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BOOK APPOINTMENT

The Cost Of Closing Doors

Declining Enrolment & Its Toll On Kashmir's Future!

Asma Majid

Srinagar: When Hamza successfully scribbled the letter A on his toy slate, the one who clapped the most in the family was Farwa. It had taken her weeks to teach her five-year old baby brother to get the alphabet right. Little Hamza would always draw an X with

extra lines instead of a proper A. But his affectionate sister would then rub the upper two lines producing a dwarf A which would usher in chortles of laughter from Hamza and

dampen Farwa's spirits. "Would you let the baby be? You are always after him with that toy slate. Let him play around with other toys," Farwa's mother Shaheen would

6 WHEN PARENTS SEE CLASSROOMS WITH BROKEN WINDOWS AND TEACHERS WHO BARELY show up, they lose faith in government institutions!

often hide her from snuggling the child in her lap, trying to teach him the alphabet.

Hamza initially loved playing with the toy slate when it was freshly gifted to him by his Molvi chachu, scribbling random stuff, but once Farwa disciplined him to read and write on it, his interest in it took a back seat. Hamza now found

solace in playing with his other toys, especially the plastic doctor set, that he had earned after much pleading from his father Javed, when he had accompanied him to attend the Friday Prayers in Hazratbal shrine, located in Srinagar city. He had even lost half the part of the plastic scissors while operating on a doll and | [More on P6](#)

J&K Has 3rd Highest Dropout Rate In North India

With a dropout rate of more than 13 percent at secondary school level, Jammu and Kashmir is grappling with worst 'abandonment' student rate in north India. The recent official figures further

Day Temp To Rise Over Next 5 Days: MeT

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The meteorological department forecast mainly dry weather for the remainder of 'Chillai-Kalan' in J&K.

It said the weather is likely to remain cloudy but dry until January 29. A fresh spell of light rain or snow at isolated places during the night of January 29 or the morning of January 30 is possible, after which the weather will stay partly to generally cloudy on January 31, the department said.

Overall, no significant weather changes are expected until the end of January, the MeT Office said.

It also mentioned a gradual and significant rise in daytime temperatures over the next five days, while a fall of 1-3 degrees in the minimum temperature is likely.

The minimum temperature dropped in Kashmir on Friday as cold conditions tightened their grip on the valley, with the Meteorological Department predicting mostly dry weather until the end of the month, officials said.

The minimum temperature in Srinagar settled at minus 3.3 degrees Celsius on Thursday night, down from the previous night's minus 2 degrees Celsius, according to the meteorological department.

Pahalgam recorded a low of minus 7 degrees Celsius, down from minus 5.6 degrees Celsius the night before.

The tourist resort of Gulmarg recorded a minimum temperature of minus 8.5 degrees Celsius, a degree | [More on P6](#)

Hope After 50 Days Of Fear In Rajouri

Patients Show Signs of Recovery



Agencies

Jammu: After nearly 50 days of uncertainty and fear, positive news is emerging from the Badhaal area of Rajouri district as patients admitted to various hospitals are showing signs of recovery.

According to officials, 14 patients from the affected village are under medical care in different hospitals, and all are reported to be recovering. Meanwhile, other residents of the village remain under strict observation as authorities continue efforts to address the mysterious health crisis.

Principal of GMC Rajouri, Dr Amarjeet Singh Bhatia said that 11 patients from Badhaal are currently admitted to the hospital, 10 of whom belong to three already-affected families. Among these, two patients are in the ICU, while the remaining nine are under close observation. "The good news is that all of them are recovering," Dr Bhatia said.

"This is a fight against an invisible enemy, and we are

implementing various measures to manage the situation. People should not panic," he added.

Dr Bhatia said recent adjustments to the patients' medications have shown positive results, and all patients are now stable. He urged the residents of Rajouri to visit the people of Badhaal, who remain under surveillance, and to boost their morale.

"These residents have been living in forests and are used to moving freely day and night. The restrictions on their movement could affect their mental well-being. It is our duty to support them emotionally," he said. "Be assured, this is not a virus or influenza—you can interact with them safely."

Principal of GMC Jammu, Dr Ashutosh Gupta said three siblings admitted to the hospital are showing improvement, including one patient who had been on a ventilator but has now been extubated and is stable.

Dr Gupta confirmed that a patient sent | [More on P6](#)

Policy Interventions Transformed Jammu & Kashmir Into Startup Hub: LG

Inaugurates 'BRICS Youth Council Entrepreneurship Run-up Event' At IIM Jammu

Observer News Service

Jammu: The industrial ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed an unprecedented improvement in the past few years, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday said and attributed the growth to the government's efforts and policy interventions that have transformed the Union Territory into a vibrant startup hub.

He urged the youth to dream big, dedicate themselves, and contribute to the development of the region to propel its growth trajectory to new heights.

"In the past few years, J&K's industrial ecosystem has witnessed an unprecedented surge, fostering a culture of



innovation, research, development, and scientific advancements. I want to see our youth among the top-notch entrepreneurs of the country, contributing to its growth," Sinha said after inaugurating the 'BRICS Youth Council Entrepreneurship Run-Up

Event' at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) here.

