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Clarity in the Chaos

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Trump Lays Claim to Gaza Strip



Agencies

Washington: President Donald Trump on Tuesday suggested that displaced Palestinians in Gaza be permanently resettled outside the war-torn territory and proposed the US take "ownership" in redeveloping the area. Trump's brazen proposal appears certain to roil the next stage of talks meant to extend the tenuous ceasefire between Israel and Hamas and secure the release of the remaining hostages held in Gaza.

The provocative comments came as talks are ramping up this week with the promise of surging humanitarian aid and reconstruction supplies to help the people of Gaza recover after more than 15 months

Netanyahu Elated

Netanyahu spoke glowingly of Trump thinking outside the box. "You say things others refuse to say. And after the jaws drop, people scratch their heads and they say, 'You know he's right.'" It's Netanyahu's first trip | [More on P6](#)

of devastating conflict. Now Trump wants to push roughly 1.8 million people to leave the land they have called home and claim it for the US, perhaps with American troops.

Trump outlined his thinking as he held | [More on P6](#)

'Unacceptable, Absurd': World Reacts to Trump's Gaza Plan

World has sharply reacted to President Donald Trump's plan for the U.S. to take over war-torn Gaza and create a "Riviera of the Middle East" after resettling Palestinians elsewhere | [More on P6](#)

Step Up Fight Against Terrorism In J&K: Shah Calls For Achieving Zero-infiltration Goal

Observer News Service

New Delhi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah Wednesday directed all security agencies to step up the fight against terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir with the goal of achieving 'zero infiltration'.

Chairing two high-level review meetings in as many days here on the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir, he also said the ecosystem of terror in the Union Territory has been weakened due to the sustained and coordinated efforts of the Narendra Modi government.

He asked all security agencies to take more stringent action on infiltration and acts of terror with a ruthless



approach, saying the goal should be to uproot the existence of terrorists.

The home minister directed them to step up the fight against terrorism with the goal of 'zero infiltration', according to an official statement.

Shah said under the

leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government is committed to wiping out terrorism from Jammu and Kashmir.

He emphasised the Modi government's policy of zero tolerance against terrorism to achieve the goal of a

terrorism-free Jammu and Kashmir and directed all security agencies to remain vigilant and continue to work in synergy to eliminate terrorism in the Union Territory.

The home minister said the narco network is providing support to infiltrators and terrorists to carry out their activities.

"There is a need to take prompt action against terror funding from the proceeds of the narcotics trade with alacrity and rigour," he said.

Shah directed the agencies to make new appointments in the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) in view of the timely implementation of the new criminal laws.

He also appreciated the efforts of the security agencies for significant | [More on P6](#)

Aga Khan Passes Away



Agencies

Paris- Karim Al-Hussaini, Aga Khan IV, the 49th hereditary Imam of the Ismaili Muslims, who became the spiritual leader of the community at age 20 as a Harvard undergraduate and poured a material empire built on billions of dollars in tithes into building homes, hospitals and schools in developing countries, died Tuesday. He was 88.

His Aga Khan Development Network and the Ismaili religious community announced that His Highness Prince Karim Al-Hussaini, the Aga Khan IV and 49th hereditary | [More on P6](#)

'Tackling Human Trafficking, Exploitation' J&K Govt Appoints Police Officials

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir government has appointed all SHOs, SDPOs, and DySP Headquarters as Special Police Officers within their respective jurisdictions for enforcing the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, to combat human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

"In exercise of the powers conferred under sub section (1) of section 13 of the Immoral Traffic | [More on P6](#)

Budget Will Not Be Confined To Govt Offices:CM Assures People-Friendly Budget

Observer News Service

Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday promised a people-friendly budget and said the yearly outlay will not be confined to government offices alone.

Abdullah, who began pre-budget consultations with legislators and chairpersons of district development councils (DDCs) on Wednesday, stressed that the budget



would be shaped by public aspirations and not limited to bureaucratic decisions.

