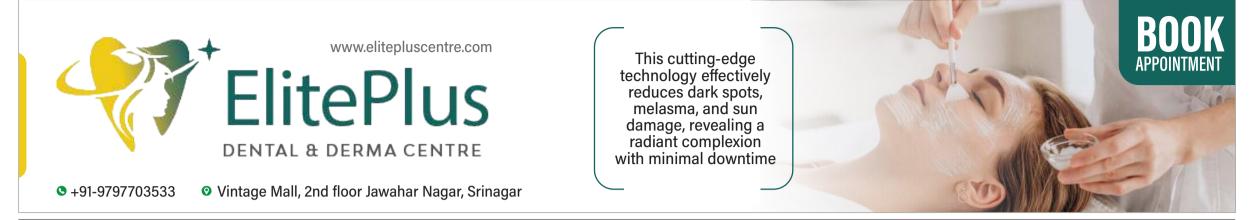
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National Drivers' Day **Beyond The Wheel: The Unseen Struggles Of Kashmir's Drivers**

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 un-told 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



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

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 Pe

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 forestrich 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

Pandemic-Like Fear Grips Rajouri

Over 200 People Shifted To Quarantine Centres



Observer News Service

Rajouri: Over 200 individuals,

identified a common factor among all those who lost their lives in Badhaal village as involvement of the brain

damage to the nervous system. National Conference (NC)

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

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 exami-

nation after many aspirants al-

Graduates

Cry Foul



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

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.

cial role in taking our sporting Several More on P6

fected 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 ĥospital in Jammu.

Top health officials have

leader and local MLA Javaid Igbal 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

LA 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."

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

Dar, a retired KAS officer, in

Batengoo, in South Kashmir's

Emergency Department.

Anantnag district.

as

Srinagar based news agency Srinagar: The Anti-Corruption Kashmir Dot Com. Bureau (ACB) initiated its first The case Irregularities raid in the fire services scam committed investigation, targeting the in the selection process of residence of Mohd Yaqoob

Fireman/Fireman Drivers in the Fire & Emergency Services (F&ES) Department. The individuals which are

Central Kashmir, reported

involves

Dar, son of the late Ab under investigation of the Wahab Dar, formerly served ACB include members of Chairman (Technical) Departmental Recruitment and Assistant Divisional including Board, the Chairmen, Members of the Officer (ADO) in the Fire and Technical Committee, offi-An official said that the cers/officials of F&ES departraid, led by DySP rank officer, ment, who remained associwas carried out in connection ated with the recruitment with FIR No. 01-2025 regprocess, M/S LMES IT LLP istered at the Police Station through its | More on P6

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

he 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

'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 pro-

found 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

Our Identity Is Tied To Our Land: CM Omar



Observer News Service

the importance of a land and its people in forging their Srinagar: Chief Minister Omar identity and exhorted them to never let it go. | More on P6 Abdullah on Thursday asserted

💊 hief Minister Omar Abdullah Thursdav chaired a review meeting of the Jammu & Kashmir State Power Development Corporation Limited (JKSPDC) here at Civil Secretariat | 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 preperations. He said that | More on P6

lege discrepancies in the result. IKSSB Chairperson Indu Kanwal Chib has announced the initiation of an inquiry into the recruitment results, Mass Comm

JKSSB Initiates Inquiry Into

Constable Recruitment Exam

Iltija Demands HC **Monitored Probe**

Centre of Excellence in Leh for

athletics, archery, and boxing,

our efforts are shaping the region into a hub of sporting

"KIWG 2025 will play a cru-

excellence," said PM Modi.

he Peoples Democratic Party leader Iltija 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

Urges Early Completion Of Hydropower

Projects



KASHMIR OBSERVER® Srinagar | Friday | 24-01-2025

Food, Medicine That Can Change Your Skin Colour – Sometimes Permanently

The Conversation

hen 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



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

However, not all ingested beta-

carotene undergoes this transfor-

mation. Excess amounts remain

in their pigment form and are de-

posited 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 reason the skin turns orange

lies in the chemical structure of

carotenoids. Beta-carotene's mo-

lecular makeup absorbs light in

the blue spectrum, reflecting or-

ange light back to our eyes. Other

carotenoids, such as lutein and

zeaxanthin (found in leafy green

vegetables), which lean toward

yellow, are less conspicuous be-

cause they are either less abun-

dant in the diet or not as promi-

Research has shown that a ca-

rotenoid-rich diet, which can

enhance a healthy golden glow,

is often perceived as more at-

tractive than sun-induced tan-

nently stored in the skin.

the pigment's presence.

system and healthy skin.

were occasionally prescribed for inflammatory disorders, and in some cases, patients who received these treatments developed a distinctive slate-grey or grey-purple discolouration 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

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 discolouration 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

ublic 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 registar birth EO Pattan submitted a case file pertaining to



Sub.. issuance of registration order in respect of delayed birth. Public Notice.

The registar birth EO Pattan submitted a case file pertaining

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

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.

birth of Avan Yousuf Yatoo s/o Mohammad Yousuf Yatoo 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.

Naib Tehsildar Pattan

SD

fko

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 Naib Tehsildar Pattan

OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR PATTAN

Sub.. issuance of registration order in respect of delayed birth.