The day-long event provides a dynamic platform for innovators, aspiring entrepreneurs, and youth leaders to showcase innovative business ideas and entrepreneurial initiatives.

Sinha highlighted the

government's efforts to develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem in the Union Territory. He said, "Our sincere efforts and policy interventions have made J&K a vibrant startup hub."

He added that various transformative initiatives by the government, through the Department of Industries and Commerce, have redefined the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, empowering the youth of the Union Territory.

"We continue to focus on policies to promote incubation centres and provide better resources and support to establish new startups. I want our youth to dream big, dedicate themselves, and develop a dynamic J&K, propelling its growth trajectory to new heights," he said. The Indian | [More on P6](#)

Republic Day 2025

Full Dress Rehearsal Held Across Kashmir



Observer News Service

Srinagar: Ahead of 76th Republic Day, full dress rehearsal functions were held on Friday across all the

districts of Kashmir, giving a glimpse of the grand spectacle to unfold on Friday.

The rehearsal is a precursor to the actual Republic Day parade scheduled | [More on P6](#)

Drones & Spotters In Place

Multi-tier security arrangements, including drones and spotters, are in place to ensure a smooth conduct of the Republic-Day functions in Kashmir, the valley's top cop, V K Birdi, said here on Friday.

"Proper and secure arrangements have been made for those who want to participate in the function," the inspector general of police (IGP) told reporters after a full dress rehearsal at the Bakshi Stadium, the venue of the main Republic-Day function in the Kashmir valley on | [More on P6](#)

Special Vande Bharat Express Arrives In J&K

Observer News Service

Jammu: Specially designed to operate seamlessly in Jammu and Kashmir's challenging winter conditions, the Vande Bharat Express train arrived in Jammu with a large number of people aspiring to experience a dream travel to Kashmir.

The Jammu railway station on Friday echoed with a unique announcement which said "Yatrigan kripya dhyan dein, Vande Bharat train sankhya 244027 Kashmir jane ke liye platform number ek

par khadi hai".

Locals and several passengers waiting for other trains at the station became ecstatic, shouting slogans of "Bharat Mata Ki Jai". Many among them rushed to platform number one soon after the arrival of the special Vande Bharat train which will run from Katra to Kashmir.

"We are elated over the arrival of the special train to Kashmir. It is our dream to travel on this train. Now Kashmir is fully connected by train to Kanniyakumari -- the other end of India," said Pune resident Adik Kadam.

Along with his family, | [More on P6](#)



MMU Delegation Meets JPC Head In Delhi

Amendment Bill Threat To Waqf Autonomy: Mirwaiz

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Expressing "serious and deep concern" over the proposed amendments to the Waqf Act, Jammu and Kashmir Mutahida Malis-E-Uleme (MMU) patron Mirwaiz Umar Farooq has said the proposed changes represent a significant threat to the autonomy and functioning of the Waqf.

In a written submission to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the proposed



Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, the MMU said the collector has been given absolute power to

change the nature of the Waqf properties into "government properties" by | [More on P6](#)

Building Bye Laws

Govt Extends Deadline For Submitting Feedback

Observer News Service

Srinagar: In a significant move, the Jammu & Kashmir Government has extended the deadline for submitting feedback on the proposed amendments to the Unified Building Byelaws (UBBL) - 2021.

The Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD) has extended the date for submitting suggestions and comments on the proposed amendments to the J&K Unified Building Byelaws (UBBL) - 2021 to February 17, 2025.

Earlier, the Department had set January 18, 2025, as the deadline for submission of feedback on these amendments, which evoked

widespread criticism from business and environmental groups. These groups accused the government of pushing through the changes in a "hush-hush" manner.

The Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industries (KCCI) and the Environmental Policy Group (EPG) had pushed for extending the deadline for feedback on changes in the building byelaws.

The proposed amendments remove all restrictions on the height and area governing the construction of residential and commercial spaces in Jammu & Kashmir. The changes include doing away with the existing curbs over Floor Area Ratio | [More on P6](#)

Popular Harwan 'Hakeem's' Clinic Sealed

Tashir Khan

Srinagar: A medical team supervised by the Tehsildar Hazratbal, Naib Tehsildar Harwan, and Block Medical Officer (BMO) Hazratbal sealed the clinic of Ghulam Qadir Reshi, also known as Qadir Resh or Hakeem, in Syedpora Bala, Harwan, on Thursday. The team also collected samples of "medicines" for further investigation.

A senior official confirmed that the samples will be sent for laboratory analysis to determine their composition and whether

they meet medical standards.

Authorities are continuing their investigation, with further details about the findings and potential implications expected soon.

