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**BOOK APPOINTMENT**

## National Drivers' Day

# Beyond The Wheel: The Unseen Struggles Of Kashmir's Drivers

Nida Sadiq & Tashir Khan

Srinagar: At 24, Salim Manzoor begins each day with a mix of determination and dread as he climbs into his e-rickshaw. A B.Com student by day and a driver by necessity, Salim uses the modest income to fund his education and support his family. Yet, despite his efforts, he feels the sting of societal judgment. "Being a driver is seen as a low-class job here," Salim said. "People pass countless hurtful

comments without understanding how much it affects us mentally. Ambulance drivers are respected as lifesavers, but we are labeled as drug addicts or alcoholics. Why this discrimination?"

Salim's story reflects the untold struggles and resilience of Kashmir's drivers who keep the region moving while fighting financial hardship, societal stigma, and government policies that often leave them behind. January 24, 2025, marks the



Pic: Suhail Khan

first-ever "National Drivers' Motor Transport Congress Day," initiated by the All-India (AIMTC). The day aimed to

**EVERY JOB DESERVES DIGNITY.**  
We work hard to survive and support our families. It's time society recognizes that"

honor the invaluable contributions of drivers who form the

backbone of India's economy. Across Kashmir, drivers from various sectors shared their experiences, frustrations, and hopes, painting a vivid picture of a profession that is as essential as it is overlooked.

From e-rickshaws creating employment opportunities for the youth to sumo and bus drivers facing dwindling incomes, their stories represent a microcosm of a society in transition.

Salim is part of a growing trend among | [More on P6](#)

## NDMA Issues Forest Fire Alert For J&K

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has issued a warning of a very high risk of forest fires in Jammu and Kashmir over the next seven days due to an extended dry spell in the region. The advisory, valid until 11 am on January 30, highlights an alarming rise in fire incidents, particularly in the Jammu region.

"Very High Forest Fire Risk is likely to occur over forest areas in J&K in the next seven days. In case of emergency, dial 112," the NDMA stated.

Jammu and Kashmir, a forest-rich region, has 20,230 square kilometers of forest, covering around 10% of its geographical area. Excluding Ladakh, where natural forests are minimal, the forest cover rises to 47%.

The forests in Kashmir mainly belong to the dry temperate category, with Deodar, Kail, and Fir trees flourishing at different altitudes. While these evergreen forests are generally less susceptible to fires due to their dense ground cover, extended dry conditions significantly increase the risk.

Officials noted that the region has recorded an 81% deficit in rainfall from January 1 to 22, receiving only 11.4 mm compared to the normal 60.5 mm for this period. This severe shortfall in precipitation has heightened the forests' vulnerability during the ongoing dry spell.

Authorities urge residents and forest personnel to remain vigilant and take necessary precautions to prevent and respond to potential fire outbreaks.

A senior | [More on P6](#)

## Pandemic-Like Fear Grips Rajouri

# Over 200 People Shifted To Quarantine Centres



Observer News Service

Rajouri: Over 200 individuals, who came in contact with the affected families of the 17 people who died due to the mysterious illness in Rajouri, have been quarantined as a precautionary measure, an official said on Thursday. Four people, including three sisters, have been shifted to hospitals, with three airlifted to a hospital in Jammu. Top health officials have

identified a common factor among all those who lost their lives in Badhaal village as involvement of the brain and damage to the nervous system.

National Conference (NC) leader and local MLA Javid Iqbal Choudhary on Thursday demanded the imposition of a medical emergency to save people and contain the spread of such a mysterious illness. Over 200 individuals who came into | [More on P6](#)

## MLA Blames 'Dual Power System' For Delays

MLA Budhal, Javed Iqbal Choudhary said systemic failures are a significant barrier to effective action, asserting that the "dual power system" in Jammu and Kashmir hampers timely decision-making and action. "There is no singular authority, and we need to have a direct line of communication between J&K and the Central government to address emergencies like this more efficiently," he claimed. "The Home Minister | [More on P6](#)

**KEEPING IN VIEW SERIOUSNESS,** the government should declare Medical emergency to save the population."

## Khelo India Winter Games 2025

# Sports Development In J&K, Ladakh Top Priority: PM

Press Trust Of India

Leh: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said his government's top priority is to develop sports across the country, especially in Jammu and Kashmir and the union territory of Ladakh.

In a message during the opening ceremony of the Khelo India Winter Games 2025 here, Modi reiterated the government's commitment to spread sporting activities across India and said how Ladakh and J&K have not only "elevated the culture of sports in our country, but also boosted tourism, showcasing the nation's beauty and



diversity." "Our government attaches top priority to sports development in Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir. Through 100 Khelo India Centres in Jammu & Kashmir and three in Ladakh, including a State

Centre of Excellence in Leh for athletics, archery, and boxing, our efforts are shaping the region into a hub of sporting excellence," said PM Modi. "KIWG 2025 will play a crucial role in taking our sporting

excellence to the next level." On an icy morning, the KIWG 2025 got off to a rousing start at the iconic NDS Stadium here on Thursday.

The first part of the KIWG 2025 is being hosted by the Union Territory of Ladakh till January 27.

The union territory of Jammu & Kashmir will host the games from February 22-25.

Meanwhile the flight from Delhi, which was carrying Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, who was to grace the KIWG 2025 opening in person, could not land at Leh's Kushok Bakula Rimpochee Airport due to bad weather. Several | [More on P6](#)

# JKSSB Initiates Inquiry Into Constable Recruitment Exam

Syed Mohammad Burhan

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir Service Selection Board (JKSSB) has initiated an inquiry into the recently released results for the Police Constable Recruitment examination after many aspirants allege discrepancies in the result.

JKSSB Chairperson Indu Kanwal Chib has announced the initiation of an inquiry into the recruitment results,



reassuring aspirants of a thorough and time-bound investigation. She emphasized that the committee | [More on P6](#)

## Ittija Demands HC Monitored Probe

The Peoples Democratic Party leader Ittija Mufti has demanded a High Court Monitored Probe in the Police Constable recruitment result.

"Appreciate a probe but we are well aware of how most enquiries never get to the bottom of punishing those who are responsible for corruption in these recruitment scams. A High Court monitored probe will be far more effective to ensure transparency & accountability. We owe this | [More on P6](#)

## Mass Comm Graduates Cry Foul

The mass communication graduates and post graduates have also raised eyebrows over the eligibility criteria for the post of photographer in the police | [More on P6](#)

# Our Identity Is Tied To Our Land: CM Omar



Observer News Service

Srinagar: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday asserted

the importance of a land and its people in forging their identity and exhorted them to never let it go. | [More on P6](#)

## Urges Early Completion Of Hydropower Projects

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Thursday chaired a review meeting of the Jammu & Kashmir State Power Development Corporation Limited (JKSPDC) here at Civil Secretariat | [More on P6](#)

## Er Rashid's Bail Plea Delhi HC Seeks NIA's Stand

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Thursday sought NIA's stand on Jammu and Kashmir MP Rashid Engineer's plea over his bail in a terror-funding case.

Justice Vikas Mahajan asked the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to file its response and posted the hearing on January 30.

Senior advocate N Hariharan while representing Engineer argued his bail plea was pending in the trial court for a considerable time and urged the high court to either direct its expeditious disposal or decide the matter itself.

"Issue notice. Let reply/status report be filed before the next date of hearing," the high court said.

On December 24 last year, additional sessions | [More on P6](#)

## Fire Service Recruitment Scam

# ACB Raids Retired KAS Officer's Residence

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) initiated its first raid in the fire services scam investigation, targeting the residence of Mohd Yaqoob Dar, a retired KAS officer, in Batengoo, in South Kashmir's Anantnag district.

Dar, son of the late Ab Wahab Dar, formerly served as Chairman (Technical) and Assistant Divisional Officer (ADO) in the Fire and Emergency Department.

An official said that the raid, led by DySP rank officer, was carried out in connection with FIR No. 01-2025 registered at the Police Station

Central Kashmir, reported Srinagar based news agency Kashmir Dot Com.

The case involves irregularities committed in the selection process of Fireman/Fireman Drivers in the Fire & Emergency Services (F&ES) Department.

The individuals which are under investigation of the ACB include members of Departmental Recruitment Board, including the Chairmen, Members of the Technical Committee, officers/officials of F&ES department, who remained associated with the recruitment process, M/S LMES IT LLP through its | [More on P6](#)

## 'Dara Harwan's Miracle Cures'

# GMC Letter On 'Quackery' Ignites Debate, Officials Remain Silent

Syed Mohammad Burhan

Srinagar: A letter allegedly written by the Professor and Head of the Department of Pediatrics at Government Medical College (GMC), Srinagar, has sparked a heated debate on social media. Addressed to the Principal/Dean of GMC Srinagar, the letter raises serious concerns about the prevalence of quackery in the region, particularly highlighting the dangers of seeking "miracle cures" in Dara Harwan. However, the document's authenticity remains unconfirmed, with officials refusing to comment

and passing the buck.

The letter, which has stirred considerable attention, bears the subject line, "Circulation of information & action against quackery thereof." Sources revealed that Dr. Parvez Ahmad, the Head of the Department of Pediatrics, is currently on leave. Dr. Sheikh Mushtaq Ahmad, who is temporarily heading the department, is said to have authored the communication.

The letter states, "With profound reverence and humble submission, it is to request your august self to protect public health and safety. We need to take some strong

measures against the practice of quackery. During the past few years, there have been several cases of Acute Liver Failure (ALF), who were previously discharged from this hospital. After leaving the hospital, they went to some place in Dara Harwan to get miracle cures, wherein they received some unproven medical treatments and complementary therapies, only to land in the ICU with ALF and subsequently die. Kindly take all possible necessary measures against such unqualified individuals to safeguard future generations." When | [More on P6](#)

## REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATIONS

# 3 Officers Suffer Heart Attacks



Observer News Service

Srinagar: Three officers on Thursday suffered heart attacks in the Kishtwar area, following which they were airlifted to government medical college Jammu.

An official said that assistant director fisheries, chief medical officer and naib tehsildar suffered heart attack during Republic day celebration preparations. He said that | [More on P6](#)



# Food, Medicine That Can Change Your Skin Colour - Sometimes Permanently

## The Conversation

When an 84-year-old man in Hong Kong went to hospital with an enlarged prostate, doctors were startled to see that his skin - and even the whites of his eyes - had turned silver-grey. A deeper investigation revealed silver deposits permeating his tissues, turning him a hue more often reserved for science fiction.

Far from a one-off oddity, in 2007 press reports described Paul Karason as a "blue man" after he attempted to cure sinus and skin problems by ingesting a homemade silver chloride solution - and there are many other examples.

