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**BOOK APPOINTMENT**

## Snowfall Throws Normal Life Out of Gear In Kashmir



Shopian	1.5 feet
Gulmarg	1 foot 3 inches
Pahalgam	1 foot 6 inches
Kulgam	2 feet
Pulwama	1 foot
Srinagar	8 inches
Ganderbal	6 to 8 inches
Budgam	7 to 10 inches
Bandipora	6 inches
Kishtwar	4 inches

KO Photo | Abid Bhat

### MeT Predicts More Snow From January 3

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Normal life was thrown out of gear in Kashmir on Saturday as most areas of the valley received snowfall, disrupting flight and railway

operations and also leading to the closure of the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway, officials said. Moderate to heavy snowfall was recorded across Kashmir since Friday, including the season's first snowfall in Srinagar city and other plain areas of the valley. In south Kashmir, heavy to very heavy snowfall was recorded in the plains, while

central Kashmir's plains received moderate snowfall. The plains of north Kashmir received light to moderate snowfall, the officials said. Srinagar recorded about eight inches of snow, while neighbouring Ganderbal recorded about seven inches. Sonamarg, a famous tourist destination, recorded around eight inches of snow, the officials added. [| More on P6](#)

### Surprise Snowfall! MET's 'Inaccurate' Forecast Sparks Backlash

Agencies

Srinagar: Kashmir Valley woke up to a blanket of heavy snow on Saturday morning, with south and central Kashmir bearing the brunt of the unpredicted weather event. The India Meteorological Department's (IMD) Srinagar station had forecast light rain and snowfall for the region on December 27 and 28, but the valley experienced over two feet of snow in some areas, catching residents, authorities, and travellers completely off guard.

The failure of weather models to predict this intense spell of snow has raised serious questions about the accuracy and preparedness of the meteorological forecasting system in the region. The inaccurate forecast by the Meteorological Department (MET) in Jammu and Kashmir

**6** The absence of state-of-the-art equipment limits the ability to accurately predict such extreme weather events."

-Faizan Arif

has created chaos on the ground with many travellers especially tourists found themselves stranded in life-threatening situations. People largely blame the weather department and its current incharge in Jammu and Kashmir Mukhtar Ahmad for the inaccurate prediction that caught everyone off guard. The MET had predicted light rainfall and scattered snowfall in some areas on Friday, but as the day proceeded the plains of Kashmir witnessed heavy snowfall [| More on P6](#)



### Flights Cancelled, Rail Service Suspended

Air traffic to and from Srinagar was also affected as flight operations at the airport were suspended due to snowfall, the airport officials said. "Due to bad weather conditions, all flights at Srinagar Airport have been [| More on P6](#)



### Over 1,300 HMVs Stranded on NH

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Traffic, Suleman Choudhary on Saturday said that more than 1300 Heavy Motor Vehicles (HMVs) are stranded on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway. IGP Choudhary said that 465 HMVs are stranded in the Qazigund [| More on P6](#)



### Roads, Highways Closed

All the major roads and highways continued to remain closed for vehicular movement for the 2nd straight day while the stranded vehicles were allowed to ply towards Ramban on Srinagar-Jammu National Highway. "All the stranded passengers have been allowed to ply towards Ramban today," a top official said, adding that no [| More on P6](#)



### Power Outages Triggered

First snowfall in Kashmir has led to widespread power outages, leaving residents grappling with disruptions in essential services. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah took to X to update the public on the situation. "Out of forty-one 33KV feeders dysfunctional in Kashmir due to heavy snowfall, thirty seven have been [| More on P6](#)

## Will Snowfall End Kashmir's Power Woes?

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The heavy snowfall in Kashmir has provided much-needed relief to the region's hydroelectric power generation, which had significantly declined due to an extended dry spell this year.

Local power generation had plummeted to approximately 40 MW, a stark contrast to Kashmir's installed capacity of over 1,140 MW. This reduction was primarily due to diminished water levels in rivers and reservoirs, essential for powering hydroelectric plants.

Officials from the Power Development Department (PDD) have expressed cautious optimism following the snowfall.

A senior PDD official said, "The recent snowfall is expected to recharge our water sources, which should gradually enhance power generation as the snow melts. However, the benefits will not be immediate;



it will take time for the snow-melt to positively impact reservoir levels."

The prolonged dry spell had not only reduced power generation but also increased the region's reliance on electricity imports to meet demand. This dependency strained the local grid and led to frequent power outages, affecting both residents and industries.

Another PDD official noted, "While the snowfall brings hope, we must continue to manage our resources efficiently and encourage [| More on P6](#)

## Snowbound Roads, Warm Hearts Kashmir's Generosity Towards Tourists Steals Spotlight

Observer News Service

Srinagar: In a heartwarming display of Kashmiri hospitality, locals in Gund, on the Srinagar-Sonamarg highway, opened the doors of their homes and a mosque to shelter a group of travellers stranded due to heavy snowfall.

A dozen tourists from Punjab found themselves caught in the snowfall on Friday while returning from the Sonamarg area, officials said.

Their vehicles became stuck in the snow and with no nearby hotels and local houses too small to accommodate the group, Gund residents opened the doors of the Jamia Masjid, allowing the tourists to stay there for the night, officials added.

"It was the best possible solution as the mosque has a hamaam, which stays warm throughout the night," said



KO Photo | Abid Bhat

Bashir Ahmad, a local resident.

The Jamia Masjid at Gund is located less than 10 kilometers from the site of a terrorist attack in Gagangir, where six people -- five non-local labourers and a local doctor -- were killed in October this year. The social media networking sites were flooded with

messages by the stranded tourists, praising the hospitality of the natives.

A video which went viral on the social media platforms revealed that dozens of stranded tourists were being provided tea and other facilities by the common Kashmiris in their homes. "We have [| More on P6](#)

## Ensure 100% Doctor Attendance: CM

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah convened a video conference meeting with all districts across Jammu and Kashmir to review snow clearance operations and restoration of essential services following heavy snowfall in the Kashmir Valley.

The meeting held at the video conference hall in Ganderbal, was attended in person by Advisor to the CM Nasir Aslam Wani, Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal Shyambir, ADC Ganderbal, and other senior district officials. Chief Secretary, Divisional Commissioners of Kashmir



and Jammu, and Deputy Commissioners from all districts participated via video conferencing. The snowfall, which began yesterday, has disrupted normal life in many districts across the valley. During the meeting, Deputy Commissioners [| More on P6](#)

### Inspects Facilities At Ganderbal Hospital

Following heavy snowfall across the Kashmir Valley, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today visited District Hospital Ganderbal and assessed the facilities and services available to patients during the inclement weather. During his visit, the Chief Minister inspected various units of the [| More on P6](#)

## Gratuitous Occupancy Doesn't Grant Property Rights: HC

M Ahmad

Srinagar: If a person has been allowed to stay in the premises gratuitously, he does not acquire any title over the property, the High Court of J&K and Ladakh has said.

"The Courts would not be justified in protecting the possession of any person who was allowed to occupy the premises for some time gratuitously," said a bench of Justice Sanjay Dhar.

The court made the observations while dismissing an appeal filed by one M/S M. R. Industries against an order by Additional District Judge, Srinagar by virtue of which the government rejected suit seeking directions



to restrain it from interfering with the use and occupation of a plot of land at Industrial Estate Zainakote, Srinagar.

"The protection can only be granted or extended to a person who has a valid subsisting rent agreement, lease agreement or license agreement in his favour," the court said, adding, "Therefore, a person holding

a premises gratuitously and whose initial entry in the premises is questionable, would not acquire any right or interest in the property and even long possession in that capacity would be of no legal consequence."

"In the instant case, as per plaintiff's (M/S M. R. Industries) own case he was allowed to occupy the additional plot of land in question by the defendants without any formal allotment," the court said, adding, "The plot of land admittedly belongs to a third person who is a migrant. Therefore, there is no legal right or interest created in favour of the plaintiff in this case, so as to entitle him to remain in possession of the suit [| More on P6](#)

## JKP SI Recruitment CAT Directs JKSSB To Permit Overage Candidates

Observer News Service

Jammu: The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) in Jammu has directed the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board to permit 241 unemployed graduates, who are over the prescribed age limit, to participate in the on-going selection process for the posts of Police Sub-Inspector.

The application was filed by the graduates seeking age relaxation.

The bench, comprising Member (Judicial) Rajinder Singh Dogra and Member (Administrative) Ram Mohan Johri, issued the directive

after hearing arguments from Advocate Sheikh Shakeel Ahmed and his team, representing the applicants.

The tribunal acknowledged that the applicants had missed the opportunity to apply earlier due to the Home Department's delay in referring vacancies to the JKSSB, leading to the overage status of the candidates.

Advocate Ahmed argued that the delay in the selection process, which lasted more than three years, had left the applicants overaged, despite the fact that they met the eligibility criteria at the time of the previous [| More on P6](#)

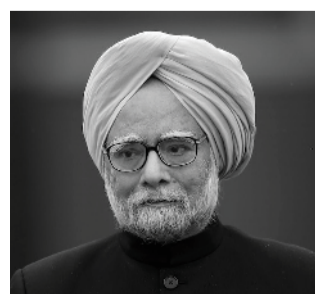
## Dr Singh Cremated With Full State Honours

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Former prime minister Manmohan Singh was cremated with full state honours here on Saturday in the presence of top dignitaries from India and abroad.

Singh's funeral pyre was lit by his eldest daughter Upinder Singh at the Nigambodh Ghat amid the chanting of religious hymns.