Earlier, the Head of the Department of Paediatrics at Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar had urged the Principal of GMC to take strong measures against the practice of quackery. "With profound reverence and humble submission, I request your esteemed self to protect public health and safety. We | [More on P6](#)

Not Targeting Any Faith Or Group: CMO

The Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Srinagar, Dr. Tahir Sajad, has clarified regarding the recent sealing of a clinic in Dara Harwan, emphasizing that the action was part of a routine exercise | [More on P6](#)

Good He Became Part Of Democratic process: BJP

Even as Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, the religious head of Muslims in Kashmir, opposed the Waqf (Amendment) Bill before a parliamentary committee, several BJP members took heart from his decision to be part of the constitutional process as the Hurriyat leader has been associated with separatist politics | [More on P6](#)

Police Destroy 121 Kgs Of Seized Narcotics In Anti-Drug Campaign

Observer News Service

Srinagar: As part of the nationwide anti-drug campaign initiated by the Hon'ble Home Minister of India, the Drug Disposal Committee of District Srinagar has destroyed 121 kilograms of seized narcotic substances. These drugs were confiscated in connection with multiple FIRs registered across the district, reads a press release issued by District Police Srinagar shared with Associated News Bureau.

The destruction process was carried out at a designated incineration facility in Lassipora, Pulwama, following necessary orders

from the competent court. Senior officers from various police wings oversaw the operation, which was conducted in the presence of representatives from the Legal Metrology Department and the Pollution Control Board to ensure proper compliance with regulations.

The destroyed narcotics included Heroin, Brown Sugar, Crystal Meth, Fukki, Charas, Codeine Phosphate, and other banned substances, it added.

This initiative reflects the Srinagar Police's unwavering commitment to eradicating drug abuse and contributing to the broader national mission of achieving a drug-free society.



Deputy CM Reviews Shab-E-Meraj (PBUH) Arrangements At Hazratbal Shrine

Nida Sadiq

Srinagar: Ahead of Shab-E-Meraj (PBUH) Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary visited the Hazratbal Shrine to oversee preparations for the large number of devotees expected to attend the occasion.

The Dy CM was accompanied by Nasir Aslam Wani, Advisor to Chief Minister; Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir; Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar; Commissioner, SMC, Srinagar; VC LCMA; Chief Engineer PDD; Chief Engineer PHE, Kashmir; Joint Director Information, Kashmir RTO, Kashmir; ADC, Srinagar and senior officers and officials of various departments.

During the visit, the Deputy CM highlighted the administration's focus on ensuring seamless arrangements for the devotees. "Like every year, people continue to visit this place, and on the occasion of Shab-E-Meraj, an even larger number of people are expected to gather here. Since it is the winter season, we have come to ensure proper arrangements for the attendees, including adequate transportation, healthcare services, food and water supplies, and uninterrupted electricity. I am pleased to note that the Divisional Commissioner, DC Srinagar, and other officials have worked diligently to ensure all arrangements are in place. Any shortcomings will be addressed promptly," he said.

The Deputy Chief Minister also engaged with the shrine management and local representatives to ensure that the arrangements align with the expectations of the devotees. He sought feedback and suggestions to further enhance the experience of visitors and uphold the sanctity of the religious occasion.

Advisor to CM Nasir Aslam Wani also reviewed the arrangements and directed officers to

administration for its proactive efforts and dedication towards ensuring a spiritually uplifting experience during this revered occasion.

They assured that all necessary measures have been taken to ensure a smooth and safe experience for the devotees during Shab-E-Meraj.

Special arrangements have also been made to ensure smooth traffic management, sufficient public transport services and availability of

Meraj-un-Nabi (PBUH) holds immense religious significance for the people, and we are committed towards ensuring that all necessary arrangements are in place to facilitate devotees in offering their prayers and participating in the observances peacefully and comfortably

address any gaps immediately. "Proper facilities must be ensured, including uninterrupted electricity and adequate transport for the devotees, especially during this winter season. A control room has been established at the shrine to monitor the arrangements and address issues in real time," he stated.

Both leaders visited the shrine, expressing their personal connection to the occasion. "I also had the opportunity to visit the shrine myself, which is a significant and meaningful experience for me," said the Deputy CM.

The shrine authorities and devotees expressed their gratitude to the

medical facilities, the meeting was informed.

The Advisor to Chief Minister asked the officials to remain vigilant and responsive throughout the event to ensure uninterrupted services.

The shrine authorities and devotees expressed their gratitude to the administration for its proactive efforts and dedication towards ensuring a spiritually uplifting experience during this revered occasion.

Later, Surinder Choudhary accompanied by Advisor to Chief Minister paid obseance at the Hazratbal shrine. He prayed for peace and prosperity for mankind and Jammu and Kashmir in particular.

Parents Decry Unfair Nursery Admissions At Private School

Agencies

Srinagar: A prominent educational institution, has come under fire for its alleged bias toward financial status in its nursery class admissions. Frustrated parents have criticized the school for prioritizing wealth over merit, sparking calls for transparency and fairness in the selection process.

A mother, whose three-year-old daughter was denied admission despite her exceptional language skills and fluency in English, voiced her grievances. "My child is talented and well-prepared, yet she was not admitted. It seems the school values money over intelligence," she said, questioning the criteria used for student selection.