Public Notice

The registar 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

fko

Naib Tehsildar Pattan

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 fko R/o Rasraypora Tehsil 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

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

Ghulam Mustafa Mir		
F/o Aasim Ali Mir	fko	
R/o Authoora Tehsil Kreeri		

OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR SERIWARPORA. Sub... Issuance of registration order in respect of delayed birth. **Public Notice** The registar 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

SD

Naib Tehsildar Pattan

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/0: Gh Ahmad Dar

R/o: Chukar Kunzer District: Baramulla

Members of the committee are :-Mushtag Ahamd (President) Ghulam Mohammad (Vice President) Rivaz Ahamd (Secretary), Rahil (Joint Secercetary) Fatima Sofi (Treasurer) Bashir Tabasum Mir (Member) Hilal Ahmad Sheikh (Member)

inf

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER KPDCL DIVISION BANDIPORA

FKO

email:- xnedbandipora@gmail.com

NIT No.-EDBpr/ 41 of 2024-25

Dated: 22-01-2025

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.

Α	Downloading of Standard Bidding Document	23th of January 2025 9:00 AM
В	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
Н	Amount of Earnest Money Deposit	2% of the Estimated Cost
	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 KPDCL 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 KPDCL 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 KPDCL 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 rec-6. ommended 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 JKPDD/KPDCL. The material shall be inspected by a PMA. 8. 9.

The work is of urgent nature and has to be completed within 10 days.

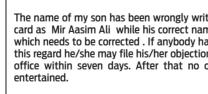
5 % to 10 % of the payments made will be kept as deposits till the defect liability period is over.

Executive Engineer Electric Division (KPDCL) Bandipora

DIPK-NB-3275/24 Dated: 23-01-2025

No: EDBpr /8478-81

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KASHMIR OBSERVER® Srinagar | Friday | 24-01-2025

Mental Health Awareness Workshop Held At JKPCC

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 JKPCC 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-

Srinagar: In a bid to en-

hance road safety aware-

ness, the Traffic Police Sri-

nagar and a group of High

Court Lawyers Thursday

held a joint traffic aware-

the Srinagar High Court

premises and later culmi-

nated at Moulana Azad

the initiative aims to

make the public aware

about the importance of

adhering to traffic rules

fic department Srinagar,

present during the march.

noted the need to curb traf-

Officials from Traf-

(MA) Road Srinagar.

and regulations.

The march started from

According to details,

ness march in Srinagar.

Agencies

Unite For Road Safety

shop on anger managefocussing on to ment, 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.

fic violations and asked

for public support and

working together with the

community, we can signifi-

cantly improve road safety,'

said a senior official from

also important and hopes

Meanwhile, local

comments for joint effort,

saying this is commendable

initiative. "We often witness

for traffic rules. Such aware-

ness campaigns are crucial to

instill a sense of responsibility

among road users," said Wa

hid, a local. (KNO)

He said this march is

resi

the Traffic department.

be more responsible.

"We believe that by

curbing violations.



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)

Traffic Police, HC Lawyers 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, Superintenit will encourage citizens to dents of Police, Traffic, Security, Joint Commissioner SMC, Superintending Engineer R&B, PDD, dents also expressed their SDM East, Chief Medical Officer, besides senior Officers of Information, Fire & Emergency, PHE, JKRTC, and other line Departreckless driving and disregard ments, besides Executive Magistrate of J&K Wakf Board and Management members of Hazratbal

Shrine and Jenab Sahib Soura. 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.

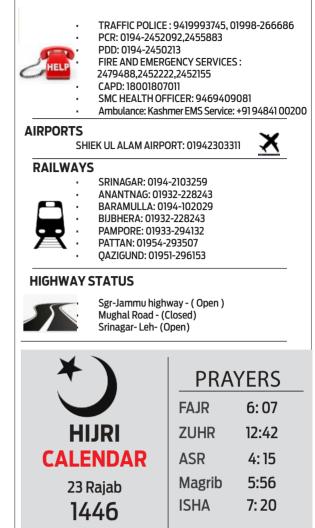
With regard to power supply, the DC asked the PDD Engineers to ensure uninterrupted power supply at the Shrine during the auspicious days of night prayers as well as on the day of display of Holy Relic and keep proper power backup to tackle any power breakdown.

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.



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 Madridvduring the Spanish transition to democracy.
- 1979 US performs nuclear test at Nevada Test Site

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 inqui-



ry, 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 high-

lighted procedural irregularities and emphasized the need for fairness in disci plinary 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

gal 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]

SMHS Hospital for medico-le-

NORTHERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr.DEN-I/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 mat 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	Valid of of		Period of completion	
	47225747.99/-		3,86,100.00/-	60 Da	ays	06 Months	
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Cease-Fire Extended By Another Month

From KO Archives

Observer News Service

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-Muhammed 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 Ramazan 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 us 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)

Think **Opinion**, Analysis, Essays

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Listen To People On **Mega Projects**

he 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 landuse 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

Decoding the Reservation Conundrum

Dr. Mushtaq Rather

arge-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:

- The Jammu and Kashmir Reserva-1. tion (Amendment) Act, 2023, dated 15.12.2023.
- The Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Castes Order (Amendment) Act, 2024.
- The Constitution (Jammu and Kash-3. mir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Act, 2024.
- Recommendations of the Jammu and Kashmir Socially and Educationally Backward Commission.