The last rites were performed in the presence of President Droupadi Murmu, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as also top leaders of the Congress party including Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar



Namgyel Wangchuck and Mauritius Foreign Minister Dhananjay Ramful were among the foreign dignitaries who paid tributes to Singh, who served as the prime minister from 2004 to 2014.

Singh, 92, died on the night of December 26. Defence [| More on P6](#)



# Heavy Snowfall Disrupts Smart City Bus Services, Commuters Suffer

Agencies

Srinagar: Heavy snowfall in Kashmir Valley, particularly in Srinagar, disrupted the operations of Smart City buses as the services were suspended for the entire day. Partial operations resumed in the evening for some buses.

Our news reporter received several calls from various parts of Srinagar city and its outskirts, with residents expressing frustration and anger over the suspension of Smart City bus services.

A commuter at Lal Chowk said, "We rely on these Smart City buses for our daily commute. I had an emergency today, but I was left stranded as these buses were missing from the roads."

"This isn't the first time snowfall has disrupted public transport. They advertise these buses as a modern solution, but what's the point if they can't function during bad weather?" said another resident at Lal Chowk.

A tea stall owner in the city said, "People were forced to take cabs or walk long distances in freezing weather. If the government is investing in such projects, they should ensure that they are operational in all conditions."

A student from IGNOU expressed his disappointment, saying he had an exam and depended on the Smart City buses for transportation. "I waited for hours and eventually had to walk all the way to my exam center. This is unacceptable," he said.

When contacted, officials from Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL) said that the bus services were disrupted due to snowfall during the night, which led to a power outage at the Pantha Chowk charging station, preventing buses from being charged.

The official added that the situation improved in the evening, allowing for partial resumption of bus services. "If the electricity supply remains stable throughout the night, the buses will be fully charged and operational in the city and its outskirts tomorrow," he said.

Speaking about the charging system, the official said, "It takes nearly three hours to fully charge a bus, providing a backup of 100 kilometers. The buses charge on 11,000 kV lines overnight. We are optimistic that services will be fully restored tomorrow if power supply issues are resolved."—(KNO)



PIC: Abid Bhat/KO

## Srinagar Post-Snowfall Snow Clearance Issues Stall City Traffic, SMC Claims Major Roads Cleared

Syed Mohammad Burhan

Srinagar: Srinagar city was left immobilized on Saturday morning as the Srinagar Municipal Corporation failed to clear snow from the lanes following overnight snowfall. Residents woke up to find major thoroughfares and interior roads blanketed with snow, disrupting daily life and halting vehicular movement across the city.

Key areas, including Raj Bagh, Solina, LD Road, Mehjoor Nagar, Wazir Bagh, and Jawahar Nagar, remained inaccessible as snow clearance efforts lagged, leaving even upscale neighborhoods stranded. Interior roads in localities like Rambagh were similarly impassable, forcing residents to remain indoors.

A local resident from Rambagh expressed frustration, stating that vehicles were unable to ply due to the absence of timely snow removal. Gulzar Hammad, a shopkeeper in Solina, lamented, "It's frustrating to see the authorities unprepared. We're used to snow here, but this negligence has brought the city to a standstill."

Sajad Hussain, a commuter stranded near Mehjoor Nagar, shared his ordeal: "I had an urgent appointment, but I've been stuck here for hours. This situation is unacceptable and highlights the administration's failure to act promptly."

"Snow used to be cleared from the roads shortly after Fajar prayers, but this time even after the sunrise, no snow clearance operation was seen," wrote a netizen on social media.

Officials from SMC said snow clearance machines, manpower and dewatering pumps were made operational in Srinagar city, while locals from many places in Srinagar said their lanes and bylanes have still not been cleared.

Officials from the SMC said they have been working since last night and are still on the ground clearing the city's roads. They said the major roads of the city are cleared, and their priority remains hospitals and other important roads.

"43 snow tractors, two Bobcats (a small type of JCB used for snow clearance), 127 dewatering pumps, and six big JCBs are operational in the city for snow clearance operations," an official said, adding that about 2,200 workers are engaged in cleaning the city's lanes and bylanes.

However, many locals claimed that snow had not been cleared from their lanes and bylanes. "The snowfall has not been cleaned from our area, and the SMC officers have not arrived yet," said Sahil, a local

from Habba Kadal, Srinagar.

Meanwhile, according to an official statement, Dr Owais Ahmed, accompanied by senior officials of the corporation, conducted thorough inspections across several areas on Saturday to assess the ongoing snow clearance and dewatering operations following the snowfall.

During his visits, the SMC Commissioner toured areas such as CBD Lal Chowk, SMHS Hospital, and government housing colonies in Balgarden, Karanagar, Sanat Nagar, Chana-pora and the Leprosy Hospital in Bahar Lal Bazar, along with dewatering stations, the statement said, adding that he engaged with on-site officers and supervisors to evaluate the progress of these operations and identify any challenges faced.

Dr Owais interacted with locals and gathered valuable insights into the effectiveness of the snow clearance and dewatering efforts. He gave on-the-spot directions for prompt snow removal and effective dewatering to safeguard public safety, facilitate transportation, and minimize disruptions to essential services, the SMC said, adding that the Commissioner appreciated the hard work of the corporation's front-line workers, who play a crucial role in these operations—(with inputs from KNT, KNO)

## DC Tours City Areas To Oversee Snow Clearance Measures

Observer News Service

Srinagar: In order to assess the ground situation in wake of snowfall in the District, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat today morning toured various areas of the Srinagar City to inspect snow-clearance operations and take first hand appraisal about functioning of essential supplies.

The DC visited various areas of the City including Lal Chowk, Ghan-ta Ghar, Residency Road, Polo-view, Rajbagh, Jawahar Nagar, Guggibagh, Rambagh, Burzulla, Hyderpora, Be-mina and other adjoining areas and

took stock of the ongoing snow clearance measures.

During the tour, the DC took on-site inspection of the ongoing snow clearance measures and stressed the Officers and officials to ensure that snow is cleared from all main roads to pave ways for smooth vehicular movement, particularly of ambulances ferrying patients. He also stressed on prioritizing snow clearance on roads leading to important installations including hospitals ensuring unhindered access for medical emergencies, as well as facilitating the smooth flow of essential services amidst the challenging

weather conditions.

The DC also laid emphasis on snow clearance from inner lanes and by-lanes to make sure people do not face any inconvenience. He underscored the importance of making other necessary facilities available to residents to minimize the impact of severe weather events on the people.


The DC also stressed on ensuring free Ambulance movement enroute all City Hospitals and emphasised on snow clearance from remote Srinagar areas like Harwan, Dara, Fakir Gujri, Khanmoh, Bahama, Soiteng, Panzinara, etc.

- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,245222,2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081
- Ambulance: Kashmir EMS Service: +91 94841 00200


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**RAILWAYS**  


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

**HIGHWAY STATUS**  


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



**PRAYERS**

FAJR	6: 07
ZUHR	12:32
ASR	3: 51
Magrib	5:33
ISHA	6: 58

**HIJRI CALENDAR**  
26 Jumada al-Sani  
**1446**

### This Day In History

- 1170 - Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury is assassinated inside Canterbury Cathedral by followers of King Henry II; subsequently martyred.
- 1503 - Battle of Garigliano: Spanish army under General Cordoba defeats French forces
- 1539 - St Jacob's Church burns after being hit by lightning
- 1541 = Isabella of Poland and King Ferdinand of Austria sign Treaty of Gyalu
- 1558 = Charles V, King of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor, buried in El Escorial, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain
- 1653 - Dutch painter Jan Vermeer becomes a member of the Guild of Saint Luke for painters in Delft
- 1705 - Prosper Jolyot's "Idoménée," premieres in Paris
- 1708 - Great Alliance occupies Gent.
- 1778 - British troops occupy Savannah, Georgia.
- 1786 - French Revolution: The Assembly of Notables is convoked
- 1806 - Thomas Dibdin's pantomime "Harlequin and Mother Goose" starring Joseph Grimaldi, in his most famous clown performance, opens at the Covent Garden Theatre, London
- 1812 - The USS Constitution under the command of Captain William Bainbridge, captures the HMS Java off the coast of Brazil after a three hour battle.
- 1837 - Steam-powered threshing machine patented, Winthrop, Maine.
- 1860 -The first British seagoing iron-clad warship, HMS Warrior is launched.
- 1862 - Battle of Chichasaw Bayou: confederate armies defeat General William T. Sherman.
- 1862 - Bowling ball invented.
- 1891 - Edison patents "transmission of signals electrically" (radio).
- 1900 - General Viljoen surprise attack British garrison to Helvetia
- 1903 - French Equatorial Africa separates into Gabon, Chad and Ubangi-Shari
- 1908 - Patent granted for a 4-wheel automobile brake, Clintonville, Wisconsin

*From KO Archives*

## NC Closes Ranks In Fear Of Gul Shah's Raid

Farooq, Party Brass Hold Lengthy Meetings

Observer News Service

Jammu: The recent convention by National Conference adversary, the Awami National Conference led by G. M. Shah in Srinagar has sent alarm bells ringing in the ruling party with the NC president, Farooq Abdullah other top functionaries in the party for a meeting to review the political situation in the state.

The NC President, Farooq Abdullah this afternoon held a detailed discussion with his senior party colleagues at his private office to take stock of the political situation in the state. The meeting, sources said, went into the evening hours also.

The meeting assumes significance in the wake of open threat by CM's brother-in-law, G. M. Shah that he would go all out in removing Farooq Abdullah from the seat of the power in the state.