Another parent accused certain individuals within the school of making arbitrary decisions that sideline deserving candidates in favor of wealthier applicants. "This institution, established on state land, was meant to promote education, not privilege," one parent lamented, pointing to the public nature of the school's setup.

The parents alleged that the school management is in-

fluenced by affluent families, undermining the institution's mission to provide quality education to all. "Some people in the school are clearly calling the shots, giving preference to influential families while avoiding the less privileged," they claimed.

The lack of transparency has led to widespread disappointment among parents who had high expectations of fairness and equal opportunity. Many have demanded a clear and just admission process that ensures every child, regardless of financial background, gets a fair chance at education.

In a direct appeal, the aggrieved parents urged Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to intervene and investigate the matter. They emphasized the need for accountability, arguing that public land and resources should benefit all sections of society equally.

The parents said that neither they were called for any interview or any interaction and yet the results were declared. "I want to know what the criteria on which admissions were made," they said and sought intervention from higher authorities. [KNT]

Mandatory Attendance For Govt Employees At R-Day Celebrations

Srinagar: The Office of the District Magistrate, Srinagar, has issued a directive mandating the attendance of all government employees in the Republic Day celebrations scheduled to be held at Bakshi Stadium, Srinagar,

on January 26, 2025. As per the order, all Heads of Departments (HoDs), District Officers, and Sectoral Officers within the jurisdiction of District Srinagar are required to attend the main function along with their subordinate staff

as part of their official duty. To ensure compliance, each department has been instructed to nominate a senior officer to mark the attendance of their staff and submit the attendance report to the District Level Nodal Officer.

ZARGAR FAMILY BEREAVED



With profound grief and sorrow we announce the sad demise of Fahmeeda Bano (W/O Late Abdul Rashid Zargar, resident of Samandhar Bagh, Srinagar (near Ahle Hadees Masjid Sharief) She passed away on the 23rd of January 2025 (Thursday) after brief illness. Ijtimaye Fateh Khwani shall be held on Sunday, 26th of January 2025- Insha Allah.

Note: Ladies are kindly requested not to bring any eatables with them.

BEREAVED:
Sajjad Ahmed Zargar
Sohail Ahmed Zargar
Sameer Ahmed Zargar
Contact: 9596568448

Government of Jammu & Kashmir
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL AND HOSPITALS DIVISION SRINAGAR
(Tele-fax No: 019-2496089, e-mail id: xennhchdk@yahoo.in)

Subject SITC of 30 KVA servo stabilizer 3 Phase along with allied works at UPHC Harwan, Srinagar Ref : 1. This office NIT No: M&HDS/TS /2024-25/137/e-tendering Dated: 22.01.2024.

CANCELLATION

Due to change in BOQ of above referred NIT floated vide e-NIT No. M&HDS/TS /2024-25/137/e-tendering Dated: 22.01.2024, is hereby cancelled and shall be floated afresh shortly.

Sd/
Executive Engineer,
Mechanical & Hospitals Division,
Srinagar.

No: M&HDS/TS/7888-91 DIPK-11207/24 Dated: 24.01.2025

Government of Jammu and Kashmir
OFFICE OF THE BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICER B.K.PORA
Email: bdbokpora@gmail.com

Subject:- Invitation for Expression of Interest (EOI) for Solid Waste Management in Block B.K.Pora District Budgam.

CORRIGENDUM

Please read "within a period of 10 days* instead of "within a period of 07 days" appearing in the fourth line of para 1st. In the EOI/Dasti quotation for said Solid Waste Management of CD Block B.K.PORA floated vide reference no BDO/BKP/1467-72 Dated 14-01-2025, DIPK-10943/24 Dated 16-01-2025.

Sd/
Block Development Officer,
B.K.PORA

No: BDO/BKP/1558-64
DIPK-11206/24
Date: 24/01/2025

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr.DEE/TR/JAT acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders (www.gem.gov.in) against below titled Tenders. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only.

Tender No.	Name of work	App. Cost. (in Rs.)	Earnest Money (In Rs.)	Completion period	Bid End Date/Time	Website Particulars
GEM/2025/B/5855014	*Hiring of Multi Utility Vehicle(MUV) for material and manpower deployment at remote locations for BDGM, SVDK, JAT and BAHN depot in J&K region for a period of two (02) years.*	50,01,568/-	1,00,032/-	24 Month	15.02.2025 13:00:00	www.gem.gov.in

Note No. GEM/2025/B/5855014 Dated: - 23.01.2025

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- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081
- Ambulance: Kashmir EMS Service: +91 94841 00200

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SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

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- BUBHERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORE: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

