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BOOK APPOINTMENT

## Pandrethan Tragedy



## The Cost Of Warmth In Kashmir's Harsh Winters

**Observer News Service**

Srinagar: Ghulam Mohammad Bhat, his body frail and his mind clouded with worry, sits alone in his home in Boniyar. He remains unaware of the tragedy that has befallen his son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren. Unbeknownst to him, they are gone, victims of the invisible killer – carbon monoxide – that crept into their rented room in Srinagar.

Ajaz Ahmad Bhat, his wife Saleema, and their three young children – Areeba, Hamza, and a month-old infant succumbed to toxic fumes apparently from an electric blower on Sunday. "I pray to God that my family members regain their senses soon. I want to see them, but I can't stand or walk," Ajaz's father, Ghulam Mohammad said. The family had moved to Pandrethan, Srinagar, two months ago in search of better opportunities. Ajaz worked as a chef at a prominent hotel, striving to provide a brighter future for his children.

The tragic incident came to light when Ajaz's sister, unable to reach him by phone, contacted the house owner, Mukhtar Ahmad. "She called me, saying Ajaz had not responded since 4 PM. I sent | [More on P6](#)

### Doctors Warn Against Unvented Gas Heaters

Medical experts have issued a stern warning against the use of unvented gas heaters in closed spaces, saying these could cause fatalities due to carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. They have urged the people to take the dangers seriously, particularly in light of recent tragic incidents, including one in Pandrethan. | [More on P6](#)

- » Install Carbon Monoxide Detectors
- » Ensure Proper Ventilation
- » Regular Maintenance
- » Recognize Symptoms

## Fresh Snowfall Disrupts Life In Kashmir

Weather To Remain Dry Till Jan 10: MeT



**Observer News Service**

Srinagar: Kashmir Valley has received fresh snowfall, bringing down the mercury further and also leading to the delay in flight operations on Monday morning. Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, experienced the fresh snowfall in the last 24 hours with the details revealing that | [More on P6](#)

### NH Open, Mughal Road Closed

The Srinagar-Jammu national highway continued to remain open for vehicular movement on Monday while the other roads including Mughal Road and other highways have not been thrown open for the public due to the snow accumulation. | [More on P6](#)

### Avalanche Warning Issued For Bandipora

The district administration Bandipora on Saturday issued a medium danger avalanche warning for areas above 2400 meters, advising residents to evacuate vulnerable zones and avoid avalanche-prone areas for the next 24 hours. "An avalanche with medium danger level is likely to occur in Bandipora district | [More on P6](#)

## USBRL Demonstrates India's Engineering Excellence: PM

» Inaugurates New Jammu Railway Division » Says J&K's Integration Into National Railway Network Monumental Step

**Observer News Service**

Srinagar: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday virtually inaugurated the new Jammu Railway Division, calling it a historic milestone in the development of Jammu and Kashmir's connectivity and infrastructure.

Addressing the nation during the ceremony, PM Modi congratulated the people of Jammu and Kashmir, saying, "Integration of J&K into the national railway network is a monumental step towards transforming Indian Railways into a global leader in efficiency, speed, and passenger experience."

"The Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Railway Link (USBRL) project is a landmark achievement that demonstrates India's engineering excellence."

Highlighting the feats of modern engineering, he said, "India's first cable-stayed rail bridge, the Anji Khad Bridge, and the iconic arch bridge over the Chenab River—the world's highest railway bridge—are marvels that are making waves globally."

The Prime Minister emphasized that the new Jammu Railway Division would not only benefit the people of Jammu and Kashmir but also extend its advantages to Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Ladakh.

PM Modi described the inauguration as a symbol of India's collective progress under the vision of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas," filling colors in the dream of "Vikshit Bharat" (Developed India).

"To achieve Vikshit Bharat, it is essential to develop Indian Railways," he said, adding that the past decade has witnessed a transformational change in railway infrastructure modernization, enhanced connectivity, and improved facilities for passengers.

He stated that the government has laid more than 30,000 kilometers of new railway tracks in the last 10 years, nearing 100% electrification, compared to just 35% in 2014. Additionally, he noted that the country has eliminated all manual crossings on broad-gauge tracks.

"Today is a big day for new-age connectivity. It shows that the entire nation is moving forward together," PM Modi remarked.

The Prime Minister stressed that new railway divisions, terminals, and modernized stations are creating unprecedented opportunities for trade, business, and employment.

"The development of railways is creating lakhs of job opportunities. In the last 10 years, lakhs of youth have been employed in the railways, and initiatives like Gati Shakti University will further enhance the workforce's skillset," he said.

Referring to the strides in high-speed train services, PM Modi noted that more than 50 Vande Bharat trains are now operational, connecting long distances in shorter times and setting a benchmark for modern Indian trains.

"The time is not far when bullet trains will traverse across the country, making railway journeys memorable," he added.

The Prime Minister also lauded India's expanding metro network, which has grown from just 5 cities in 2005 to 21 cities today, with over 1,000 kilometers of operational tracks.

Stressing the importance of indigenous development, PM Modi said, "Under the 'Made in India' initiative, railway stations are being modernized, and high-speed train corridors are being developed. This will ensure India leads from the front in connectivity and infrastructure."

He reiterated the government's commitment to making Indian Railways the backbone of a developed and self-reliant India, saying, "This is not just about connectivity but also about fulfilling | [More on P6](#)

### Major Rail Network To Link Key Towns: LG

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday said that the surveys are ongoing for the major rail network that will link key towns across J&K. "Surveys are ongoing for the Anantnag-Bijbehara | [More on P6](#)

### Service Won't Negatively Impact Jammu: CM

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday allayed fears of any negative fallout on Jammu after the launch of direct rail service between Kashmir and the rest of the country anytime soon, saying his | [More on P6](#)

### J&K Rail Extension Resumed After 50 Yrs: Dr Singh

With Kashmir set to get connected with the rest of the country through rail link anytime soon, Union minister Jitendra Singh on Monday said he first train had arrived at the Jammu Railway Station way | [More on P6](#)

## EC Set To Announce Schedule For J&K By-polls

**Agencies**

Srinagar: The Election Commission of India (ECI) is set to announce the schedule for the by-election for Budgam and Nagrota assembly segments of Jammu & Kashmir, sources disclosed.

Sources said that the poll-body is expected to unveil the schedule for the election for these two seats in the next few days.

"The announcement in this regard is likely to be made this week," they said, adding that voting would take place in the second or third week of February.

While Budgam seat was vacated by Omar Abdullah, who chose to retain the party stronghold of Ganderbal, the Nagrota seat became vacant following the demise of BJP leader Devinder Singh Rana.

While BJP is likely to field Devinder Singh | [More on P6](#)

## Handwara-Bungus Road Environmental Violations NGT Directs Secretary PWD To Appear In Person

**Observer News Service**

Srinagar: The National Green Tribunal -NGT has sought the personal appearance of Administrative Secretary of Public Works Department -PWD J&K in connection with a petition filed regarding alleged environmental destruction on Handwara-Bungus Road in north Kashmir's Kupwara district.

The three member Principal Bench of Justice Prakash Srivastava (Chairperson), Justice Sudhir Aggarwal (Judicial Member) and Dr A Senthil Vel (Expert Member) while hearing the petition filed by Rasikh Rasool Bhat -lawyer and RTI activist from Handwara has directed Administrative Secretary PWD J&K Govt to be present before the NGT on next date of hearing -i.e. 22.04.2025.

The petitioner Advocate Rasikh Rasool has alleged that there have been environmental violations during the execution of the Handwara-Bungus road project. The NGT has been hearing this case for almost one year.

"I was forced to move to NGT as the Govt failed to act on my repeated pleas. The PWD R&B Handwara as well as PWD R&B Administrative Department failed to respond to an earlier notice issued on February 21, 2024" said Rasikh Rasool.

"Despite being informed about the potential violations, no action was taken by the respondents | [More on P6](#)

## Post-snowfall Restoration Work In Full Swing: Omar Abdullah

**Observer News Service**

Srinagar: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday said post-snowfall restoration work in the valley was underway in full swing and being closely monitored.

The Kashmir valley and some areas in the Jammu division recorded moderate to heavy snowfall on Sunday, leading to road closures and snapping of electricity supply in many areas.

"Following the snowfall in Jammu and Kashmir yesterday (Sunday), particularly in the valley, restoration work is in full swing and being closely monitored," Abdullah said in a post on X.

"The current electricity load being drawn in the valley is 1,200 MW and this will rise as the day progresses. Snow clearance work is proceeding, with priority roads receiving immediate attention," the chief minister said.

He added that ministers Sakina Itoo and Javid Dar, and Nasir Aslam Wani -- the advisor to the chief minister -- would travel around the districts to review the situation on the ground.

Meanwhile, Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, today undertook a comprehensive tour of South Kashmir districts of Anantnag, Kulgam, Pulwama and Shopian to gather first hand account of impact of recent snowfall in these districts.

She chaired meetings at each district headquarter and took stock of | [More on P6](#)

## JKB Reports Higher Deposit Growth In Q3

**Observer News Service**

Srinagar: J&K Bank on Monday reported higher deposit growth compared to its advances in the third quarter ended December 2024. The lender reported a 9.65 per cent rise in total deposits to Rs 1.40 lakh crore against Rs 1.28 lakh crore at the end of the third quarter of the previous financial year.

However, the loan growth was lower at 5.98 per cent to Rs 99,134 crore against Rs 93,538 crore in the third quarter of the previous fiscal.

Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) Bank's total deposits increased 9.65% to Rs 1,40,947.81 crore as of 31st December 2024 as compared with Rs 1,28,542.47 crore as of 31st December 2023.

Total business stood at Rs 2,36,987.48 crore as of 31st December 2024, | [More on P6](#)





**PUBLIC NOTICE**

I, MOHAMMAD AMIN THAKER, son of MOHAMMAD SADIQ resident of BAGHAT E KANIPOORA, hereby declare that I have changed my name from MOHAMMAD AMIN THAKER TO MOHAMMAD AMIN AKHTAR. Henceforth, I shall be known and identified as MOHAMMAD AMIN AKHTAR for all purposes. If any individual or organization has any objections to this change, they are requested to communicate their objections in writing within 7 days from the date of this publication to my current address i.e. BAGHAT E KANIPOORA or contact me [7006786578]  
Date: 4 January 2025  
Sincerely,  
MOHAMMAD AMIN AKHTAR

inf

Subject:- Grant Of Registration of the Proposed Travel unit under the name & Style "M/S M/S Chenab Adventures tour and travel situated at Narbal, budgam

**Public Notice**

Whereas I, Mr. Jehangir Ali Mir S/O Ali Mohd Mir R/o Gund Hassi Bhat, Srinagar KASHMIR intend to apply in the Department of Tourism for registration of my proposed travel unit under the name & style of M/S M/S Chenab Adventures tour and travel situated at Narbal, budgam KASHMIR under tourist trade act 1978/82/2011-12. Whereas I will submit state subject / Domicile certificate, Qualification Certificate, pan card \ Experience Certificate (Minimum 5 years), Police character certificate, Bank statement (minimum balance 10000), site plan, Affidavit, Rent deed duly attested by sub Registrar, printing material (Latter head / Visiting card) Photograph of the unit (indoor and outdoor) and Two passport size photographs to the department of Tourism as per prescribed checklist I Prior to Registration of my unit as an Excursion Agency. / Adventure Tour Operator Now as per J&K Registration of Tourist Trade Act 1978/82/2011/12) before my case is processed for my registration by the Competent Authority, the matter is hereby notified for information of general public / Financial Institutions / Bank / Organisation, etc for objection, if any and the same should reach to the Deputy Director Tourism Registration (email id: ddtreg23@gmail.com) within a period of 7 days from the publication of this notice in a leading newspaper/newspapers of the valley. No objection beyond a period of 7 days shall be entertained.

iko

Subject:- Grant Of Registration of the Proposed Travel unit under the name & Style "M/S Luxury Milestone Tour And Travels Located At Batpora Tehsil Kunzer And District Baramulla

**Public Notice**

Whereas I, Mr. Farhad Afzal Beigh S/O. Mohammad Afzal Beigh R/O. Batpora Kunzer KASHMIR intend to apply in the Department of Tourism for registration of my proposed travel unit under the name & style of M/S Luxury Milestone Tour And Travels Located At Batpora Tehsil Kunzer And District Baramulla KASHMIR under tourist trade act 1978/82/2011-12. Whereas I will submit state subject / Domicile certificate, Qualification Certificate, pan card \ Experience Certificate (Minimum 5 years), Police character certificate, Bank statement (minimum balance 10000), site plan, Affidavit, Rent deed duly attested by sub Registrar, printing material (Latter head / Visiting card) Photograph of the unit (indoor and outdoor) and Two passport size photographs to the department of Tourism as per prescribed checklist I Prior to Registration of my unit as an Excursion Agency. / Adventure Tour Operator Now as per J&K Registration of Tourist Trade Act 1978/82/2011/12) before my case is processed for my registration by the Competent Authority, the matter is hereby notified for information of general public / Financial Institutions / Bank / Organisation, etc for objection, if any and the same should reach to the Deputy Director Tourism Registration (email id: ddtreg23@gmail.com) within a period of 7 days from the publication of this notice in a leading newspaper/newspapers of the valley. No objection beyond a period of 7 days shall be entertained.

bmg

**Office of the Naib Tehsildar Palhallan**  
Executive Magistrate 1st Class

Application Of Tawseef Ahmad, Shahid Nazir S/o Nazir Ahmad Teli R/o Sherbugh Sultanpora Tehsil Pattan for obtaining OBC Certificate

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

General Public is hereby informed through this notice that the applicant file is currently under process in the office of the undersigned regarding obtaining OBC certificate. According to the field staffs report the applicants are permanent resident of village Sherbugh Sultanpora Khoie tehsil Pattan District Baramulla and have been residing here from more than 15 years and has not migrated from the said village the annual family income of the applicant from all sources is Rs 235200 /-. Family details of the applicant are give below.