Four new tribes—the Pahari ethnic group, Padari tribe, Kolis, and Gadda Brahminswere included in the Scheduled Tribes, and

a separate 10% reservation was these newly included tribes, tak reservations under the Schedule umbrella to 20%. Besides, 15 n OBCs were incorporated, with proportion in reservation up to ommended by the Socially and H

Backward Classes (SEBC). Earlier, Jammu and Kashmir



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 actu-

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,



Kashmir, reckless development risks doing more harm than good



A Beginner's Guide: Fresh Investors Should Start with

Irshad Mushtaq

or those new to the world of investing, entering the stock mar-ket can be overwhelming. It's essential to approach it with the right strategies, especially if you're a fresh investor. Here's a **L** straightforward guide to help you navigate your investmen journey. As a beginner, it's important to understand that investing di rectly 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, in-dustry trends, and overall business insights. This knowledge requires time, effort, and experience, which most fresh investors may lack. In stead 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 typi cally 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 profes sional fund managers. This means that experts are handling the com plexities 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 Sys tematic Investment Plan (SIP) in mutual funds is an excellent way to in vest 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 invest ments with patience, and focus on building your investment knowledge as you go. Remember, starting early in mutual funds can set the founda tion for a successful investment journey. Make informed decisions, and let your money work for you!

Learn from the insights of @Irshad Mushtaq, Writer, Investor, En trepreneur & Founder of M I Securities! Connect for valuable financial advice at misecurities@bp.sharekhan.com Disclaimer: This article is for information only and doesn't offer investment advice. It's not an endorse ment 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 vation for SCs. 10% for STs. 4% for O residents along the Line of Actual Con national border, 10% for Residents-Areas (RBA), and 10% for Economically Sections (EWSs). These amendments i sal of the policy, especially among youth, are be ing sounded across the valley. Ge

Before the addition of Paharis to the list of Scheduled Tribes, the Gujjar-Bakerwar 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

Michtil of reservation were Carborated into the outhoricut civil society alike. Calls for a review and reverpurely 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 vears 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

any central or stat servation basis GRAL opportu nity 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 Ther 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 in-

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

reservation policy.

fuse a degree of uniformity in the

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Confidence And Willpower

onfidence 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 selfconfidence 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

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 deepseated 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



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.

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 strugglesundiagnosed, 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

A New Policing Perspective

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 trend. The this contradiction is stark: in a region steeped in Sufi values and religious teachings that prohibit such behavior, pornography becomes easily an accessible

for escape 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 healthcare 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.

> to Make a Difference As a passionstudent, recognized dire the 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



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 slowmoving 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

within their jurisdictions, and

the response was encouraging.

A mail from the Inspector Gen-

eral of Police (IGP) office even

forwarded us to meet with the

Director General of Police (DGP)

to discuss our proposal. How-

ever, despite the initial momen-

tum, our efforts faced significant

challenges. The administration,

unfortunately, did not extend

financial or institutional sup-

port, which made it impossible

to sustain the project. Without

funding and official backing, we

were forced to halt our initiative.

the critical need for administra-

tive

This experience underscored

commitment

to mental health

reforms. Pas-

sionate 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

A Personal Initiative: **A Passionate** Student's Attempt neuroscience and neuropsychology

need renabilitation, not endless confinement under IPC sections

health Advocate, raising awareness through Articles and public education. He can be reached at Umairvanio7@gmail.com

If It Bleeds, It Leads

Elesa Zehndorfer

or 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 ref-

erendum 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 Analyt-



ica explicitly used neuroticism as a personality measure when engaging in neuropolitical campaigning for the Ted Cruz and Donald Trump 2016 presidential damaging to our minds. The

election campaigns. Unfortunately, in stoking this kind of neurotic intent, bad news, fear, and hatred appear

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 creators' 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 outlet'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

Cont. from Page 1

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Beyond The Wheel

young people who are turning to e-rickshaws for employment. He views driving as both a necessity and a symbol of change."E-rickshaws have created employment opportunities for many youths like me," Salim said. "But in Kashmir, whenever something new is introduced, people criticize it, claiming it negatively affects other professions.'

Salim acknowledged that e-rickshaws have affected the income of sumo and petrol auto drivers. However, he believes they serve as a lifeline for unemployed youth. "There was a time when young people like us spent our days playing games or wandering aimlessly," he said. "Even after earning degrees, many of us were stuck at home, idle and disheartened. E-rickshaws gave us a chance to earn a livelihood and support our families."

Salim also faces financial pressures. As an e-rickshaw driver, he pays a portion of his earnings to his superior, leaving little for himself. "Every morning, I step out with the stress of earning enough to pay my boss and still save something for my family," he said. "And yet, when people treat us with contempt, it deeply hurts."

For Bilal Ahmad, another e-rickshaw driver from Mehjoor Nagar, societal stigma is only part of the issue. Unjust government policies have worsened the challenges faced by drivers like him. "The government recently fixed e-rickshaw fares, but the rates are so low that we can barely cover our expenses," he said. "We protested, but some auto drivers supported the decision. They know it's unfair, but they don't care."

Bilal highlighted the daily harassment e-rickshaw drivers face, from verbal abuse to physical violence. "There have been cases where drivers were beaten up just because people assumed they were drunk," he said. "Every day, we argue with auto or sumo drivers over passengers. No one thinks about how all this affects us."

Petrol Rickshaw Drivers Hit Hard

While e-rickshaws create opportunities for some, they pose challenges for traditional petrol rickshaw drivers. Hilal, a driver from Barbar Shah, stated that the competition has become overwhelming. "E-rickshaw drivers operate without fixed routes or proper permits," Hilal explained. "They don't pay passenger taxes like we do, yet they run freely in city areas. Meanwhile, we follow the rules, pay taxes, and struggle to make ends meet."