These striking cases reveal a profound truth: our bodies can display the residue of what we consume. The adage "you are what you eat" usually refers to overall health and nutrition, but that phrase can be startlingly literal when our skin takes on unexpected colours.

The cases above illustrate dramatic instances of the condition known as argyria, in which silver particles accumulate in the body. Silver was once a mainstay in medical treatments for its antimicrobial properties. But modern evidence shows that consuming or absorbing too much can transform one's skin in ways that seldom fade. In argyria, silver ions circulate through the bloodstream and become embedded in the dermis, a layer beneath the surface where the body cannot easily clear them. This is the layer that tattoo pigments reside in.

A similar phenomenon, albeit rarer, is chrysiasis, in which gold deposits infiltrate the skin. Historically, gold-based therapies



were occasionally prescribed for inflammatory disorders, and in some cases, patients who received these treatments developed a distinctive slate-grey or grey-purple discoloration that, much like argyria, could not be easily undone.

Pigments from the plate Orange, yellow and red pigments exert the most influence over skin, and orange seems to reign supreme. This shade, often associated with carrots, sweet potatoes and pumpkins, comes from carotenoids, a class of pigments naturally found in plants. Carotenoid pigments are fat soluble. When consumed, they are absorbed in the small intestine and transported via lipoproteins in the bloodstream to be stored primarily in fat-rich tissues, including the subcutaneous layer of the skin. This storage gives the skin a characteristic golden hue, most notably when carotenoid-rich foods are consumed in high quantities.

Of the many carotenoids found in nature, beta-carotene is the star player: a strong orange tint and high "bioavailability" - the term used to describe drug absorption - make it particularly

influential. Humans metabolise (break down) carotenoids in a selective way. Enzymes in the intestines and liver turn beta-carotene into vitamin A, which is crucial for vision, a healthy immune system and healthy skin.

However, not all ingested beta-carotene undergoes this transformation. Excess amounts remain in their pigment form and are deposited in the skin, particularly in areas like the palms of the hands and soles of the feet, where the thicker layer of skin highlights the pigment's presence. The reason the skin turns orange lies in the chemical structure of carotenoids. Beta-carotene's molecular makeup absorbs light in the blue spectrum, reflecting orange light back to our eyes. Other carotenoids, such as lutein and zeaxanthin (found in leafy green vegetables), which lean toward yellow, are less conspicuous because they are either less abundant in the diet or not as prominently stored in the skin.

Research has shown that a carotenoid-rich diet, which can enhance a healthy golden glow, is often perceived as more attractive than sun-induced tan-

ning. But moderation is key. The 90s juice brand Sunny Delight never really recovered from the controversy of orange-stained Sunny D kids.

Naturally occurring dietary pigments such as anthocyanins, betalains and chlorophyll offer many health benefits, but rarely leave a mark.

Anthocyanins, found in berries, red cabbage and purple carrots, provide the deep reds, purples and blues we associate with these foods. Known for their antioxidant properties, they are water-soluble, meaning they are quickly metabolised and therefore unlikely to leave a mark on the skin.

Similarly, betalains, the pigments responsible for rich reds and yellows, offer detoxifying and anti-inflammatory benefits but are excreted by the body without a visible effect on skin tone. Excess ingestion may, however, cause urinary and faecal colour change.

These colourful tales carry more than an aesthetic message. They highlight the fine balance required in our relationship with the substances we ingest. From wholesome pigments to unintended consequences, they serve as a vivid reminder that while food may be medicine and may be transformative, we are, quite literally, what we eat. Sunlight compounds the effect by triggering a process called photoreduction, which turns silver ions into metallic silver or related compounds. As a result, affected lighter skins adopt a bluish or greyish tinge. And in brown and black skin, the discoloration may appear as a darker grey or slate-blue hue, effectively creating an inadvertent tattoo.

# Global Survey Finds Public Trust In Science Second Highest In India



Press Trust Of India

Public trust in science is the second highest in India, following Egypt, with a moderately high level overall worldwide, according to a survey spanning 68 countries, including under-researched ones in the Global South.

Australia ranked fifth and Bangladesh sixth, while New Zealand ranked ninth and the US twelfth for public trust in scientists.

The analysis, published in the journal Nature Human Behaviour, found no evidence for the oft-repeated claim of a crisis of trust in science, researchers said.

"Our results show that most people in most countries have a relatively high level of trust in scientists and want them to play an active role in society and politics," lead researcher Viktoria Cologna, from ETH Zurich, Switzerland, said. The survey, the first in a post-pandemic world, included nearly 72,000 people.

The majority of the participants also perceived scientists as qualified (78 per cent), honest (57 per cent) and concerned about people's well-being (56 per cent), the authors found.

However, significant differences between countries were noticed -- in particular, people with right-wing political views in Western countries tend to have less trust in scientists than those with left-wing views.

Further, 83 per cent of the survey respondents believed that scientists

should communicate with the public about science, and 52 per cent that scientists should be more involved in the policy-making process, the researchers found.

The participants also gave high priority to research related to improving public health, solving energy problems, and reducing poverty.

While research related to developing defence and military technology was given a lower priority overall, people in African and Asian countries often demand high priority for developing defence and military technology, the authors said.

"Our results also show that many people in many countries feel that the priorities of science are not always well aligned with their own priorities. We recommend that scientists take these results seriously and find ways to be more receptive to feedback and open to dialogue with the public," co-author Niels G. Mede, from the University of Zurich, said.

"Our 68-country survey challenges the idea that there is a widespread lack of public trust in scientists. In most countries, scientists and scientific methods are trusted," the authors wrote.

The study provides global, representative survey data on the populations and regions in which researchers are perceived to be most trustworthy, the extent to which they should engage with the public, and whether science is prioritising important research issues, the team said.

**OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR PATTAN.**  
Sub.. issuance of registration order in respect of delayed birth.  
**Public Notice**  
The registrar birth EO Pattan submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Ayan Yousuf Yattoo s/o Mohammad Yousuf Yattoo R/o Daraie Sangrama Sopore Distt Baramulla with verified date of birth 11/06/2015 occurred at SDH pattan.in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 03 days after that no objection shall be entertained.  
SD  
fko Naib Tehsildar Pattan

**OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR PATTAN.**  
Sub.. issuance of registration order in respect of delayed birth.  
**Public Notice.**  
The registrar birth EO Pattan submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Zidane Shams Najar s/o Shams ul zuha Najar R/o Andergam Tehsil Pattan distt Baramulla with verified date of birth 29/10/2021 occurred at SDH pattan.in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 03 days after that no objection shall be entertained.  
SD  
fko Naib Tehsildar Pattan

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
I have applied for the issuance of Fertilizers and Pesticides License for my business unit under name and style DAR MUSAIB PESTICIDES AND FERTILIZERS CHUKAR situated at chukar kunzer. If anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the plant protection officer Lalmandi Srinagar within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.  
JAVID AHMAD DAR  
S/O: Gh Ahmad Dar  
R/o: Chukar Kunzer District: Baramulla  
FKO

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
We have applied for the registration of Society under name and style "Ashai Cultural Society" . If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Director Industries Commerce Kashmir within 21 days. After that no objection shall be entertained.  
**Members of the committee are :-**  
Mushtaq Ahmad (President)  
Ghulam Mohammad (Vice President)  
Riyaz Ahmad (Secretary)  
Rahil (Joint Secretery)  
Fatima Sofi (Treasurer)  
Bashir Tabasum Mir (Member)  
Hilal Ahmad Sheikh (Member)  
inf

**OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR PATTAN**  
Sub.. issuance of registration order in respect of delayed birth.  
**Public Notice**  
The registrar EO Pattan submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Eshaal Waseem s/o Waseem Ahmad Bhat R/o Palhallan Tehsil Pattan distt Baramulla with verified date of birth 02/11/2022 occurred at SDH pattan.in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 03 days after that no objection shall be entertained.  
SD  
fko Naib Tehsildar Pattan

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
I have lost the Death Certificate of my Husband, Ghulam Rasool Dar. Now I have applied for the duplicate of the same. Anybody having objection, if any, may file same in the office of the SMC, Srinagar within seven days from the date of issue of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.  
Mumtaza Bano  
Wd/o Late Ghulam Rasool Dar  
R/o Hyderia Colony, Sector 10 Khomeini Chowk, Bemina Srinagar

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER KPDCI DIVISION BANDIPORA**  
email:- xnedbandipora@gmail.com  
Dated: 22-01-2025  
NIT No.-EDBpr/ 41 of 2024-25  
For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, Jammu and Kashmir State, e-Tenders (In Two Cover System) is hereby invited from registered A class Electric Contractors, registered with J&K State Government, Central Public Works Department, Railways and other state or central governments or any other relevant Government agency enlisted with CPWD, MES, Railway, DGBRO of appropriate class, for Augmentation of 100KVA to 200 KVA Transformer Malik Mohalla Kralpora per terms, conditions, technical specifications, Drawings and schedules forming part of this tender document.

A	Downloading of Standard Bidding Document	23th of January 2025 9:00 AM
B	Clarifications start date	23th of January 2024 9:00 AM
C	Clarifications end date	25th of January 2024 9:00 AM
D	e-Bid submission (start) date & time	23th of January 2025 9:00 AM
E	e-Bid submission (end) date & time	5th of February 2025 9:00 AM
F	Online Technical e-Bid opening date & Time	5th of February 2025 1:00 PM
G	Cost of e-Bid document	Rs. 200
H	Amount of Earnest Money Deposit	2% of the Estimated Cost
I	Estimated amount	INR 4.0 Lacs

- The Successful bidder need to submit the proof/cost of e-Bid document as stated in the above table through Demand Draft and CDR (Preferably State Bank of India/J&K Bank) pledged to Executive Engineer KPDCI Division Bandipora, payable at Bandipora before opening the financial bid.
- All the e-Bids must be accompanied by the scanned copy of EMD in the form of CDR/FDR/Bank Guarantee only, pledged to the Executive Engineer KPDCI Division Bandipora. No Interest would be payable on Earnest Money deposited with the Department.
- An ink signed and stamped hard copy of the complete SBD document including Technical Specifications, Drawing and Schedules is required to be submitted along with Bid documents to the office of Executive Engineer KPDCI Division Bandipora by Registered post/Courier/By Hand only from the bidder who is declared L1 after opening of financial bids.
- The date and time of opening of Financial-Bids shall be notified on Web Site <http://jktenders.gov.in>.
- The Department reserves the right to cancel any or all the e-Bids/ the e-Bid process without assigning any reason thereof. The decision of the department will be final and binding.
- The BOQ quantity of E-nit is final, any excess quantity or item required will be allowed only as per site requirement and recommended by engineer in charge after prior approval from the competent authority.
- The work is a full turnkey job and the key material has to be procured only from the vendors empaneled with or approved by JKPCD/KPDCI. The material shall be inspected by a PMA.
- The work is of urgent nature and has to be completed within 10 days.
- 5% to 10% of the payments made will be kept as deposits till the defect liability period is over.