S.No	Name	Parentage	Age	Occupation
1	Nazir Ahmad Teli	Gh Mohd	50	Labour
2	Mehlaa Begum	W/o Nazir Ahmad	49	H/W
3	Tawseef Ahmad	S/o --	32	Labour
4	Nayeema Nazir	D/o --	25	H/W
05	Tawheeda Bano	--	28	--
06	Eshrat Nazir	D/o --	23	--
7	Shahid Nazir	S/o --	20	Student

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

fko Naib Tehsildar

**Office of the Naib Tehsildar Tilgam**

Sub. Application of Javid Ahmad Bhat S/ Gh Mohd Bhat R/o Wanigam Bala for obtaining RBA certificate in favour of self

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Regarding the subject cited above applicant's RBA certificate is under process in this office, in this matter report was sought from Patwari concerned which reveals that applicant is residing in village Wanigam Bala from last 15 years with his father and have not migrated till date. The family members of applicant are as under

1 Gh Mohd Bhat	68y	Pensioner
2 Haja Begum	65y	H/work
3 Javid Ahmad Bhat	33y	Handicap / student
4 Saima Akhter	28y	student

The monthly income of applicant family is 48550. in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 02 days after that no objection shall be entertained

SD fko Naib Tehsildar Tilgam

# IIT-Guwahati Develops Advanced Nanotechnology For Cholesterol, Triglyceride Detection

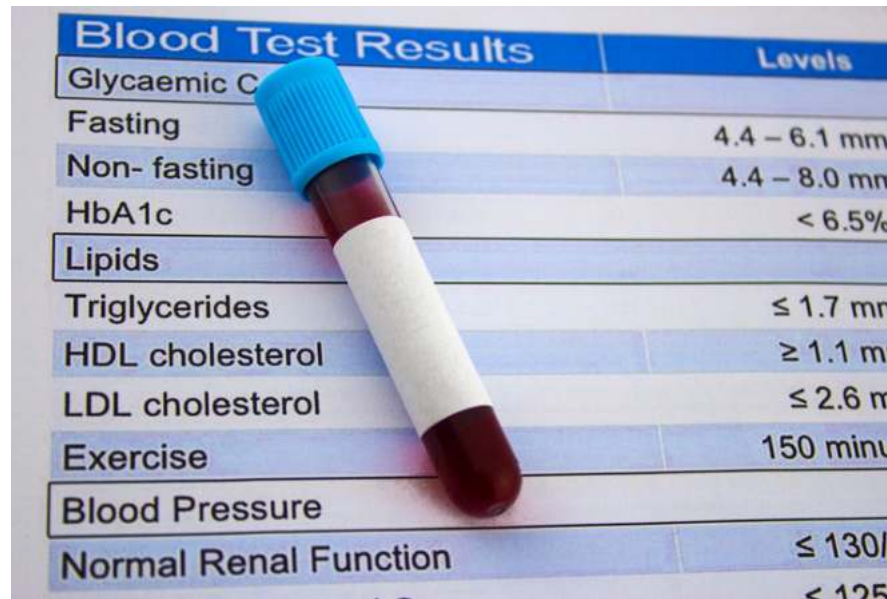
Press Trust Of India

Researchers at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Guwahati have developed an innovative approach to improve the detection of cholesterol and triglycerides by integrating Surface-Enhanced Raman Scattering (SERS) on the nanoscale objects, officials said.

The findings of the research were recently published in the noted journal -- Biosensors and Bioelectronics.

According to Dipankar Bandyopadhyay, Professor at Centre for Nanotechnology and Department of Chemical Engineering, IIT-Guwahati, the work utilises bimetallic nanostructures that are 10,000 times thinner than the width of a human hair for the high-fidelity detection of the biomarkers in the human blood.

"The metabolic biomolecules like cholesterol and triglycerides play pivotal role in maintaining a harmonious cardiovascular health of a human body. The high (HDL) and low (LDL) density lipoproteins transport cholesterol to the cellular sites for various metabolic activities," he said.



Bandyopadhyay explained an imbalance of LDL and HDL causes arterial plaque formation leading to hypertension, formation of blood clots, or ischemia.

On the other hand, triglycerides (TGA) transform into fatty acids and glycerol during digestion which in turn is packaged inside lipoproteins namely very low-density lipoprotein (VLDL), for

transportation to the cells. An elevated level of triglycerides leads to atherosclerosis and coronary artery disease, pancreatitis, type 2 diabetes, or fatty liver, he said.

"Therefore, the timely detection of any abnormality and a close monitoring of cholesterol and triglyceride levels in blood is highly sought for. While traditional lipid profile tests of blood are

reliable, they often require laboratory settings, are not available as a point-of-care solution, and can take time to provide results," he said.

IIT-Guwahati claimed that their researchers have focused on a technique that combines nanotechnology and molecular detection, which can further be translated into a point-of-care as device with an enhanced diagnostic precision.

"The researchers employ SERS active bimetallic nanostructures -- the silver shelled gold nanorods, which enable a plasmonic resonance hybridisation of silver and gold to produce augmented spectral resolutions as compared to pristine silver or gold nanorods.

"Subsequently, these bimetallic nanorods are linked to two different Raman active receptors and immobilised with the enzymes cholesterol oxidase and lipase for concurrent detection of different concentrations of cholesterol and triglycerides. Such innovations help in the development of a platform for the ultrafast point-of-care detection kit with a higher level of the detection sensitivity," Bandyopadhyay said.

# A Quarter Of Indian Population Can Access Stroke Facility In An Hour

Press Trust Of India

Roughly a fourth of the Indian population has access to a rehabilitation centre within an hour of experiencing an ischaemic stroke -- caused when a blood clot affects supply to the brain, a study found. The research, published in the International Journal of Stroke, also estimated that there is less than one ischaemic stroke centre per million population.

Ischaemic stroke is the most common, accounting for about 70-80 per cent of all strokes in India, according to a September 2024 study, published in the journal Scientific Reports.

In the recent study, researchers, including those from the US' Ascension Health and All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Hyderabad, found that a total of 566 stroke centres equipped with the 'intravenous thrombolysis' method of treatment (which breaks up



blood clots) were spread across 26 states and union territories.

Of the 566, over 60 per cent (361) were found to be also equipped with endovascular therapy for stroke patients, considered superior.

Typically, an ischaemic stroke patient was 115 kilometres away from the nearest intravenous thrombolysis treatment centre and about 130 kilometres away from the nearest endovascular therapy centre, the researchers found.

Further, a little over 26 per cent of the Indian population can access intravenous thrombolysis centre in under an hour, while about a fifth can access endovascular therapy centre.

The data on "intravenous thrombolysis capable (IVT-C) and endovascular treatment capable (EVT-C)" stroke centres were collected in March 2021 from medical devices and pharmaceutical industry providers. Time taken to drive to the nearest stroke care centre was estimated using the application 'Google Distance Matrix API'.

"Access within one hour to an IVT-C and an EVT-C centre was available to 26.3 per cent and 20.6 per cent of the Indian population, respectively," the authors wrote. "The average stroke centres per million (SCPM) population was 0.41 and 0.26 for IVT-C and EVT-C, respectively," they wrote. Further, "median (typical) distances to the nearest IVT-C and EVT-C centres were 115 kilometres and 131 kilometres, respectively."

# Diet, lifestyle influences chances of age-related brain disorders: Study

ANI

The scientists at the Allen Institute for Brain Science have identified the molecular changes that occur in the brains of ageing mice and located a hot spot where most damage is centralized. The cells in the area are also connected with metabolism, thus suggesting a connection between diet and brain health.

Scientists at the Allen Institute have identified specific cell types in the brains of mice that undergo major changes as they age, along with a specific hot spot where many of those changes occur. The discoveries are published in the journal Nature.

The study found that in ageing brains, genes associated with inflammation increased in activity while those related to neuronal structure and function decreased.

"Our hypothesis is that those cell types are getting less efficient at integrating signals from our environment or from things that we're consuming," said Kelly Jin, Ph.D., a scientist at the Allen Institute for Brain Science and lead author of the study.

"And that loss of efficiency somehow contributes to what we know as ageing in the rest of our body. I think that's pretty amazing, and I think it's remarkable that we're able to find those very specific changes with the methods that we're using."

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## Avoid Unvented Gas Heaters: Doctors

### Agencies

Srinagar: Medical experts have issued a stern warning against the use of unvented gas heaters in closed spaces, saying these could cause fatalities due to carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. They have urged the people to take the dangers seriously, particularly in light of recent tragic incidents, including one in Pandrethan, Srinagar.

Dr Murtaza Ahmad, a doctor at the Directorate of Health Services Kashmir (DHSK) said that unvented gas heaters emit combustion byproducts like carbon monoxide, which can accumulate to lethal levels in poorly ventilated rooms. "Carbon monoxide poisoning is a grave risk associated with these heaters. The best way to prevent such deaths is to stop using unvented gas heaters altogether and switch to vented alternatives," he said.

Dr Ahmad said that if unvented gas heaters are still used, they should only be operated in rooms with adequate ventilation and never in bedrooms, bathrooms, or enclosed spaces. "These heaters lack a chimney to vent harmful combustion products outside. As a result, toxic pollutants like carbon monoxide remain inside the room, posing a severe threat," he explained.

Carbon monoxide, dubbed a "silent killer", is undetectable by sight, smell or taste. Victims

often become unconscious during sleep without realising the danger. Vulnerable groups, including children, the elderly, pregnant women, and those with chronic health conditions, are at greater risk.

Dr Showkat Ahmad from GMC Anantnag called for avoiding unvented gas heaters. He and other experts described telltale signs of suffocation, including small red or purple splotches in the eyes, face, and neck and petechial haemorrhages in the lungs. Other symptoms include shortness of breath, slow heart rate, hoarseness, sore throat, confusion, loss of consciousness, nosebleeds and visual changes.

"Prolonged exposure to CO can cause symptoms such as headache, dizziness, nausea and confusion. In severe cases, it can be fatal," Dr Showkat said, adding that nitrogen dioxide, another byproduct of combustion, can irritate the respiratory system and worsen conditions like asthma.

Dr Irfan, another doctor at DHSK, said carbon monoxide is produced when fuels like gas, oil, coal, or wood do not burn completely. In poorly ventilated spaces, CO can reach dangerous levels, impairing the blood's ability to carry oxygen to vital organs. "Symptoms of CO poisoning include dizziness, headache, nausea, confusion, and, in severe cases, unconsciousness or death," he said.



## 'Illegal' Fishing Nets Threaten Dal Lake's Biodiversity

### Agencies

Srinagar: The Centre for Environmental Law (CEL), an independent environmental body in the Kashmir region, has appealed to the fisheries department to ensure compliance with existing bans and penalize violations through routine inspections and enforcement drives.

In a letter addressed to J&K's fisheries department, it highlights the reports of use of 'banned' fishing nets in the Dal Lake, stating that it was leading to injuries and trapping of migratory birds.

The letter states that the use of these illegal nets was not only a violation of the Wildlife (Protec-

tion) Act, 1972, but also a direct threat to the region's biodiversity.

"This unlawful practice has led to alarming instances of migratory birds being trapped and injured. These species, vital to the biodiversity of our region, are now at significant risk due to these activities," reads the letter.

The letter further states that the adverse impact of such actions extends beyond harming migratory birds, it disrupted the delicate ecological balance of Dal Lake, which was already under strain from various anthropogenic pressures.

The CEL in the letter has urged the fisheries department to take immediate measures, like conducting routine inspections to

ensure compliance with the ban and penalizing violators. It has also asked for community awareness programs, highlighting to educate the fishing community about the environmental impact of their practices and promoting sustainable alternatives.

The CEL letter has also called for collaborative conservation efforts, calling for partnering with environmental organizations to develop long-term strategies for the protection of Dal Lake's wildlife.

"I trust that the Department of Fisheries will treat this issue with the urgency it demands and take immediate steps to mitigate the threats posed by the use of banned nets," reads the letter—(KNO)

## GMC Warns Students Against Alcohol, Drug Use In Hostels

### Agencies

Srinagar: In a latest development, the administration of the Boys Hostel at Government Medical College (GMC), Srinagar, has issued a stern warning against the use and possession of alcohol and narcotic substances within the hostel premises.