The financial burden of running a petrol rickshaw is immense. Hilal outlined the expenses: renewing documents annually costs Rs18,000, insurance is Rs12,000, and fuel expenses can reach Rs 11,000 a month. "After covering all these costs, we're left with almost nothing for our families," he said.

Nazir Ahmad, another petrol rickshaw driver, highlighted the unfair competition created by erickshaw fares. "The government set rates at Rs 2.50 per kilometer for e-rickshaws," he said. "It's too low for them to survive, but it also creates problems for us. How are we supposed to compete?'

The Struggle To Stay Afloat

For sumo drivers, the introduction of e-rickshaws and e-buses has been devastating. Sajad Ahmad, who has been driving a sumo for 18 years, said his income has been halved. "Before e-rickshaws and e-buses, we earned enough to run our families and maintain our vehicles," Sajad said. "Now, we're lucky if we can make one or two trips a day.'

At his stand, where 70 to 80 sumos wait for passengers, drivers often sit idle for days before getting a fare. "By 10 a.m. in the past, you wouldn't find any drivers sitting here," another sumo driver said. "Now, the stand is rarely empty."

Sajad and his colleagues bear significant expenses, from road taxes and fitness certificates to maintenance costs. "We don't want e-rickshaw drivers out of business-they have families to feed too," he said. "But the government needs to make policies so we can all coexist."

Bus Drivers Face Bleak Future, Demand Fair Policies

Bus drivers, who once dominated public transportation, are also struggling. Taufeeq Ahmad, a bus driver whose family has been in the profession for generations, described the cascading effects on the local economy. "With public buses, it's not just the driver and conductor who depend on this workmechanics, tea stall owners, and others rely on it too," he said. "But smart city buses and e-rickshaws have reduced our income. The revenue from smart citv buses doesn't even stay in the state; it goes to private companies. Zahid Ahmad, another bus driver, shared the harsh realities of his work. "A round trip from Soura to Lal Chowk costs Rs 500 in fuel, but we only earn Rs 600 a day," he said. "After supporting our families and maintaining our buses, there's nothing left." For many bus drivers, the future of the profession looks bleak. "No one wants to join this line of work anymore," Zahid said. "Some drivers have left to sell clothes on the streets. The government hasn't introduced any clear policies for transportation."

and frustration, threatening the livelihood he has sustained for decades.

Mohd Amin, said, "When the scrapping policy was first introduced, we were told it wouldn't apply to us. But now they're saying these buses will eventually be rejected for running on the roads." He added, "The scrapping policy is inefficient. Even if we were to take new buses under the scheme, the money would only reach our bank accounts after we're dead."

Amin's words reflect the sentiments of many bus drivers who feel left behind by policies that seem out of touch with ground realities, leaving them with little hope for a stable future in the profession. The Weight Of Stereotypes

One of the most pervasive stereotypes is that Kashmiri drivers are inherently "reckless and ag-gressive." This generalization, often fueled by isolated incidents and fueled by fear, ignores the complex realities faced by many drivers.

Studies say that these stereotypes can have significant real-world consequences. The fear of being profiled or targeted can create a constant sense of anxiety and insecurity.

"People often say things like, Drivers are a nuisance, or make other derogatory remarks," said Zahoor Ahmad, a truck driver from south Kashmir.

"People see us just as drivers, but we are more than that. We are fathers, sons, brothers. We work hard to support our families," he said, adding that people in general consider them not belonging to good families.

"It is just our means of livelihood. Like other professions, we deserve respect too," he said

As National Drivers' Day passes, drivers in Kashmir continue to navigate their challenging roads, not only transporting passengers but also shouldering the burdens of societal judgment and economic hardship. Their stories, much like their journeys, serve as a testament to resilience and hope for a better future.

NDMA Issues

officer from the Jammu and Kashmir Disaster Management Authority (JKDMA) said, "This alert is generated through our portal and is scientifically validated. Based on its severity, we activate responders such as the fire and emergency services and the forest department."

He said the residents are urged to call 112 in case they spot a fire, and their teams will take immediate action to contain and manage the situation, stating that their top priority remains to save lives and protect properties.

The advisory stresses the importance of ensuring all fire-related materials, such as campfires or cooking stoves, are completely extinguished after use. People are also advised to avoid forested areas during this high-risk period.

The JKDMA official said that they have set up operation centers to handle any incidents, urging the public to stay vigilant and follow safety protocols to prevent environmental damage, loss of wildlife, or human casualties.

Notably, such alerts come in response to dry weather conditions, rising temperatures, and reduced humidity, which significantly increase the likelihood of forest fires in the region.

Similar warnings have been issued by the authorities in the past, where residents and visitors near forest areas were urged to exercise extreme caution and avoid activities that could trigger fires, such as lighting campfires or discarding cigarette butts.

As per the current advisory, NDMA has advised to stav calm if a sudden fire occurs and to avoid panic and follow emergency protocols.

The advisory strongly advises not to enter forest areas during such a high-risk period.

The NDMA, including JKDMA, has been highlighting the importance of vigilance during such critical periods to prevent any such incidents that could lead to environmental damage, loss of wildlife, or risk to human lives.

Sports Development

Badhaal village in Rajouri district has been declared a containment zone as of Wednesday, with prohibitory orders in place for all public and private gatherings following the recent deaths, officials said.

Magistrate orders have sealed the homes of families where the deaths occurred as part of the primary containment zone. Entry into these homes, even by family members, is strictly prohibited without permission from officials on duty.

The secondary containment zone includes families that had close contact with the affected individuals, who are under constant health monitoring, they said.