HIGHWAY STATUS

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



HIJRI CALENDAR

24 Rajab
1446

PRAYERS	
FAJR	6: 06
ZUHR	12: 42
ASR	4: 16
Magrib	5: 57
ISHA	7: 21

This Day In History

- 1348 - Friuli Earthquake in European southern Alps measuring approximately 6.9, largely destroys Villach, killing 5,000
- 1565 - Battle at Talikota India: Deccan sultanate destroy Vijayanagar's army and the last Hindu kingdom of Southern India
- 1579 - Treaty of Utrecht signed, marks beginning of Dutch Republic
- 1721 - Tsar Peter the Great ends Russian-orthodox patriarchy
- 1755- Moscow University is established by Elizabeth of Russia and founded by Mikhail Lomonosov on Tatiana Day
- 1840 - American naval expedition under Charles Wilkes is first to identify Antarctica as a new continent
- 1964 - Echo 2, US communications satellite launched
- 1971 - Himachal Pradesh becomes 18th Indian state
- 1971 - Military coup in Uganda under Major General Idi Amin
- 1974 - Dr Christian Barnard transplants 1st heterotopic heart transplant (adding donor heart without removal of old)
- 1975 - Bangladeshi parliament disposes of premier Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
- 1979 - 1st documented case of a robot killing a human in US
- 1980 - Highest speed attained by a warship, 167 kph, USN hovercraft
- 1983 - Infrared telescope satellite launched into polar orbit
- 1988 US VP George H. W. Bush & Dan Rather clash on "CBS Evening News" as Rather attempts to question Bush about his role in Iran-Contra affair.
- 1990 - Avianca Flight 52, runs out of fuel & crashes in Cove Neck NY, 73 die.
- 1992 - Hubble space telescope optics finds NGC3862/3C264.
- 1994 - Mine fire at Asansol, India, kills 55
- 1994 - US space probe Clementine launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base, California
- 2001 - A 50-year-old Douglas DC-3 crashes near Ciudad Bolivar, Venezuela killing 24.
- 2002 - Wikipedia switches to the new version of its software ("Phase II") aka Magnus Manske Day.
- 2005 - A stampede at the Mandher Devi temple in Mandhradevi in India kills at least 258.
- 2006 - Three independent observing campaigns announce the discovery of OGLE-2005-BLG-390Lb through gravitational microlensing, the first cool rocky/icy extrasolar planet around a main-sequence star.
- 2010 - Ethiopian Airlines Flight 409 crashes into the Mediterranean Sea shortly after take-off from Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport, killing all 90 people on-board.
- 2011- Egyptian Revolution of 2011 begins with a series of street demonstrations, rallies, acts of civil disobedience, labor strikes and violent clashes in Cairo, Alexandria and other major cities
- 2011- UK announces it had a shock economic contraction of 0.5% in Q4 2010, due to severe winter weather and budget cuts implemented by the coalition government
- 2018- Doomsday clock moved by 30 seconds to 2 minutes to midnight by Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, closest since 1950s
- 2019- Longest-ever US government shutdown ends after 35 days when President Donald Trump agrees to three week of negotiations on border security by a House-Senate conference committee
- 2019- Tailing dam for an iron ore mine in Brumadinho, south-eastern Brazil, collapses killing at least 110 with 238 missing
- 2021- Janet Yellen is confirmed as the first female treasury secretary by the US Senate
- 2022- Australian government buys the copyright to the Aboriginal flag designed by artist Harold Thomas for A\$20 million (US\$14m) [1]
- 2023- America and Germany announce decision to send powerful battle tanks (US 31, Germany 14) to Ukraine to fight Russia invasion
- 2023- Chris Hipkins is sworn in as Prime Minister of New Zealand, following the resignation of Jacinda Ardern

Healthcare Crisis

Jab Munsif Hi Qatil Ho

Bilal Ahmad Khanday

“
Why do I call it 'unhealthy healthcare'? There are many points that prove my argument, but the recent incident I witnessed—one that even happened to me at one of the primary and major hospitals in Kashmir—serves as an eye-opener for policymakers to reconsider their policies and management practices

So far as the health sector is concerned, it is there to act as a bedrock that supports a society with its infrastructure, equipment, efficient and skilled doctors, paramedical staff, capable and dynamic administration, quality checkups, medications, and more. Healthcare is one of the primary, pioneering, and fundamental systems in a society, which not only cures our physical ailments but also heals our mind and soul. However, as the saying goes, “*Jab munsif hi qatil ho*,” we lose hope for a better future, as we are like a boat that is being sunk by the rower himself.

The “*Munsif hi qatil ho*” expression holds true for almost every sector, considering the realities at the grassroots level. As far as the health sector is concerned, it should serve as the bedrock of a society, with its infrastructure, equipment, skilled doctors and paramedical staff, vibrant administration, quality checkups, medications, and more. Why do I call it ‘unhealthy healthcare’? There are many points that prove my argument, but the recent incident I witnessed—one that even happened to me at one of the primary and major hospitals in Kashmir—serves as an eye-opener for policymakers to reconsider their policies and management practices. These ultimately determine the health and hygiene of the public, both in the short and long run.

A few days ago, I took my better half for a cardiac check-up, as advised by a physician. Upon reaching the hospital, I was astonished by the long, serpentine queues that we had to follow to get a ticket, which then needed to be counter-signed by the concerned official for the date. This process seemed messy and cumbersome for almost all patients and attendants, who had to follow what seemed more like ‘dictates’ in the hospital rather than clear rules and regulations. After standing in line for about an hour, I finally reached the counter and got the ticket with the date.