The notice in possession with Associated News Bureau, signed by the Warden of the hostel, was prompted by the discovery of alcohol bottles during a recent inspection.

Complaints have also been received about some hostel inmates engaging in the consumption of alcohol and drugs, activities strictly prohibited under hostel rules and the law.

The warden emphasized that such behavior not only violates legal and institutional guidelines but also contradicts the values upheld by the hostel. Residents have been reminded that possession, use,

or distribution of prohibited substances will result in severe consequences, including legal action and immediate eviction without prior notice.

The administration has urged all residents to strictly adhere to the hostel's rules and regulations to maintain a conducive and disciplined environment. This announcement reflects the hostel administration's commitment to maintaining a safe and lawful environment for students, with zero tolerance for substance abuse.

Meanwhile, Social media platforms are flooded with anger and messages of anguish, with many calling "These are the future doctors of our state, what to expect from these so called doctors, society should take action against these doctors", another user states "Why warning? Police must investigate and whosoever is responsible must be punished as per the law". (ANB)

## Guru Gobind Singh Ji's Birth Anniversary Observed

### Agencies

Srinagar: A large number of Sikh devotees gathered at the historic Gurudwara Chatti Padshahi in Rainawari on Monday to observe the Prakash Parv of Guru Gobind Singh, the revered tenth Sikh Guru.

The Gurudwara reverberated with prayers and hymns as devotees celebrated the birth anniversary of the Guru with spiritual fervour.

The day was marked by special prayer services, Kirtan (religious hymns), and the traditional langar (community meal) offered

to all visitors.

On this occasion, one of the devotees, Harpreet Singh said, "The great message of Guru Gobind Singh Ji motivates us toward a life of valour, humbleness and service. Such a message seems relevant in present times."

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E-TENDER NOTICE				
Tender Notice No:- 285, 286-2024-25-ADEN-LDH & 287, 288-2024-25-ADEN-JRC Date: 03.01.2025				
Sr.DEN-IFZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites open tenders (E-Tenders) against below titled tenders and available on <a href="http://www.reps.gov.in">www.reps.gov.in</a> with closing date: 27.01.2025 up to 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against these tenders, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. In place of Earnest money deposit, "Bid Security Declaration" is to be submitted on prescribed format as available in document section on the portal.				
Tender Type	Tendering Section	Bidding System		
Open	Works	Two Bid System		
Date of Uploading Tenders	Bid Starting Date	Bid Closing Date/Time		
02.01.2025	13.01.2025	27.01.2025/ 15:00 Hrs		
S. No.	Tender No.	Details of Tender		
1.	285-2024-25-ADEN-LDH-FZR	Providing and erecting Metal beam crash barrier & RCC Boundary wall along the track to prevent CRO on SNL-JRC section in the jurisdiction of SSE/WLDH.		
	Advertised Value (Rs.)	Earnest Money	Validity of Offer	Period of Completion
	20,62,09,318.72/-	11,81,100.00/-	90 Days	06 Months
	Similar Nature of work:- "Any civil work other than track work".			
2.	286-2024-25-ADEN-LDH-FZR	Providing and erecting Metal beam crash barrier & RCC Boundary wall along the track to prevent CRO on SNL-JRC section in the jurisdiction of SSE/WPGW.		
	Advertised Value (Rs.)	Earnest Money	Validity of Offer	Period of Completion
	21,94,81,565.86/-	12,47,400.00/-	90 Days	06 Months
	Similar Nature of work:- "Any civil work other than track work".			
3.	287-2024-25-ADEN-JRC-FZR	Providing and erecting Metal beam crash barrier & RCC Boundary wall along the track to prevent CRO on SNL-JRC section in the jurisdiction of SSE/WJRC.		
	Advertised Value (Rs.)	Earnest Money	Validity of Offer	Period of Completion
	18,12,03,682.70/-	10,56,000.00/-	90 Days	06 Months
	Similar Nature of work:- "Any civil work other than track work".			
4.	288-2024-25-ADEN-JRC-FZR	Providing and erecting Metal beam crash barrier & RCC Boundary wall along the track to prevent CRO on SNL-JRC section in the jurisdiction of SSE/WJRC.		
	Advertised Value (Rs.)	Earnest Money	Validity of Offer	Period of Completion
	19,89,47,319.19/-	11,44,700.00/-	90 Days	06 Months
	Similar Nature of work:- "Any civil work other than track work".			
Note: 1. Before bidding, bidders to check for any corrigendum issued against tender.				
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE <span style="float: right;">57/25</span>				

## OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

### 8 WEEK FREE GROUP THERAPY

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

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

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

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

You do not have to fight your battles alone.

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

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9070806160

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- PAMPORE: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

**HIGHWAY STATUS**

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

PRAYERS	
FAJR	6: 08
ZUHR	12:35
ASR	3: 57
Magrib	5:39
ISHA	7: 04

**HIJRI CALENDAR**  
06 Rajab  
1446

## This Day In History

- 754 Pope Stefanus II arrives in Ponthion
- 1325 - Afonso IV succeeds Dionysius as King of Portugal
- 1558 - Calais, last English possession in France, retaken by French
- 1579 - England signs an offensive & defensive alliance with Netherland
- 1610 - Galileo Galilei discovers the first three moons of Jupiter: Io, Europa & Ganymede
- 1618 - Francis Bacon becomes Lord Chancellor of England
- 1622 - Germany & Transylvania sign Peace of Nikolsburg
- 1698 - Russian Tsar Peter the Great departs Netherlands for England
- 1790 - French Revolution: A major riot breaks out in Versailles as people demand lower bread prices
- 1822 - Liberia colonized by Americans
- 1904 - Marconi Co establishes "CQD" as 1st international radio distress signal
- 1915 - World War I: Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm approves strategic bombing of Britain, but forbids bombing London, fearing his relatives in the royal family might be killed
- 1922 - The Anglo-Irish Treaty is ratified by Dail Eireann by a 64-57 vote
- 1935 - French Foreign minister Pierre Laval and Benito Mussolini sign the Franco-Italian Agreement
- 1940 - Winter War: The Finish 9th Division defeats the Soviet forces on the Raate-Suomussalmi road despite being significantly outnumbered
- 1941 - Chinese Kuomintang forces under orders from Chiang Kai-shek open fire on the surrounded Communist New Fourth Army at Maolin, Anhui Province, killing or capturing 7,000 troops
- 1942 - WW II siege of Bataan starts
- 1944 - US Air Force announces production of 1st US jet fighter, the Bell P-59
- 1945 - Lord Haw-Haw (William Joyce) reports total German victory in the Ardennes

## From KO Archives

## Delete Sindh Add Kashmir To 'Jan Gan Man'?

### Supreme Court Serves Notice To Government On National Anthem

#### Agencies

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court Thursday sought the government's response to a petition seeking the deletion of the word "Sindh", now a part of Pakistan from India's national anthem and replace it with the word "Kashmir".

A bench comprising Chief Justice R. C. Lahoti and Judge G.P. Mathur issued notice to the government in response to public interest litigation filed by Sanjeev Bhatnagar, a scientist and speed skating champion who represented India in the Asian Games.

In September, the court while rejecting his plea had given the petitioner the liberty to draw the government's attention to this and then approach the court if no action was taken.

According to the petitioner, who is also an advocate, approached the court stating that the inclusion of the word Sindh in the national anthem was an infringement on the sovereignty of Pakistan.

The inclusion of the word in the anthem for the past 54 years had also hurt the feelings of over one billion people in India, he claimed. Bhatnagar said the petition was being filed to avoid any future international dispute as such "flaws" in the anthem could bring dishonour and disrespect to the nation.

He sought a direction for the deletion of the word Sindh from the anthem and its substitution with the word Kashmir.

In response to his representation, the home ministry replied the anthem was adopted by the Constituent Assembly Jan 24, 1950. At that time, Sindh had become a part of Pakistan and therefore the assembly was conscious of this fact.

"The word Sindh refers not mere to the province of Sindh but also to the Sindh culture which is an inalienable part of the rich and diverse culture of India," the home ministry said.

"Moreover, the contribution of Sindh people in the making of modern India has been extremely noteworthy and cannot be overlooked. It may not therefore be appropriate to delete the word Sindh from the national anthem.

"Former deputy prime minister and senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Advani is a member of the Sindh community.

(KASHMIR OBSERVER, 07 JANUARY, 2005)



## KASHMIR OBSERVER®

Printed & Published by Sajjad Haider on behalf of Kashmir Observer LLP  
Printed at: K.T Press Pvt. Ltd 120-Electronic Complex, Industrial Estate, Rangreth-Budgam  
Published from: 5-Boulevard Srinagar J&K  
Editor-in-Chief: Sajjad Haider  
News Editor: Farzana Nisar  
Opinion Editor: Tooba Towfiq  
Online Editor: Syed Hamid  
Head Layout & Design: Muntazir Yaseen,  
Digital Media Head: Amir Ali Shah  
Business & Sales Head: Namisha Raj  
Distribution & Advertising: Firdos Ali  
RNI Registration No: 69503/98  
Postal Registration No-L/159/KO/SK/2014-16  
Legal Counsel: Tasaduq Khwaja  
Switchboard: (0194) 2502327 | +91 1947969705  
Editorial: (0194) 2502327  
Email: editor@kashmirobserver.net

### KO VIEW

## China's Fresh Virus Spike

China is witnessing a surge in human metapneumovirus (HMPV) cases, another potential epidemic, which is overwhelming hospitals, raising concerns in the world. Like COVID-19, it causes respiratory symptoms like cough, fever, and shortness of breath. Although usually mild, it has been found to lead to severe complications in vulnerable groups such as infants, the elderly, and immunocompromised individuals. Like COVID-19 again, it has so far no specific vaccine or treatment, and authorities are recommending preventive measures like handwashing, mask-wearing, and social distancing to curb its spread.

The Chinese government, however, has stressed that the situation does not warrant alarm, and assured the public that the rise in HMPV cases are typical winter respiratory illnesses. The World Health Organization too has so far stopped short of declaring this viral infection a public health emergency. This means that the UN body doesn't think that the HMPV is likely to cause a pandemic. People have been urged to follow hygiene protocols and seek medical attention for severe symptoms.

India is closely monitoring the rise in cases in China. However, no unusual surge in respiratory illnesses has been reported within the country. The government has reassured the public that the country is well-prepared to manage respiratory illnesses, with recent preparedness drills confirming readiness. Health experts have advised standard precautions to address respiratory health concerns.

Last year, the world saw a brief spread of monkeypox, a contagious skin infection spread through close contact with someone who has symptoms. India also saw several cases but the epidemic soon died down. Let us hope that HMPV also ends soon. But we shouldn't take the infection lightly. This is how COVID-19 too had emerged in China in February 2020 and then in the blink of an eye spread through the world. More than 776.8 million cases and 7 million deaths from COVID-19 have been recorded globally since the pandemic began in early 2020, according to the latest data released by WHO. From January 2020 to November 2024, over 28.1 million COVID-19 hospitalizations were reported to WHO across 172 countries. The takeaway from the horrific COVID-19 experience is that we can't ignore the advent of any new infection. The world will be watching the HMPV, its severity and its spread in the weeks to come. In Kashmir, we experience many winter-related infections, some of them very severe, so we also need to take precautions. While the current surge in HMPV cases may not yet pose a global threat, it serves as a reminder of the need for vigilance, preparedness, and adherence to preventive measures to mitigate the risk of any potential health crisis.



### Did You Know? Understanding the Journey of Investing: Patience Over Shortcuts Irshad Mushtaq

When it comes to investing, time is a crucial factor. Many people believe they can make quick money through shortcuts, but the reality is far different. In the world of investments, especially in the stock market, there are no easy paths. Here's what you need to know about investing wisely and avoiding the traps of speculation. Time is Essential Investing is not a get-rich-quick scheme. It requires time, patience, and courage. Whether you are in a profession like medicine or business, the focus should be on long-term gains rather than immediate profits.

#### The Importance of Quality Consultations

Before diving into investments, consider seeking advice from a financial consultant. Understanding the potential risks and mistakes you could make can save you from costly errors. A knowledgeable consultant can guide you and help you navigate the financial landscape effectively. Avoiding Shortcuts Many people are tempted by the allure of shortcuts, but these often lead to financial losses. In investments, especially in the stock market, approaching your finances with the right mindset is crucial. It's important to differentiate between trading and investing; trading is often based on speculation, while investing focuses on building wealth over time.

#### Regulated Opportunities

Investing in mutual funds, whether through Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs) or lump-sum investments, is a smart and regulated choice for everyday individuals. In India, these investments are overseen by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), so they come with a level of security not found in speculative ventures like games.

#### Educating Ourselves

To be financially free, we need to educate ourselves and the younger generation about the true nature of investing. Understanding the difference between trading as a game and investing as a sustainable strategy is vital. Let's work together to foster a culture of informed investing.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, investing is a long game that requires dedication and the right knowledge. Instead of seeking shortcuts that may lead to financial discomfort, let's focus on making informed Decisions for a secure future. Together, we can create a financially stable environment for ourselves and those around us.

