messi, Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and Vinicius Jr.

Coming at the end of many leagues' regular season, FIFA said the dates would be "harmoniously aligned with the international match calendar" to ensure sufficient rest for players ahead of the start of domestic campaigns.

The governing body has also set up a player welfare task force to be led by former Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger.

FIFPRO, which says it represents more than 66,000 players around the world, is not convinced. In October, its European division teamed up with domestic leagues and filed a legal complaint in Europe against how FIFA adds new and bigger men's competitions to the calendar.

FIFA hit back, noting that European clubs often fill their summer breaks with exhibition matches around the world. It accused some European leagues of acting with "hypocrisy, and without consideration to everyone else in the world."

Zakir Hussain laid to rest in San Francisco, percussionist Sivamani pays musical tribute



Agenceis

Zakir Hussain was laid to rest on Thursday at a San Francisco cemetery as renowned percussionist A Sivamani and other artistes performed on their drums at a little distance away in a tribute to the tabla maestro.

Hussain, one of the world's most accomplished percussionists, died at a San Francisco hospital on Monday due to complications arising from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, a lung disease. He was 73.

He was laid to rest at the Fernwood cemetery in San Francisco on Thursday.

Hundreds of his admirers gathered at Hussain's funeral to pay their last respects. Sivamani and several other musicians played drums at a little distance away to pay him a tribute.

Sivamani told PTI Video, "Rhythm is God, that is you Zakir bhai. I learned a lot in our journey from 1982 till now. Every moment you are here with us in the rhythm. Every time I hit the rhythm, you are there. We love you Zakir Bhai. Have a lovely journey. Please give my pranam to all the masters."

Hussain, the son of the legendary tabla player Alla Rakha, revolutionised the instrument, taking it beyond the limits of classical music to other forms, including jazz and Western classical.

The celebrated musician, one of India's most well-known, received four Grammy Awards in his career spanning six decades, including three at the 66th Grammy Awards earlier this year.

Hussain is survived by his wife Antonia Minnecola and daughters Anisa Qureshi and Isabella Qureshi.

Hussain received the Padma Shri in 1988, the Padma

Bhushan in 2002, and the Padma Vibhushan in 2023.

In his career spanning six decades, the musician worked with several renowned international and Indian artistes, but it was his 1973 musical project with English guitarist John McLaughlin, violinist L Shankar, and percussionist TH 'Vikku' Vinayakram that brought together Indian classical and elements of jazz in a fusion hitherto unknown.

Sivamani after Hussain's death in a Facebook post said he would go to San Francisco to see him for the last time.

"No Zakir Bhai, you cannot leave us like this. This is just unbelievable...I'm on the way to San Francisco. I want to see you, one last time. I want to hold your hands...my brother, my Guru...I'm devastated.. life will never be the same again," Sivamani had said.

Messages of condolence poured in on social media as the news of Hussain's demise spread. Prime Minister Narendra Modi called him a true genius who revolutionised the world of Indian classical music.

Grammy winner musician Ricky Kej remembered Hussain for his "immense humility, approachable nature".

"One of the greatest musicians and personalities India has ever produced. Along with being the best himself, Zakirji was known for...being responsible for the careers of numerous musicians, who are now forces to reckon with themselves.

He was a treasure trove of skill and knowledge and always shared and encouraged the entire music community through collaborations and his actions. His legacy will live on forever, and his influence will be felt for generations. He left us too soon," Kej had written on X after his demise.

India's Forest Cover Grows by 1,445 Sq Km: Report

Agenceis

India's total forest and tree cover has increased by 1,445 sq km since 2021, reaching 25.17 per cent of the total geographical area in 2023, according to the latest government data.

The India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023, released on Saturday, also said that India has achieved an additional carbon sink of 2.29 billion tonnes compared to 2005 levels. As part of its climate plans or Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to meet the Paris Agreement goals, the country has committed to creating an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.

The country's total forest cover increased to 7,15,343 sq km in 2023, reaching 21.76 per cent of its geographical area, the report stated.

The tree cover increased by 1,289 sq km and now constitutes 3.41 per cent of the country's geographical area, it said.

Together, the forest and tree cover amount to 8,27,357 sq km or 25.17 per cent of India's geographical area. This marks an overall increase of 1,445 sq km from 2021, with forest cover alone rising by 156 sq km.

According to the Forest Survey of India (FSI), forest cover refers to all land that has a tree canopy density of more than 10 per cent and spans over an area of one hectare or more, regardless of the type of ownership or legal status.

This includes natural forests as well as man-made plantations, orchards and tree patches in urban and rural areas that meet the size



and canopy density criteria.

Tree cover is defined as patches of trees and isolated trees outside the Reserved Forest Area (RFA) that are less than one hectare.

Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav said the most positive finding of the report is that India has already created an additional carbon sink of 2.29 billion tonnes compared to 2005 levels.

India's carbon stock in 2023 is estimated at 7,285.5 million tonnes, which is an increase of 81.5 million tonnes compared to 2021.

The fast-growing South Asian country is estimated to have 31.71 billion tonnes of carbon stock in forest and tree cover by 2030.

FSI Director General Anoop Singh said bamboo cover has also been estimated and included in the tree cover.