Sources said that there are fears among the NC top brass that Shah like in 1984 may engineer defections in the ruling party as there was growing dissension among some of the ministers. They are reportedly unhappy over Dr. Farooq Abdullah's move of cutting them to size in the last reshuffle. They include Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Shah and Abdul Rahim Rather.

The Chief Minister, sources said, who is under tremendous pressure to drop at least six ministers for their reported poor performance has dropped the idea of a fresh cabinet re-shuffle in view of the latest threat by G. M. Shah. The CM had earlier made-up his mind in consultation with his senior colleagues to drop some ministers, including Iftikhar Hussain Ansari for his alleged tax-evasion, Bashir Ahmad Kitchloo for his son's alleged involvement in timber-smuggling and Ajat Shatru for his reported illegal construction in green belt.

"Nothing will be done that annoys anyone in the party for the time being," a source, close to those who attended the meeting this evening said. The meeting also discussed possible changes in the state administration on large scale.

The police is also to witness large scale reshuffle by the state cabinet. The changes will affect almost all the senior police officers of the rank of IGPs in the state, besides shifting of all the district police chiefs. Three IGPs, sources said are being promoted as additional director generals of police, while three senior officers are being sent to Centre on deputation.

(Kashmir Observer, 29 December, 1998)

**Office of the Principal**  
**S. P. COLLEGE, SRINAGAR**  
**CONDOLENCE MEETING**

The Principal, staff, and students of this college place on record their grief and sorrow on the passing away of **Professor (Dr) Nazir Ahmad Gilkar**, former Principal of this college.

A condolence meeting was held in the college on **December 26, 2024**, to offer Fateha for the departed souls. The members also prayed to the Almighty to bestow courage on the bereaved families to bear this irreparable loss.



Sd/-  
**Prof. (Dr) Mohammad Farooq Mir**  
Principal

INF

**OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY SRINAGAR**  
Dated: 21.11.2024  
Present: Ms. Nusrat Ali Hakak

In the case of:  
The J&K Bank Ltd B/lu: Zaina Kadal Srinagar  
Through Attorney Holder Javeed Ahmad Sheera  
.....Applicant

V/S

1. Farooq Ahmad Malik  
S/o: Ghulam Ahmad Malik  
R/o: Haien Trehgam Kupwara-193224  
At Present: Gurgadi Mohalla Zaina Kadal Srinagar-190002  
Borrower/ Non-Applicant

In the matter of Substitute service through Publication / Advertisement

Whereas, applicant Bank has filed application before this authority in terms of Section 12-A of Act and Commercial Courts.

Whereas, notice was issued against non-applicant but services could not be effective due to insufficient / incomplete address.

Whereas, it has been shown to the satisfaction of the undersigned that service of non-applicant could not be effective in ordinary mode.

Therefore, the non-applicant through the medium of this notice are directed to appear in person or their attorney by or before the next date of hearing i.e. 03.02.2025

Sd/-  
**Secretary (Sub Judge)**  
District Legal Services Authority Srinagar

AB

Website: kupwara.nic.in email: dckup-jk@nic.in ph. no: 01955-253335

(Government of Jammu and Kashmir)  
**Office of the Deputy Commissioner/District Magistrate**  
**District Dev. Commissioner Kupwara**  
ORDER

In order to ensure timely disposal of grievances of the general public arising out of harsh winter season/heavy snowfall, Mr Mohammad Rouf Rehman, JKAS Addl. Deputy Commissioner, Kupwara (Cell No.9419040800) is hereby designated as Nodal Officer, for effective functioning of Joint District Control Room, 24X7 Kupwara for timely disposal of the grievances and exigencies of the general public in the District.

All the line/ essential Departments shall keep close liaison with the Nodal Officer and ensure timely disposal of the grievances of the general public being received by the District/ Sub Divisional Control Rooms and their respective established Control Rooms. Further, all the concerned Officers of these line departments shall furnish their action taken report to the Nodal Officer on weekly basis.

DIPK-10142/24  
DATED: 28-12-2024  
No. DCK/PS/2024/14/3288/3305

Deputy Commissioner Kupwara

Government of Jammu & Kashmir  
**Office of the Principal**  
**Govt Higher Secondary School Munadguffan**  
Yaripora Kulgam pin: 192232 email: principal-hssmunad@jk.gov.in

PUBLIC AUCTION NOTICE

Auction notice is hereby invited to all the bidders/concerned dealers/General Public to attend this office on 1st of January 2025 for the sale/auction of the unserviceable items like furniture(wooden Desks/ wooden & Plastic chairs)/tin lockers/trunks/computer monitors/UPS/CPUs etc for which the complete list can be seen on the spot.

The auction will be conducted at 11:00 am on the aforesaid date on the following terms and conditions in the office of the undersigned.

- The auction will be held and the highest bidder in whose favour the bid is closed should required to deposit the full amount on the spot.
- The materials should be lifted within 05 days from the date of acceptance of bid.
- Other terms and conditions if any shall be announced on spot at the time of bid.
- The auction committee members have reserved the right to accept or reject any bid without assigning any reasons thereto.

No: HSSMG /412 /2024  
DIPK-10135/24  
Dated: 28/12/2024

SD/-  
Principal HSS Munadguffan

# Trading Paradise For Progress?

Burhan Uz Zaman

“Once completed, these projects could trigger a construction boom along the tracks, particularly near stations. Think commercial and residential buildings stretching over a kilometer on both sides, adding to the already alarming rate of unregulated construction in the Valley

According to the department of tourism, over 20 million tourists visited Jammu and Kashmir this year—a record-breaking figure and the highest ever. The numbers are impressive, especially considering the region's decades of turmoil. These figures could have been even higher if not for the continuous unrest over the last three decades, as the region lies in a conflict zone.

Kashmir's natural beauty, the very foundation of its tourism, is under threat. Unplanned and illegal constructions, particularly in scenic spots like Pahalgam, Gulmarg, and Sonmarg, are slowly eating the Valley's charm. According to a recent survey, illegal constructions in these areas have increased by nearly 20% over the past five years, indicating a serious challenge to sustainable tourism. If restrictions are not imposed, we risk losing what makes Kashmir special, both for locals and visitors.

Now, the issue isn't just about the loss of scenic beauty—it's about livelihoods too. Most of the Valley's population relies on apple orchards and paddy fields, which are now at risk due to proposed railway projects. These include the Awantipora-Shopian, Anantnag-Pahalgam, Baramulla-Uri, and Sopore-Kupwara lines.

## Does Kashmir Really Need These Railway Lines?

Railway connectivity is often used for long distances, like the Banihal-Baramulla railway line, Kashmir's first and oldest railway line, which now connects Jammu to the Valley.

This line divides the valley almost in two equal parts and spans nearly 200 kilometers. The authorities have announced that trains will now run directly from Delhi by next year. Projects like the Chenab Bridge on this line are truly an engineering milestone in the history of Indian Railways, it is appreciable and making it a truly people-centric project. However, the same cannot be said for the new proposals.

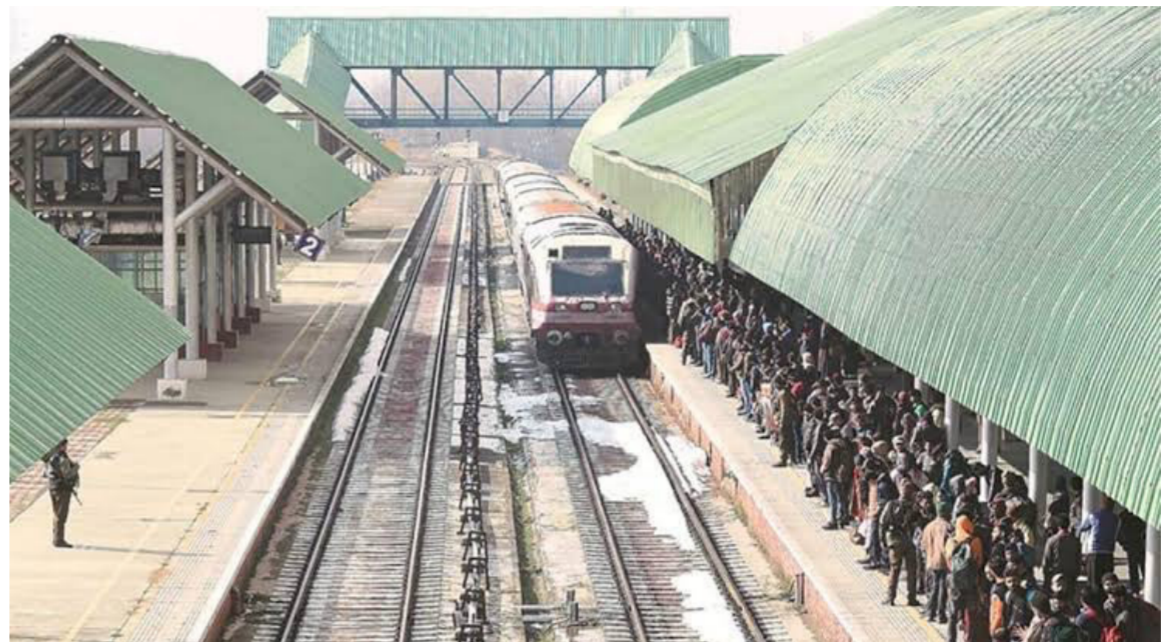
If we consider routes like Bijbehara to Shopian or Anantnag to Pahalgam, the distances are barely 30-40 kilometers. What is the purpose of constructing railway projects for such short distances, especially when it endangers people's livelihoods and natural heritage? Neither are these projects demanded by the people, as seen in the widespread resistance against them. Although there are claims that these projects will boost tourism in J&K, but the question remains: at what price? Can tourism flourish without the scenic beauty and clean environment that are being compromised with each passing day?