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

# The Menace of Online Gambling

## Parents can play a predominant role in curbing this gambling addiction



Peerzada Aarif

“  
At a time when the Kashmir Valley is grappling with crises tearing apart its social fabric, drug addiction has already taken a heavy toll on its youth, destroying their physical and mental health. Now, this additional threat of online gambling involving young children could lead to disastrous consequences if not addressed immediately

Recently, a video went viral on social media showing a man from Srinagar who had lost around 80 lakh rupees while playing online gambling on a site called Teen Patti. This is the first instance where an individual has lost such a substantial amount to the menace of gambling.

Many people in the valley have lost money on these platforms. Earlier, a man from Baramulla lost 42 lakh rupees through online gambling, forcing his parents to sell their house to repay the debt. Another individual from the town gambled away 32 lakh rupees and now suffers from severe depression.

To quote the recent instance of the man from Srinagar: as per reports and his own statement on social media, he had invested his entire savings and borrowed money from friends and relatives.

This menace of online gaming and gambling has become a nuisance in our society. More and more youth are becoming involved and addicted to it, leading to huge monetary losses and causing significant problems for their families. This issue needs to be brought to light to seek immediate public attention and curb this menace.

Online gambling refers to any form of gambling or gaming conducted on the internet. This includes platforms like virtual poker, casinos, and sports betting. Popular online gambling platforms worldwide include sports betting, online casinos, poker, blackjack, lotteries, roulette, slots, arbitrage betting, baccarat, and bingo.

Teen Patti is another popular Indian gambling card game that originated from the English game of three-card brag and is influenced by poker. It is also known as flush or flash in some areas.

Gambling, in general, is not a new phenomenon. People have engaged in gambling in offline modes, resulting in substantial monetary losses. However, the advent of online gambling using smartphones and the internet poses more significant risks and threats. In offline gambling, so-

cial restrictions and stigma limit gamblers' networks and participation. However, the plague of online gambling has become a silent killer, with youth wasting their time and money via smartphones and the internet, resulting in massive financial losses.

This addiction leaves many young individuals gambling throughout the night, negatively impacting their physical and psychological well-being. Social influences, particularly through social media and peer interactions, normalize gambling behaviors, making them more appealing to adolescents. Mental health issues like anxiety and depression are closely linked to online gambling addiction, as individuals often use gambling to cope.

During these online gambling activities, individuals often chase their previous losses, leading to even greater financial setbacks. This cycle leaves them in a state of regret, depression, anxiety, and severe psychological trauma.

This menace is spreading rapidly among youth, particularly teenagers, who, driven by greed and the desire to earn easy money, become deeply addicted to these gambling platforms.

One major reason people resort to gambling is their desire for shortcuts to wealth, avoiding hard work. However, such practices drain financial resources and cause anxiety, depression, poor mental health, and strained social relationships. Another reason for youth falling prey to gambling apps is the influence of celebrities and social media influencers promoting these platforms, attracting young minds. In some cases, individuals who face significant financial losses may even contemplate suicide.

At a time when the Kashmir Valley is grappling with crises tearing apart its social fabric, drug addiction has already taken a heavy toll on its youth, destroying their physical and mental health. Now, this additional threat of online gambling involving young children could lead to disastrous consequences if not addressed immediately.

To curb the menace of online

gambling, our society needs an integrated and comprehensive approach involving different sections of the community.

Parents can play a vital role in shaping their children's online gaming habits by monitoring what they play and for how long. Such social control can positively impact children. Parents can also set time limits, encourage regular breaks, and engage their children in alternative activities to break these habits. Playing physical games with children can help them find a range of activities to enjoy.

Parents should also talk to their children about these gambling sites, helping them identify and express their feelings. Providing support and fostering strong parent-child relationships can protect children from unhealthy behaviors. Research suggests parental support is linked to fewer gaming problems over time.

Spending quality time with children and involving them in offline activities can eradicate the ill effects of online gambling and gaming.

Counseling sessions in schools, colleges, universities, and other educational institutions are urgently needed to guide and counsel youth about the adverse effects of such gambling apps. At the community level, religious clerics can address this issue through socially relevant sermons.

On an individual level, youth should limit social media use and reduce screen time to avoid these traps and scams. They must avoid bad company that encourages gambling. Instead, they should engage in sports and productive activities, recognizing that wealth requires planned, hard work rather than reliance on scams and risky platforms.

Strict cyber laws are essential to mitigate financial risks. Such dangerous apps and platforms should be banned, and existing laws must be enforced and implemented strictly.

*Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. The author can be reached at [aarifpeerzada1@gmail.com](mailto:aarifpeerzada1@gmail.com)*



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## Encouraging Responsible Citizenship During Snowfall in Kashmir

Snow, while it brings beauty and charm to our Valley, also presents unique challenges that demand cooperation, empathy, and collective effort.

Snowfall often disrupts daily life, blocking roads, cutting off power, and straining essential services. It is during such times that our strength as a community is tested. As responsible citizens, it is crucial that we rise to the occasion and lend a helping hand to those in need. Firstly, we must ensure that roads and pathways remain accessible, not just for ourselves but also for our neighbors, especially the elderly and those with mobility chal-

lenges. Clearing snow from shared spaces such as walkways, driveways, and local roads can prevent accidents and enable essential services to function smoothly.

Secondly, we must be mindful of our energy consumption. During snowstorms, power outages are common, and conserving electricity can ensure that the limited supply reaches everyone. Simple actions such as using heaters judiciously and switching off non-essential devices can make a significant difference.

Additionally, let us be vigilant about the needs of vulnerable groups. Checking on elderly neighbors, pro-

viding warm clothing to those in need, and sharing food or firewood can save lives during harsh winters. Schools, mosques, and community halls can also be utilized as temporary shelters for those without adequate heating facilities.

Another aspect of responsible citizenship is ensuring that our actions do not harm the environment. Disposing of snow appropriately and avoiding the use of non-biodegradable materials for temporary fixes can protect our surroundings.

Most importantly, let us encourage a culture of patience and understanding. Snowfall brings delays and

disruptions, but by practicing kindness and offering assistance wherever possible, we can ease the collective burden.

As Kashmiris, we have always been known for our hospitality and compassion. Let us extend these values to our neighbors and strangers alike during snowfall, transforming challenges into opportunities for community bonding. Together, we can create a spirit of resilience and solidarity that inspires others.

Majid Bhat  
[Majidb@hotmail.com](mailto:Majidb@hotmail.com)



# Building Warmth: Transforming Homes for Kashmir's Harsh Winters

Dr. Shujaat Hussain Buch

*Woh makaan jo sardiyon mein bhi muskan bane,*

*Jahan roshni ke saath garmi bhi basay.*  
(A house that smiles even in winter's chill,  
Where warmth and light share space at will)

Winter in Kashmir isn't just a season; it's a test of resilience. Even without the snowfall, temperatures have dipped to a numbing  $-8^{\circ}\text{C}$  in Srinagar, leaving taps frozen, windowpanes frosted, and heaters struggling to keep up. Many of us wake up in homes that feel as cold as the outside air. At the Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), our research into thermal comfort is uncovering practical solutions to make homes warmer, more energy-efficient, and sustainable.

## Living the Chill

In Kashmir, Chillai Kalan isn't just a name—it's an experience. Imagine waking up on a winter morning and finding the tap frozen solid. Blankets feel like ice, and rooms, despite being indoors, carry the same biting chill as the outdoors. Modern homes, with their thin walls and large single-glazed windows, are ill-equipped to handle this cold. In contrast, traditional homes, with thick mud-and-stone walls and small windows, manage to retain warmth, providing a stark reminder of what we've lost in our transition to modernity.

## The Challenge of Kashmir's Climate

*(The champion of seasons is the one who builds right,  
Balancing warmth and coolness, day and night.)*

Kashmir's climate is one of extremes:

- **Winters (December–March):** Harsh and unforgiving, with heavy snowfall and freezing temperatures.
- **Spring (March–May):** A transitional period with wide daily fluctuations in temperature.
- **Summer (June–September):** Mild, with temperatures stabilizing around  $15\text{--}35^{\circ}\text{C}$ .
- **Autumn (October–November):** Gradual cooling leads into the next winter.

These conditions demand houses that adapt seamlessly to seasonal changes. Unfortunately, many modern homes aren't designed with these climatic realities in mind.

## Traditional vs. Modern Homes

### Traditional Dhajji-Dewari Homes

These homes are a legacy of Kashmiri ingenuity, designed to thrive in extreme climates.

- **Materials:** Thick walls made of mud, stone, and timber, with small windows to retain heat.
- **Performance in Winter:** Indoor temperatures often stay  $10\text{--}15^{\circ}\text{C}$  higher than outdoor temperatures, even during subzero nights.
- **Performance in Summer:** The high thermal mass of these materials keeps interiors cool, with in-



In Kashmir, Chillai Kalan isn't just a name—it's an experience. Imagine waking up on a winter morning and finding the tap frozen solid. Blankets feel like ice, and rooms, despite being indoors, carry the same biting chill as the outdoors. Modern homes, with their thin walls and large single-glazed windows, are ill-equipped to handle this cold

door temperatures up to  $5^{\circ}\text{C}$  lower than outdoors.

### Modern Brick-and-Mortar Homes

Modern homes may look sleek, but they fall short in thermal performance.

- **Materials:** Thin walls of bricks and cement mortar, with large single-glazed windows.
- **Performance in Winter:** Indoor temperatures hover around  $5^{\circ}\text{C}$ , only slightly above freezing, making them heavily reliant on heaters.

- **Performance in Summer:** Without proper insulation, these homes heat up quickly, becoming uncomfortable.

### Findings from IUST Research

At IUST, our research focuses on practical ways to improve thermal comfort. Here's what we've discovered:

- **Advanced Insulation:** Materials like mineral wool, rigid foam boards, and expanded polystyrene (EPS) can drastically improve heat retention.
- **Building Orientation:** Homes should face south to maximize solar gain in winter.
- **Double-Glazed Windows:** Replacing single panes with double-glazed ones significantly reduces heat loss.
- **Roof Insulation:** Adding polyurethane foam under tin roofs prevents heat escape through the top.

### A Case Study: Thermal Comfort Room (TCR)

To test these ideas, we built a Thermal Comfort Room (TCR) at IUST. This small experimental setup allowed us to study how different materials, designs, and ventilation strategies perform.

### Contributions from Our Students:

- **Group 1** optimized indoor thermal comfort using innovative materials.
- **Group 2** analyzed the performance of various insulation techniques.
- **Group 3** studied how glazing and sealants affect heat retention.
- **Group 4** worked on balancing ventilation and radiation for maximum efficiency.

These findings provide a roadmap for creating homes that are not just warm but also energy-efficient and sustainable.

### What You Can Do to Improve Your Home

Making your home winter-ready

doesn't have to break the bank. Here are some practical tips:

- **Insulate Walls and Roofs:** Use mineral wool or EPS for better heat retention.
- **Seal the Gaps:** Apply weather stripping or silicone sealants around windows and doors.
- **Upgrade Windows:** If double-glazing isn't possible, invest in heavy curtains.
- **Orient New Builds:** Ensure your house faces south to capture the winter sun.

### Reviving Traditional Wisdom

Our ancestors understood the challenges of Kashmir's climate and built homes that adapted to it. Reviving traditional techniques like Dhajji-Dewari, combined with modern materials, offers the best of both worlds—sustainability and comfort.

### Imagine a Better Winter

Picture this: A home where you wake up to a warm, sunlit room, not a frosty one. Your tap flows freely, and you don't have to huddle under layers of blankets just to stay warm. This isn't a distant dream; it's entirely achievable with thoughtful design and innovation.

### Conclusion

*Hum ne sikha hai sardi se jeene ka tareeqa,  
Ghar banake jo rahe har mausam ka saathi.*  
(We have learned the art of living with the cold,  
By building homes that stand by us through every season.)

With the right approach, we can ensure that no one has to wake up to frozen taps and icy rooms again. Let's build not just houses but homes that embrace and protect us, no matter how harsh the winter.

# Assertiveness: It's Not About Control

Let's get the record straight on what assertiveness is and isn't

Jennifer Gerlach

I kicked back at my all-time favorite coffee shop, nervously waiting for them to call my friend's double espresso macchiato. I pleasantly sipped my tea with a tad bit of guilt. He sprang up, walked to the front, and asked about his drink. His order had been overlooked. He returned with his signature little coffee cup. My guilt turned to admiration.

As a woman, assertiveness is not something I have always valued or sought to develop. What others might call confidence, I feared would be viewed with judgments of nothing but privilege if I were to attempt.

My worries were not unfounded. Women experience a disproportionate amount of 'assertiveness backlash,' a construct that describes subtle and not-so-subtle ways of punishing individual attempts to speak up. And it's not just a legend. Research supports this phenomenon.

One recent study showed 223 participants videos of female and male agents showing varying levels of assertive gesturing as they spoke (Wessler et al., 2022). Even in this modest demonstration, the dominant females were rated less favorably than the dominant males.