India's total bamboo-bearing area is now estimated at 1,54,670 sq km, an increase of 5,227 sq km compared to 2021.

(81.62 per cent).

The FSI also analysed forest cover changes in the Western Ghats and Eastern States Area (WGESA) over the past decade and found an overall loss of 58.22 sq km in forest cover.

During this period, very dense forests increased by 3,465.12 sq km while moderately dense forests and open forests decreased by 1,043.23 sq km and 2,480.11 sq km respectively.

In the hill districts of the country, the forest cover is 2,83,713.20 sq km, which makes up 40 per cent of the total geographical area of these districts. The latest assessment shows an increase of 234.14 sq km in forest cover in hill districts.

The latest ISFR report showed a decrease of 327.30 sq km in forest cover in the northeastern region.

The total forest and tree cover in the region stands at 1,74,394.70 sq km, accounting for 67 per cent of the region's geographical area.

The country's total mangrove cover stands at 4,991.68 sq km, a net decrease of 7.43 sq km since 2021, according to the report.

Moderately dense forest and open forest categories saw declines of 1,043.23 sq km and 2,480.11 sq km, respectively, over the last decade, despite gains in very dense forest, the report stated.

The FSI has been assessing forest cover since 1987 and tree cover since 2001.

The National Forest Policy 1988 mandates that 33 per cent of the geographical area of India should be under forest or tree cover.

Man Loses Mother's Cancer Treatment Fund In Online Game, Dies By Suicide

Agenceis



Chennai: A 26-year-old youth, who lost his mother's cancer treatment fund on online rummy game, tragically ended his life. Police identified the youth as Akash, a catering delivery worker who started playing online rummy during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently became addicted to it.

He used to live with his mother, a cancer patient, and his brother after the death of their father a few years ago.

Recently, Akash's mother found that 30,000, which she had saved for her cancer treatment, was missing.

Upon questioning, Akash admitted that he had used the money to play online games.

After being scolded by his mother and brother, Akash went missing from their home on Friday evening, taking his mobile phone with him.

The family searched for him at the homes of close friends but was unable to locate him.

On Saturday morning, his body was found on the terrace of their residence.

The Kotturpuram Police in Chennai have registered a case and begun an investigation.

Over the past four years, 48 people have committed suicide in Tamil Nadu due to addiction to online betting apps and online loan frauds.

The Tamil Nadu Online Gaming Authority (TNOGA) had earlier an-

nounced its intention to take strict action against those promoting online gambling and betting apps in the state.

Citizens are encouraged to report online gambling activities or offer suggestions on regulating online games through www.nonlinegamingauthority.com or via email at tngo@tn.gov.in.

The TNOGA, 2022, prohibits online gambling, betting, and games of chance.

Violators face imprisonment of up to three months, a fine of up to 5,000, or both. Financial institutions and payment gateways are also prohibited from facilitating transactions related to online gambling.

Additionally, the TNOGA Act bans advertisements promoting online gambling or games of chance in any form of media within Tamil Nadu.

Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) president and former Union Minister, Anbumani Ramadoss, have called on the government to take stringent measures against online games like rummy, which are reportedly driving many youths to despair and suicide.

52 kg gold, Rs 10 crore cash recovered from abandoned car in Bhopal jungle

Agenceis

The Income Tax Department has recovered 52 kg of gold and Rs 10 crore cash from an abandoned car in Bhopal following hour-long searches in connection with a disproportionate assets case linked to former RTO Constable Saurabh Sharma, an official said on Friday.

The searches were conducted on the premises associated with Sharma, who ventured into the real estate business after taking voluntary retirement from the Transport Department of the state government.

Sources said the car was found abandoned in the jun-



gle of Mendori village, which is located near a dense forest area and Kaliasot Dam, around 15-20 km from Sharma's residence in Arera

Colony, where the raid was conducted on Thursday.

The raid was conducted jointly by Madhya Pradesh Lokayukta's Special Police

Establishment (SPE) and Income Tax Department at the residence of Sharma and his associate, Chandan Gaur.

The gold found in the car

late night on Thursday, is said to be worth Rs 42 crore.

The seizure has brought further attention to Sharma and Gaur already under investigation in a disproportionate assets case.

During the search, I-T team also recovered documents related to investments in multiple properties, a hotel, and a school. Properties linked to Sharma are spread in several districts in the state.

Sharma, a resident of Gwalior had joined the MP government's transport department on a compassionate appointment after his father's death.

Sharma has been described as a 'simple man' during his joining. How-

ever, his lifestyle gradually changed completely and his assets saw a drastic growth during 12 years of his service, which initially raised suspicion, the police said.

After clashes with bureaucrats and complaints regarding a school allegedly built on government land, Sharma retired early to focus on real estate ventures.

Both Sharma and Gaur have been booked under the Prevention of Corruption Act, with ADG Lokayukta Jaideep Prasad confirming that investigations are ongoing.

Officials believe the gold and cash found in the abandoned vehicle may be part of the illicit wealth amassed by Sharma and Gaur.

**KASHMIR'S
HARRASSED
HUSBANDS**

SCAN TO WATCH THIS ON

**KASHMIR
OBSERVER**