Executive Engineer  
Electric Division (KPDCI)  
Bandipora

No: EDBpr /8478-81  
DIPK-NB-3275/24  
Date: 23-01-2025

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
The name of my son has been wrongly written on his adhaar card as Mozin Mushtaq while his correct name is Mozin Mushtaq Bhat which needs to be corrected . If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the concerned office within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.  
Mushtaq Ahmad Bhat  
F/o Mozin Mushtaq Bhat  
R/o Rasraypora Tehsil Pattan  
fko

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
The name of my son has been wrongly written on his adhaar card as Mir Aasim Ali while his correct name is Aasim Ali Mir which needs to be corrected . If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the concerned office within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.  
Ghulam Mustafa Mir  
F/o Aasim Ali Mir  
R/o Authoora Tehsil Kreeri  
fko

**اطلاع عام**  
بشیر احمد ولد محمد رمضان بٹ ساکنہ موضع بانڈی پائین تحصیل داگورہ ضلع بارہمولہ کی فرزندہ، رامل بشیر بٹ کا تاریخ پیدائش 11/09/2016 ہے۔ اب اس سے اپنے فرزند کی تاریخ پیدائش سرٹیفکیٹ نکالنی مطلوب ہے اس سلسلے میں اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ سات دن کے اندر اندر تحصیل آفس داگورہ/BDO آفس داگورہ میں پیش کرے۔ معاذ گرنے کے بعد کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔  
FKO

**OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR SERIWARPORA.**  
Sub.. issuance of registration order in respect of delayed birth.  
**Public Notice**  
The registrar birth BDO pattan submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Khan Amaan -UL - Haq S/o Bilal Ahmad Khan R/o Guiwa tehsil pattan Distt Baramulla with verified date of birth 11/04/2020 occurred at home. In this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 07 days after that no objection shall be entertained.  
SD  
fko Naib Tehsildar Pattan

## Mental Health Awareness Workshop Held At JKPC

Syed Mohammad Burhan

Srinagar: Mental Health Awareness and Anger Management Workshop was held on Thursday at the Jammu and Kashmir Projects Construction Corporation (JKPCC), Sher Gari, Srinagar. The session, which ran from 11:10 AM to 2:15 PM, was organized by Kashmiri American Society for Healthcare, Medical Education and Research (KASHMER) in collaboration with Help Poor Voluntary Trust (HPVT) to promote mental well-being and emotional resilience among the JKPC staff.

Consultant Clinical Psychologist Dr. Muhammed Muzaffar Khan presented a brief awareness about mental health disorders, their identification and importance.

Counseling Psychologist, Aimen led the work-

shop on anger management, focussing on to differentiate between anger and aggression and the effective techniques for regulating and managing the same in day to day lives.

General Manager, JK-PCC Farooq Ahmed Bhat, while having active participation in the workshop, welcomed the initiative of focussing on mental health illnesses in the working population of society.

A dedicated Q&A session was also conducted, where staff members of JK-PCC engaged in open discussions, seeking guidance on mental health and anger management concerns.

This interactive and informative workshop highlighted the importance of mental health awareness and emotional self-regulation, fostering a healthier and more supportive workplace environment.

## Traffic Police, HC Lawyers Unite For Road Safety

Agencies

Srinagar: In a bid to enhance road safety awareness, the Traffic Police Srinagar and a group of High Court Lawyers Thursday held a joint traffic awareness march in Srinagar.

The march started from the Srinagar High Court premises and later culminated at Moulana Azad (MA) Road Srinagar.

According to details, the initiative aims to make the public aware about the importance of adhering to traffic rules and regulations.

Officials from Traffic department Srinagar, present during the march, noted the need to curb traf-

fic violations and asked for public support and curbing violations.

"We believe that by working together with the community, we can significantly improve road safety," said a senior official from the Traffic department.

He said this march is also important and hopes it will encourage citizens to be more responsible.

Meanwhile, local residents also expressed their comments for joint effort, saying this is commendable initiative. "We often witness reckless driving and disregard for traffic rules. Such awareness campaigns are crucial to instill a sense of responsibility among road users," said Wahid, a local. (KNO)

## Court Halts Suspension Of Two Hospitals, Orders Fresh Inquiry

Agencies

Srinagar: The Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh High Court has stayed the suspension of Shifa Medical Centre and Florence Hospital under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY).

The suspensions, issued by the State Health Agency (SHA) on January 11, 2025, were challenged on grounds of procedural lapses and denial of natural justice.

Justice Muhammad Yousuf Wani as per the news agency Kashmir News Trust ordered the suspen-

sion to be kept in abeyance until the next hearing on February 7, 2025.

The court directed the SHA to conduct a fresh inquiry, providing the hospitals with two weeks to respond to the show-cause notices dated December 18, 2024.

The hospitals had been accused of coercing patients into paying extra charges and violating scheme guidelines. While the SHA defended its actions citing complaints and inspections, the court highlighted procedural irregularities and emphasized the need for fairness in disciplinary actions. [KNT]

## Body Of Newborn Found Near Graveyard

Agencies

Srinagar: The body of a newborn was discovered near a graveyard adjacent to Islamia College in Srinagar on Thursday, officials said.

Authorities swiftly moved the newborn's body to

SMHS Hospital for medico-legal formalities as part of an investigation into the incident.

Hospital sources said that the body of the baby will be taken to Children's Hospital Srinagar. Police have meanwhile taken cognizance of the incident and registered a case in this regard. [KNT]



A QR code-based GIS plate being placed on a majestic Chinar tree in Nishat Garden. KO Photo Abid Bhat

## DC Finalizes Arrangements For Meraj-Un-Nabi (PBUH)

Observer News Service

Srinagar: In connection with observance of upcoming Meraj-un-Nabi (PBUH) 1446 Hijri, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Thursday Bhat chaired a meeting here at Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex to review the arrangements being made by all line Departments for smooth conduct of the auspicious religious occasion.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioners, RTO, Kashmir, Superintendents of Police, Traffic, Security, Joint Commissioner SMC, Superintending Engineer R&B, PDD, SDM East, Chief Medical Officer, besides senior Officers of Information, Fire & Emergency, PHE, JKRTC, and other line Departments, besides Executive Magistrate of J&K Wakf Board and Management members of Hazratbal Shrine and Jenab Sahib Saura.

At the outset, the Deputy Commissioner sought a detailed action plan from concerned Departments regarding the arrangements being put in place during

auspicious days of Meraj-un-Nabi (PBUH) with regard to electricity, water supply, sanitation, cleanliness, fire service, transport, parking and medical facilities etc.

The DC directed the Officers of all line Departments to ensure special arrangements for smooth observance of the religious occasion at the Shrine for the Devotees particularly during the intervening night (Shab) 26-27th Rajab 1446 Hijri, which falls on intervening night of 27-28 January 2025 and on Friday Following that falls on January 31, 2025.

To ensure adequate availability of transport facility, the RTO was asked to make better transport arrangements particularly during night and wee hours for the devotees during the auspicious days of Meraj-un-Nabi (PBUH) and make availability of e-Rickshaws from parking slots to Shrine for old age and physically challenged people.

With regard to power supply, the DC asked the PDD Engineers to ensure uninterrupted power supply at the Shrine during the auspicious days of night prayers as well

as on the day of display of Holy Relic and keep proper power backup to tackle any power breakdown.

In this regard the DC was informed that in addition 400 KVA Genset and 20 KVA UPS has been kept as backup to provide power supply during any failure so that devotees do not face any difficulty.

Similarly, the DC directed the PHE authorities to ensure adequate water supply at the Shrine so that devotees do not face any inconvenience. He instructed them to keep a sufficient number of water tankers at the premises to cater to the demand.

Likewise, the DC asked the SMC Officers to deploy sufficient men and machinery at the venue to ensure proper cleanliness in and around the Shrine. They were also asked to take measures for establishment of mobile toilets besides a concrete mechanism to contain stray dog menace in and around the Shrine.

The DC also laid stress on making all dysfunctional Street/Mass lights functional well before the commencement of the Holy religious occasion.

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**HIGHWAY STATUS**

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

### HIJRI CALENDAR

23 Rajab 1446

PRAYERS	
FAJR	6: 07
ZUHR	12:42
ASR	4: 15
Magrib	5:56
ISHA	7: 20

### This Day In History

- 1644 - Parliamentary army wins battle of Nantwich, Cheshire, English Civil War
- 1722 - Tsar Peter the Great begins civil system
- 1892- Battle of Mengo, Uganda: French missionaries attack British missionaries
- 1900 - Battle of Tugela-Spionkop, South Africa (Boers vs British army)
- 1901 - Denmark and the US sign a treaty under which Denmark will sell the Danish West Indies to the USA for \$5 million, but the sale will be postponed until 1917
- 1924 - Benito Mussolini disallows non-fascists work union
- 1969 - Students protest the erection of steel gates around the London School of Economics
- 1972 - Japanese Sgt. Shoichi Yokoi is found hiding in a Guam jungle, where he had been since the end of World War II.
- 1975 Fastest Earth-bound object, 7200 kph, in vacuum centrifuge, England.
- 1977 Massacre of Atocha in Madrid: five labor lawyers murdered by fascists in Madrid during the Spanish transition to democracy.
- 1979 - US performs nuclear test at Nevada Test Site

### From KO Archives

## Cease-Fire Extended By Another Month

Observer News Service

**N**EW DELHI - Despite reservations from within, government today extended the cease-fire in Jammu and Kashmir by a month beyond republic day to give peace every chance and asked Pakistan to curb and control militant activities of organisations like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad.

"The present ceasefire is being extended (for restoring peace in the state) by another month," External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh told reporters outside Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's 7 Race Course Road residence.

The Cabinet Committee on Security headed by the prime minister discussed the situation in Jammu & Kashmir for three hours before deciding to extend the truce.

"Yes, the CCS felt that despite the continuing violence unleashed by the militant groups, especially by Jaish-e-Muhammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba, the government must extend the ceasefire by another month," Singh said.

But the government is still debating the issue of clearing the proposed travel plans of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference delegation which wants to go to Pakistan for talks with militant commanders based there.