Yet, time has shown me the value of resolute, clear, and direct communication. Initiative sometimes gets you your coffee. Rather than seeing assertiveness as "mean" or "bad," I have come to appreciate it. I have taken time to cultivate my style of assertiveness. What follows are four common misunderstandings about assertiveness and a new perspective.

Assertiveness is not bossiness: Bossy. Whether on the playground or in the office, many strong female leaders have unfairly been cast this unkind title (Ciancetta, 2018). Yet, assertiveness is not merely about telling others what to do, it's about being crystal in our communication, intentions, and expectations.

Assertiveness is clarity: When someone communicates directly, their message should ideally be heard loud and clear. Clarity is a gift. Understanding what someone is asking or

expressing is essential for effective communication, a key ingredient in professional and personal relationships.

Assertiveness is not judging others: Assertiveness is not about making harsh judgments of others. On the contrary, clear communication can prevent a buildup of resentment and prevent misunderstandings.

Assertiveness is honesty: Sometimes, to avoid clear assertiveness, people engage in indirect communication, specifically something that radically open dialectical behavioral therapy calls 'disguised demands' (Lynch, 2018). Disguised demands can take a range of forms, from little lies to feigned incompetence. These communication patterns tend to harm relationships and are often dishonest.

Assertiveness is not mean: The word 'assertive' brings to mind a picture of a person with hands on both hips while wearing an abrasive face. Yet confidence is often appreciated. When someone is assertive, we can communicate effectively. In addition, unlike passive aggression, assertiveness does not typically project guilt to the receiver.

Assertiveness is kindness: Assertiveness is an act of kindness to ourselves and others. Clear boundaries prevent burnout on both sides and show a sense of respect.

Assertiveness is not control: Unlike disguised demands, assertiveness is not about controlling other people's behaviors. Although we may make requests assertively, in the end, it is up to the other to decide whether or not to accept the rules of engagement that we are offering.

Assertiveness is about trust: Honest and direct communication is one of the most basic expressions of trust. By being truthful and clear, we show that we recognize the other person as a capable human.

## Conclusion

If you are struggling with assertiveness, you are not alone. Steps like practicing honest, clear, and direct communication gradually can help to hone these skills. Psychotherapy also offers a setting to master assertiveness skills while challenging beliefs that could perpetuate a lack of assertiveness.

# A Historic Milestone for Kashmir's Transportation Network

Irfan Attari Kashmiri

The much-anticipated Vande Bharat train is set to be introduced in January 2025, marking a historic moment for Kashmir's transportation network. Capable of navigating the twists and turns of the Himalayan track at speeds of up to 90 km/h, this ultra-modern train is poised to cut travel time between Srinagar and New Delhi to just 13 hours, potentially revolutionizing how travelers move in and out of the Valley. Beyond its impact on travel time, the train is also expected to bring economic relief by reducing the exorbitant airfares that have burdened many.

For decades, air travel has been the primary mode of transportation to navigate the geographical constraints between Kashmir and other parts of India. However, the steep costs associated with flights have placed a heavy financial strain on locals, students, and workers. The New Delhi-Srinagar airfare typically ranges between ₹3,000 and ₹8,000 one-way, soaring even higher during peak tourism seasons and festivals.

## The Vande Bharat Experience

The Vande Bharat Express, a flagship semi-high-speed rail project, promises a world-class travel experience within India. Departing New Delhi every evening, the train reaches Srinagar the following morning, offering a 13-hour journey that, while longer than a flight, prioritizes comfort and convenience. Furnished with heating systems to withstand Kashmir's freezing winters, the train includes key stops such as Ambala Cantt, Ludhiana, and Jammu Tawi.

The introduction of the Vande Bharat train is expected to disrupt the New Delhi-Srinagar travel sector. Premium airlines, long dominant on this route, may face significant competition as ticket prices on the train are projected to range between ₹2,000 and ₹3,000. This affordability, coupled with the comfort and reliability of rail travel, is anticipated to attract a substantial number of passengers who previously had limited options.

Transportation analysts predict that airfares on this route could drop by 10% to

30% in the short term as airlines adapt to the new competition. For budget travelers and families, the train offers an attractive alternative, particularly during winters when fog and snow often disrupt air travel. The Vande Bharat's all-weather reliability presents a dependable solution for those long accustomed to flight delays and cancellations.

## Economic and Tourism Impact

The Vande Bharat train is expected to significantly benefit Kashmir's economy, which heavily relies on tourism. By making travel easier and more affordable, it will likely encourage greater numbers of domestic tourists to visit the Valley. Kashmir, renowned for its breathtaking landscapes, historical monuments, and rich cultural heritage, has often been inaccessible to budget tourists due to high travel costs.

Affordable train fares are also expected to boost off-season tourism, which has previously been hampered by prohibitively expensive airfares. Tourism experts suggest that the influx of visitors will directly benefit

local residents by increasing demand for lodgings, hospitality services, cafés, and handicrafts. Bashir Ahmed, a shop owner at Srinagar's Lal Chowk, remarked, "Low-cost travel means more tourists visiting the state, which translates directly to better business."

## Breaking Monopoly and Fostering Competition

The introduction of the Vande Bharat train is seen as a challenge to the monopolistic pricing practices of airlines on the New Delhi-Srinagar route.

airfares often reach exorbitant levels, leaving passengers with little choice. However, the Vande Bharat Express offers an alternative that could bring much-needed price regulation to the market.

While airlines are unlikely to lose their entire customer base, especially among those who



Peak-season

prioritize speed, the competition introduced by the train is expected to drive better pricing and services. Rajeev

Sharma, a transport analyst, noted, "We will see increased offers, discounts, and dynamic pricing as airlines attempt to win back lost market share."

## A Step Towards Sustainable Development

The Vande Bharat train aligns with the government's vision of sustainable development. Equipped with modern, energy-efficient

it offers an affordable way to experience the beauty of Kashmir without breaking the bank. And for the region as a whole, the train promises enhanced connectivity and economic growth.

## Conclusion

The Vande Bharat Express in Kashmir is not just a transportation upgrade—it is a symbol of progress, affordability, and inclusivity. By bridging distances and reducing travel costs, it unites families, boosts tourism, and fosters economic

development. As the train's arrival approaches, it carries the hopes and aspirations of the people, ushering in a new era of connectivity and opportunity for the Valley.

The author is a renowned social activist, writer, President of Foundation for Youth Web, and a student of cybersecurity



## BIS JKBO Celebrates 78th Foundation Day As Manak Carnival

Observer News Service

Jammu: Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), Jammu and Kashmir Branch Office (JKBO) celebrated its 78th Foundation Day "Manak Carnival" at its JKBO Bari Brahmana, Jammu premises with great enthusiasm on January 6, 2025. The event featured a variety of engaging activities, including nukkad natak, poster-making competitions, Manak Geet performances, and speeches, highlighting the importance of standards in daily life.

Four schools from the region- PM Shri Govt Girls Higher Secondary School Reasi, Govt. Girls Higher Secondary School Kathua, Govt Girls Higher Secondary School Sunderbani, Rajouri and Govt Girls Higher Secondary School Samba actively participated in the celebrations, contributing to the vibrant atmosphere of the event.

Students showcased their creativity and understanding of the theme through performances, such as nukkad natak, painting, and impactful speeches, all centered around the importance of standardization in enhancing quality and sustainability in daily life and the students were felicitated for their participation and exceptional



contributions during the event.

As a special initiative, the participating students were also taken on industrial visits to various manufacturing units in the region to gain practical insights into the role of standards in ensuring quality and safety.

Speaking on the occasion, the Joint Director, BIS-JKBO, Pankaj Atri remarked, "We are delighted to celebrate our Foundation Day with the participation of these bright young minds. This event serves as a platform to create awareness among students about the significance of standardization and its transformative impact on society."

The event witnessed the presence of BIS JKBO officials, teachers, and students from the participating schools, fostering a collaborative and educational environment.

The Bureau of Indian Standards, Jammu and Kashmir Branch Office (BIS JKBO), is a regional office of India's National Standards Body, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). It plays a pivotal role in promoting Standardization, Hallmarking, and Conformity Assessment activities across Jammu and Kashmir, ensuring quality and reliability in products and services.

## CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

### Pandrethan Tragedy

another tenant to check on them," Mukhtar said. "When the tenant knocked and got no response, we forced the door open and found the entire family lifeless," Mukhtar recounted. Officials suspect suffocation caused by the electric blower, which likely depleted oxygen levels in the room.

Many say that the presence of a newborn likely heightened the family's efforts to maintain a warm environment within their rented accommodation. The desire for warmth, a basic human need, tragically turned into a deadly trap.

As the bodies were brought to their hometown (Gingle Uri) for burial, an atmosphere of sorrow gripped the entire locality, with villagers and relatives gathered in large numbers to offer their condolences — their sobs and wails breaking the sombre silence.

Hundreds joined the funeral procession of the deceased, braving the winter chill to pay their last respects.

"We have lost an entire family. Ajaz, who was working at a renowned hotel in Srinagar for several years was the backbone of his household. His children were so young, full of life. This is an unimaginable loss," Bashir Ahmad, a neighbour said. "Ajaz was the sole breadwinner for the family and an honest, hardworking man who dreamt of a better life for his children."

But this is not an isolated incident. Earlier, two minors lost their lives when a fire engulfed their tin-shed home in Tangmarg, Baramulla. In Kulgam, a 24-year-old man lost his life, and his mother remain critical after suffering asphyxiation.

Across Kashmir, families grapple with the dual challenges of economic instability and the brutal winter season. Poor ventilation, reliance on outdated heating methods, and inadequate safety awareness leave many at risk of similar fates.

"This pandrethan incident underscores the daily struggle for survival faced by many Kashmiris during the harsh winter months, where the fight against the cold can inadvertently become a fight for life itself," Aasiya Jan, a teacher said.

"Warmth is a luxury they cannot afford safely. Many families in Kashmir rely on firewood or coal for heating during winters. This isn't the first time such an incident has happened. Authorities must create awareness about safer heating options," said a relative of the deceased.

Pediatrician Dr. Suhail Naik also linked the incident to poverty. "The father, who tragically lost his life along with his family due to suffocation, faced an impossible choice: either endure the deadly cold or keep the gas heater on for warmth. He was trapped in both scenarios. Sadly, the gas heater filled the room with carbon dioxide—often referred to as a sweet poison."

Experts warn that suffocation cases rise during winter as people use heating gadgets in closed spaces/rooms throughout the night, leading to excessive carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions and Oxygen (O2) depletion that can cause immobility and death.

"Unchecked use of heating gadgets increases carbon monoxide levels and depletes oxygen, leading to suffocation," warned an official.

Authorities have urged residents to adopt safety measures when using heating appliances. They emphasize the need for adequate ventilation and regular maintenance of devices to prevent similar incidents.

The tragedies have prompted calls for greater awareness and safer heating alternatives, especially for vulnerable families living in poorly ventilated homes. Social organizations and local leaders have also called for government intervention to provide safer heating solutions during the harsh winter months.

### Doctors Warn Against

Srinagar. Dr Murtaza Ahmad, a doctor at the Directorate of Health Services Kashmir (DHSK), said that unvented gas heaters emit combustion byproducts like carbon monoxide, which can accumulate to lethal levels in poorly ventilated rooms. "Carbon monoxide poisoning is a grave risk associated with these heaters. The best way to prevent such deaths is to stop using unvented gas heaters altogether and switch to vented alternatives," he said.

Dr Ahmad said that if unvented gas heaters are still used, they should only be operated in rooms

with adequate ventilation and never in bedrooms, bathrooms, or enclosed spaces. "These heaters lack a chimney to vent harmful combustion products outside. As a result, toxic pollutants like carbon monoxide remain inside the room, posing a severe threat," he explained.

Carbon monoxide, dubbed a "silent killer", is undetectable by sight, smell or taste. Victims often become unconscious during sleep without realizing the danger. Vulnerable groups, including children, the elderly, pregnant women, and those with chronic health conditions, are at greater risk.

Dr Showkat Ahmad from GMC Anantnag called for avoiding unvented gas heaters. He and other experts described telltale signs of suffocation, including small red or purple splotches in the eyes, face, and neck and petechial haemorrhages in the lungs. Other symptoms include shortness of breath, slow heart rate, hoarseness, sore throat, confusion, loss of consciousness, nosebleeds and visual changes.

"Prolonged exposure to CO can cause symptoms such as headache, dizziness, nausea and confusion. In severe cases, it can be fatal," Dr Showkat said, adding that nitrogen dioxide, another byproduct of combustion, can irritate the respiratory system and worsen conditions like asthma.

Dr Irfan, another doctor at DHSK, said carbon monoxide is produced when fuels like gas, oil, coal, or wood do not burn completely. In poorly ventilated spaces, CO can reach dangerous levels, impairing the blood's ability to carry oxygen to vital organs. "Symptoms of CO poisoning include dizziness, headache, nausea, confusion, and, in severe cases, unconsciousness or death," he said.

The doctors recommend the following safety measures:

- Install Carbon Monoxide Detectors: These devices can provide early warnings of dangerous CO levels.

- Ensure Proper Ventilation: Keep rooms well-ventilated when using gas heaters.