The Banihal-Baramulla railway line serves a legitimate need and benefits the masses. Plans to double this line make sense, as it will ease train movement without further need for additional land acquisition as the required land was already acquired during the proposal and construction of the first one. But projects like the Anantnag-Pahalgam and Awantipora-Shopian lines raise questions about their necessity, given the limited distances involved and the already good road connectivity in these areas.

## The Shrinking Land Crisis

There is already minimal land available in Jammu and Kashmir for agriculture and horticulture. This land is shrinking rapidly due to unregulated development projects and infrastructure. Experts warn that at the current rate of shrinkage, it will lead to food insecurity and economic instability.

These projects themselves violate the 'Land Use



Policy of India', which suggests sustainable development that ensures the optimal use of land resources. The policy aims to conserve and protect sensitive ecosystems like forests and wetlands, promote eco friendly practices, and secure food security by protecting agricultural land. As per the policy, the government should follow a consultative and participatory approach when acquiring agricultural and cultivated land for such projects. So, the authorities should engage in discussions with landowners and local communities to understand their needs, concerns and alternatives.

As per 2016 data, the average landholding size in Jammu and Kashmir is only 0.33 hectares, far below states like Arunachal Pradesh (5.82 ha), Punjab (3.62 ha), Haryana (2.22 ha), and Rajasthan (1.73 ha). This highlights the precarious situation of land availability in the region. Shrinking agricultural land in a place with such low landholding sizes could devastate livelihoods.

## The Economic Backbone at Risk

According to the Department of Horticulture, Jammu and Kashmir accounts for 75% of India's apple production, contributing significantly to the region's economy. Losing even a fraction of this industry would be devastating. Let's not forget that the apple industry is the backbone of Jammu and Kashmir's economy. Experts warn that these projects could deal a severe blow to this crucial sector, one that supports thousands of families. Tourism pales in comparison when considering the economic importance of agriculture and horticulture.

## Unplanned Progress and Environmental Concerns

We've all seen what unplanned development can do. Look at Delhi's choking air quality—an example of how progress without planning can backfire. The World Health Organization recently reported that South Asia has some of the most polluted cities in the world, and if such trends continue, Kashmir too could face severe environmental degradation. For example, the Anantnag-Pahalgam railway project could severely degrade the environment and threaten natural heritage. Pahalgam, famous worldwide for its

scenic beauty, is at risk of losing its pristine charm.

Although road connectivity is good enough for these places, widening existing roads would be a viable alternative, with a much smaller environmental impact compared to these railway projects.

## Public Resistance and Concerns

For almost a year, dozens of videos have circulated on social media where people demand that their voices be heard. Protests, especially by farmers, have erupted against these projects. Their message is clear: they are not against development but against the price they're being asked to pay.

## The Urbanization Threat

And it's not just about the railway lines themselves. Once completed, these projects could trigger a construction boom along the tracks, particularly near stations. Think commercial and residential buildings stretching over a kilometer on both sides, adding to the already alarming rate of unregulated construction in the Valley. According to official data, urbanization in Kashmir has already grown by 12% in the past decade, raising concerns about overburdened infrastructure and ecological imbalance.

## The Way Forward

Progress is essential—we all agree on that. But it must not come at the cost of people's livelihood and natural heritage. Globally, alarm bells are ringing. The world is at a tipping point, with climate change and overdevelopment threatening fragile ecosystems. Can Kashmir afford to lose its paradise in the name of progress? The administration should rethink these projects and find a way to strike a balance, ensuring that development benefits the people without harming what makes Kashmir unique.

Kashmir deserves better, and so do its people. Let's not trade paradise for progress.

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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## On Dr Manmohan Singh He Will Be Remembered Not Just Kindly But With Gratitude By History

Arvind Mayaram

Dr Manmohan Singh will be remembered not kindly but with gratitude by history. In July 2012, I was appointed as secretary in the Department of Economic Affairs by the Government. Prime minister Singh was also holding the charge of the finance ministry that time after Pranab Mukherjee had been elected India's President.

However by the time I joined as secretary, P. Chidambaram was the finance minister and I did not get to directly work under Manmohan Singh. But during the 2012-14 period, the Indian economy was in the throes of multiple crises and we had to regularly present our strategies before the PM. I was fortunate enough to watch him closely as he guided the government quietly but steadily.

A man a few words, Dr Singh was a great listener. He was a globally recognised economist and architect of India's economic reforms of 1990s, but he never cut any of us short when we were making a presentation. Even if our opinions were contrarian to his point of view, he contradicted us gently, often with a smile. He was clear and precise in his directions, but always delivered them as a suggestion.

Even though we struggled with issues like runaway inflation, burgeon-

ing fiscal deficit and toxic current account deficit against serious odds, he provided much needed encouragement and support.

When in mid 2013, the Rupee tanked from 59 to a dollar to 68.8, there was a near panic. When nothing was working we suggested that to correct market sentiments a new "NRI Bond" should be floated along with a few other measures. There was a serious pushback from the RBI. Most economists within the government were also opposed to it. As FM Chidambaram put his faith in our suggestion, we briefed Dr Singh, who concurred and subsequently, the RBI launched the scheme. The rest is history. Within a quarter, we could bring in around US\$ 35 billion, reversing the flow of dollars from the country and pulling the Rupee back to around 60 to a dollar.

From growth strategies to FDI reforms, Dr Singh was always supportive. The list of reforms that he presided over is very long and impressive. Very few would remember that GDP growth, which averaged 7.7% during Dr Singh's 10 year stewardship of the government was unprecedented. When it slumped to 5.1% in 2012-13, the finance ministry under FM Chidambaram took some extraordinary measures.

Within an year, the economy had turned around. The economy recorded a growth rate of 6.9% in 2013-14 providing the then new government a solid founda-



tion for consolidating and accelerating growth. There was not a single strategy followed by us during that period which did not benefit from Dr Singh's oversight.

Dr Singh is remembered as the architect of economic reforms of 1991, which created a higher growth trajectory for the economy. But we must not forget the second economic revolution ushered in by him during his ten year rule, which was of an even greater magnitude. UNDP and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) released the Global Multidimensional Poverty and Human Development Index in 2018. According to the report, the incidence of multidimensional poverty

almost halved between 2005-06 and 2015-16 (most of this period under Dr Singh's rule), from 54.7% of the population to 27.5% of the population.

Sabina Alkire of OPHI, who led the study, said: "India remains the country that has the largest reduction in the number of poor, with over 270 million persons leaving poverty." In fact, getting such a large number of people out of poverty in such a short time created a huge demand side push and consequently a crisis of expectations which the government could not contain, and collapsed under its weight in the 2014 elections.

On a personal note, I remember two one to one meetings the most. The first

was aboard the PM's special plane which was carrying him and the Indian delegation to St. Petersburg to participate in the G20 Summit in 2013. PM Singh called me aside for a briefing on the issues that we were to raise and then spoke over a range of issues afflicting the economy, in the larger global context.

I learnt a lot from his overarching framework of understanding of geo-politics and India's position in it in terms of its economic prowess. The second meeting was soon after I had retired from service in October 2015. I wanted to express my gratitude for the trust he had placed in me during a very critical period by appointing me as the finance secretary. Dr Singh received me with great affection and talked to me about my career and how I felt about being in the IAS at the end of a long service period. As I rose to leave, he gently put his hand on mine and said, "I have watched you from a distance during these last few years and I have no hesitation in saying that you have discharged yourself with distinction." I couldn't have asked for a greater affirmation from what I received from this great statesman on that day.

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

# The Loss of Spirituality in Today's Umrah and Hajj

Dr Haamid Bashir

Hajj and Umrah are not merely rituals but profound spiritual journeys designed to bring Muslims closer to Allah. These acts of worship are intended to purify the soul, strengthen faith, and instill humility. However, in recent years, the essence of these pilgrimages has been overshadowed by the growing preference for luxury and comfort in holy Makkah/Medina cities. Many pilgrims opt for premium packages, five-star accommodations, and lavish services, often prioritizing material comfort over the spiritual essence of these sacred acts. This trend reflects a shift in focus from the simplicity and austerity that are central to Islamic teachings toward a more commercialized and materialistic approach to worship. Traditionally, Hajj and Umrah were opportunities to disconnect from worldly desires, embrace humility, and reflect on one's relationship with the Creator. Pilgrims would endure hardships as a reminder of the sacrifices made by Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and his family. Today, the emphasis on luxury detracts from the spiritual essence of these acts of worship.

## Commercialization of Holy Pilgrimage

The rise of premium packages and luxury services in Hajj and Umrah has turned these sacred journeys into lucrative industries. Tour operators compete to offer extravagant packages, including stays in five-star hotels near the Haram, private transportation, gourmet dining, and personalized services. While these amenities provide convenience, they often create a divide between wealthy pilgrims and those who undertake the journey with limited resources. This commercialization has transformed Hajj



**OPTING FOR LUXURY DURING PILGRIMAGE CONTRADICTS THESE PRINCIPLES AND RAISES ETHICAL CONCERNS.** It creates an environment where social status becomes apparent, detracting from the sense of unity and equality that Hajj and Umrah aim to foster

and Umrah into experiences that cater more to comfort and status than spiritual enrichment.