Government believes violence must be ended and peace, which has been welcomed by the people of Jammu and Kashmir, given every chance.

The CCS took the decision of cease-fire extension notwithstanding views of sections within the government opposing extension. The entire security scenario in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly acts of cross-border terrorism and militant acts against civilians, was reviewed at the CCS meeting.

The CCS meeting was attended by home minister L.K.Advani, Jaswant Singh, defence minister George Fernandes, finance minister Yashwant Sinha, deputy chairman of planning commission K.C.Pant, national security advisor Brajesh Mishra, army chief Gen. S.Padmanabhan besides other top officials.

Singh said Vajpayee's peace initiative on Ramadan eve was taken despite heinous acts of terrorism and violence against innocent people. Asked about the possibility of Indo-Pak talks on the Kashmir issue, he said India has always been in favour of a dialogue and will remain so.

A congenial atmosphere has to be created and the onus for that ties on Pakistan. Dialogue on one hand and gun-talk on the other does not work, he said.

The ground situation in Jammu and Kashmir as well as on the border and the Line of Control (LOC) was reviewed in its entirety, Singh said, adding that chief minister Farooq Abdullah was informed and consulted in the matter.

Singh said the views of major political parties was also taken into consideration while taking the decision.

On Islamabad's stand that it was unable to control militant organisations, including Lashkar-e-Taiba, which were carrying out violent activities, highly-placed sources today said we do not buy Pakistan's argument that they have no control over these groups: They are controlled and directed by Pakistan.

They said the main aim of Vajpayee government's announcement of extending the cease-fire by a month beyond January 26 was to meet people's desire for peace in Jammu and Kashmir. Tell the international community that India sincerely wanted to end violence and also address Pakistan for a positive response.

We have been able to convince the people in the state that we sincerely want to give a chance to peace, they said adding that the international community has appreciated New Delhi's gesture across the board.

(KASHMIR OBSERVER, 24 JANUARY, 2001)

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**

**E-TENDER NOTICE**

Sr.DEN4/FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites open tenders (E-Tenders) against below titled tenders and available on www.ireps.gov.in with closing date.10/02/2025 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 or prescribed format as available in document section on the portal.

Tender Type	Tendering Section	Bidding System
Open	Works	Single Bid System
Date of Uploading Tenders	Bid Starting Date	Bid Closing Date/Time
16/01/2025	27/01/2025	10/02/2025 /15:00 Hrs

S.No.	Tender No.	Details of Tender			
1.	293-2024-25-ADEN-JRC	Sewer crossing of 2400mm dia through R.C.C Box of size 4mtr x 4mtr at KM 10/17-19 on JUC-PTK section.	Advertised Value (Rs.)	Earnest Money	Validity of offer
			47225747.99/-	3,86,100,00/-	60 Days
					06 Months

Similar nature of work: "RCC Bridge/ Limited Height Subway work".

Note : 1. Before bidding, bidders to check for any corrigendum issued against tender. Tender Notice No:-293-2024-25-ADEN-JRC Date: 20.01.2025

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# Decoding the Reservation Conundrum

Dr. Mushtaq Rather

Large-scale public discussions are currently being witnessed in public forums on the most contentious issue of reservation in J&K. There is no denying the reality that extending the contours of reservation to the justified sections of society has visibly raised their living standards. However, the deep-rooted discrimination and alienation the unreserved category youth are currently experiencing have compelled them to vent their resentment against the disproportionate quota for reserved category candidates in government jobs and in admissions to premier institutions.

The issue of reservation is compounded even more in a place like Jammu and Kashmir, where people majorly rely on government jobs as the private sector is still in its nascent stage, besides being highly unorganized. The youth, therefore, have pinned their hopes on the government sector. The issue, and a justified one, is the limited carrying capacity of the government sector to accommodate the selected few who emerge victorious from cut-throat competition in a highly level playing field. This is even aggravating the core issue of unemployment as the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is leading the chart with one of the highest unemployment rates in the country.

### Controversial Incorporations in Reservation Rules 2005

The Parliament, in February 2024, approved reservations for the Pahari ethnic tribe, Padari tribe, Kolis, and Gadda Brahmins during the budget session. Later, the UT administration of Jammu and Kashmir, in March 2024, approved the proposal of the Social Welfare Department to amend the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Rules, 2005, in light of:

1. The Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Act, 2023, dated 15.12.2023.
2. The Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Castes Order (Amendment) Act, 2024.
3. The Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Act, 2024.
4. Recommendations of the Jammu and Kashmir Socially and Educationally Backward Commission.

Four new tribes—the Pahari ethnic group, Padari tribe, Kolis, and Gadda Brahmins—were included in the Scheduled Tribes, and a separate 10% reservation was allocated for these newly included tribes, taking the total reservations under the Scheduled Tribe (ST) umbrella to 20%. Besides, 15 new castes in OBCs were incorporated, with an increased proportion in reservation up to 8%, as recommended by the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC).

Earlier, Jammu and Kashmir had 8% reservation for SCs, 10% for STs, 4% for OBCs, 4% for residents along the Line of Actual Control/ international border, 10% for Residents of Backward Areas (RBA), and 10% for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS). These amendments in the reservation policy did not go well among youth and civil society alike. Calls for a review and reversal of the policy, especially among youth, are being sounded across the valley.

Before the addition of Paharis to the list of Scheduled Tribes, the Gujjar-Bakerwal tribal community cornered the biggest share of the 10% reservation in government jobs and educational institutions for tribes. The prospect of sharing this with the Paharis, who are the most educated and affluent group, had led to much resentment among the Gujjar-Bakerwals. The Union Territory administration, however, found a way out. It added 10% to the existing quota for the Scheduled Tribes, to be shared by the Paharis and three newly added groups—leaving the Gujjar-Bakerwal's share of 10% untouched.

In this win-win situation, however, many others, especially the unreserved aspirants, firmly believe they are losing out. The recent broadening of the reservation umbrella has



Feature image caption: A medical student at a protest demanding the rationalisation of reservation in Jammu and Kashmir on December 23, 2024. | Photo Credit: PTI

now taken the percentage of reserved categories in jobs and professional educational institutions in the Union Territory from 50% to 60%. The pool open for the general category has been reduced to 40%, which has statistically shrunk to 30%, as the 40% seats for the unreserved category include 10% horizontal reservation (6% for ex-servicemen and 4% for physically handicapped persons, which are to be absorbed from the unreserved quota).

### Realistic Issues Emerging out of Reservation Policy

The increased proportion in reserved categories is violating the provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act, 2004, which categorically underlines that the percentage of reservation shall in no case exceed 50%. This provision has drawn its essence from a 1992 nine-bench judgment of the Honorable Supreme Court, which, in its verdict, accepted a 50% cap on caste-based reservations. But over the years, this ceiling has been continuously eroded by various states and UTs across the country.

Providing reservation to socio-economically disadvantaged strata of society is integral to addressing the uneven developmental pattern of the country so that the marginalized sections of society are in a position to break the vicious cycle of poverty, educate their children, and stand shoulder-to-shoulder with other citizens to cherish the actualization of the nation as a developed nation with a deep essence of admiration towards inclusivity. A nation where everyone feels included and meaningfully contributes to the nation-building process.

With this aim, our forefathers of the constitution incorporated the provisions of reservation into our constitution for the upliftment and betterment of the marginalized sections of

society. We need to take a pause and ponder: have the seeds of reservation truly reached the people who were really deserving? Who actually benefited? If the marginalized sections of society have harvested the fruits of reservation, are there visible indicators showing that they truly have prospered? Are they at par with the people from the upper strata of society in terms of living standards, dignity, employment, and education?

When the provisions of reservation were incorporated into the constitution, they were purely added as a temporary measure until developmental uniformity was realized and those living in abject poverty attained a degree of economic prosperity. It has been 77 years since independence, and the temporary provision of reservation has attained a degree of permanency and has become an inevitable tool in the political landscape, shaping regional and national political dimensions.

### Way Forward

The implementation of a just reservation model must revolve around the following core principles:

- The main criterion for reservation must be the economic status of the family, irrespective of tribe, caste, region, etc. When the reservation policy revolves around economic status, people residing in mountainous regions or semi-urban or urban pockets, living in abject poverty, will get their due share. This will truly render the policy as a non-discriminatory one.
- The central as well as State/UT governments have specific reservation rules for persons serving in the defense forces (Ex-servicemen: Army/ Navy/Air Force) for their adjustment in civil departments. These rules make it clear that ex-servicemen can avail of the benefit of reservation only once. Once an ex-serviceman is adjusted in any central or state civil department on a reservation basis, their opportunity to apply for future recruitment exhausts at that moment. They can no longer apply as ex-servicemen but must apply as unreserved candidates.
- The same model can be replicated for other types of reservations in our UT as well. If one member of the family is adjusted based on the reservation quota, they should not be allowed to use the reservation quota for any subsequent recruitment. The benefit of reservation should be one-time only.
- There must be a provision to provide reservation to only one single member of the family. This will infuse a degree of uniformity in the reservation policy.

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

“When the provisions of reservation were incorporated into the constitution, they were purely added as a temporary measure until developmental uniformity was realized and those living in abject poverty attained a degree of economic prosperity. It has been 77 years since independence, and the temporary provision of reservation has attained a degree of permanency and has become an inevitable tool in the political landscape, shaping regional and national political dimensions

### KO VIEW

## Listen To People On Mega Projects

The proposed acquisition of 4,834 kanals of fertile horticultural land in Pulwama for a National Institute of Technology (NIT) campus is being resisted by local people. For them, this land, where almonds are cultivated, is a major contributor to their agricultural economy. Residents, who have cultivated the land for generations, argue that the project's scale far exceeds necessity. Their plea is simple: build, but not at the expense of their livelihoods.

Similarly, the ambitious Ring Road project encircling Srinagar, with its proposal for 30 satellite colonies, has sparked widespread unease. Critics, including former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti, have pointed out that such ventures violate land-use policies and threaten prime agricultural terrain. The Kashmir Valley, already grappling with limited arable land, cannot afford to lose its fertile heartland to urban sprawl disguised as progress.

Another contentious initiative is the Bijbehara-Pahalgam railway line, cutting through apple orchards that sustain thousands of families. With apple farming employing over 3.5 million people and contributing 10 percent to the Valley's GDP, this isn't just about land but the very backbone of Kashmir's rural economy. So for people, this isn't an abstract policy debate, it's about survival.

The government insists these projects will bring economic upliftment, better connectivity, and educational opportunities. While that may be true, the question remains: at what cost? Development that affects the livelihood of the very people it claims to benefit is not development, it is disruption.