- Regular Maintenance: Regularly inspect and maintain heating appliances to ensure their safety.

- Recognize Symptoms: Be alert to signs of CO poisoning and seek immediate medical attention if they appear.

Medical experts call for awareness and preventive actions to safeguard lives during colder months. They said carbon monoxide poisoning is preventable with proper precautions and that reliance on unvented gas heaters should be minimized.

They warn that unvented gas heaters remain a silent threat to public safety. They said the Pandrethan incident should serve as an eye-opener for everyone to prioritise safer heating alternatives and take proactive measures to prevent tragedies caused by carbon monoxide poisoning. Awareness, education and vigilance can save lives during the winter months, they added. (KNO)

### Fresh Snowfall

Sonamarg and Gulmarg, have recorded the heavy snowfall with accumulation of 16 inches and 15 inches respectively till Monday morning.

According to the details, Doodhpatri and Yusmarg in Central Kashmir's Budgam and Pir ki Gali in Shopian recorded a snowfall of one foot each while Srinagar City recorded 2-3 inches of snow during the period.

As per an Independent Weather Forecaster, Aadil Maqbool, the maximum areas across Kashmir Anantnag, Qazigund, Kulgam, Kokernag, Pulwama, Budgam plains, Ganderbal, Kupwara and others recorded a light snowfall during the period with majority of these areas witnessing an accumulation of just 1-2 inches of snow till this morning.

Pahalgam has recorded a snow accumulation of 6 inches till this morning, he said.

Moreover, the Meteorological department (MeT), Dr Mukhtar Ahmad, said that the weather conditions would remain generally dry from tomorrow till January 10 while on January 11 and 12, there is a possibility of light rain in plains of Jammu and snow at isolated to scattered places.

He added that from January 13-15, the weather would remain generally dry.

Meanwhile, in its advisory, the MeT has stated that the tourists, travelers and transporters are advised to follow administration and traffic advisory.

Furthermore, the night temperatures improved across Kashmir and settled above normal with Srinagar recording a minimum temperature of minus 0.5 degree while Qazigund recorded a night

temperature of 0.0 degree.

Pahalgam recorded a low of minus 1.4 degree Celsius while Kokernag, Kupwara and Gulmarg, a famous ski-resort have recorded a low of minus 0.4 degree, minus 0.3 degree and 4.5 degree Celsius respectively.

Meanwhile, all the morning flights at Srinagar airport were delayed due to bad weather.

Director Srinagar airport, Javed Anjum said that flights that were scheduled for the morning have been delayed till 11 am due to bad weather.

"The runway is clear, and the flight status is on standby. Operations will resume after 11 am, depending on weather conditions," he had said.

The flight operations were, however, resumed after 11:00AM with officials stating that the operations have resumed as the first flight from Amritsar landed at Srinagar International Airport.

The flight operations resumed after a day-long suspension as all the flights scheduled to and from Srinagar International Airport were cancelled after the dense fog reduced visibility to zero at the airport.

### NH Open, Mughal Road

A noticeable slow movement was observed on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway due to the breakdown of heavy motor vehicles and single-lane traffic, officials said, adding that passengers and light motor vehicles (LMVs) are advised to travel during daylight hours, as there is a possibility of shooting stones between Ramban and Banihal.

An official said that as heavy snowfall disrupted normal life in the valley, slow movement was seen on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, caused by the breakdown of heavy motor vehicles and single-lane traffic.

He further said that the passengers as well as the light motor vehicles (LMVs) are urged to travel during daylight hours, as the likelihood of shooting stones between Ramban and Banihal is high.

Regarding the traffic advisory for January 7 (tomorrow), he said it is subject to fair weather and improved road conditions, LMVs, passenger vehicles, and HMVs will be allowed to travel from both Jammu and Srinagar on the highway.

About Kishwar- Sindhani-Anantnag road he said, the road is still closed due to snow accumulation along with Srinagar-Sonamarg-Gumri road also closed due to snow accumulation.

About Mughal Road, he said it is still closed due to snow accumulation, and the Baderwah-Chamba road is also closed due to snow accumulation.

### Avalanche Warning

in the next 24 hours," an official statement issued here.

The administration has urged residents living near avalanche-prone zones to take precautions and vacate unprotected settlements. For assistance, residents can contact the helpline number 112, it reads.

### USBRL Demonstrates

aspirations and creating a better future for millions."

### Major Rail Network

-Pahalgam (78km) and Awantipora-Shopian (28kms) rail lines. DPR is under examination for new line between Baramulla-Uri (46kms), Baramulla-Kupwara (39kms), Jammu-Poonch via Akhnor, Rajouri (223kms), Manwal-Talra via Ramkote, Billawar and Duner (117kms), Sopore-Kupwara (37kms), Pathankot-Leh (664kms), Bilaspur-Manali-Leh (489kms) and doubling of Baramulla-Banihal line," he said.

By linking key towns and regions, these projects promise to unlock the region's untapped potential and boost local economies, the IG added.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday inaugurated the new Jammu Railway Division, through virtual mode.

On the occasion, Sinha expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for dedicating the new Jammu Railway Division.

"This new division is very important from a strategic point of view. It will also stimulate economic growth, employment generation, infrastructure development and creation of new tourist circuits" he said.

Speaking on the remarkable progress achieved in developing a comprehensive railway-network in the UT, the Lieutenant Governor said the Indian Railways stands at the forefront of our journey towards a developed and self-reliant J&K.

"For Jammu and Kashmir, Indian Railways is spearheading a new era of development and integration. Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) will seamlessly connect Kashmir to Kanyakumari, boosting tourism, trade, and employment opportunities in the region," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said, by connecting Kashmir to the national railway network, Indian Railways has laid the foundation for a prosperous and integrated future for Jammu and Kashmir.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that, under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the infrastructure development across the sectors has set new benchmarks in the UT of J&K.

"With a strong emphasis on infrastructure, sustainability, and innovation, we are laying the foundation for a future where economic growth and improved livelihoods go hand in hand and everyone is empowered to make this vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 a reality," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said, the enhanced connectivity is already unlocking the potential of Jammu and Kashmir. Improved transportation efficiency is stimulating trade, encouraging industrialization, and enabling the movement of raw materials and finished goods.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted that with better access to markets, the socio-economic upliftment of the region is being realized, and tourism is receiving a much-needed boost.

The Lieutenant Governor also spoke on several transformative railway projects in the pipeline for Jammu and Kashmir, demonstrating Indian Railways' unwavering commitment to improving regional connectivity and fostering socio-economic development.

In view of the rapid industrialization taking place in J&K and emergence of Jammu, Samba and Kathua as industrial hubs, the Lieutenant Governor emphasized that Indian Railways should explore

possibilities for establishment of Railways' Private Freight Terminal to facilitate the transportation of goods and products of traders and industries of these areas.

The Lieutenant Governor lauded the efforts of every stakeholder and also recalled the contribution of Late Devender Singh Rana for a new Jammu Railway Division.

He further informed that the Z-morph tunnel will be inaugurated by the Prime Minister soon.

The creation of the Jammu Railway Division, with 742.1 KM comprising Pathankot - Jammu - Udhampur - Srinagar - Baramulla, Bhogpur Sirwal - Pathankot, Batala - Pathankot and Pathankot to Joginder Nagar sections, will significantly benefit Jammu and Kashmir and surrounding regions, fulfilling the long pending aspiration of the people and improving connectivity to other parts of India. It will create employment opportunities, infrastructure development, promote tourism and lead to overall socio-economic development of the region.

### Service Won't

government will ensure that the region benefits immensely by the completion of the long-pending project.

Omar was speaking at a function organized in connection with the virtual inauguration of the Jammu railway division by Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of the start of direct train service to Kashmir from Katra, with the final trial run scheduled for Tuesday.

"Two days ago, we got this good news through media that the trial train reached Katra from Srinagar. It is expected that very soon, the prime minister will inaugurate this section which will complete the railway line and immensely benefit the people of the region," the chief minister said.

However, he said there are some concerns among the people related to the rail service, especially in Jammu.

"It is often said that when rail service reached Jammu from Pathankot (Punjab), the situation in Pathankot became a bit difficult. Here too, at some places, there is a notion that if trains reach Kashmir directly from Jammu, the latter might face the same situation as Pathankot.

"On behalf of my government, I want to assure the people of Jammu that the rail service to Kashmir will have no impact on the region. Rather, we assure that Jammu will benefit from it as it will enhance trade and tourism, besides increasing travel between the two regions," Omar said.

Praising the prime minister for his efforts to improve connectivity and road network in Jammu and Kashmir, Omar said the expansion of railway line to Poonch-Rajouri in Jammu and beyond Baramulla in Kashmir will be the responsibility of the Jammu railway division.

"In my previous tenure as chief minister, the last function I attended was the inauguration of the Katra railway station. After assuming charge again, this is my first major function. And both are linked to railways and held under the leadership of Modi," he said.

The inauguration of the Jammu division is the biggest proof of the efforts of the prime minister to improve connectivity and road network in the region, he said.

The ongoing work on the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra expressway project, four-laning of the Jammu-Srinagar national highway, Z-morph and Zojila tunnels to provide all-weather road connectivity to Ladakh, along with airport expansion will further enhance connectivity on their completion, he said.

Lauding the railway ministry, Omar said that people used to get down from the train in Pathankot before it slowly reached Jammu, but in the last four decades, the railway service kept expanding -- first from Jammu to Udhampur, and then from Udhampur to Katra.

Similarly, rail service started in Kashmir from Srinagar to Baramulla, and was extended to Anantnag and Banihal and later to Sangaldan, he said.

Referring to the steep hike in air fare during the winter months when most of roads remain closed in Kashmir due to heavy snowfall, Omar said, "We are forced to buy air tickets worth Rs 5,000 for Rs 25,000... I hope the new rail service will not only benefit the railways, but also boost trade and industries with the induction of cargo trains."

Congratulating the people of J-K on getting a separate railway division in Jammu, Omar said it was a long-pending demand which has been fulfilled now.

"I am thankful to Prime Minister Modi and Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw," he said.

"The biggest thing is our coordination and control will not be from Firozpur (railway division), but from Jammu. And in this, we will definitely see benefits in recruitment. A small part of Punjab and a part of Himachal Pradesh have been added to this as well," Omar said.

Highlighting the transformative potential of the project, the Chief Minister stated, "Rail connectivity will bring immense benefits to Jammu and Kashmir. It will boost trade, tourism, and industrial growth. During harsh winters, when road closures disrupt transport, railways will provide a reliable alternative, reducing dependency on costly air travel. The new division will also facilitate cargo transfer and make travel more affordable, especially during winter when airfare skyrockets."

Concluding his speech, Omar expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Modi and Railway Minister Vaishnaw for their commitment to the region's development. "On behalf of myself and the government, I congratulate the people of Jammu and Kashmir on this historic achievement and assure them that the benefits of this initiative will be far-reaching," he said.

### J&K Rail Extension

back in 1972 but for as long as 50 years after that, there was no further progress and we had to wait for over half a century for Narendra Modi to take over as the Prime Minister and resume the rail extension work in J&K after a gap of 50 years. He said, some day the question would be posed why the successive governments during these long years did not give priority to this sector in J&K or were there certain elements not in support of Kashmir valley getting connected to the rest of India by railway and thus becoming a part of the national mainstream.

He said that the railway infrastructure recorded rapid expansion in the past 10 years across the country under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing a function organised at the Jammu railway station to mark the inauguration of the

Jammu railway division by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Singh said Kashmir is getting connected by train very soon, fulfilling a long-lived dream.

The BJP MP from Udhampur also raised a question mark on the delay of over five decades in extending the railway line from Jammu to Kashmir Valley, as he urged people to celebrate the creation of the Jammu division for the bright future of their children.

"The first train will go from here to Kashmir (very soon), giving a new impetus to business, industry and tourism besides creating new job opportunities in the region. Modi Ji has done it for us, in a realistic way," Singh said.

"Many elderly people will remember that exactly 53 years ago in 1972, a train arrived at the Jammu railway station. So the question that arises is what took so long to extend the service to Kashmir," he said.

"In the past five decades, many governments came and went. Someday, this delay in extending service to Kashmir will be a subject of discussion. Were the priorities different or the earlier governments did not have the willpower?"

"Were there people who did not want Kashmir to be connected to the rest of India by rail and be made a part of the national mainstream? Or was it the creator's will that we had to wait for 50 years for Modi to become the prime minister," Singh asked.

When the Modi-led government took over in 2014, the work on Kashmir's rail project was almost stopped as the railway line and its alignments were entangled in the midst of controversies, the minister said.

But the government decided to go ahead with the work, leading to the construction of the world's highest railway bridge over Chenab river in Reasi district along the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla railway line, which was completed recently and is presently undergoing trial runs between Katra and Srinagar, he said.

Stating that the BJP-led government ensured fast-track work on the rail project to ensure its completion within the shortest possible time, Singh said, "Railway infrastructure in the country expanded at a very rapid pace in the past 10 years after Modi took over as the prime minister in 2014."

"Electrification of tracks has been completed in over 61,000 kilometres, while the length of metro rail, which was only 248 kilometres in 2014, has been expanded to 1,000 kilometres," he said.