**Loss of Spiritual Focus**  
One of the most significant consequences of this shift is the

loss of spiritual focus. Pilgrims staying in opulent hotels may find themselves engrossed in

comfort, socializing, or sightseeing, leaving little room for introspection and prayer. The simplicity and humility that define the pilgrimage are overshadowed by indulgence and a desire to showcase affluence. This focus on luxury undermines the core purpose of Hajj and Umrah: to seek Allah's forgiveness, strengthen faith, and develop a sense of

equality and unity among Muslims.

## The Ethical Implications

Islam emphasizes modesty and discourages extravagance. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) himself performed Hajj and Umrah in a state of simplicity, teaching Muslims the value of humility and detachment from worldly possessions. Opting for luxury during pilgrimage contradicts these principles and raises ethical concerns. It creates an environment where social status becomes apparent, detracting from the sense of unity and equality that Hajj and Umrah aim to foster.

## Reviving the Spiritual Essence

To address this issue, it is crucial to encourage pilgrims to prioritize the spiritual objectives of Hajj and Umrah over material comfort. Educational programs and awareness campaigns can emphasize the importance of simplicity, humility, and introspection. Religious scholars and Hajj/Umrah guides can play a vital role in promoting the true essence of these sacred journeys, guiding pilgrims to focus on worship and self-purification.

In conclusion, the increasing preference for luxury and comfort in Hajj and Umrah reflects a broader trend of materialism and spiritual neglect in modern society. By reconnecting with the core values of these sacred acts, Muslims can ensure that their pilgrimages to Makkah/Medina remain profound spiritual experiences rather than mere indulgent trips.

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

*The author is a research scholar*

## Kashmir Kandur's Bread is Now Costlier

Ikkz Ikbal

Kandar Choet, the iconic Kashmiri roti baked in traditional tandoors by kanders (local bakers), is more than just a staple in Kashmiri households; it is a cultural emblem. However, recent hikes in the price of this beloved bread have stirred public concern, as they reflect the broader inflation affecting essential goods in the region.

### The Rising Costs of a Staple

For decades, Kandar Choet has been an affordable and nutritious option for Kashmiri families. Priced reasonably, it was a breakfast staple. Yet, the recent price surge, with a single roti now costing significantly double than before, has caused frustration among consumers. The primary reasons sighted by roti makers to this price hike include:

- Increased Cost of Ingredients:** The prices of wheat flour, oil, and other essentials have surged due to inflation.
- Rising Fuel Prices:** With higher costs of firewood and other fuels required for tandoors, kanders are left with no choice but to pass on these expenses to consumers.
- Transportation Costs:** The transportation of raw materials, especially to remote areas of Kashmir, has become costlier due to increasing fuel prices.

### Inflation Beyond Kandar Choet

The price hike in Kandar Choet is only one facet of the inflationary wave sweeping across the region. Essential goods, including vegetables, dairy, and meat, have seen unprecedented price increases. For instance:

Common vegetables for daily use have witnessed price spikes of over 30% in recent years. Milk and dairy products, integral to Kashmiri households, have also become more expensive due to rising fodder costs and supply chain issues.

Lamb, meat and chicken, staples for special occasions, are now unaffordable for many middle-class families.



**The price hike in Kandar Choet is only one facet of the inflationary wave sweeping across the region. Essential goods, including vegetables, dairy, and meat, have seen unprecedented price increases**

### The Hype Around Kandar Choet Prices

The hike in Kandar Choet prices has sparked debates across social media platforms, with memes, videos, and discussions highlighting the financial strain on households. This hype underscores the symbolic value of Kandar Choet in Kashmiri culture—it is not just food; it is a representation of tradition and identity.

The inflation in essential goods has put immense pressure on the average family in Jammu and Kashmir. Many households now have to make tough choices, cutting back on certain items to manage expenses. The rise in food prices is also impacting the dietary habits of people, forcing some to turn to less nutritious alternatives.

### Way Forward

While inflation is a global phe-

nomenon, localized measures can help mitigate its effects in Kashmir:

- Subsidies on Essentials:** Government intervention to subsidize essential commodities can provide relief to struggling families.
- Support for Kanders:** Providing financial aid or subsidies on fuel and raw materials for kanders could stabilize Kandar Choet prices.
- Efficient Supply Chains:** Streamlining transportation and distribution networks can reduce the costs of goods reaching markets.
- Awareness and Cooperation:** Consumers and producers must work together to ensure fair pricing and minimize wastage.

### Conclusion

The hike in Kandar Choet prices is a microcosm of the larger inflationary trends impacting Kashmir. While the hype surrounding it may seem exaggerated, it highlights the frustration and concern of people grappling with rising costs of living. Addressing these challenges requires collective effort and targeted policies to ensure economic stability and the preservation of cultural staples like Kandar Choet.

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## Make Mosques Welcoming and Warm for Young

Mudasir Ali

Generally, a mosque is a place where Muslims worship Allah. This place is highly revered and honoured by Muslims. All the sacred places in Islam across the world have their own importance and position and are dedicated to serving the true sanctity of faith and religious values. To become a Muslim, one has to bear witness (Kalima Shahada), which is the first and foremost pillar of Islam. A Muslim is also required to pray five times a day, which is the second fundamental pillar of Islam. It is obligatory for every Muslim man to pray in a mosque. Islam and faith are the two most important and precious aspects that a practicing Muslim must understand. It is prohibited in Islam for a Muslim to neglect communal prayers at home when it is mandatory to pray in a mosque, particularly the obligatory prayers. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) emphasized to parents the importance of encouraging their children to pray when they are seven years old. When they attain the age of ten, it becomes obligatory for them to pray in a mosque. Parents have the right to reprimand their children for neglecting prayers. A parent is the best guide for their child and can set their son or daughter on the right track, provided they themselves are following the commandments of Islam faithfully. Islam is undoubtedly a complete way of life. There is not a single aspect of life that Islam leaves unnoticed. It is a complete and perfect religion for its true believers. Amid the captivating illusions of



modernity, every human being claims to be rational and intellectual. However, the true beauty lies in integrity and wisdom, which every human being should strive to possess. Unfortunately, we are deprived of moral values and fail to adopt positive ways, even when there is a dire need to contribute within the purview of Islam. Lacking practical approaches to solving problems distances us from our main goals. Often, we prefer ignorance over rationality, which lowers our morale and hinders our ability to find solutions. Prayer is the second most important pillar of Islam, and most of the time, we perform this religious practice in mosques. Small children are rarely seen in mosques. A mosque is not restricted to adults; children, too, can come and pray with us. While standing for Takbeer Allahu Akbar to offer obligatory prayers, it would be wise to adjust children properly in the prayer rows, keeping one child between two elders. This will help keep them calm and prevent them from laughing or disturbing others during prayer. Discipline in mosques is of utmost importance, and everyone should follow it

in letter and spirit.

Children often laugh and run in mosques, as they are immature and unaware of the sanctity of the place. As Muslims, it is our religious duty to teach them the basics of Islam and the importance of the mosque. This will gradually develop their positive attitude toward righteous practices. Muslims should be humble and polite when dealing with children. Unfortunately, we sometimes hear harsh words from elders directed at children in mosques. How beautiful it would be to teach children to pray! A good Muslim never hurts children; rather, they love and guide them. One who has a kind heart and gentle words can positively influence others through their actions. Indeed, children are innocent and lack an understanding of discipline. Scolding them or glaring at them angrily in mosques is inappropriate and unkind. How beautiful it looks when children prostrate before Allah! We should encourage children in mosques rather than humiliating them. Yes, it is true that mosques must remain clean and pure for worshippers.

However, children need to be taught politely by el-

ders to remain silent in the mosque. With time, they will naturally learn good practices, such as how to sit and remain calm in the mosque, and how to pray with others. Scolding children angrily in mosques is not a good way to teach them. One must be very kind to them, as kindness brings a charming smile to their faces.

Let's not be too harsh, as it might scare children away from mosques. Keep their spirits high with positive gestures. These children are our future assets, and tomorrow they will be the beacons of light for the next generation. We cannot restrict children from entering mosques to pray. It is high time we teach and motivate them.

Through kindness and guidance, we must create welcoming environments in mosques where children can learn the values of Islam, embrace communal worship and grow into responsible future leaders of the faith. May Allah accept all our good deeds and bring peace across the world. Aameen!

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## Amid Road Closure, Woman Forced To Deliver Baby At Home

Agencies

**KOKERNAG:** A woman at Gadole area of Kokernag in South Kashmir's Anantnag district was forced to deliver her baby at home after failing to reach the hospital due to unclear roads following the heavy snowfall. However, the infant died shortly after the birth, the family said.

The woman, identified as Masrat Jan, wife of Nawaz Ahmad Magray of Magraypora Gadole, delivered the baby boy on Saturday around 11:00 AM. A relative, Bilal Ahmad Magray, said that impassable roads left them with no option but to manage the delivery at home.

"We repeatedly contacted the Tehsil administration and officials responsible for road clearance from early morning,

but no assistance was provided. Not even a JCB was sent to clear the snow. The road remains blocked, and the woman is yet to be shifted to a healthcare facility," he said, adding that despite efforts by Asha workers and health officials, they were unable to reach the family due to the unclear roads.

The family has demanded immediate measures to improve road clearance and healthcare accessibility in the area to prevent such incidents in the future.

SDM Kokernag, Suheel Ahmad Lone, said, "The administration tried its best to reach the destination but couldn't due to heavy snowfall. We sent a vehicle, but the road was slippery and snow-bound. The woman delivered at home, but this is not a case of medical negligence." —(KNO)

## Snowfall Disrupts Umrah Pilgrims Travel Plans

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Heavy snowfall since Friday afternoon caused major disruptions in air travel, leaving hundreds of passengers, including Umrah pilgrims, stranded in Srinagar and Delhi.