After my better half’s check-up, the cardiologist advised an ECG for further investigation to probe the expected problem. The next step was to deposit the fee for the ECG, but to my utter surprise and disgust, the concerned window (counter) was closed, even though the clock read 2:30 pm. Somehow, I realized I could deposit the fee at the casualty counter, which fortunately was still working. When I reached the ECG counter, I found some patients still waiting outside for their turn. To kill time, I asked an elderly lady, holding a small baby in her lap, who she was with. She replied that her daughter was inside, having cardiac issues for a long time.

When we entered for our turn, I saw a woman, probably in her late forties, arguing with the staff to provide her with some cotton to clean the gel off her body after the ECG. She



“
This process seemed messy and cumbersome for almost all patients and attendants, who had to follow what seemed more like ‘dictates’ in the hospital rather than clear rules and regulations

was given a bed sheet, wet and dirty, that had been left on a chair. She refused to use it and argued that it was unreasonable to expect a patient to clean gel off her body with such an unhygienic item. Finding no alternative, she left, rebuking the officials and the administration for their careless approach, which could further jeopardize patients’ health and hygiene.

Finally, I got my better half’s ECG done, but to my surprise and dismay, I found that I was even more harsh than the lady who had earlier taught these so-called literates a lesson. I too raised the issue with them. Their illogical response was that they were charging a meager amount for the ECG, which I countered with a valid argument. I asked them how it could be justified when a hospital, which claims to prioritize health and hygiene and promotes these ideals in its brochures and signboards, would compromise the very lives of people who regard doctors and officials as near divine. They explained that the administration had not provided them with the necessary items to carry out their duties efficiently.

I replied, “Isn’t it your legal and moral duty to officially bring this matter to the notice of your seniors and administrators, who are being well-compensated for their ‘services’?” They finally expressed regret and seemed eager to get me out of the room, but before leaving, I requested them to please bring this issue to the attention of their seniors for the sake of the health and hygiene of the patients.

Since then, the scenes have haunted me, and I finally decided to write about the issue to highlight not only this case but also similar issues that patients endure daily, not only in this hospital but in almost all government hospitals. These hospitals, on one hand, claim to provide high-quality healthcare and hygiene, while on the other hand, they play with the innocent lives of the people.

This is why I wrote, “*Jab munsif hi qatil ho*”...

The author can be reached for feedback at
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Three Reasons Why AI's Momentum Could Stall in 2025

Dambisa Moyo

The rapid pace of technological advances over the past year, especially in artificial intelligence, has provided many reasons for optimism. But as we head into 2025, there are signs that AI’s momentum may be waning.

Since 2023, the dominant narrative has been that the AI revolution will drive productivity and economic growth, paving the way for extraordinary technological breakthroughs. PwC, for example, projects that AI will add nearly \$16 trillion to global GDP by 2030 – a 14% increase. Meanwhile, a study by Erik Brynjolfsson, Danielle Li, and Lindsey R. Raymond estimates that generative AI could boost worker productivity by 14% on average and by 34% for new and low-skilled workers.

Recent announcements by Google and OpenAI seem to support this narrative, offering a glimpse into a future that not long ago was confined to science fiction. Google’s Willow quantum chip, for example, reportedly completed a benchmark computation – a task that would take today’s fastest supercomputers ten septillion years (ten followed by 24 zeros) – in under five minutes. Likewise, OpenAI’s new o3 model represents a major technological breakthrough, bringing AI closer to the point where it can outperform humans in any cognitive task, a milestone known as “artificial general intelligence.”

But there are at least three reasons why the AI boom could lose steam in 2025. First, investors are increasingly questioning whether AI-related investments can deliver

significant returns, as many companies are struggling to generate enough revenue to offset the skyrocketing costs of developing cutting-edge models. While training OpenAI’s GPT-4 cost more than \$100 million, training future models will likely cost more than \$1 billion, raising concerns about the financial sustainability of these efforts.

To be sure, investors are eager to capitalize on the AI boom, with venture capital firms investing a record \$97 billion in US-

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based AI startups in 2024. But it appears that even industry leaders like OpenAI are burning through cash too quickly to generate meaningful returns, leading investors to worry that much of their capital has been misallocated or wasted. A back-of-the-envelope calculation suggests that a \$100 billion investment in AI would require at least \$50 billion in revenue to produce an acceptable return on capital – accounting for taxes, capital expenditures, and operating expenses. But the entire sector’s annual revenues, according to my sources, total just \$12 billion, with OpenAI accounting for roughly \$4 billion. In the absence of a “killer app” for which customers are willing to pay substantial sums, a significant portion of VC investments could end up worthless, triggering a

decline in investment and spending.