He also termed Jammu one of the best connected destinations in north India which will get a further boost with the completion of the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra expressway within six months, which will enable commuters to reach Delhi in just six hours.

Referring to the northeast, Singh said there is no part in the region where double-track railway line has not been set up in the past decade, while the Arunachal Expressway inaugurated by Modi has improved connectivity and transport network.

### EC Set To Announce

Rana's daughter, Devyani Rana, as its candidate from Nagrota seat, all eyes are on who will be NC's candidate from Budgam seat.

The NC has not even provided any inkling about who will be its candidate from the seat, evoking widespread curiosity among political observers and voters alike.

In 2024 J&K polls, Omar Abdullah won Budgam seat by defeating Muntazir Mehdi, son of separatist leader Agha Hassan, by a margin of more than 18000 votes. Rana won Nagrota seat by defeating Joginder Singh of National Conference by 30,472 votes. (KNO)

### NGT Directs Secretary

even as Executive Engineer is party in the case. On 2nd of January, Executive engineer R&B Handwara appeared before the tribunal but failed to justify his non responsiveness in the previous hearings in this case" Rasikh Rasool added

It is pertinent to mention that R&B Division Handwara took up execution of Handwara Bungus road without the required environmental clearance from competent authority. The petitioner has alleged before NGT that more than 25000 forest trees have been axed and uprooted plus illegal riverbed mining is done to extract the riverbed material in violation of J&K Minor Mineral Concession Rules.

The NGT in its Jan 2nd 2025 order reads, "Though notice was duly served and the matter was subsequently taken up on 25.04.2024, 07.08.2024 and 19.11.2024, no reply on behalf of respondent number 2 Administrative Secretary Public works Roads and Buildings Department, UT of J&K and respondent number 5 Executive Engineer Public Works, R&B Division Handwara, J&K have been filed. It has been pointed out that these officers are the main respondents responsible for the alleged violation. Hence, we direct respondent no.2- Administrative Secretary, Public works Roads and Buildings Department, UT of J&K to appear on the next date of hearing and apprise us about the allegation and the alleged violation."

On 18.11.2024 J&K Pollution Control Committee -JKPCC had filed a report disclosing the discrepancy of 2728.82 MT in the material consumed and disposal permits obtained by the executing agency PWD (R&B) Department. It further says that the executing agency didn't provide any justification for the discrepancy. The petitioner in this case has also appealed to the Chief Minister and by CM to get this matter inquired through J&K Anti Corruption Bureau (JKACB).

### Post-snowfall Restoration

snow clearance operations, availability of essential commodities, restoration of essential services like water supply and power supply and other public welfare measures.

### JKB Reports

up 8.56% as compared with Rs 2,18,294.83 crore as of 31st December 2023.

CASA Deposits rose 4.39% YoY to Rs 67,888.01 crore as of 31st December 2024. CASA was at 48.17% as of 31st December 2024 as against 50.59% as of 31st December 2023.

Gross advances increased 5.98% to Rs 99,134.05 crore as of 31st December 2024 as compared with Rs 93,538 crore as of 31st December 2023.

Gross investment jumped 26.97% to Rs 41,394.29 crore as of 31st December 2024 as compared with Rs 32,602.59 crore as of 31st December 2023.

Jammu & Kashmir Bank is a private sector scheduled commercial bank. The banks standalone net profit jumped 44.6% to Rs 550.92 crore on 15.7% increase in total income to Rs 3,419.63 crore in Q2 FY25 over Q2 FY24.

The scrip declined 3.13% to Rs 97.55 on the BSE.



## Restoration Of J&K Statehood Is Not A Favor: Advisor To CM

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** The restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir is not an act of kindness but a rightful due, Advisor to the Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani said on Monday, emphasizing the region's integral status as the "crown of the country."

CM's Advisor while speaking to reporters during a visit to Kupwara district, reiterated the central government's commitment to restoring J&K's statehood.

"Statehood restoration is not a favor but our right. Both the Prime Minister and the Home Minister have assured its restoration on the floor of the Parliament and we trust their word," he said.

Advisor Nasir also highlighted the positive relations between the central and the J&K government, which he said are yielding constructive responses. "People have expecta-



tions from the government and rightly so they have seen people's representation after years. We are working to bridge the gaps and assure them that the government remains committed to its promises. All that is needed is patience," he added. Notably, the Advisor was on a review visit to Kupwara post recent snowfall. He expressed satisfaction with the district administration's response. "The administration has performed well in restoring essential services and we have sensitized them to prepare for the upcoming weather conditions," he said—(KNO)

## Police Assist Stranded Tourists, Locals Amid Heavy Snowfall

Observer News Service

**GANDERBAL:** With heavy snowstorm warnings in effect across the region, the Ganderbal Police have been at the forefront to ensure the safety and well-being of both tourists and locals.

Specially trained teams have been deployed to assist those stranded in remote and high-altitude areas, particularly in popular tourist spots such as Sonamarg, Gund, and Kangan.

An official said that "We understand the difficulties people face during these harsh conditions. Our teams are working around the clock to assist anyone in distress, whether it's guiding tourists to safety or helping stranded vehicles. Public safety is our top priority."

Tourists have expressed their gratitude for the police's swift response.

A tourist from Delhi, Sandeep

shared, "We were stuck on our way to Sonamarg, and the Gund police arrived quickly to help us out. Their professionalism and care have made a huge difference in this difficult situation."

The police are advising travelers to avoid unnecessary journeys and remain vigilant in case of emergencies. They are also urging people to stay informed about local weather conditions to prevent any accidents.

For emergency assistance, locals and tourists can reach out to the Ganderbal District Police via the available 24/7 helpline numbers.

With heavy snowfall disrupting travel in the region, both Sonamarg and Gund Police Stations have been placed on alert to manage the situation. Police teams are actively monitoring the conditions to assist stranded tourists and residents in the affected area.

## Rising Asphyxiation Cases In Kashmir Need Solutions: Tarigami

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Expressing serious concern over the rising asphyxiation cases in Kashmir, which have become a recurring issue during winters, CPI(M) leader and MLA Kulgam Mohamad Yusuf Tarigami on Monday urged the government to provide carbon monoxide sensors to households at subsidized rates.

Referring to the increasing asphyxiation cases, which have so far claimed seven lives in Kashmir, with one victim still in critical condition, the CPI (M) leader said that the government should formulate a policy to distribute carbon monoxide sensors at subsidized rates through local bodies.

He added that while the victims cannot be brought back,



families should receive compensation as a humanitarian gesture, and those in critical condition due to suffocation should be provided immediate and free of cost treatment.

Tarigami said that there is a need for awareness campaigns at the village level about the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning and called for concrete steps to prevent further cases of suffocation in J&K—(KNO)

## Dr. Jitendra Singh Hails New Railway Chapter in Kashmir

Agencies

**JAMMU:** Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences, and MoS PMO, Dr. Jitendra Singh, Monday lauded the inauguration of a new chapter in Indian Railways at the Jammu division as a historic milestone, stating that it will prove significant for the rural heartlands of Kashmir and the broader development of the region.

Speaking at the event at Jammu, Dr. Singh reflected on the long journey leading to this achievement, recalling that the railway station had witnessed its first train arrival in 1972, over five decades ago.

He noted that the gap between that milestone and today's achievement raises important questions. "Was it due to administrative inefficiency, a lack of political will, or certain elements opposing the integration of Kashmir with the rest of India through rail connectivity?" he asked.

Dr. Singh credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership for transforming this vision into reality. "Perhaps it was destiny that we had to wait over 50



years, until the advent of PM Modi's leadership, to witness this moment. It was under his guidance that this dream, once considered impossible, has now been fulfilled," he said.

He recalled the initial steps taken during Modi's tenure, including a significant public event at Katra Railway Station in 2014. Despite challenges and delays caused by technical issues, shifting priorities, and changes in government, progress resumed with renewed vigor under Modi's administration.

Dr. Singh expressed optimism about the project's impact, emphasizing that it will open new horizons of development for the region. "This is a historic day, not just for Kashmir but for Indian Railways, as it symbolizes the fulfillment of a dream that seemed impossible long ago," he said—(KNO)

### SNOWFALL AFTERMATH

## PDD Restores 100% Electricity In Kashmir

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Following the fresh snowfall in Kashmir, Power Development Department (PDD) Monday said that it has restored electricity in all areas.

Besides, the department further said that there was no major damage recorded because of the snowfall.

A top official said that "Although there was no major fault or damage that could have disrupted the electricity because of the snow, in some areas there was a minor smash up to transmission lines and DTs which we restored immediately."

"As of now we have restored electricity in all areas of Kashmir region," the official said.

The official further said that the department was estimating the minor damage to DTs caused by the snowfall.

On asking about the ongoing power supply and curtailment schedule, the official said that it was supplying over 1800 MWs of power to the consumers.



"The power supply has increased and as of now we are supplying over 1800 MWs of power to the consumers of Kashmir region," the official said.

It also said that from a couple of weeks the power supply has touched 1950 MWs.

About the unscheduled power cuts in both metered and non-metered areas, the official informed that the district cuts usually occur in flat rated and non-metered areas.

"Majorly the consumers of metered areas usually don't face any unscheduled power cuts but the consumers in flat rated areas face the issues because of the overload that hampers or damages the power lines or power stations," the official said.

It also said that the flat rated consumers were using crude heating gadgets. "There is no judicious use of power in flat rate and non-metered areas."—(KNO)

## Pulwama's Litter Tehsil Emerges As Hub For High-Density Apple

Agencies

**PULWAMA:** In a groundbreaking development, the Shalhoora area in south Kashmir's Pulwama district is rapidly transforming into a hub for high-density apple varieties, reshaping the traditional orchard landscape.

Hundreds of growers from the Litter Tehsil of Pulwama district are converting their land to cultivate a diverse range of premium apples, which promises not only increased yields but also unique flavours and textures.

Growers from the Litter area of Pulwama said that a few farmers initially planted high-density varieties and earned handsome returns. Inspired by their success, many more have now prepared land on a large scale to plant high-density apple varieties.

This area, which traditionally did not have any apple orchards, saw some people converting their paddy land into high-density apple orchards. After the experiment yielded grand success, almost everyone in the area started adopting high-density apple farming.

The growers said these new varieties of apples were introduced in Kashmir after 2015. The standout feature of these apples is that they begin bearing fruit just a year after plan-



tation and reach full production in the fourth or fifth year.

They said traditional apple trees start bearing fruit at least ten years after plantation and are typically harvested in November, which sometimes exposes growers to damages due to untimely snowfall. However, high-density apples are harvested in August and are supported by facilities that protect them from hailstorms and other climatic challenges.

Javid Ahmad, who has high-density apples on around 8 kanals of land in the Shalhoora area, said this farming method has benefits. "We have prepared fresh 12 kanals and are going for high-density apple farming as it requires low input and labour costs. The quality of such apples is also high, with uniformity in colour and size," he said.

One grower shared his success story: "I planted high-density apples on around 3 kanals of land and fetched over

8 lakhs in just two years. The same land would have generated 8 lakhs from paddy cultivation over 100 years."

In September 2015, the then J&K Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed inaugurated the erstwhile State's first-ever high-density apple orchard at Bamdoora in south Kashmir's Anantnag district.

Kashmir produces over 20 lakh metric tonnes of apples annually, with some years reaching 25 lakh metric tonnes. According to the 2017 economic survey in J&K, half of Kashmir's population is directly or indirectly dependent on the apple industry, with over 3.5 lakh hectares under apple cultivation.

Horticulture contributes significantly to the state's Gross Domestic Product (SGDP), accounting for about 9.5 per cent. The sector also generates around 8.50 crore man-days of employment in J&K every year—(KNO)

## CS Reviews Implementation Of PM Gati Shakti



Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, while chairing a meeting of all the Administrative Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries and Deputy Commissioners about the implementation of PM Gati Shakti (PMGS) Master Plan, remarked that departments should take lead in adding as many layers as possible by mapping all their projects besides those among the social sector.

The Chief Secretary also advised the Department of Industries & Commerce, which is the nodal department for its implementation, to work out modalities for designating a threshold limit of Rs 20 Cr for PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan Portal for planning of projects here.

The Commissioner Secretary, I&C, Vikramjit Singh gave an overall view of the performance made by the UT in the implementation of PMGS in J&K. He made out that all the 38 departments of the UT had been on-

boarded that in turn had added more than 600 data layers to it till date.

He further apprised the meeting that J&K is among the top 3 States/UTs at national level. It has also been categorised as 'Fast Mover' in LEADS (Logistics Ease across Different States) 2024 report launched by DPIIT while it was ranked as 'Aspirer' consecutively for the last 3 editions.

Regarding adoption of PMGS at district level the meeting was informed that a session was conducted with all DCs and CPOs there. A handbook of PMGS area development planning was also shared with them to enhance their capacity for making the process easy for all the districts.

In a first, Kupwara was selected from J&K in a pilot phase of PMGS District Master Plan to adopt it at district level. The same model in future is going to be adopted by other districts as well.