The cancellations have caused a huge distress for passengers and financial losses for travel agents, estimated at approximately Rs 70 lakh as per the tour operators.

President of the Jammu Kashmir Association of Hajj and Umrah Companies (JKAHUC), Sheikh Feroz, in a brief presser said that due to the weather conditions, both passengers and operators were facing huge challenges.

"Flights were operational till yesterday morning, allowing most passengers to depart. However, after 4 PM, snow-induced cancellations halted air traffic, stranding many in Srinagar. Around 700-800 people scheduled to depart from Srinagar are now stuck," Feroz said.

He said that nearly 500 passengers arriving from Jeddah to Delhi have been left without accommodation due to flight disruptions, urging the airlines to arrange for immediate accommodation for these passengers.

"Travel agents are under immense pressure to accommodate these pilgrims, but resources are limited. Most of these agents are young entrepreneurs who cannot bear such losses," he said.

He said that the disruptions have severely impacted Umrah

pilgrims, stating that many are now facing the prospect of cancelled accommodations in Mecca due to their inability to arrive on time, resulting in significant financial losses for travel agents, most of whom are small business owners.

"This is a huge burden on travel agents, many of whom are unemployed youth trying to make ends meet. They cannot bear such massive losses. We appeal to passengers to cooperate and share the financial burden caused by these unforeseen circumstances," Feroz said.

He said that hotels in Mecca and Medina have strict cancellation policies, which can result in losses of up to 50-60% of the package cost.

Appealing to airlines and the government to arrange alternative flights and provide accommodations for stranded passengers, he said, "Airlines like Air India, Indigo, and Akasa must step up to support the affected passengers."

He also called on traffic police authorities to facilitate travel for those attempting to reach Delhi by road. "If flights remain grounded tomorrow, many will have no option but to travel by road. The administration and traffic police must ensure smooth passage to avoid further chaos."

He said that with Saudi Airlines scheduled to operate flights on Monday, any further delays or cancellations could result in additional losses for both passengers and travel agents. —(KNO)

## 2 Year Old Girl Dies Of Suffocation In Kulgam

Agencies

**KULGAM:** A two-year-old girl lost her life while three other members of a family were hospitalized due to suffocation caused by a charcoal fire pot used for heating at Ves Batapora area of Kulgam district, officials reported.

An official said that a family, originally nomads from Ramban and currently living as tenants in Ves Batapora, suffered suffocation during the night due to the use of a charcoal fire pot indoors.

The family of four out of five was rushed to PHC Mohammadpora by police, health officials, and the lo-

cal administration. However, the two-year-old girl, identified as Aadita Jan, daughter of Nissar Ahmad from Ramban, was declared dead upon arrival at the health center.

A relative of the family expressed gratitude to the local residents and administration, saying, "We are thankful to the people and authorities who acted quickly to shift the family to the hospital and saved the lives of the other three members."

Medical Superintendent (MS) of District Hospital Kulgam said that one child was brought dead, while the three hospitalized family members are in stable condition—(KNO)



SHIKARAS REST GRACEFULLY on the snow-kissed shores of Dal Lake, as Kashmir transforms into a winter wonderland.

KO PHOTO, ABID BHAT

## Season's First Snowfall Brings Hope For Kashmir's Farmers, Horticulturists

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** The first spell of snowfall this season, after a prolonged dry period, has brought joy to thousands of fruit growers and farmers in Kashmir, who are now hopeful of better crop production this year.

The Kashmir Valley received its first heavy snowfall on Friday evening, ending an extended dry spell and bringing relief to horticulturists and agriculturists alike.

Experts said that the six-month-long dry period, with no rain or snow, had raised the risk of pest attacks, as dryness and a lack of moisture make fruit trees vulnerable. Dr Suhaib, an environmental expert said "Prolonged dry weather significantly impacts orchards and fruit crops in Kashmir, posing substantial challenges to agricultural productivity. Extended dry spells disrupt natural irrigation patterns, reducing water availability for crops. This scarcity hampers the growth and development of fruit trees, leading to reduced yield and quality."

The extended dryness had also worried farmers who had sown Rabi crops. The low soil moisture delayed germination, which would have affected production. Dry conditions also created an environment conducive to pests and diseases, further threatening orchards. Now, with the dry spell ending, farmers, fruit growers, and those associated with horticulture have heaved a sigh of relief. Farmers expressed relief, saying that the seeds sown in autumn had not germinated well due to the dryness, raising fears of low production. Mustard, an annual crop har-



vested in April, was also under threat due to the lack of precipitation. However, the timely snowfall has revived hope among farmers, who now expect better production this year.

Mohammad Ibrahim, a farmer from Pulwama, said the winter snowfall is crucial for water availability during the paddy plantation season. "Farmers were very worried, but the recent snowfall has brought happiness," he said.

People associated with horticulture and agriculture described the snowfall as "the need of the hour". They are now optimistic about good crop production this year.

Meanwhile, an official from the PHE (Public Health Engineering) department said that most water sources were on the verge of drying up, with water levels in others critically low. "This snowfall has given us hope that these water sources, especially springs, will recharge, ensuring uninterrupted water and power supply for residents," the official said.

He said the process of recharging water sources might take a few days, but hopes remain high as the long dry spell had caused widespread water shortages across Kashmir—(KNO)

## 'Snow Shoveling May Trigger Heart Attack Among Sedentary Individuals'

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Snow shoveling, a routine activity during snowfall, poses a significant risk for heart attacks, especially among individuals with pre-existing heart conditions or those who are unaccustomed to vigorous physical activity, Doctors said on Saturday.

Dr Irfan, a cardiologist at SMHS said that snow shoveling may trigger an acute heart attack in sedentary individuals with cardiac risk factors and it must be avoided.

He said that snow shoveling can trigger heart attack as cold temperatures cause blood vessels to constrict, leading to increased blood pressure. This places additional strain on the heart. He said that shoveling snow is a high-intensity activity and it requires sudden bursts of energy, which can significantly increase heart rate and blood pressure, triggering a cardiac event in vulnerable individuals.

"Conditions such as coronary artery disease or high blood pressure heighten the risk during physically demanding activities like shoveling," he said.

Doctors said that elderly, people with underlying medical conditions, people with sedentary lifestyles, smokers and overweight individuals are at more risk.

They said that one must consult his doctor before engaging in strenuous activities, if he has a history of heart issues. They advised people to wear clothes in layers to keep warm and reduce the strain of cold weather on your heart, stretching or light physical activity can prepare your body for the task, use a lightweight shovel and push the snow instead of lifting it to reduce strain and take regular breaks besides that stay hydrated and watch for warning signs like chest pain, shortness of breath, or dizziness, and seek medical attention if you experience any such issues.

Meanwhile, the Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar has issued an advisory, asking people to stay warm, prevent respiratory tract infections and Modify outdoor activities.

"Myocardial Infarction (MI), commonly known as a heart attack, remains one of the leading causes of death and morbidity globally. Alarmingly, every 40 seconds, someone experiences a heart attack. A recent study published in

the Journal of the American College of Cardiology has identified two significant precipitating factors for heart attacks: cold weather and air pollution," reads an advisory issued.

"The study highlighted that 10 million people globally experience disability and 500,000 deaths occur annually due to low temperatures and Cold weather has been established as a critical factor triggering both minor and major heart attacks," it reads further.

"Cold temperatures can cause blood vessels to constrict, increasing blood pressure and the workload on the heart. Additionally, exposure to cold can exacerbate respiratory tract infections, further stressing cardiovascular health," it reads.

"Air pollution has been identified as another key risk factor for heart attacks, contributing to systemic inflammation and impaired cardiovascular function," it said.

In recommendations for High-Risk Groups, advisory states that people at higher risk, including those with hypertension (HTN), diabetes, obesity, a history of smoking, previous heart attacks, or heart failure, are advised to take extra precautions during winter months.

They have been advised to maintain a comfortable indoor temperature using adequate heating, wear warm clothing, including hats, gloves, and insulated footwear, when venturing outdoors, avoid unnecessary exposure to cold environments. Consider influenza vaccinations to reduce the risk of viral infections and Modify Outdoor Activities. Avoid outdoor jogging or other strenuous physical activities during cold weather, as this can increase the risk of cardiac events.

"There is data evolving which has established a relationship between SNOW SHOVELING & HEART ATTACK. So people are advised to Stay Inside, Stay Warm & Avoid Shovelling & other Strenuous & heavy work," it reads.

"In light of the above it is crucial for everyone, especially high-risk individuals, to adopt preventive measures during winter to safeguard heart health. By staying warm and minimizing exposure to cold and air pollution, we can significantly reduce the risk of heart attacks," the Advisory states further—(KNO)

## 3 AEEs Suspended In Shopian For Dereliction Of Duties

Observer News Service

**SHOPIAN:** The Shopian district administration Saturday suspended three Assistant Executive Engineers (AEEs) for dereliction of their duties in snow clearance operations.

As per the order issued by Deputy Commissioner Shopian, the three officials include, Mohd Noordin who is AEE, SD Imamsahib, Zaffar Ahmed, AEE, SD Ramnagri and Mohd Saleem, AEE, SD Hirpora—were found absent from their designated locations during critical snow clearance and relief operations in the district.

The authorities have said that during an inquiry, it was revealed that the AEEs were not present in the district when their services were most needed.