"You have won your elections because people have placed their trust | [More on P6](#)

'It Is Collective Retribution'

Ruhullah Flays 'Detentions' After Kulgam Attack

Observer News Service

Srinagar, National Conference MP Aga Ruhullah Mehdi on Wednesday condemned the "detentions of 500 people" in Jammu and Kashmir after the Kulgam terror attack, saying that "punishing an entire population for the actions of a few is

not counterterrorism but collective retribution".

On Monday, terrorists shot dead Manzoor Ahmad Wagay, an ex-serviceman, and injured his wife and 13-year-old niece in an attack in South Kashmir's Kulgam district.

"I unequivocally condemn the attack on | [More on P6](#)

Seeks EAM's Help For Detained Kashmiri in Saudi

Member of Parliament, Syed Aga Ruhullah Mehdi, has appealed to the External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, to intervene in | [More on P6](#)

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143 Out Of 161 Srinagar Smart City Projects Completed: Official

Agencies

Srinagar: As the year 2025 enters its second month, officials from Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL) on Wednesday said that 143 out of the total 161 projects under the Smart City initiative have been completed.

An official from SSCL said that the initial budget was Rs 940 crore, and among the remaining 18 projects, work is currently underway. We are hopeful of achieving full completion by March 2025, he said.

Regarding infrastructure developments, the official said that one of the major ongoing projects is Riverfront Phase II, covering the stretch from Amira Kadal to Chattabal.

"The Shahr-e-Khaas development, divided into Sections A, B, and C, along

with three other projects, has reached an 85 percent completion rate," he said, adding that the underground ducting project along the right bank of the riverfront is progressing well, with about 75% of the work completed.

The completed projects, he said, include the redevelopment of Lal Chowk, upgrades to MA Road and Residency Road, Riverfront Phase I, the Integrated Traffic Management System (ITMS), the SD Net, and the Srinagar data network (Intranet), among others. The upcoming milestone projects include improvements to Batmaloo, Mominabad Road, Dalgate-Gojwara Road and others.

The SSCL's initiatives aim to transform the urban landscape while preserving the city's unique cultural heritage, the official said—(KNO)



Stray Dog Population Surges In City

Agencies

Srinagar: The increasing population of stray dogs in various parts of Srinagar has instilled fear among residents, particularly in areas like Bhorikadal, Khanyar, Eidgah, Nawakadal and Dalgate. Residents complain that venturing out during morning and evening hours has become a daunting task, as packs of stray dogs roam the streets, often chasing pedestrians and creating a sense of insecurity.

A resident from Bhorikadal expressed concern over the growing menace. "We are afraid to step out early in the morning or late in the evening. The dogs chase us, and even our children fear going to their tuition classes. We often have to accompany them to ensure their safety," he said.

The uncontrolled growth of stray dogs has become a pressing issue, with frequent cases of dog bites being reported from different localities. Elderly individuals, children, and women are particularly vulnerable, as aggressive canines are often seen blocking pathways and chasing vehicles and pedestrians. Several instances of dog attacks on school-going children have been reported, raising serious safety concerns.

Despite repeated appeals to the concerned authorities, residents claim that no substantial action has been taken to address the menace. A shopkeeper from Khanyar voiced his frustration, stating, "Every day, we witness people, especially children and the elderly, being chased by these stray dogs.

"We are afraid to step out early in the morning or late in the evening. The dogs chase us, and even our children fear going to their tuition classes. We often have to accompany them to ensure their safety,"

been temporarily halted due to the harsh winter conditions.

"We cannot conduct sterilization during the cold months. However, once the temperature rises, we will resume the program to control the dog population," he said.

While sterilization remains a long-term solution, many believe that immediate measures such as dog shelters and designated feeding zones should be established to prevent further attacks. Experts have also suggested increased public awareness about handling stray dogs and coordinated efforts between municipal bodies and animal welfare organizations.