The third zone encompasses all families in Baddal village, where arrangements for food and water are being made and communal dining has been prohibited

A total of 17 people, including 13 children from the families of Mohammad Fazal, Mohammad Aslam, and Mohammad Rafiq in Baddal village, have died due to a mysterious illness over the past month and a half.

According to officials, the condition of Ejaaz, who was airlifted to PGI Chandigarh on Tuesday night, is reported to be stable. Ejaaz is currently admitted to the emergency ICU at PGI Chandigarh, where initial investigations are underway. A definitive assessment of the illness awaits the receipt of test reports.

Three new patients airlifted to a hospital by the Indian Air Force (IAF) in Jammu are currently under observation, officials added.

A central team continues its investigation into the cause of the deaths in three families, with over 230 samples sent for testing to various institutes.

The Special Investigation Team (SIT), established by the police after neurotoxins were found in samples from the deceased, continues its probe into potential criminal aspects.

Officials indicated that more than 50 persons have been questioned in connection with the case.

Dr A S Bĥatia, Principal of Government Medical College Hospital Rajouri, revealed that the common factor among all 17 deaths is the involvement of the brain and damage to the nervous system.

MLA Blames 'Dual

had sent the team here which took samples, but the samples are still here as they are being sent by vehicle which will take time," he said. "Air ambulance should have been here to take them to the respective institute for immediate analysis so as to ascertain the reasons for deaths but that isn't happening due to the dual power system.

He added, "I myself contacted Dr Jitendra Singh, LG, CM for air ambulance but failed. That is why people need to wake up and fight to end this dual power system."

MLA Javaid Iqbal Choudhary hit out at the Principal of Government Medical College Hospital Jammu, accusing the hospital management of mismanagement in handling patients.

"There is total mismanagement at the GMC hospital in Jammu. They failed to save the children. While one ill person shifted to PGI Chandigarh was stable but others shifted to GMC in Jammu are serious. We demand that all should be shifted to Chandigarh", he told reporters in Rajouri.

The MLA asserted that the hospital's handling of the situation has been inadequate, citing the lack of air ambulance services for patients despite repeated efforts.

Commending the efforts of the district administration, police, and health department of Rajouri, the MLA emphasized that higher authorities must address the situation more effectively.

Critically, Choudhary accused the Principal, GMC Jammu of causing unnecessary delays in referring the ill siblings to PGI Chandigarh, saying that personal conflicts and "ego clashes" are endangering lives. "If anything happens to these children, the Principal should be held accountable." he said.

The MLA said the situation warrants the declaration of a national emergency. "We must all work collaboratively-this is not the time for politics," he said, adding that playing partisan games could detract from essential public health responses. Principal, GMC Jammu, Dr Ashutosh Gupta said the hospital was informed at 6:30 pm on Wednesday about airlifting three children exhibiting symptoms of the mysterious illness from GMC Rajouri to GMC Jammu. "To facilitate their care, GMC Jammu contacted PGIMER Chandigarh to confirm bed availability. Despite repeated requests to the Director and HOD of PGIMER Chandigarh, the administration at PGIMER conveyed their inability to accept the patients due to a lack of available beds." he said. Dr Gupta said that, in response, GMC Jammu immediately dispatched critical care ambulances to the technical airport in Jammu for potential road transport to Chandigarh. However, considering the urgency of the children's condition, they were transferred to SMGS Hospital, Jammu, where senior pediatric consultants, including the HoD Pediatrics, received them, he said. "One child's condition deteriorated rapidly upon arrival, requiring immediate ventilator support and advanced ICU interventions. Timely and high-end interventions at SMGS Hospital prevented adverse outcomes that could have occurred during transit to Chandigarh," he added. Dr Gupta said the GMC Jammu medical team is in constant touch with their counterparts at PGIMER Chandigarh. Experts from ICMR and NCDC Delhi are also providing regular updates and guidance on patient management. He also acknowledged the efforts of MLA Budhal Javed Iqbal Choudhary for arranging midnight airlifting and for standing by the public of Bhudhal during this critical time. Dr Gupta praised the dedication of the GMC Jammu medical fraternity, including faculty, paramedics and administrative staff, who he said are working tirelessly to save lives. "We will leave no stone unturned to support the people of Bhudhal and ensure the best possible medical care during these extraordinary times," he said.(KNO)

Police, Home Department. The Jammu & Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) has received an Indent from Home Department for filling up vacancies under direct recruitment.

The aspirants allege that some aspirants who have secured less marks in the constable exams are topping in the merit list in Constable (telecommunication exam as the examination was held after a gap of a few days only.

"The government of the day needs to look into the matter, we voted for transparency and accountability, it is good to hear that an inquiry has been ordered by the SSB Chairperson," said Nadeem Lone, an aspirant.

Pertinently, days ago the People's Democratic Party leader, Iltija Mufti, had raised concerns over alleged discrepancies in the telecommunications and photographer exams conducted by the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB), questioning the fairness and transparency of the results.

Mass Comm

Department saying that the Merit list for the Photographer (CONSTABLE) post has raised serious concerns, as there are hardly any candidates who meet the stringent eligibility criteria.

"These requirements, including 10+2 with Science, a 6-month computer diploma, age below 28, height specifications, and two years of experience in Photography/Videography from a recognized organization, are exceptionally rare," said Rahil Hussain, an aspirant.

"How is it possible for someone without a journalism or relevant background to hold a valid photography certificate and be eligible for this position? It's troubling that so many ineligible candidates were able to appear for the exam without meeting the basic criteria." he added.