Second, the enormous amounts of energy required to operate and cool massive data centers could impede AI’s rapid growth. By 2026, according to the International Energy Agency, AI data centers will consume 1,000 terawatt-hours of electricity annually, exceeding the United Kingdom’s total electricity and gas consumption in 2023. The consultancy Gartner projects that by 2027, 40% of existing data centers will be “operationally

constrained” by limited power availability. Third, large language models appear to be approaching their limits as companies grapple with mounting challenges like data scarcity and recurring errors. LLMs are primarily trained on data scraped from sources such as news articles, published reports, social media posts, and academic papers. But with a finite supply of high-quality information, finding new datasets or creating synthetic alternatives has become increasingly difficult and costly. Consequently, these models are prone to generating incorrect or fabricated answers (“hallucinations”), and AI companies may soon run out of the fresh data needed to refine them.

Computing power is also approaching its physical limits. In 2021, IBM unveiled a

two-nanometer chip – roughly the size of a fingernail – capable of fitting 50 billion transistors and improving performance by 45% compared to its seven-nanometer predecessor. While undeniably impressive, this milestone also raises an important question: Has the industry reached the point of diminishing returns in its quest to make ever-smaller semiconductors?

If these trends persist, the current valuations of publicly traded AI companies may not be sustainable. Notably, private investment is already showing signs of declining. According to the research firm Preqin, VC firms raised \$85 billion in the first three quarters of 2024 – a sharp drop from the \$136 billion raised during the same period in 2023.

The good news is that should today’s AI giants start to falter, smaller competitors could seize the opportunity and challenge their dominance. From a market standpoint, such a scenario could foster increased competition and reduce concentration, preventing a repeat of the conditions that allowed the so-called “Magnificent Seven” – Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, Meta, Microsoft, Nvidia, and Tesla – to dominate the US tech industry.

Views expressed in the article are the author’s own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. Dambisa Moyo, an international economist, is the author of four New York Times bestselling books, including *Edge of Chaos: Why Democracy Is Failing to Deliver Economic Growth – and How to Fix It* (Basic Books, 2018). The article is syndicated from Project Syndicate, 2025

The Power of Storytelling

Shaping Societies and Transmitting Ideas through Generations

Mehleen Syed

Storytelling is perhaps the most ancient and compelling method of human communication. From the cave paintings of early humans to the elaborate narratives of today, stories have been woven into the fabric of every culture, serving as vessels of history, belief, and imagination. This article explores the profound impact of storytelling on societies, examining its evolution, influence, and the complexities of interpretation that shape our understanding of the past and present.

The Origins and Evolution of Storytelling

The history of storytelling dates back thousands of years, where early humans used cave paintings and oral traditions to convey their experiences, beliefs, and societal norms. These narratives, whether factual accounts or mythical tales, provided a framework for understanding the world and passing down cultural heritage from one generation to the next. Ancient civilizations like the Greeks used written narratives to chronicle their histories and mythologies, setting the stage for the written word as a powerful tool of cul-



Konstantin Yuon, "New Planet," 1921 (Photo: Wikimedia Commons [Public Domain])

press, invented in the 15th century, revolutionized the dissemination of stories, enabling them to be shared far beyond the storyteller's immediate reach. This democratization of storytelling had a profound impact on education, politics, and culture, as books became available to the masses and stories took on new forms, such as novels and plays.

Storytelling as a Catalyst for Revolution

One of the most compelling aspects of storytelling is its ability to inspire change and revolutionize societies. The example of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran illustrates how religious narratives and storytelling can mobilize masses and reshape political landscapes. The stories told by religious leaders during that time ignited a fervor among the people, leading to the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty. This demonstrates the profound impact storytelling can have on collective consciousness and societal transformation.

Religious leaders, particularly the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, used storytelling as a means to unite the masses, framing the revolution not only as a political struggle but as a spiritual and moral quest for justice. These stories resonated with people from all walks of life, giving them a sense of purpose and direction. As the revolution gained momentum, it became clear that storytelling was not just about conveying information, but about creating an emotional bond that could inspire collective action.

This phenomenon is not unique to Iran. Throughout history, revolutions have often been fueled by powerful narratives that challenge the status quo. The French Revolution, for instance, was driven by the stories of inequality and oppression, while the American Revolution was inspired by the ideals of liberty and justice. In each case, storytelling served as a vehicle for uniting people around a common cause and sparking action that would forever change the course of history.

The ability of stories to inspire change is not limited to large-scale political movements. On a personal level, stories can also motivate individuals to confront challenges, overcome obstacles, and achieve personal transformation. The power of storytelling lies in its ability to connect with the human experience, evoking emotions that can lead to a shift in perspective or behavior.

Educational and Personal Impact of Storytelling

Beyond its role in historical and political contexts, storytelling plays a crucial role in education and personal development.

Teachers and parents often use storytelling as a pedagogical tool to impart moral values, teach lessons, and stimulate creativity in children. Museums and historical sites, such as those preserving the life of iconic figures like Mirza Ghalib, serve as living storytellers that connect individuals with their cultural heritage and inspire personal reflection.