Apart from the fear of attacks, residents are also worried about the potential spread of diseases such as rabies.

A local doctor from a Srinagar hospital highlighted the risks associated with uncontrolled stray dog populations. "Rabies is a fatal disease, and timely vaccination is crucial. If the number of stray dog attacks increases, the demand for vaccines will rise, putting immense pressure on healthcare facilities," he warned.

The residents, however, demand immediate intervention. "We are not against animals, but human lives matter too. The authorities must act swiftly before the situation gets worse," said a resident from Dalgate.

Until concrete steps are taken, the streets of Srinagar will continue to be plagued by this growing menace, leaving residents in perpetual fear every time they step out of their homes. (ANB)

Meenakari Work In Kashmir On Verge Of Extinction

Agencies

Srinagar: The well-known Kashmiri Meenakari work is taking its last breath and it is on the verge of extinction with the last surviving artists finding it difficult to manage the family affairs.

Nazir Ahmad Pahalwan (72), son of Ghulam Nabi Pahalwan of Teergaripora, Rajouri Kadal, Srinagar, a last surviving artist of Meenakari said that he has been associated with this work since 1968.

Nazir has learnt this art from his father and continues to do Meenakari work whenever he gets any order. Narrating the difficult situation, Nazir said Meenakari work has gone very down and he hardly gets any order, which makes his struggle to earn a livelihood difficult.

"There were few Meenakari artisans but due to no demand in the market, they switched to some other job," he said. "My own son is working as a fitter as he refused to take the legacy forward due to the low market."

He said that nobody at present is ready to learn this

art, adding that demand is on decline for the last 15 years.

Meenakari work is being done on gold and copper items by writing different names and other things.

Despite ailing health and bad financial conditions, Pahalwan has kept the dying art of Meenakari alive for the last 50 years. He continues to do "Meenakari" from the dilapidated workplace in the premises of his residence at Rajouri Kadal whenever he gets any orders.

"Old Kashmir Meenakari" pieces are treasured by collectors and museums. Nowadays, we only come to see old Kashmir Meenakari pieces in museums and art books. Kashmir was once a renowned center for meenakari on silver, gold, and brass. The process of meenakari involves the use of special micro tools and needs a lot of patience," he said.

He said the government can make efforts by attracting youth in this work so that the legacy is preserved and the dying art will be kept alive for the future generations—(KNO)

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan.

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

Public Notice..

The registrar birth EO Pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Aaliya Naseer D/o Naseer Ahmad Bhat R/o Arampora Sopore Tehsil Sopore with verified date of birth 24/05/2021 occurred at SDH pattan.in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

SD Naib Tehsildar Pattan
fko

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan.

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

Public Notice..

The registrar birth EO Pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Azhar Ali Malla s/o Kifayat Hussain Malla R/o Amargarh shalboni Matipora with verified date of birth 28/08/2022 occurred at SDH pattan.in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

SD Naib Tehsildar Pattan
fko

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan

Application of Bashir Ahmad Sofi s/o Mohd Asgar Sofi R/o Hanjiwera for obtaining Legal hair certificate of his son deceased Yawar Abass Sofi

Public Notice

IT is inform to general public that legal hair certificate of applicants son is under process in this office in this matter report Was sought from Patwari concerned which reveals that applicant's son namely Yawar Abass Sofi died on 02/02/2024 and legal hairs of deceased are as under.

Legal Heirs Details	Name	Age	Relationship with the Deceased	Marital Status
	BASHIR AHMAD SOFI	50	FATHER	MARRIED
	AFROZA BANO	41	MOTHER	MARRIED
	ASMAT BASHIR	18	SISTER	UNMARRIED
	MUBEENA BASHIR	21	SISTER	UNMARRIED
	ALIYA BASHIR	13	SISTER	UNMARRIED

In this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 07 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

SD Naib Tehsildar Pattan
fko

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan.

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

Public Notice...