It also said that the locations of these officials were traced in Janglat Mandi, Anantnag and Srinagar. "Their absence was deemed highly unprofessional and unbecoming of public servants, especially during a period of heightened administrative efforts to provide relief to citizens amidst snow-related challenges."

Pending a detailed inquiry into their conduct by the Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) of Shopian, the AEEs have been suspended and they have been attached to the 24x7 Control Room in Shopian and instructed to report immediately.

Further, their salaries have been withheld, with no disbursement permitted by the respective Drawing and Disbursing Officers (DDOs) until the inquiry concludes.

# J&K Police Extend Helping Hand Amid Heavy Snowfall

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Amidst heavy snowfall across Kashmir the J&K Police have been continuously extending a helping hand to the common people across all the districts.

According to the details, the policemen have been actively engaged in rescuing stranded passengers and evacuating ailing patients, providing vital assistance during the inclement weather conditions.

South Kashmir

In South Kashmir's Anantnag district, police received a distress call about a vehicle carrying four tourists getting stuck in deep snow at Dalwath.

A team from Police Station Dooru quickly arrived on the scene and rescued the stranded tourists. "We were stranded and the situation was getting worse, but the Police came to our rescue. We are truly grateful for their timely help," said one of

the tourists, Priya Kapoor from Delhi.

Another tourist from Gujarat said, "We were stranded at Sinthan Top after our Tavera skidded into a water drain due to the heavy snowfall. Thanks to the swift action of SDPO Kokernag and SHO Larnoo, they reached us quickly and ensured our safety. We are truly thankful for their help during such a difficult time."

In another instance the police facilitated emergency evacuation of a female patient from Bragam to Sub-District Hospital (SDH) Dooru in a police vehicle.

The patient, who had recently undergone surgery, was in severe pain and needed immediate medical attention. Her family praised the police for their swift response. "The police acted without delay and ensured my wife received the necessary treatment. We couldn't have done it without them," said her husband.

In Pulwama district, Police



received a distress call about a group of people stranded with a body at Wahibugh on their way to Qazipora. Police responded

immediately and carried the body on foot to Qazipora, ensuring the family could perform the last rites.

Additionally, two women requiring urgent medical attention were rescued near Turkawagan Bridge and moved to District Hospital Pulwama for treatment.

In Awantipora, a call was received about a woman in critical need of medical care. A special team, led by the SHO of Police Station Awantipora, rushed to the scene and evacuated the patient to SDH Tral for treatment.

In Kulgam, a cardiac patient named Nawaz Ahmad Mallah from Adigam, Devsar, was in dire need of medical attention after suffering a heart attack. Due to the heavy snowfall and slippery roads, his family could not transport him to the hospital.

A police team, led by the SHO of Police Station Devsar, quickly evacuated the patient to a hospital for treatment.

Budgam

In Central Kashmir's Bud-

gam district, police worked tirelessly to rescue tourists stranded in Doodhpathri and assisted patients, commuters, and other travellers trapped on snow-covered roads in remote areas. "The police were our lifeline when we were stranded in Doodhpathri. They not only helped us but also made sure we were safe and warm," said Alex, a tourist from Mumbai.

Ganderbal

In Central Kashmir's Ganderbal district, police extended help to tourists, commuters, and patients who were stranded due to the heavy snowfall.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Ganderbal Ragav S reviewed the snow clearance operation across the district.

A tourist from West Bengal stuck in Sonamarg told KNO, "We never expected to get stranded in the snow, but the Ganderbal police were there for us when we needed them

the most. Their quick response made all the difference, and we're truly thankful for their help," he added.

North Kashmir

In North Kashmir's Baramulla district, extensive emergency assistance operations were launched following heavy snowfall.

Police teams were deployed along key routes such as the Gulmarg-Tangmarg road axis to rescue stranded travellers, provide mechanical assistance, and help install snow chains.

The SSP Baramulla supervised these operations, ensuring that all critical areas received attention.

To further assist the public, J&K Police set up emergency help desks at key locations across Kashmir, offering shelter and transportation assistance to tourists and other travellers.

Police teams were strategically deployed across the region to assist those in far-flung areas prone to heavy snowfall.

# Gutsy Reddy's Maiden Ton Keeps India Afloat In 3rd Australia Test

Press Trust of India

**MELBOURNE:** Nitish Reddy, an unknown entity in red ball cricket before the start of Border-Gavaskar series, virtually bailed India out with his dogged maiden Test century here on Saturday, severely denting Australia's hopes of winning the Boxing Day contest.

Reddy's unbeaten 105 took India to 358 for nine, still 116 runs short of Australia's first innings score of 474 as rain brought an early end to the third day's play.

With the flat MCG deck not offering much to the bowlers, saving the Test match shouldn't be a big deal for India. Reddy, easily India's 'find of the series', played a pivotal role in visitors' fightback.

Reddy's combative spirit and the invaluable 127-run stand he shared with Washington Sundar (50 off 162 balls) proved to be the turning point for the hosts.

Reddy's innings was termed as one of greatest Test knocks by the legendary Sunil Gavaskar given the situation as India



were in a precarious position after Rishabh Pant's dismissal courtesy a rash shot had left India tottering at 191 for six.

The young Andhra batter could have been stranded on 99 when Jasprit Bumrah got dismissed, leaving Reddy with

last-man in Mohammed Siraj, who walked in to another round of boos and faced three deliveries from home skipper Pat Cummins.

Both Reddy and his father Muthyala's expressions changed with each ball but

Siraj survived to allow Reddy savour the moment he must have dreamt a thousand times.

A picture-perfect straight drive off Scott Boland was the moment of the series for India as Reddy balanced his helmet with the bat and took

a knee, expressing his gratitude towards the Indian dug-out which gave him a standing ovation.

A decade back, when his father Muthyala left a secured job to open a micro-finance (lending) business and incurred losses, the Reddy family was advised not to give wings to young Reddy's cricketing dreams but they were unrelenting.

Sitting in the stands near the boundary, Reddy's father broke down when his son achieved the milestone.

As Indian fans clicked selfies with him it must have reminded of the day when his son received the best U-16 cricketer award from the BCCI in 2017, and an impressionable Reddy was seen clicking selfie with his idol Virat Kohli and his wife Anushka Sharma while leaving the hotel premises.

Reddy's batting was based on stable core, playing the ball late and only going for the drive when the ball was pitched up. He wasn't defending unnecessarily and 10 fours and a six was a testimony to that.

## 5th Edition Kashmiri Pandit Premier League Begins In Jammu



Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday inaugurated the 5th edition of Kashmiri Pandit Premier League at MA Stadium, Jammu.

In his address, Sinha extended his felicitations and best wishes to all the players participating in one of the biggest cricket tournaments in Jammu.

"Life is best defined by sports. One of the

main objectives of life is to maintain a fine balance between body, mind and soul and this is what sports teaches us," the LG said.

"Sports gives us courage and determination to achieve the impossible. Sports gives us dreams and provides the strength and courage to fulfil those dreams," he added.

The LG congratulated the Lalitaditya Sports, Education and Health Organization on its endeavour to promote sports.

He said the initiatives like Kashmiri Pandit Premier League will provide a vibrant platform to the players to hone their abilities and overcome their limitations.

On the occasion, the LG reiterated his commitment towards the welfare and empowerment of Kashmiri Pandit community.

Sarmad Hafeez, Secretary, Youth Services and Sports Department; Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu; Dr. Arvind Karwani, Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner (Migrants) J&K; senior officials of UT and Police Administration, prominent citizens, sportspersons and others were present.

## Thang-Ta Coaching Camp Held At Polo Ground Srinagar

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** A Thang-Ta coaching camp was organised by J&K Sports Council at the Multipurpose Indoor Hall, Polo Ground, Srinagar, in collaboration with the J&K Thang-Ta Association, on Saturday. The camp aimed to prepare athletes while undergoing rigorous training for the 30th Sub-Junior and Senior National Thang-Ta Championship 2024, scheduled to be held in Haridwar, Uttarakhand, from 4th to 6th January 2025.

In pictures posted on social media, scores of young athletes were seen training in



snow at Polo Ground.

Meanwhile, Sports Council also held a Basic First Aid and CPR training workshop for sports coaches, athletes and staff at MA Stadium, Jammu.

Organised by KIRF (J&K) in association with the JKSC, the workshop was supported by the Departments of Or-

thopaedics and Anesthesia, Government Medical College Jammu. Conducted under the supervision of Nuzhat Gul, Secretary JKSC, the session saw participation of 50 athletes and coaches who learned vital first aid and CPR techniques to handle on-field emergencies.

## 1st T20: New Zealand Fight Back To Beat Sri Lanka By 8 Runs



Press Trust of India

**MOUNT MAUNGANUNI:** Daryl Mitchell and Michael Bracewell made half-centuries in a 105-run sixth wicket partnership to help lead New Zealand to an eight-run win over Sri Lanka on Saturday in the first of three T20 Internationals.

Outstanding bowling at the death also turned the match in New Zealand's favor as Sri Lanka slumped from 121-0 to 164-8 in reply to New Zealand's 172-8.

Mitchell made 62 and Bracewell 59 in a partnership lasting only 60 balls, after coming together with New Zealand in trouble at 65-5 when Wanindu Hasaranga dismissed Glenn Phillips and Mitchell Hay with consecutive deliveries in the 10th over.

New Zealand's total looked inadequate as Pathum Nissanka made 90 in 60 balls and shared a 121-run opening stand with Kusal Mendis which seemed to have set up Sri Lanka for a comfortable win. Mendis contributed 46 to Sri Lanka's first century opening partnership in T20s in 122 innings over eight years.