Pertinently, the successful candidates will proceed to physical evaluation rounds after the result was declared, however after marred by allegation of discrepancies the recruitment process has entered a hiccup.

Shortlisted candidates from the written examination will move on to the next stage of selection, which includes the Physical Standard Test (PST) and Physical Endurance Test (PET).

The written examination took place on December 1, 8, and 22, 2024, in an offline ÔMR-based format. The test assessed General Knowledge, Aptitude, and role-specific skills through 100 multiple-choice questions, with one mark awarded for correct answers and a penalty of 0.25 marks for incorrect responses. The recruitment aims to fill 4,002 constable vacancies in the Jammu and Kashmir Police.

Iltija Demands

to the youth of J&K & their future," Mufti posted on 'X'.

The National Conference (NC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) have clashed over recruitment scams in Jammu and Kashmir, with leaders from both parties accusing each other of irregularities in recruitment examinations. Iltija Mufti, daughter of PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti, highlighted alleged discrepancies in the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) exams. She guestioned how candidates who failed in two previous recruitment exams managed to top the Jammu and Kashmir Police Constable examination while hard working candidates were left out. Iltija called for transparency and accountability from the JKSSB and the government.

Responding to these allegations, NC spokesperson Ifra Jan criticized the PDP for its alleged involvement in the J&K Bank recruitment scam, labeling it the largest in the region's history. She stated that the NC is answerable to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, not to the PDP. Ifra emphasized that the controversial exams were conducted under the Lieutenant Governor-led administration and suggested Iltija direct her questions toward the BJP and LG administration rather than targeting the NC.

Ifra further accused the PDP of consistently u dermining the NC and deflecting blame. She urged Iltija to show the courage to question the LG administration regarding the recruitment process instead of "sabotaging the elected government," Ifra also highlighted that the PDP's actions have hindered the collective fight for the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood.

The meeting was attended by Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Principal Secretary Power Development Department (PDD) Rajesh H Prasad, Principal Secretary Finance Santosh D Vaidya, Managing Director JKSPDC Pankaj Magotra and other senior officials.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister emphasized the need for timely execution of these projects to ensure their public utility and stressed the importance of tackling challenges such as contractual issues,time and financial overruns in case of projects under construction and operation and maintenance issues of commissioned projects.

The roadmap for the next five years was presented showing substantial capacity addition to meet growing energy demands which would gradually reduce reliance on power imports, and boost the state's energy self-sufficiency. Upcoming projects, Detailed Project Report (DPR) formulation and appraisal were also discussed and JKSPDC was asked to focus on strategic project planning for development of hydropower assets on Chenab, Jhelum, Ravi and Indus rivers.

Highlighting the government's commitment to sustainable energy, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah urged officials to study revival plans for stalled projects and execute them efficiently.

He called for a proactive approach to address the challenges faced by JKSPDC and stressed that enhancing J&K's hydropower capacity is essential for meeting our energy demand.

"The timely execution of hydropower projects is essential to unlocking Jammu and Kashmir's potential as a power-surplus state. I urge all stakeholders to address challenges proactively and expedite ongoing works to serve the public interest," Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said. Earlier, Principal Secretary PDD provided a comprehensive update on the status of hydroelectric power development in Jammu and Kashmir.

Of the region's estimated 18,000 MW hydropower potential, 15,000 MW has already been identified, making it a key driver for future energy initiatives.

A detailed review of commissioned projects, including the Baglihar Hydroelectric Power Project (Stages I & II) on the Chenab River, Upper Sindh Hydroelectric Project (Stages I & II) on the Sind River, Lower Jhelum Hydroelectric Project in Baramulla was carried out during the meeting. The meeting also deliberated on projects under construction, including the New Ganderbal Hydroelectric Project (93 MW) on the Sind River, the Pakal Dul Hydroelectric Project (1,000 MW) under the Chenab River cascade, and the Ratle Hydroelectric Project (850 MW), which has been revived through a joint venture between NHPC and JKSPDC.

Discussions highlighted the importance of expediting work on these projects to ensure these become operational at the earliest.

Delhi HC Seeks

judge Chander Jit Singh -- who had requested the district judge to transfer the case to a court designated to try lawmakers as Rashid became an MP dismissed Rashid's plea urging him to pronounce the verdict on his pending bail application in the NIA case.

With the matter sent back to him by the district judge, the trial judge said in his decision that he could only decide the miscellaneous application and not the regular bail plea.

Hariharan said the MP was left without any redressal as the court hearing the bail plea "suddenly" took the view that it could not hear his case and the MP/MLA court did not have the jurisdiction to hear NIA cases.

He argued the pendency of the bail plea was resulting in Rashid's constituency being left unrepresented during the parliamentary sessions owing to his continuing custody.

Hariharan said there was urgency in the matter as the fourth session of Parliament was scheduled to begin on January 31.

Across all modes of transportation, drivers in Kashmir share a common hope: a fair system that allows them to earn a dignified living.

"Every job deserves dignity," said Bilal Ahmad, the e-rickshaw driver. "We work hard to survive and support our families. It's time society recognizes that.'

Vehicle Scrappage Policy

The vehicle scrappage policy is a governmentfunded initiative introduced in 2021 aimed at removing old, unfit, and polluting vehicles from Indian roads. This policy encourages the adoption of modern, environmentally friendly vehicles to reduce the country's carbon footprint.