There is no denying the need for infrastructure. Education, connectivity, and housing are essential for progress. However, projects must be undertaken with a nuanced approach. This means minimizing land acquisition, exploring alternative locations, and engaging with local communities to ensure their voices are heard.

Already, the past decade has witnessed a worrisome trend in the Valley's farm sector: While the rice yield per hectare of paddy land is increasing, the paddy land itself has been diminishing at an alarming rate. According to official figures, over the past seven years, Kashmir has lost 6,000 hectares of paddy land, reducing the total land under paddy cultivation from 1,35,000 hectares to 1,29,000 hectares. One reason for this is the indiscriminate construction on the paddy land right across the Valley that successive governments have failed to stop.

So, as the government pushes forward on the mega projects, it must take on board not just the grievances of the people but also their wider environmental implications. In a place as fragile as Kashmir, reckless development risks doing more harm than good.



Did You Know?

## A Beginner's Guide: Fresh Investors Should Start with Mutual Funds

Irshad Mushtaq

For those new to the world of investing, entering the stock market can be overwhelming. It's essential to approach it with the right strategies, especially if you're a fresh investor. Here's a straightforward guide to help you navigate your investment journey. As a beginner, it's important to understand that investing directly in individual stocks can be a complex endeavor. To successfully invest in shares, one needs a solid grasp of various factors, including balance sheets, profit and loss statements, company management, industry trends, and overall business insights. This knowledge requires time, effort, and experience, which most fresh investors may lack. Instead of jumping into direct stock purchases, it's advisable to consider investing in large-cap companies—established firms known for their stability. However, it's crucial to exercise patience and ensure proper diversification in your investment portfolio. This will help protect your investments by spreading risk across different sectors and companies. For new investors, entering the stock market via mutual funds is typically a more suitable option. Mutual funds are essentially pools of investments, allowing you to invest in a diversified portfolio of equities without having to pick individual stocks. When you invest in a mutual fund, you're essentially buying a "basket" of shares managed by professional fund managers. This means that experts are handling the complexities of investment decisions for you, ensuring that your money is allocated wisely. Registered under the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), asset management companies (AMCs) are responsible for these mutual funds, providing a regulated and secure investment avenue. By purchasing mutual fund units, you gain access to a diverse array of stocks, which helps mitigate risk. For those just starting, a Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) in mutual funds is an excellent way to invest regularly without overwhelming yourself. By contributing a fixed amount regularly—say, 40-50% of your savings into a mutual fund—you can gradually build wealth over time. The earlier you start this practice, the greater the potential benefits. In summary, fresh investors should invest wisely and sensibly, keeping in mind that the stock market is subject to volatility, which is completely normal. Approach your investments with patience, and focus on building your investment knowledge as you go. Remember, starting early in mutual funds can set the foundation for a successful investment journey. Make informed decisions, and let your money work for you!

Learn from the insights of Irshad Mushtaq, Writer, Investor, Entrepreneur & Founder of M I Securities! Connect for valuable financial advice at [miscurities@bp.sharekhan.com](mailto:miscurities@bp.sharekhan.com) Disclaimer: This article is for information only and doesn't offer investment advice. It's not an endorsement or an offer to buy or sell any financial products. If you decide to act on the information here, you do so at your own risk.



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## Confidence And Willpower

Confidence and willpower are the keys to personal improvement and accomplishment. A person needs confidence and willpower to succeed in any sphere of life. Confidence means belief in yourself and determination in support. Willpower is the strong desire to achieve one's goals through any adversity. Neither of these qualities are innate, but can be developed with hard work and consistent practice.

To build self-confidence, you first need to recognize your abilities and limitations. Only when you understand yourself well will you develop confidence in your abilities. Building confidence in your strengths and interests can help you move forward with confidence in any situation.

It is best to set small goals at the beginning to build confidence. When you accomplish these small goals, the feeling of accomplishment bolsters your confidence. This approach helps to move towards a bigger goal.

One of the most important ways to build self-confidence is to learn from failure. Failure is not a big deal. Failure happens at some point. Learn new lessons from failure. Not being afraid of mistakes, correcting them and moving forward increases self-confidence many times over.

Thorough preparation and investment of time in any task boosts confidence. When you are well prepared for any task, the results lead to success and this boosts your confidence.

Helping and encouraging others

increases your self-confidence. When you play a distinct role in the lives of others, your confidence grows.

The first step in building willpower is setting goals. When you know where you want to go, you will develop the will to move in that direction. When the goal is not clear, the willpower is weakened.

Continuity is very important for building willpower. Like making a habit of doing anything regularly. The practice of moving forward little by little every day strengthens one's willpower and increases the scope of work.

Morals should be developed to increase willpower. When you face difficult situations, you can change them by developing morale.

An important part of increas-

ing willpower is self-control and patience. Willpower is strengthened by exercising self-control and persevering in the right direction even when circumstances are not favorable.

Good physical and mental health is a factor in increasing willpower. Proper diet, adequate sleep, and physical exercise also strengthen the willpower.

Self-confidence and willpower are two very important assets in a person's life. Developing both of these qualities requires patience, perseverance, and regular practice. When you set goals with confidence and move consistently towards them with willpower, you will surely succeed.

Satyabrat Bora

# Before Handcuffs, Hear Their Cries

## A New Policing Perspective

Umair Ashraf

Kashmir is currently being overshadowed by a mental health crisis of alarming proportions. The rising rates of suicides, substance abuse, unemployment, and associated societal issues reflect a silent epidemic, gnawing at the very foundation of its youth. This crisis demands urgent intervention from every stakeholder, particularly the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Police and the administration, who must collaborate with mental health professionals to tackle this growing concern effectively. The problem is not merely one of law enforcement but of deep-seated mental health issues that need an empathetic and structured approach.

### A Surge in Suicides: A Grim Reality

Kashmir has witnessed an exponential increase in suicides over the past two decades, and the numbers paint a grim picture. Between 1999 and 2019, the suicide rate rose significantly, according to recent reports. As per the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)'s report, published in December 2023, Jammu and Kashmir had the

highest number of reported cases of attempted suicide in 2022. Of the 1,769 cases recorded by the Bureau across India in 2022, 497 were reported from the UT alone. These are merely the reported cases; countless others go unreported due to societal stigma, fear of judgment, or lack of awareness.

The J&K Police often step in only after a tragic suicide attempt or death is reported, but by then, the damage is irreversible. Families are left grieving, while potential warning signs that could have been addressed earlier remain overlooked. Unfortunately, these reported cases are just the tip of the iceberg. Beneath the surface lies a massive population grappling with severe mental health struggles—undiagnosed, untreated, and unseen.

### The Menace of Substance Abuse: A Growing Epidemic

Adding to this crisis is the alarming rise in substance abuse across Kashmir. As per the Drug De-Addiction Centre reports from the police, over 70,000 people in Kashmir, including children as young as 10, are addicted to some form of substance. The primary substance of abuse has shifted from cannabis and alcohol to opioids like heroin. Official data shared by the ministry of social justice and empowerment in parliament, as per new reports from 29 March 2023, said that over 1 million in a population of over 14 million in Jammu and Kashmir were involved in substance abuse (one out of 14 people in the union territory).

The J&K Police frequently bust drug trafficking networks, seize large quantities of narcotics, and arrest those involved. However, their efforts address only the supply chain; the root cause of addiction remains largely unaddressed. The administration needs to recognize that drug abuse is not merely a criminal issue but a severe mental health problem requiring early intervention and professional support.

Many

abusers, often under the influence of drugs, resort to crimes ranging from theft to violence. This criminal behavior puts additional strain on law enforcement. However, these young individuals, driven to the brink by psychological pain and societal pressures, need rehabilitation, not endless confinement under IPC sections drug-abuse

### Unemployment, Pornography, and Societal Pressures

Unemployment in Kashmir is another major contributor to this crisis, with rates hovering at over 20%, among the highest in the country. The lack of job opportunities, coupled with societal expectations, drives young individuals into despair. Late marriages, caste-based restrictions, and increasing choosiness in partner selection add further strain, particularly on men who struggle to find outlets for their natural instincts and emotions.

An overlooked yet significant issue in the region is pornography consumption. Reports suggest that Kashmir ranks among the highest in pornography viewership in India, despite its deeply rooted conservative culture. A study conducted in 2021 highlighted that internet penetration and social isolation during the pandemic only exacerbated this trend. The contradiction is stark: in a region steeped in Sufi values and religious teachings that prohibit such behavior, pornography becomes an easily accessible escape for those grappling with loneliness, unemployment, and social restrictions.

### A Call for Integrated Mental Health Solutions

While the JK

Police and administration have made efforts to address these issues, the measures remain far from adequate. Mental health services in the region are grossly underdeveloped. With only a handful of psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors serving millions, the mental health infrastructure is incapable of meeting the growing demand.

This gap highlights the need for a comprehensive strategy to integrate mental health professionals into the existing health-care and law enforcement systems. Primary health centers (PHCs) must employ trained mental health experts who can assess and address early warning signs. By equipping PHCs with such resources, the administration can ensure that individuals grappling with psychological issues receive timely intervention before their problems escalate.

Additionally, a record-keeping system, leveraging data from Anganwadi centers and local health workers, can help identify children and adolescents showing signs of developmental or behavioral issues. This proactive approach would allow for early referrals to specialists and prevent future crises.

### A Personal Initiative: A Passionate Student's Attempt to Make a Difference

As a passionate neuroscience and neuro-psychology student, I recognized the dire need for action in this space. Along with

a group of dedicated professionals, including doctors, nurses, advocates, and students from arts and MBBS fields, I initiated a grassroots project to address mental health and substance

abuse issues in Kashmir. Our aim was to create a strategy for change—one that combined awareness, early intervention, and rehabilitation.

We reached out to the J&K Police for permissions to work

sonate individuals and grassroots organizations can only do so much without systemic support.

### Saving Minds, Not Controlling Them

It's time for the administration to step up and take ownership of this crisis. The exponential rise in suicides and substance abuse signals a slow-moving genocide—a battle our brains are waging against us. The J&K Police cannot be expected to tackle this crisis alone; their role is reactive by nature, addressing issues only when they escalate into crimes or emergencies. To truly save young minds, we need a proactive approach.

The administration must allocate resources to recruit mental health professionals, establish dedicated counseling centers in every district, and remove the stigma surrounding mental health. Instead of endlessly incarcerating individuals under drug-related IPC sections, the focus should shift to rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

Moreover, community involvement is crucial. Schools, colleges, and local organizations must join hands to spread awareness about mental health and substance abuse. Workshops, counseling sessions, and open forums can help break the silence and encourage individuals to seek help.