Storytelling in education goes beyond simply relaying facts and figures; it fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills by encouraging students to engage with the material on a deeper level. When children listen to stories, they are not only learning about the world around them, but they are also developing empathy, understanding different perspectives, and honing their ability to think critically about complex issues.

For instance, in the classroom, storytelling can bring historical events to life, allowing students to immerse themselves in different times and places. By engaging with narratives from various cultures and traditions, students gain a broader perspective of the world and its complexities. This helps to develop a sense of global citizenship and an appreciation for diversity.

On a personal level, storytelling can serve as a source of inspiration and reflection. Many people find solace in the stories of others, whether through literature, films, or personal anecdotes. Stories help individuals make sense of their own lives, offering guidance during times of difficulty or confusion. By reflecting on the experiences of others, individuals are able to

gain new insights into their own circumstances and navigate life's challenges with greater resilience and clarity.

Epics, Myths, and Their Cultural Significance

Central to storytelling are epics and myths, which blend historical events with mythical elements to create larger-than-life narratives. Epics like the 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata' in Hindu mythology or the 'Odyssey' in Greek mythology not only entertain but also serve as moral compasses and cultural touchstones for their respective societies. These stories often feature heroic figures and mythical beings, embodying archetypes that resonate across time and cultures.

Epics, by their very nature, are larger-than-life tales that transcend the mundane concerns of daily life. They tell the stories

of heroes and villains, gods and mortals, exploring fundamental themes of good versus evil, fate and free will, and the nature of the human soul. These narratives are often passed down through generations, serving as both entertainment and moral instruction.

Interpretation, Manipulation, and Bias in Storytelling

However, the interpretation and manipulation of stories can significantly influence their impact and meaning. Historical texts and epics, such as the 'Ramayana', have undergone reinterpretations over time to suit evolving cultural and political agendas. Scholars like Romila Thapar highlight how these reinterpretations reflect societal shifts and power dynamics, shaping narratives to reinforce dominant ideologies or challenge existing norms.

The process of reinterpretation is not always a neutral one. Stories are often shaped and ma-

nipulated to serve the interests of those in power. In the case of the 'Ramayana', for example, the early versions of the epic did not depict Lord Rama as a deity. It was only in later versions that the idea of Rama being an incarnation of Vishnu was emphasized, likely in response to the rise of new religious movements that sought to promote specific theological views.

The Role of Belief and Evolution of Narratives

Belief systems, whether rooted in religious faith or cultural tradition, often shape how stories are perceived and transmitted. What one culture considers myth may hold profound truth or symbolism for another, illustrating the subjective nature of storytelling and its ability to adapt to diverse perspectives and interpretations. This fluidity allows stories to evolve with society, reflecting changing values and beliefs across generations.

The evolution of narratives is also influenced by the needs and desires of each generation. As society changes, so too does its understanding of its own history and myths. This is evident in the reinterpretation of characters and stories, such as the shifting portrayal of Maleficent in recent adaptations of 'Sleeping Beauty'. Once viewed as the archetypal villain, Maleficent has been reimagined as a more sympathetic character, challenging traditional notions of good and evil.

This ability to reinterpret and evolve stories is a testament to the enduring power of storytelling. It allows narratives to remain relevant and meaningful, even as societies change and evolve. By reimagining old stories, new generations can find fresh insights and inspiration that speak to their own concerns and values.

Conclusion: Stories as Agents of Change and Continuity

In conclusion, storytelling stands as a timeless art form that bridges the past with the present, offering insights into human experience and shaping the future through its narratives. Whether through ancient myths or modern narratives, storytelling continues to influence



The cave painting of Lascaux Cave

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The 'Ramayana', for example, is more than just a tale of heroism and adventure; it is a guide to living a virtuous life. The character of Lord Rama embodies the ideal of dharma (righteousness), and his journey serves as a metaphor for the struggles individuals face in their quest to live a good and just life. Similarly, the 'Mahabharata' delves into the complexities of human nature, exploring themes of duty, honor, and the consequences of war.

While these epics have their roots in ancient history, their relevance continues to endure. In modern times, they have been reinterpreted and adapted in countless forms, from literature and theater to film and televi-

These shifts in interpretation are not unique to the 'Ramayana'. Throughout history, the retelling of myths and epics has been influenced by the political, cultural, and religious climate of the time. What is considered truth or myth can often depend on the perspective of the storyteller and the audience. This is what Plato warned about when he discussed the dangers of poetry: that it could shape beliefs and perspectives in ways that were not always grounded in objective truth.

In addition to political and religious motivations, stories are

societies, provoke thought, and inspire action. By understanding the power of storytelling, we can appreciate its role in shaping our identities, beliefs, and collective consciousness, making it a cornerstone of human culture and communication.

Through its ability to transcend time and space, storytelling remains not only a means of entertainment but also a profound tool for understanding ourselves and our place in the world. Stories have the power to transform individuals and societies, to challenge existing norms, and to inspire change. In this sense, storytelling is not just a reflection of the past, but a dynamic force that shapes the future.

Views expressed are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. The author can be reached at mehleenriaz@gmail.com