Under the car scrapping policy, vehicles are required to undergo a mandatory fitness test once they reach a specific age. For both private and commercial vehicles, this age is set at 15 years. The fitness test is crucial as it assesses whether a vehicle is still roadworthy or should be scrapped. These tests are conducted at automated centres and evaluate emission levels, safety standards, and the overall condition of the vehicle.

Vishesh Paul Mahajan, the Transport Commissioner of Jammu and Kashmir, stated that the transport subsidy scheme, which is part of a broader initiative to phase out vehicles older than 15 years, is receiving a positive response.

In a recent media briefing in Srinagar, Mahajan announced that buses, matadors, and minibuses are eligible to apply for a subsidy by scrapping their old vehicles and providing proof of the scrapping process. He stated, "We have advertised this initiative. The RTO has informed me that approximately 35 applications have been received so far." He encouraged more people to take part in the scheme.

For Mohd Amin, a bus driver, the government's scrapping policy has become a source of confusion

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 but encouraged all the stakeholders by stating that India was truly a "4D sports destination." "If I talk of one and a great united India, then I also look at the diversity hidden in it and the benefits that come from it.

"Currently we are in Leh. we can hold the Winter Games here due to the prevalent weather conditions. If we go towards the Northeast, it's a great region for the development of adventure sports," he said.

"Going forward, we will explore the immense possibilities of beach games in south India, we will see all our other popular games being organised on the west coast. This tells us that we are a 4D Nation in terms of sports," Mandaviya added.

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.

This is the second time Ladakh is hosting the winter Games, which is into its fifth edition.

Over 200 People

contact with the affected families have been relocated to a quarantine centre set up in the building of a nursing college and GMC hospital in Rajouri, they said

A new quarantine centre was set up in nursing college on Wednesday. As a precautionary measure, these relocated individuals include close relatives of the deceased. Several individuals who had contact with the affected families, from those who took children to the hospital to those who participated in burials, have also been identified.

These individuals have been moved away from the village as a precaution to break the chain, officials said.

Strict security measures have been implemented at the quarantine centre located in the nursing college building in Rajouri, designated specifically for quarantine purposes. The facility has been secured with fencing and rigorous monitoring, they said.

Before admission to the centre, all individuals are being screened. Arrangements have been made to accommodate those affected at the nursing college at Gujjar Mandi.

"Keeping in view seriousness, the government should declare Medical emergency to save the population", the MLA told reporters here.

JKSSB Initiates

members involved in the inquiry have been directed to complete their work promptly and transparently.

"We have initiated the inquiry and it will be concluded in the time bound manner," she said.

Pertinently, the Jammu and Kashmir Service Selection Board (JKSSB) had announced 4002 posts of Constables, constable (telecommunication) constable executive police, constable (photographers) besides other posts vide Advertisement Notification No. 01 of 2024, dated: 16th July, 2024.

The JKSSB had advertised the posts via Subject Advertisement for the posts of Constable in J&K

Our Identity

The land of Jammu and Kashmir, a region restive for decades, must be protected by its people at all costs, he said.

"When we talk about these matters - about the Constitution, special status, and the prosperity of Jammu and Kashmir – we are also talking about our identity. And our identity is tied to our land," Omar said while addressing a function in the Bari Brahmana area of Samba district.

"We want this land to remain ours. The land that Sheikh Abdullah, with a single signature, transferred to you without any compensation ... Without it, what do we truly possess?" he said.

"It must not be taken away from us, and this should remain our collective effort," he added.

Omar also paid his tributes to Dr B R Ambedkar for his contributions to the drafting of a Constitution that ensured equality between all.

"No matter how much is said about Ambedkar, it will always fall short. The foundation of any nation lies in its Constitution, and Ambedkar gave this nation its Constitution. He laid the foundation of this country, and wherever we stand today, it is because of him." he said.

Referring to the West, he said some of these countries exercised discrimination on the basis of one's skin colour, while India after Independence wrote away all such differences, even seeing men and women as equal.

"This is the kind of day we celebrate – a day where Ambedkar ensured from the very beginning that no matter your colour, caste, or background, there would be no difference between your vote and anyone else's. A vote is equal, free from discrimination, transcending caste or creed," he said.

All the same, Omar expressed concerns at the succeeding generations' failure in upholding the values of the Constitution. He said this failure has given rise to conflicts, predominantly to the detriment to the marginalised.

"Even today, if we look at the largest legislative houses in India, how many men are there, and how many women? The same can be observed in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly – compare the number of men and women, and the difference is like that between the earth and the sky," he said.

Urges Early

to assess the progress made in execution of new hydro- electric projects and the expected enhancement in power generation from these projects.

"There seems to be no court which would hear my bail application. I have no redressal.. Three months have gone by and my bail application is pending. My constituency can't be unrepresented," he said.

He argued, "Twenty one witnesses get examined, that time you had the jurisdiction. I became an MP on June 5, 2024 but before that I was an MLA. When you took cognisance and when charges were framed. I was an MLA. You continue to hear me."

The NIA counsel said the agency in November wrote to the registrar general of the high court on the issue of designation of a lower court to hear the case but he was not aware of the status of the request.

He suggested that the bench could call for a report from the high court's administrative side.

Hariharan said he didn't see any reason for the agency to oppose the present plea.

Rashid was elected from the Baramulla constituency in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and has been lodged in Tihar Jail since 2019 after the NIA arrested him under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in the 2017 terror-funding case. The ED filed a money laundering case against the accused persons on the basis of the NIA's FIR, which accused them of "conspiring to wage war against the government" and fomenting trouble in the Kashmir valley.