### Conclusion

The mental health crisis in Kashmir is a ticking time bomb that demands urgent action. It's not just a matter of law enforcement but a societal issue that requires the collective effort of the JK Police, administration, mental health professionals, and the community at large. Early intervention, proper mental health infrastructure, and a shift in societal attitudes can pave the way for a healthier and more hopeful future for Kashmir's youth. Let us not wait for the crisis to explode beyond control. The time to act is now—to save lives, rebuild hope, and secure the future of this paradise on earth.

*The author is a Master's student in Clinical Psychology with a dedicated focus on Neural networks, brain chemistry, and their broader societal implications. He is also a committed Social Activist and Mental Health Advocate, raising awareness through Articles and public education. He can be reached at Umairano07@gmail.com*

**THE ADMINISTRATION NEEDS TO RECOGNIZE THAT DRUG ABUSE IS NOT MERELY a criminal issue but a severe mental health problem requiring early intervention and professional support. These young individuals, driven to the brink by psychological pain and societal pressures, need rehabilitation, not endless confinement under IPC sections**



# If It Bleeds, It Leads

Elesa Zehndorfer

For decades, newsrooms have operated under the premise that 'if it bleeds it leads'. While grim, it is a clever approach: fMRI brains scans appear to confirm the neurological draw of bad news. When we view threats, for example, a greater and earlier blood oxygen level-dependent (BOLD) activation in the amygdala and periaqueductal gray can be observed. This could be considered a fight-or-flight response, as both are parts of the brain associated with rapid defensive action.

### Negativity Bias

This negativity bias is reflected in a recent study of 105,000 headlines (with more than 370 million impressions), which found that for every positive word included in a headline of average length, the click through rate (CTR) decreased by 1%. Consistent with a negative bias hypothesis, each negative word increased the CTR by 2.3%. What's more, the word 'joy' lowered CTR's, while the word 'sadness', conversely, increased them.

### If It Burns, It Earns

A similar slogan often cited in newsrooms is 'if it burns, it earns,' a recognition that imminent threats promote our survival instinct and can be consid-

ered a form of attentional bias. It is likely why negative, shocking Facebook and Meta posts are more liked and shared than positive-bias posts.

A 2018 study, for example, studied two populist rhetoric driven campaigns: the Donald Trump's 2016 US presidential campaign and the UK Brexit referendum from the same year. Researchers reported that both campaigns heavily appealed to similar pain points—fear, for example, as well as lost national pride, overplayed immigration fears, baiting opposing voter groups, and racism, or the fear of other nationalities or ethnicities. These negative headlines powerfully drove exposure and engagement.

### The Effect of Neuroticism

Compellingly, out-group animosity (denigrating one's political opponents online) appears to be a stronger motivation to vote than in-group amity (friendliness). Thus, there appears to be political capital in encouraging online hate by one's supporters.

Specifically, research shows that pain point dimensions of fear, lost pride, and loss aversion are all associated with the personality dimension of neuroticism. Neuroticism subsequently emerged as a reliable predictor of voting in the 2016 Brexit referendum and the 2016 US presi-

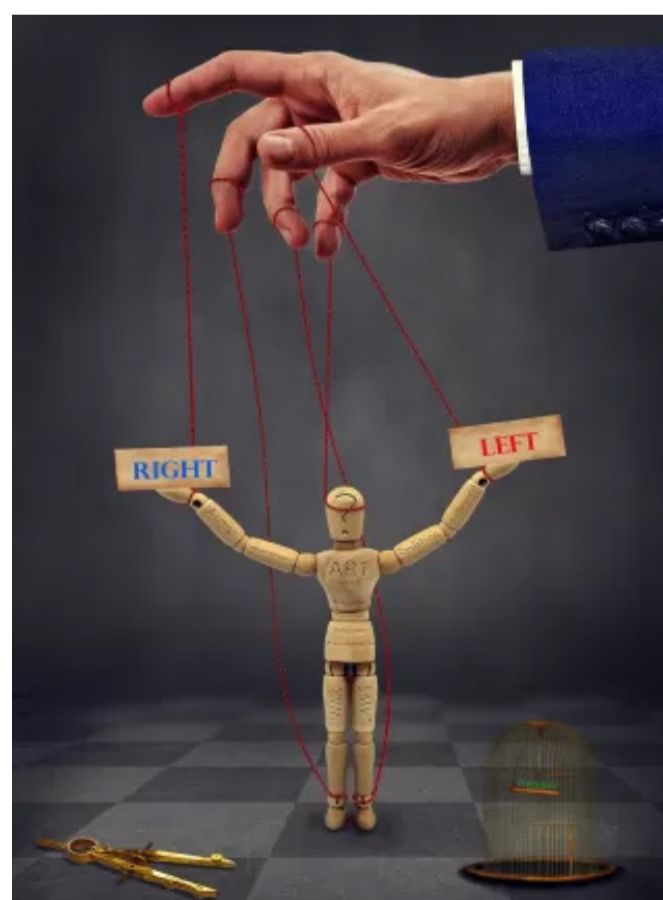
dential election, even when controlling for variables such as political attitude and regional industrial heritage.

### The Sleeper Effect

Obshonka et al. (2018) subsequently referred to a 'sleeper effect' of neuroticism as a meaningfully impactful force on the

**This negativity bias is reflected in a recent study of 105,000 headlines (with more than 370 million impressions), which found that for every positive word included in a headline of average length, the click through rate (CTR) decreased by 1%. Consistent with a negative bias hypothesis, each negative word increased the CTR by 2.3%**

geopolitical landscape. Interestingly, political consulting firm Cambridge Analy-



ca explicitly used neuroticism as a personality measure when engaging in neuropolitical campaigning for the Ted Cruz and Donald Trump 2016 presidential

election campaigns. Unfortunately, in stoking this kind of neurotic intent, bad news, fear, and hatred appear damaging to our minds. The

American Psychological Association State of Our Nation Report 2017 identified, for example, that while 95% of Americans said they follow the news regularly, more than half also claimed that doing so caused them stress. Further, much of the news content we end up being exposed to appears unsolicited via our social media feeds (a phenomenon known as incidental exposure). Incidental exposure is designed to catch us off guard, jarring us with shocking, negative posts. It is particularly damaging to our mental health because it triggers us to instinctively fire off a reply. That can turn out great for a content creator's pay-per-click revenue, but it isn't so positive for our anxiety levels.

### Playing on our emotions

Negative headlines seriously play on our emotions, which is why they push engagement so powerfully. A recent Stanford University study reported, for example, that emotional stories are around 22 times more memorable than facts alone. Combining negative headlines with emotionally triggering words and images subsequently offer a powerful means of gaining viral political exposure, maximizing the chances that a story will rise to the top of an editor's pile and become an out-

let's next headline.

### Minimize your exposure

Worryingly, research has shown that people can exhibit increased depression and anxiety symptoms after only 14 minutes of news consumption. It makes sense to avoid being part of that statistic.

### So what can we do?

Organizations like the APA offer easy but useful tips and interventions, such as allocating only specific times in the day (e.g. half hour over lunch) to check the news, and avoiding checking headlines before bed (to avoid disrupting sleep and mood). Selectively opting for regulated news sources is also a positive approach, as is avoiding social media (to avoid incidental exposure and outrage clickbait). Choosing positive news-only sites like the Good News Network can also offer a panacea to the constant doom and gloom.

Finally, turn off notifications from news sites, to avoid being caught off guard with a negative, adrenaline-spiking headline. You'll stay informed, you'll avoid news overload, and you might just increase the odds of finishing each day with a bigger smile on your face.

*The article was originally published by Psychology Today*



## Quick Settlement Of Insurance Claims Brings Relief To Families Of J&K Bank Customers



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** In a major relief to bereaved families, J&K Bank facilitated the swift settlement of insurance claims under its Met-Loan & Life Suraksha (MLLS) product for deceased borrowers in its Mumbai Zone. Insurance claims amounting to Rs 80 Lakhs were paid to five families, alleviating their financial burden during difficult times.

The Bank's General Manager & Divisional Head (ROI) Rajesh Gupta and Zonal Head (Mumbai) Irfan Anjum, alongside Associate Director & Head (PNB MetLife) Irfan Ali Zargar displayed the symbolic cheque of Rs 80 Lakhs in the presence of AGM Hayat Mohammad Rather, Credit Head (Mumbai) Zahoor Ahmad Qanoong and other senior officials at the Bank's Mumbai Zonal Office. The event was also attended by Branch Heads, Advances Managers, Zonal Insurance Co-ordinator (Mumbai) Rajinder Kumar Razdan and senior representatives from PNB MetLife, including Regional Manager Peer Jeelani and Senior Territory Manager Taha bin Nazir.

Expressing gratitude for quick redressal, the claimants appreciated the Bank and its insurance partner PNB MetLife for their timely support. "We are thankful to the Bank for covering these loans under insurance and facilitating the swift settlement of claims. PNB MetLife's prompt action has relieved us from a significant financial burden," they said.

Speaking on the occasion, Divisional Head (ROI) Rajesh Gupta emphasized the importance of insuring loans to secure the financial future of families. "We along with our partners remain committed to safeguard the interests of our customers through timely and customer-centric products and services. And by insuring loans with products like MLLS, we are able to reduce the financial burden on borrowers and their families during challenging times."

Zonal Head (Mumbai) Irfan Anjum said, "With a single premium option and bank funding available, insuring loans goes a long way in reducing the financial burden on families during such difficult times."

## HK Hyundai Unveils Hyundai CRETA Electric



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** HK Hyundai Unveiled the much-anticipated Hyundai CRETA Electric at their dealership located at Athwajan Bypass Srinagar, Earlier, Hyundai Motor India Limited (HML) launched Hyundai CRETA Electric at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025 at an introductory price of INR 17,99,000.

Hyundai CRETA Electric promises a paradigm shift in the electric SUV segment with its bold design, cutting-edge technology, electrifying performance, and all-around safety. The Undisputed, Ultimate, Now Electric, CRETA is a testament to HML's commitment to offering technologically advanced products to Indian customers.

Various dignitaries were present on the unveiling ceremony from Hyundai Motor India Limited including Be-dabrat Sharma (ZBH, HML), YB Hwang (ZBC, HML), Sujit Kumar (RBH, HML), Puneet Mehta (ASH, HML) and Akshay Jamwal (TSM, HML).