As far as the performance of different departments is concerned H&UDD and Jal Shakti

Department were said to stand as major achievers in the UT with all of their assets mapped. It was further given out that all the departments had almost mapped their offices and other major assets over the UT Master Plan portal.

It was further revealed that 50 projects across 10 departments had been discussed in TSU/NPG meetings till date. Orientation session and portal demonstration on project planning was also held earlier in 2024 for the understanding of nodal officers.

In addition, development of district level portals would be accomplished with focus on usage of existing data to identify infrastructure gaps in the district.

Moreover, geo-referencing of all 6500 revenue maps would also be achieved in the year ahead. The PMGS under Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP) would enhance coordination between various government departments for seamless execution of projects here in J&K.

## J&K's Business Rules Draft Yet To Be Finalized

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** The formulation of business rules for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir remains a work in progress, with the government yet to finalize the framework that aims to ensure better governance and transparency.

A committee, headed by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, has been constituted to oversee the process. However, progress appears to be moving at a slow pace, raising questions and concerns among stakeholders.

Business rules are critical for streamlining administrative functions, defining responsibilities, and ensuring accountability across various government departments. In the context of Jammu and Kashmir, these rules are particularly significant as they would set the stage for transparent and efficient governance under the administrative structure of the Union Territory.

Political observers say that the absence of finalized business rules has led to procedural ambiguities and hindered smooth decision-making. They believe that a robust framework could bridge the gap between policy formulation and execution, benefiting citizens and businesses alike.

While the government has initiated steps by forming a committee led by Deputy Chief Minister, there is little clar-

ity on the progress. According to sources, the draft business rules are yet to be prepared, and no official communication has been issued by the General Administration Department (GAD) to outline the roadmap or time-frame for their completion.

The lack of transparency in the process has also raised concerns about the individuals and entities involved in drafting the rules. "Who is working behind the scenes to frame these rules remains a mystery," remarked an insider.

Once the draft rules are ready, they will undergo vetting by the Omar Abdullah led cabinet before being sent to the Lieutenant Governor's office for final approval. "This stage could potentially lead to friction between political and administrative authorities, particularly if there are disagreements over the provisions in the rules," said an observer who warned that such a scenario could pose a significant challenge to the current government led by Omar Abdullah.

"By finalizing and implementing the business rules promptly, the Jammu and Kashmir government has an opportunity to set a benchmark for governance in the region. Clear and well-structured business rules could pave the way for more accountable, efficient, and transparent administration, fostering trust and improving the lives of the people," he added. (KNT)

## Budgam: 17 Injured In Stray Dogs Attack



Agencies

**BUDGAM:** Seventeen persons were injured after they were attacked by the stray dogs in Budgam town of central Kashmir on Monday, with one severely injured person referred to SMHS Hospital in Srinagar for advanced treatment.

An official said that the incident occurred at the main market of Budgam town, where stray dogs appeared suddenly

and attacked multiple individuals, sparking panic among locals.

Medical officials at the Budgam District Hospital confirmed that 17 people received treatment for injuries, with one patient in serious condition shifted to Srinagar hospital for advanced treatment.

Local residents have urged authorities to take immediate action to address the rising stray dog menace in the area so that people can have a sigh of relief—(KNO)

## BJP Core Group Holds Meeting In Jammu

Agencies

**JAMMU:** The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) held its monthly Core Group meeting at the party headquarters in Trikuta Nagar, Jammu, under the leadership of party President Sat Sharma.

The meeting was mainly addressed by Tarun Chugh, National General Secretary of BJP and Prabhari for J&K, who spoke about the party's organizational activities and key socio-political issues in Jammu and Kashmir.

Prominent leaders present included Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh, National Secretary Dr. Narinder Singh, Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma, MP Sh. Jugal Kishore Sharma, General Secretary (Organization) Ashok Koul, former President Ravinder Raina, former Deputy

CM Kavinder Gupta, and other party leaders.

Tarun Chugh praised the efforts of the Modi-led government for its rapid development initiatives in Jammu and Kashmir, which he said are driving growth and prosperity in the region. He also emphasized the need to speed up the ongoing organizational elections, including the election of Mandal and District Presidents, after the successful completion of the membership drive.

Sat Sharma highlighted the development of the railway network up to Baramulla, which he believes will improve business opportunities and boost local industries, create jobs, and contribute to the socio-economic development of the region. (KINS)

## Winter Preparedness Reviewed In Budgam

Observer News Service

**BUDGAM:** Advisor to Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani on Monday reviewed the winter preparedness measures in Budgam, focusing on snow clearance operations and the availability of essential services.

During his visit, the Advisor was accompanied by Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Akshay Labroo. Nodal Officers of the district briefed the Advisor on the steps being taken to ensure uninterrupted services despite the challenges posed by the weather.

The meeting was also attended by elected representatives, including MLA Khansahib Saif Din Bhat, MLA Chadoora Ali Mohammed Dar, and MLA

Berwara Dr. Shafi Ahmad Wani. Senior officials, such as the district's Executive Engineers and the Chief Planning Officer, were also present.

Advisor Nasir Aslam underscored the need for coordinated efforts among all departments to ensure timely snow clearance, restoration of essential services, and uninterrupted availability of supplies for the residents.

He stressed that proactive and efficient measures are crucial for minimizing disruptions and providing relief to citizens during snowfall. Reassuring the public, the Advisor affirmed the government's commitment to safeguarding the well-being of the people during the harsh winter season.



## BGT: 'Australia's Tactics To Break Down Rohit Were Successful'

Press Trust of India

**SYDNEY:** Indian skipper Rohit Sharma wilted under the traditional Australian tactic of mentally breaking down the opposition captains during the just-concluded Border-Gavaskar Trophy, said former spinner Kerry O'Keefe.

India lost the five-match series 1-3 and Rohit made just 31 runs from three Tests at an average of 6.20.

"They couldn't bring down (Jasprit) Bumrah. He was too good. But then the baton was passed to Rohit Sharma and they brought him down straight away, to the extent that he withdrew from the final Test," O'Keefe told Fox Sports.

"So that's a tactic they seem to want to do if they can, if they can break the skipper and make him anonymous, it empowers them," he added.

It may be recalled that former Australian pacer Glenn McGrath used to make pre-se-



ries predictions as how many times he will dismiss the opposition captain and it often worked against the likes of ex-England skipper Michael

Atherton. Bumrah led India in the first Test at Perth in the absence of Rohit, who stayed back in India for the birth of his second child.

India won the match by 295 runs. The 37-year-old Rohit took over from Bumrah in the second Test in Adelaide, but his personal form and the team's fortunes

went south from that point.

Eventually, Rohit "opted out" of the fifth and final Test Sydney with Bumrah returning to guide the side.

The 75-year-old further validated his point saying the Aussies could not dominate Ajinkya Rahane during the 2021-22 series which India won.

"They couldn't get Ajinkya Rahane the last time and he won the series," he said.

O'Keefe, who played 24 Tests and two ODIs for Australia, said Australia had employed a similar strategy against captains of other visiting teams.

"But if you look at the captains they've brought down in recent times, Sharma, Tick, Shan Masood with Pakistan. It was three-nil. Kraigg Brathwaite, it was one-all, but they were on top of Kraigg.

"They went to New Zealand and brought down Tim Southee, winning two-nil," O'Keefe added.

### Short TAKES

#### Bumrah Likely To Miss Majority Of England Series

**P**ace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who sustained back spasms, is likely to be rested for the majority of India's home white-ball series against England, keeping an eye on the ICC Champions Trophy, starting from February 19.

Bumrah, who was India's stand out player with 32 wickets in their 1-3 thrashing at the hands of Australia in the just-concluded Border-Gavaskar Trophy, couldn't bowl in the final innings of the series here after suffering back spasms. The 30-year-old Bumrah who bowled more than 150 overs in the series.

The injury has a direct link to his excessive workload in the series, and the BCCI medical team will try to ensure the new Test captain is ready for the ICC showpiece where his presence is mandatory to India's fortunes. According to sources privy to the development, the grade of Bumrah's back spasm has not yet been ascertained. India will open their Champions Trophy campaign against Bangladesh on February 20 in Dubai.

If Bumrah's injury is in grade 1 category, then it will take a minimum two to three weeks of rehabilitation before Return to Play (RTP).

#### Defiant Shan Masood Narrows Pakistan's Deficit To 109

**P**akistan captain Shan Masood continued to defy South Africa as the tourists cut down the deficit to 109 runs on the fourth day of the second and final test on Monday. Masood progressed to a defiant 137 off 232 balls and led Pakistan to 312-3 at lunch with Saud Shaeel getting a lucky escape and staying unbeaten on 16.

South Africa enforced the follow-on after Pakistan collapsed to 194 on a dry wicket in reply to the home team's massive first innings score of 615.

Shaeel could have been out leg before wicket to Kwena Maphaka in the penultimate over before the break, but South Africa didn't go for a television review against Indian on-field umpire Nitin Menon's not out decision. TV replays clearly showed the ball would have hit the leg stump of the left-hander and earned South Africa its third wicket of the session.

But Masood stood firm and continued to lead Pakistan's strong fightback on Monday after sharing a record-breaking double century opening partnership with Babar Azam (81) that had anchored the tourists to 213-1 on Day 3.

#### Afghanistan Seal Historic Test Series Win In Zimbabwe

**A**fghanistan took only 15 balls to wrap up victory on the last day of the second Test against Zimbabwe at the Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo on Monday, winning by 72 runs to claim the two-match series 1-0.

Zimbabwe were dismissed for 205, failing to add to their overnight score but losing their last two wickets in only 13 minutes.

Richard Ngarava was run out in the second over of the day amid confusion with captain Craig Ervine, who went in the next over trapped leg before wicket by Rashid Khan, who finished with 7/66 in 27.3 overs.

It was Khan's leg spin on Sunday that saw Afghanistan move into a winning position after Zimbabwe initially looked victory-bound when they were 157/4, chasing a winning target of 278 runs. The first Test, also in Bulawayo, ended in a high scoring draw. Afghanistan have now won four of 11 Tests played since getting Test status in 2017 -- two of them against Zimbabwe.

### JKFA Officials Meet AIFF President In Srinagar

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Officials of J&K Football Association met with the President of the All India Football Federation, Kalyan Chaubey, on Monday and addressed several issues and chart a strategic course for the development of football in Jammu and Kashmir.

Among the issues highlighted by the JKFA officials, the elections of the main body of JKFA, welfare of footballers, coaches and



referees, sustained football activities, reconstruction and redesign of JKFA, implementation of the national sports code, constitutional alignment of JKFA with AIFF

were discussed. The meeting also discussed grassroots development in J&K, infrastructure development, tournaments and leagues and collaboration with AIFF.

### J&K Shootingball Team Participates In Junior Nationals

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The J&K junior boys' Shootingball team has made a strong impact at the 45th Junior National Shootingball Championship in Kolkata, West Bengal. Over the course of three matches, the team secured one victory over Tripura.

The team, mentored by EIDI Gulzar Ahmad (Team Coach), consists of talented players Natiq Amin, Umar



Abbas, Ahmad Abid, Mohammad Irham, Huzair Nisar, Musab Aashiq, Wahhaj Abduhoo, Ayan Bhat, Zaman Mudasar and Mir Mustafa. The player are all students of Oasis Educational Institute

Nowgam. Sheikh Dawar, Secretary of the J&K Shootingball Association, congratulated the players and the team coach for their commendable performance and successful participation.

### ICC, BCCI, CA, ECB Exploring Two-Tier Test System

Press Trust of India

**SYDNEY/NEW DELHI:** The ICC in collaboration with cricket boards of India, Australia and England is exploring the possibility of a two-tier Test system to facilitate more series between big three nations.

The Age reported that Jay Shah, the new ICC chairman, is set to meet Cricket Australia chair Mike Baird and his England counterpart Richard Thompson later this month to discuss the finer points. "Any plan for a move to two divisions in Test cricket would kick in after the end of the current Future Tours Program in 2027," the Age reported quoting its sources.

The BCCI is currently gearing up for its Special General Meeting on January 12 in Mumbai where interim secretary Devajit Saikia is expected to get a full-time role. Saikia was appointed in the interim role after Shah vacated his post last month to take over as ICC chairman. A BCCI official indicated that the discussion floated around the ICC corridors in 2016, the first-time when a two-tier Test system was seriously considered. "We don't have any news of any such move as yet. Currently, preparations are being made for SGM and the recent tour to Australia too needs to be discussed.



"There was such a move sometime back, but we haven't heard anything since," a BCCI source told PTI. The BCCI and cricket bodies of Zimbabwe and Bangladesh opposed the move, citing the possibility of decreasing revenue.

They had also argued that smaller nations would miss out on the opportunity of playing against top teams if such a system comes into existence. However, nine years down the road the modalities have changed and even some of the reputed experts such as former Indian skipper Ravi Shastri are supporting the division.

"I've been a firm believer in that if you want Test cricket to survive and be alive and thriving, I think that's the way to go. "The top teams play against each other more often, so there is a contest; you want contests," Shastri told SEN during the recent fifth Test between India and Australia.

28<sup>th</sup> year OF PUBLICATION

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