Cases of the NIA and the ED also involve Pakistanbased Lashkar-e-Taiba chief and 26/11 Mumbai attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed, Hizbul Mujahideen leader Syed Salahuddin and others.

ACB Raids Retired

main partner Maharaj Krishan Wali, beneficiaries & others.

GMC Letter

contacted, Dr. Sheikh Mushtaq Ahmad declined to discuss the issue. "I am not authorized to speak to the media," he said, redirecting queries to the Medical Superintendent (MS) of Children's Hospital Bemina and the Principal of GMC Srinagar.

Similarly, MS Children's Hospital Bemina, Dr. Abdul Rasheed, stated, "I have not officially received any such letter and am not authorized to speak to the press."

Principal GMC Srinagar, Dr. Iffat Hassan, also refused to provide clarity on the matter. "Come to the office, and we will talk," she said curtly when contacted over the phone.

The circulation of the letter has raised concerns among the public, with many questioning the efficacy of measures against unqualified practitioners who pose a threat to public health. The lack of an official response has further fueled speculation, leaving citizens and healthcare professionals in the dark.

3 Officers Suffer

the officers were airlifted to GMC Jammu for treatment and their condition is said to be stable.

STATE

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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 Qanoongu and other senior officials at the Bank's Mumbai Zonal Office. The event was also attended by Branch Heads, Advances Managers, Zonal Insurance Coordinator (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 customercentric 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 (HMIL) launched Hyundai CRETA Electric at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025 at an introductory price of INR 17.99.000. Electric CRETA Hyundai 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 HMIL's commitment to offering technologically advanced products to Indian customers. Various dignitaries were present on the unveiling ceremony from Hyundai Motor India Limited including Bedabrata Sharma (ZBH, HMIL), YB Hwang (ZBC, HMIL), Sujit Kumar (RBH, HMIL), Puneet Mehta (ASH, HMIL) and Akshay Jamwal (TSM, HMIL).

ing Director, HK Hyundai, Umar Yaqoob Mir said, "CRETA Electric marks a defining moment in HMIL'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 muchneeded push for the growth of the segment.'

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 ecotourism 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 filers 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 leductions including those

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 emr

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 updat-ed 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 29,616teachers 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

their returns.

Speaking at the unveiling of Hyundai CRETA Electric Manag-

Shabir Ahmad Baba (General Manager, HK Hyundai) said, "Hyundai CRETA Electric comes with an Electrified Exterior & Vibrant Interior: 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)

ing 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-

related to loans, donations and the duties of every taxpayer, medical premiums, were being including the accurate filing of falsely claimed by some indireturns, disclosure of correct viduals. Sh. Sahay emphasized income, claiming of applicable the need to spread awareness deductions, and reviewing Form 16 and Form 26AS to enabout these malpractices in order to eliminate them comsure compliance with tax laws. pletely. He assured that strict The program at Jammu was a action would be taken against part of a nation-wide outreach those found guilty of such ofagainst fraudulent claims of fenses. "We must work together income tax refund by taxpayers. During the program, parto restore the faith of the cititicipants raised questions on zens in the tax system, and this various tax-related matters and responsibility begins with eduthe actions being taken against cation and awareness," he said. He also informed taxpayers non-compliance. In response to queries, Sh. Sahay advised

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

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 homestavs 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.

those who have received any

notices or demands to immedi-

ately contact the Department's

Jammu office for assistance in

resolving their issues.

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)

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 Majistrate 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 infrastructure, 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.

SPORTS

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

Press Trust of India

MURO LECCESSE: India's 10-year-old karting sensation Atiga 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 Final Cup as a debutant. WSK Super Master Series, the The first of these three races, WSK Super Series Master Series, WSK Euro Series and the WSK

my mind was ... I did not

celebrate, as a fan of Ro-

hit Sharma. I know he is something, even though I

dismissed him. I am a big

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

fan of Rohit Sharma. "(Even) if we win this

driving in the winter will be a challenge but I am up for it,' said Atiqa. WSK is considered as the pinnacle of karting which attracts the best driving talent, the top kart manufacturers and engine manu-

> facturers from the world over. Reigning world champion Max Verstappen is among the host of drivers that have raced in WSK in their formative years.

will be held over the weekend.

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

"I am super thrilled to get

Like Verstappen, Atiqa 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 Atiqa's side

when she competes in Italy this weekend. "Atiqa 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 appear-

Ranji Trophy clash here at the Wankhede Stadium a decade ago. Apart from moving the ball sideways, Nazir said ance in a decade. Nazir used the moisture hitting the right length at on a fresh wicket here at a spot just ahead of the good length was the right approach on the first day

the BKC Ground to great effect, dismissing Mumbai captain Ajinkya Rahane here which helped him (12), Shivam Dube (0) and produce extra bounce too, Hardik Tamore (7) along that ended Rohit's stay afwith Rohit in a display of ter 3 runs off 19 balls.

fine seam bowling. "A good ball is a good "When you dismiss an international player, it is ball against any player, always a prized wicket. you don't look at the stat-There was some help from ure of the player, but Rohit the surface, I tried to bowl in right areas. Rohit Shar-Sharma's wicket is a big one, I am happy," Nazir ma is a big name and his told media after the end wicket was important for us and for me, personally,

of play. "The first thought in 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 icehockey match made for a crisp ceremony. Mandaviya expressed his disappoint-

ment 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**

&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 quickfire 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

Daris 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 Bar-

cola, 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.



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