Speaking at the unveiling of Hyundai CRETA Electric Manag-

ing Director, HK Hyundai, Umar Yaqoob Mir said, "CRETA Electric marks a defining moment in HML's journey of electrification and reflects commitment to the government's 'Make in India' vision, as it is our first indigenous EV SUV in India. With over a decade of global expertise in electric mobility, Hyundai Motor Company has established itself as a pioneer in EV innovation. Now, the same innovations and expertise are being brought to India, enhancing our country's EV landscape. Hyundai CRETA Electric is a testament to the vision of 'Progress for Humanity' and Hyundai's commitment to making India a global hub for advanced mobility solutions. We are confident that Hyundai CRETA Electric will set new benchmarks in the Indian EV industry, providing the much-needed push for the growth of the segment."

Shabir Ahmad Baba (General Manager, HK Hyundai) said, "Hyundai CRETA Electric comes with an Electrified Exterior & Vibrant Interiors: Hyundai CRETA Electric exudes a bold and futuristic design, making a statement of modernity on the road."

## DGP Visits Forward Areas In Basantgarh, Reviews Operational Readiness

Agencies

**JAMMU:** Director General of Jammu and Kashmir Police (DGP), Nalin Prabhat, visited the forward areas of Basantgarh to assess the operational preparedness at the strategic tri-junction of Kathua, Doda, and Udhampur.

According to news agency KINS, the DGP commended the personnel for their exceptional dedication and hard work in maintaining security in these critical areas. He emphasized the importance of building and sustaining public trust and directed the forces to implement enhanced security measures to ensure peace and stability in the region.

The DGP was accompanied by Anand Jain, ADGP Jammu Zone, Rayees Mohammad Bhat, DIG Udhampur-Reasi Range; Amod Nagpure, SSP Udhampur; and senior officers from

the CRPF and Army.

The DGP interacted with personnel deployed at Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) and lauded their relentless commitment to maintaining peace and security.

Acknowledging the tough working conditions, he commended their dedication and resilience. He urged them to tackle emerging threats with determination while ensuring the safety and well-being of the local populace remains a top priority.

Highlighting the importance of community engagement, the DGP stressed fostering trust and collaboration between the police and the residents of Basantgarh. He directed officers to intensify outreach efforts, address public grievances promptly, and work closely with local stakeholders to build a stronger sense of security and unity in the region. (KINS)

## Manasbal Lake Set To Become Eco-Tourism Hub With New Scenic Pathway



Agencies

**GANDERBAL:** The Roads & Buildings (R&B) Department has unveiled an ambitious project aimed at transforming Manasbal Lake, located in Central Kashmir's Ganderbal district, into a premier eco-tourism destination.

The centerpiece of the initiative is a 1.8-kilometer scenic pathway encircling the lake, offering visitors unparalleled views of its breathtaking beauty and surrounding landscapes, while preserving the region's delicate environmental balance.

The project which comes with a cost of Rs 9.82 crore, will be built using eco-friendly materials and sustainable construction practices.

The pathway will include

walking trails, observation points, and designated rest areas designed to provide panoramic vistas of the lake and its serene surroundings. The careful design ensures minimal environmental impact, safeguarding the natural ecosystem of the area.

In addition to enhancing the visitor experience, the project is expected to stimulate the local economy by attracting tourists, thereby benefiting local hospitality businesses, artisans, and agricultural sectors.

The emphasis on sustainable tourism is intended to promote a deeper appreciation for the area's natural and cultural heritage, ensuring that Manasbal Lake remains a pristine and cherished destination for generations to come.

The R&B Department's ini-

tiative reflects a commitment to balancing tourism development with environmental preservation. By fostering sustainable growth, the project aims to benefit both the local community and the region's ecology, positioning Manasbal Lake as a premier eco-tourism hub.

Beyond enhancing the visitor experience, this project is expected to boost the local economy by attracting more tourists, thereby benefiting local hospitality businesses, artisans, and agricultural sectors.

The emphasis on sustainable tourism is designed to cultivate a deeper appreciation for the area's natural and cultural heritage, ensuring that Manasbal Lake continues to thrive as a pristine and beloved destination for future generations—(KNO)

## Program Organized To Raise Awareness About Filing Income Tax Returns



Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** The Income Tax Department Jammu, in coordination with Higher Education Department of the J&K UT organized an outreach program at Govt. College for Women, Parade. The program aimed to raise awareness about filing of correct refund claims and making taxpayers aware of the consequences of filing fraudulent claims of Income Tax refunds of persons working in different departments.

Principal Commissioner of the Income Tax Department in J&K, Sh. Vikram Sahay addressed a pressing issue regarding the incorrect filing of income tax returns by several taxpayers. Speaking on the matter, he emphasized that education and awareness have a significant role to play when it comes to understanding the importance of lawful tax practices.

"It is disturbing to see that many income tax returns are filed incorrectly and a large number of gullible taxpay-

ers fall prey to external agents promising full TDS refunds. Even higher officials have been found to fall victim to these scams, unaware that these actions are not only immoral but also criminal," Sh. Sahay said.

The Principal Commissioner pointed out that fraudulent deductions, including those related to loans, donations and medical premiums, were being falsely claimed by some individuals. Sh. Sahay emphasized the need to spread awareness about these malpractices in order to eliminate them completely. He assured that strict action would be taken against those found guilty of such offenses. "We must work together to restore the faith of the citizens in the tax system, and this responsibility begins with education and awareness," he said.

He also informed taxpayers that the window for updating income tax returns for the Financial Year 2023-24 is open until March, providing an opportunity for individuals to correct any mistakes made in

their returns.

Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax, Mohd Noor Siddiqui, highlighted that till 31st December, 2024, IT Department has identified as many as 90,000 salaried taxpayers who had wrongly claimed deductions amounting to ₹1,070 crores approx. He emphasized the duties of every taxpayer, including the accurate filing of returns, disclosure of correct income, claiming of applicable deductions, and reviewing Form 16 and Form 26AS to ensure compliance with tax laws.

The program at Jammu was a part of a nation-wide outreach against fraudulent claims of income tax refund by taxpayers. During the program, participants raised questions on various tax-related matters and the actions being taken against non-compliance. In response to queries, Sh. Sahay advised those who have received any notices or demands to immediately contact the Department's Jammu office for assistance in resolving their issues.

## Amid Tourism Boom, Operators Struggle In Kashmir

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** A group of tour and travel operators representing hoteliers, houseboat owners, and tour operators on Thursday urged the government to take decisive steps to address challenges faced by the tourism sector, highlighting the need for an advisor dedicated to the industry.

Addressing the media in Srinagar, Tour and Travel operators representing different associations, said that while tourism in Kashmir has witnessed growth, the lack of adequate promotion and a dedicated representative has affected businesses on the ground.

"The tourism economy is performing better compared to other trades, but in the last five years, particularly post-COVID, over 1 lakh people have entered this sector. Despite its promising potential,

efforts need to be doubled to address key issues," said, one of the representatives.

He said, PM Modi in Mann Ki Baat talked about Kashmir having witnessed a tourism boom but, "our people have also done promotions alike and in the last four years, this sector has faced a need for an individual advisor, with whom they can share queues and that can reach the government."

He said that high accommodation costs have deterred tourists, resulting in home-stays and hotels witnessing fewer bookings. "To push tourism forward, focused promotional campaigns are essential. We have repeatedly raised these concerns with higher authorities, and we hope the Chief Minister will create a dedicated advisor for tourism operations," he added.

Before five years, the capacity of hoteliers in J&K were about fifty thousand and this

time it is about more than a lack in only Kashmir valley and homestay of about fifteen thousand and this has given a good boost to the tourism sector, he said.

He further noted the need for a single executive advisor to address the issues faced by hoteliers, houseboat owners, and other stakeholders as accommodation has increased and there is a need to look after the tourism industry.

The group also requested the government to focus on reviving the houseboat industry, which has dwindled to just 750 houseboats, and to ensure the direct operation of trains to Kashmir to boost connectivity.

"Environmental concerns and other pressing issues must also be addressed. Having an advisor for the tourism sector would ensure our voices are heard and our problems resolved," they said. —(KNO)

## Day, Night Temp Settle Above Normal In Kashmir



Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** The minimum as well as the maximum temperatures across the Valley continued to settle above normal on Thursday while the weatherman has predicted no major weather activity till January 31 across Jammu and Kashmir.

The maximum temperature settled at 13.3 degree Celsius in Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, which was 6.2 degree Celsius above normal while the minimum temperature was also 0.3 degree above normal.

As per the details, Gulmarg recorded a day temperature of 3.0 degree Celsius against the normal of 0.1 degree while the night temperature settled at minus 7.5 degree Celsius against minus 8.4 degree Celsius normal.

The maximum temperature in Qazigund, a gateway of

Kashmir settled at 13.4 degree Celsius while the minimum temperature settled at minus 2.6 degree Celsius. Pahalgam, recorded a day temperature of 9.6 degree Celsius against the normal of 4.8 degree while the night temperature settled at 5.6 degree Celsius.

Kupwara recorded a day temperature of 13.7 degree Celsius while the night temperature settled at minus 2.2 degree Celsius and Kokernag in South Kashmir recorded a day temperature of 9.8 degree Celsius while the minimum temperature settled at minus 1.6 degree Celsius.

Meanwhile, the Director Meteorological department (MeT) has predicted mostly dry and cloudy weather conditions till January 31. However, he stated that there is a possibility of light rain and snow at isolated places in between January 29 and 30—(KNO)

## Why Students Prefer Pvt Schools Over Govt Institutes?

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** The government school in Jammu and Kashmir despite having 244 percent extra institutions in comparison to private schools, the Teacher School Ratio (TSR) in public schools is very low.

In only 5452 private schools, more than 12 Lakh students were enrolled in comparison to the 18,785 government schools wherein only over 14 Lakh students were enrolled—thus raising a question on claims of the authorities with regard to the influx in student enrolment in government-run schools.

The official figures reveal that there are a total of 5452 private schools in Jammu and Kashmir wherein at least 70,234 teachers are posted to teach over 12,03,064 students.

However, in a shocking rev-

elation, the official figures reveal that there were a total of 14,21,643 students in 18,785 government schools wherein at least 96,380 teachers were posted.

According to the updated official figures, the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) in government schools as of now is 14:75 while the PTR in private schools remains 1:17.

The figures further reveal that the Teacher School Ratio (TSR) is 1:5 in government schools and 1:13 in private schools.

It also states that there are a total of 1,67,046 teachers in Jammu and Kashmir with at least 29,616 teachers posted or deployed at Primary level, 61,045 at Upper Primary level, 43,789 at Secondary level and 32,596 teachers were posted or deployed at Higher Secondary level—(KNO)

## RNAF Founder Highlights Concerns Of Minorities In Kashmir

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Founder of the Rouble Nagi Art Foundation (RNAF) and member of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM), Rouble Nagi, on Thursday highlighted her organization's contributions to Jammu and Kashmir and her recent engagement with minority communities in the region.