He was out in the 14th over, an over where Jacob Duffy took three wickets for one run, marking the point at which Sri Lanka's run chase began to unravel. Kamindu Mendis and Kusal Perera were also out in the same over. "They're class batters, particularly

those two at the top," Duffy said. "We know these conditions well with a bit of bounce and swing up top."

Nissanka was dismissed with the total 153-5 in the 19th over and only 20 runs needed for victory.

But Sri Lanka went into the match with a long tail and it wasn't able to finish what Nissanka and Kusal Mendis had started.

"We're really disappointed about the result and we really should have done better," Sri Lanka captain Charith Asalanka said. "I think Pathum Nissanka and Kusal Mendis batted really well and the rest of us, myself included, should take responsibility for this loss."

New Zealand was under pressure for most of the match, stumbling to 32-2 at the end of the power play as Binura Fernando bowled superbly at the top of the innings, finishing with 2-22.

Hasaranga then stepped up and took his two important middle-order wickets as New Zealand reached 65-5 by the midpoint of its innings.

Mitchell and Bracewell lifted New Zealand to a solid total which was still made to look reachable under the early onslaught from Nissanka and Mendis.

But after Duffy's three-wicket burst, Sri Lanka lost its way and the next best score after the opening pair was 8. Matt Henry and Zak Foulkes bowled superbly at the death.

## Short TAKES

### It Was A Stupid Shot, Pant Let Team Down: Gavaskar

The legendary Sunil Gavaskar on Saturday lashed out at Rishabh Pant for his "stupid" shot, saying the wicketkeeper-batter had let the team down by throwing his wicket away when India needed him the most.

With India desperately looking for a partnership on the third day of the fourth Test against Australia at the MCG, Pant went across and attempted to scoop Scott Boland to fine leg, only to get a big leading edge for Nathan Lyon to complete a simple catch at deep third man.

Pant tried to play a similar shot in the previous ball too but failed to connect and was hit in the naval area. The batter seemed to be in pain as he lay on the ground.

"Stupid, stupid, stupid. You have got two fielders there and you still go for that (shot). You missed the previous shot and look where you have been caught. You have been caught at deep third man. That is throwing your wicket," a furious Gavaskar said while commenting.

"Not in the situation that India was... you have to understand the situation as well. You cannot say that that's your natural game. I'm sorry, that is not your natural game. That is a stupid shot. That is letting your team down badly," the batting great said on air.

"He should not be going in the dressing room. He should be going in the other dressing room."

Former India coach Ravi Shastri termed it a "very risky shot".

### SA v PAK 1st Test: Rain Washes Out First Session On Day 3

Rain delayed the start of the third day's play in the first cricket test between South Africa and Pakistan with no play possible before lunch on Saturday.

The entire first session was washed out at SuperSport Park with Pakistan scheduled to resume its second innings at 88-3 - still trailing South Africa by two runs.

South Africa has plenty of time left to press its bid for a place in next year's World Test Championship final. The home team needs to win one of the two test matches against Pakistan for a guaranteed place in next June's WTC final at Lord's.

South Africa claimed a 90-run first innings lead on the back of half centuries from Aiden Markram and debutant Corbin Bosch, who smashed an unbeaten 81 on a dream debut.

Bosch's scintillating knock, which featured 15 fours, was the highest score by a No. 9 batter on debut in test history.

Pakistan had been bowled out for 211 as Bosch claimed a wicket with his first ball and finished with impressive figures of 4-63.

Paceman Dane Paterson took 5-61 on a wicket where both teams have packed their line-ups with four fast bowlers each, going into the game without a specialist spinner.

### Argentine Women Footballers Released After Racist Incident

A Brazilian judge ordered late on Friday the release from prison of four players from River Plate's women's soccer team who had been arrested for an alleged racial slur during a match.

Judge Fernando Oliveira Camargo decided to free Argentine footballers Candela Diaz, Camila Duarte, Juana Cangaro and Milagros Diaz on condition they show up in court in Sao Paulo every month until the case is finished.

Sao Paulo state authorities have yet to say when the footballers will be released from the Carandiru penitentiary where they spent Christmas.

On Dec. 21, a Brazil Ladies Cup semifinal between River and Brazil's Grêmio was stopped in the first half after Diaz made apparent monkey gestures to a ball boy, as shown in broadcast footage. A brawl started and Grêmio players walked off in protest.

The referee showed red cards to six River players and ended the match because there was no longer the minimum number of players required to continue.

The score was 1-1 but the referee awarded the match to Grêmio, which won the final of the tournament on penalties against compatriots Bahia two days later.

The Brazil Ladies Cup also banned River from the tournament for two years.

Organisers said future editions will immediately ban any participating team whose athletes or staff "engage in racist gestures on the playing field."

Grêmio coach Thaisan Passos said her team told her River players had previously called them "monkeys."

## Chhetri Farewell Signals End Of An Era In Forgettable 2024 For Indian Football

Press Trust of India

**KOLKATA:** Indian football found itself in the throes of despair throughout 2024 with the senior men's team failing to register a single win in a year when the long-serving Sunil Chhetri finally decided to hang up his boots internationally after 19 years of yeoman service.

The familiar sight of the diminutive No. 11 running into the box, deftly chipping the ball into the back of the net, bringing out his trademark 'namaste' celebration, and looking skywards with his fingers pointing to the heavens will forever be etched in the hearts of Indian football fans.

With his record 151 appearances and 94 goals for India, Chhetri became synonymous with the sport in the country, inspiring millions while leading the team with distinction.

The talisman's retirement, at 39, marked a poignant end in a year of more lows than highs with the men's national team facing transitional challenges and failing to notch a single win

across 12 months for the first time in a decade.

"You don't wish to stop playing for the country. But one day you have to, and you will be fine. Finally, I reached this decision. And I think I made the right decision," an emotional Chhetri had said after his decision to retire.

India's FIFA World Cup qualifier against Kuwait was his last appearance for the country.

On June 6, in his final match at Salt Lake Stadium, 58,921 fans gathered to bid farewell to the legend but the game ended in a goalless draw, much to the disappointment of his supporters.

It was a night heavy with emotion, as Indian football lost its torchbearer, the unifying figure who had carried the sport on his shoulders for nearly two decades. The national team has never been the same since his retirement.

### World Cup Qualifiers Debacle

The disappointing exit from the second round of FIFA World Cup Qualifiers was followed by the acrimonious sacking of head



coach Igor Stimac, a year before his contract expired.

Stimac initially demanded USD 920,000 (Rs 7.72 crore) as compensation and approached the game's governing body FIFA after rejecting the All India Football Federation's (AIFF) offer of first three, then five, and finally 10 months' salary as settlement.

The matter escalated before both parties reached an agreement, setting the national federation back by USD 400,000.

Stimac was earlier given an extension until 2026 on the condition of reaching the quar-

terfinals of the AFC Asian Cup but India finished last in their group after failing to win a single match.

Manolo Marquez, a familiar face in Indian football having led Hyderabad FC to an ISL title in 2022, was appointed as the new head coach in July while keeping his job at FC Goa till the end of the ongoing season.

But his appointment failed to turn around India's fortunes as the team lost once and drew thrice under the Spaniard.

The Indian team ended the year with a 1-1 draw against

Malaysia. In all, the side played 11 matches and suffered six losses in a forgettable year. The lack of results reflected in their rankings as the team slipped to 126 in the FIFA chart from 102 in December last year.

At club level, Mohun Bagan and Mumbai City FC continued their dominance with the two teams winning the Shield and ISL title respectively.

There was, however, also a setback for Mohun Bagan who were considered 'withdrawn' from the AFC Champions League 2 after refusing to travel to Iran for their match against Tractor SC on October 2, citing security concerns amid political unrest in that part of the world.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) cancelled all of Mohun Bagan's matches in the competition, considering them null and void. This followed the club's goalless draw against Ravshan Kulob in their opening Group A match at Salt Lake Stadium.

The year proved to be a historic one for Odisha FC who secured a spot in the AFC Women's Champions League Group

Stage after topping their preliminary stage group with two wins, including a 4-1 victory over Lion City Sailors and a 2-1 win against Etihad Club.

There was also a tug of war between bitter rivals Mohun Bagan and East Bengal over one of the finest centrebacks Anwar Ali, leading to legal battles over his contract.

### Controversy Off The Field

The sport also had its share of off-the-field controversies with some questioning AIFF president Kalyan Chaubey's leadership following the termination of Nilanjan Bhattacharjee, the head of the national federation's legal body.

Chaubey faced allegations of mishandling tender processes and using AIFF funds for personal expenses from the ousted Bhattacharjee.

Former India captain Bhairu Bhutia also called for Chaubey's resignation citing "issues" with AIFF's administration. If that was not enough, the federation found itself embroiled in a new controversy

over its handling of the broadcasting rights for the I-League 2024-25 season.

After initially entering into a deal with Sony for the coverage of matches, the AIFF abruptly switched to Shrachi Sports, an inexperienced entity. The move led to sponsor concerns, with club owners threatening to withdraw teams if proper broadcasting arrangements aren't made.

The AIFF, though, denied any wrongdoing.

### Future Tense

The Indian team is currently in a transition phase, with head coach Marquez experimenting with various combinations and giving opportunities to a group of promising youngsters to identify the next No. 10.

However, the team remains unsettled, with the veteran duo of Gurpreet Singh Sandhu and Sandesh Jhingan carrying significant responsibility at the back.

Following a challenging year, Marquez faces the task of steering India to a third consecutive AFC Asian Cup qualification.