Addressing a press conference here, Nagi said, "RNAF has been active in the region since 2014, focusing on quality education, creative learning, and skill development. The foundation has upgraded school infrastructure, introduced computer labs, and established skill development centers in remote areas, empowering women and girls with employment opportunities."

During her recent tour across districts including Baramulla, Kupwara, Srinagar, Kulgam, Pulwama, and Anantnag, she said that she met delegations and social activists representing minorities such as Sikhs, Christians, Kashmiri Pandits, and Ahmadiyas. "They were assured that their concerns, ranging from daily challenges to cultural preservation, will be prioritized," she added.

Nagi said, "Kashmir is the crown jewel of India's unity in diversity. Ignoring any community weakens the cultural fabric of the region. Regional integration, enhanced connectivity, and collaborative efforts have paved the way for development, particularly benefiting eco- and cultural tourism in Kashmir." —(KNO)

## Republic Day Celebrations: Shopian Declared "No Drone Flying Zone"

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** In preparation for Republic Day celebrations, District Magistrate Shopian has designated the district as "No Drone Flying Zone" from January 24th to January 26th, 2025.

As per an order issued by District Magistrate Shopian a copy of which lies with Kashmir Observer reads, in light of the upcoming Republic Day celebrations on January 26th, 2025, and in the interest of ensuring the smooth, safe, and secure conduct of events and activities, it is hereby ordered that the entire area of Shopian district is designated as a "No Drone Flying Zone" with immediate effect, extending through and beyond the period of Republic Day observances.

Order further reads, this restriction is enacted to maintain public safety, protect sensitive infrastruc-

ture, and prevent any potential security threats posed by unauthorized unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). The prohibited airspace will remain in effect from January 24th to January 26th, 2025, in the entire District, Shopian.

All relevant law enforcement agencies, including local police, security forces are instructed to strictly enforce this order. Drones detected within the restricted airspace will be immediately intercepted, and violators will be subject to legal action as per applicable laws. Any drone activity within the designated no-fly zone, noticed by an individual, should be immediately reported to the District Administration/Police Authorities, it reads.

This action is taken with a view to ensuring a secure, peaceful, and orderly Republic Day celebration for all citizens and participants, reads the order.

## 10 YO Atiqha Mir First Indian Female To Race In World Series Karting

Press Trust of India

**MURO LECCESSE:** India's 10-year-old karting sensation Atiqha Mir is set to become the first female from the country to race in the World Series Karting (WSK) Championships after being signed by 29-time champions Babyrace for a full season. This was after her impressive results in a test session conducted at La Conca circuit in south of Italy. The racer from Jammu and Kashmir will also be the only female in the Mini class having a highly competitive grid of over 60 karts. She will race in all three WSK



Championships this year: the WSK Super Master Series, the WSK Euro Series and the WSK Final Cup as a debutant. The first of these three races, WSK Super Series Master Series,

will be held over the weekend. "I am super thrilled to get this opportunity to drive with in WSK with Babyrace. This will be the highest level of karting I have ever driven in. I will have to learn a lot of circuits and driving in the winter will be a challenge but I am up for it," said Atiqha. WSK is considered as the pinnacle of karting which attracts the best driving talent, the top kart manufacturers and engine manufacturers from the world over. Reigning world champion Max Verstappen is among the host of drivers that have raced in WSK in their formative years.

Like Verstappen, Atiqha too hails from a racing family. Her father Asif Nazir is India's first National Karting Champion and Formula Asia Vice Champion. He will be by Atiqha's side when she competes in Italy this weekend. "Atiqha has managed to move up to the highest level of karting through her hard work and dedication. "It will be tough for her racing against this quality of field. She has to learn new tracks, new conditions and adapt herself to this new environment. It will be challenging and a learning year for her," said Nazir.

## J&K Pacer Umar Reveals Why He Didn't Celebrate Rohit's Wicket



Press Trust of India

**MUMBAI:** It was a "prized wicket" for Umar Nazir Mir but being a fan of Rohit Sharma, the Jammu and Kashmir pacer said he could not bring himself to celebrate the high-profile dismissal in the Ranji Trophy clash against defending champions Mumbai here on Thursday. The 31-year-old rattled Mumbai with his 4/41 on the opening day of their Group A clash and among those he sent back was the India captain, whose prolonged lean run continued

in his first Ranji appearance in a decade. Nazir used the moisture on a fresh wicket here at the BKC Ground to great effect, dismissing Mumbai captain Ajinkya Rahane (12), Shivam Dube (0) and Hardik Tamore (7) along with Rohit in a display of fine seam bowling. "A good ball is a good ball against any player, you don't look at the stature of the player, but Rohit Sharma's wicket is a big one, I am happy," Nazir told media after the end of play. "The first thought in

my mind was...I did not celebrate, as a fan of Rohit Sharma. I know he is something, even though I dismissed him. I am a big fan of Rohit Sharma. "(Even) if we win this game, it would be a proud moment because India's captain is playing in the opposition," added Nazir, who was a member of the J&K side which beat a star-studded Mumbai in their Ranji Trophy clash here at the Wankhede Stadium a decade ago. Apart from moving the ball sideways, Nazir said hitting the right length at a spot just ahead of the good length was the right approach on the first day here which helped him produce extra bounce too, that ended Rohit's stay after 3 runs off 19 balls. "When you dismiss an international player, it is always a prized wicket. There was some help from the surface, I tried to bowl in right areas. Rohit Sharma is a big name and his wicket was important for us and for me, personally, as well," he said.

## Sports Development In J&K, Ladakh Top Priority: PM Modi



Press Trust of India

**SRINAGAR:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said his government's top priority is to develop sports across the country, especially in Jammu and Kashmir and the union territory of Ladakh. In a message during the opening ceremony of the Khelo India Winter Games 2025 here, Modi reiterated the government's commitment to spread sporting activities across India and said how Ladakh and J&K have not only "elevated the culture of sports in our country, but also boosted tourism, showcasing the nation's beauty and diversity." "Our government attaches top priority to sports development in Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir. Through 100 Khelo India Centres in Jammu & Kashmir and three in Ladakh, including a State Centre of Excellence in Leh for athletics, archery, and boxing, our efforts are shaping the region into a hub of sporting excellence," said PM Modi. "KIWG 2025 will play a crucial role in taking our sporting excellence to the next level." On an icy morning, the KIWG 2025 got off to a rousing start at the iconic NDS

Stadium on Thursday. The first part of the KIWG 2025 is being hosted by the Union Territory of Ladakh till January 27. The union territory of Jammu & Kashmir will host the games from February 22-25. Meanwhile the flight from Delhi, which was carrying Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, who was to grace the KIWG 2025 opening in person, could not land at Leh's Kushok Bakula Rimpochee Airport due to bad weather. Several dignitaries, including the Lt Governor of UT-Ladakh, Brigadier Dr BD Mishra, was present in the opening ceremony. A cultural display and an exhibition ice-hockey match made for a crisp ceremony. Mandaviya expressed his disappointment at missing the opening ceremony. The KIWG 2025 started on Thursday with ice hockey matches at the NDS complex and the Ladakh Scouts Regimental Centre. Nineteen teams, comprising states, union territories and institutional outfits like Army and ITBP, are competing. A total of 594 participants, of which 428 are athletes, are involved in the Ladakh leg of KIWG 2025.

## Short TAKES

### Ranji Trophy: J&K Dominate Mumbai On First Day

J&K took control on the first day of their Ranji Trophy Elite Group A match against Mumbai, finishing the day on 174/7 with a lead of 54 runs. Mumbai, after winning the toss and electing to bat first, were bundled out for a paltry 120 runs. Shardul Thakur was the top-scorer for Mumbai with a quick-fire of 51 runs. Rohit Sharma had a short stay at the crease, scoring just 3 runs of 19 balls before being dismissed by Umar Nazir Mir. The rest of Mumbai's batting order also struggled, leading to a quick collapse. Yashasvi Jaiswal also went out early, scoring 5 runs. Seamer Umar Nazir Mir bowled a tight spell, dismissing Rohit on the 13th ball he faced after 12 dot balls. Mumbai were all out for 120 runs in 33.2 overs. Umar Nazir Mir finished with 4 wickets for 43 runs, and Yudhvir Singh claimed 3 wickets for 31. J&K lost wickets at regular intervals, but Shubham Khajuria (53) and Abid Mushtaq (44) steadied the ship with crucial contributions. A total of 17 wickets fell on the first day, making it a highly eventful day of cricket. (KNO)

### Ranji Trophy: Pant's Delhi Crumble Against Jadeja's Spin

Ravindra Jadeja's excellent all-round effort - five wickets and 38 runs - outshone Rishabh Pant's minuscule 10-ball 1 as Saurashtra gained good foothold over a shoddy Delhi after Day 1 of their Ranji Trophy Elite Group D match in Rajkot on Thursday. Batting first, Delhi were shut out for 188 with captain Ayush Badoni (60, 78b, 5x4, 2x6) and Yash Dhull (44, 76b, 8x4) leading their batting effort. However, they failed to convert their knocks into something more substantial as India left-arm spinner Jadeja ran roughshod over his clueless opponents with figures of 5 for 66. In reply, Saurashtra reached 163 for five with opener Harvik Desai making a 93 off 120 balls with eight fours.

### Champions League: City, Bayern Stunned; Real Madrid Win

Paris St Germain clawed back from two goals down to stun Manchester City 4-2 in the Champions League on Wednesday and leave the English club outside the playoff places and in danger of elimination. Goals from PSG's Ousmane Dembele, Bradley Barcola, Joao Neves and Goncalo Ramos turned the match on its head after City had taken a 2-0 lead early in the six-goal second half. Substitute Jack Grealish and Erling Haaland struck in the 50th and 53rd minutes for City, but home fans braving torrential rain at Parc des Princes were treated to a brilliant comeback. Feyenoord striker Santiago Gimenez scored twice in the first half to steer the hosts to a stunning 3-0 victory over Bayern Munich in the Champions League on Wednesday and boost their chances of a top-eight finish. Holders Real Madrid hammered RB Salzburg 5-1 in a Champions League clash in the Spanish capital on Wednesday thanks to doubles from Brazilian forwards Rodrygo and Vinicius Jr either side of a goal by Kylian Mbappe.

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

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THE OTHER SIDE
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VOX POP
UNRAVEL KASHMIR