The registrar birth EO Pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Mohammad Usman Para s/o Mushtaq Ahmad Para R/o Mamoosa Tehsil Pattan with verified date of birth 23/06/2021 occurred at SDH pattan.in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

SD Naib Tehsildar Pattan
fko

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan.

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

Public Notice...

The registrar birth EO Pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Fatima Assad D/o Assadullah Magloo R/o Yakhmanpora Dever Tehsil Sopore with verified date of birth 29/07/2021 occurred at SDH pattan.in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

SD Naib Tehsildar Pattan
fko

GOVERNMENT OF (U.T) JAMMU & KASHMIR

Office Of The Executive Engineer Jal Shakti (PHE) Deptt. Ground Water Division Srinagar Baghi-Ali-Mardan, Nowshara Srinagar.

E-mail:- phegwd@yahoo.com,

Tel./FaxNo:- 0194-2411285

Extension Notice 6th.

Subject: Installation of Bore well in Thayan block Kalaroose.

Reference:01. This office Re-Tender Corrigendum Notice Issued Vide Endorsement No. PHE/GWDS/24-25/Corrs./8695-8705, dated: 10-12-2024.

02. This office e-NIT No.30-JS-PHE/GWDS/Mech. of 2024-25, issued vide endorsement No: JS-PHE/GWDS/24-25/Corrs./7063-74, dated: 04-11-2024, Bearing Tender ID. No. 2024_PHE_263359_24, for the S. No. 11 of e-NIT.

Due to "No Response" for the above mentioned Subject work advertised vide e-NIT No. and Tender ID No under reference No. 02 & Re-Tender Corrigendum under Reference No. 01. Which was scheduled to be downloaded till 05-02-2025 Up-to 11:00 AM are extended as per the details given below: -

S.No.	Item	Fresh Date
1.	Period of submission of bids	10-02-2025 Up-to 11:00 AM
2.	Date of opening of tenders	11-02-2025 11.00 AM

NOTE:

All other terms and conditions shall remain same as laid down in the aforesaid e-NIT issued vide above referred endstt: nos.

DIPK-11572/24 dated: 05-02-2025

Executive Engineer
Jal Shakti (PHE) Deptt.
Ground Water Division Srinagar.

- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,2452222,2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
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- ANANTNAG: 01932-228243
- BARAMULLA: 0194-102029
- BIJBERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORE: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

HIJRI CALENDAR

7 Shaban
1446

PRAYERS	
FAJR	5: 59
ZUHR	12:45
ASR	4: 25
Magrib	6:09
ISHA	7: 29

This Day In History

- 337 - St Julius I begins his reign as Catholic Pope
- 1508- Maximilian I proclaimed Holy Roman Emperor, 1st Emperor in centuries not to be crowned by the Pope
- 1577- King Henri de Bourbon of Navarra becomes leader of the Huguenots
- 1626- Huguenot rebels & French sign Peace of La Rochelle
- 1685- Duke of York becomes King James II of England and VII of Scotland upon the death of his brother Charles II
- 1716 Britain & Netherlands renew alliance
- 1760 - Niccolò Piccinni's opera buffa "La buona figliuola" (The Good-Natured Girl) first performed at the Teatro delle Dame, Rome, Italy, with an all-male cast
- 1778 Britain declares war on France
- 1778 -France recognizes USA, signs Treaty of Alliance in Paris, 1st US treaty
- 1788- Massachusetts becomes 6th state to ratify constitution
- 1819- Stamford Raffles founds Singapore as a British trading port
- 1820- First 86 African American immigrants sponsored by the American Colonization Society start a settlement in present-day Liberia
- 1832- 1st appearance of cholera in Edinburgh, Scotland

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan.

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

Public Notice...

The registrar birth EO Pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Ahmad Bin Firdous S/o Firdous Ahmad Lone R/o Darnambal Tarzoo Sopore with verified date of birth 03/11/2020 occurred at SDH pattan.in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

SD Naib Tehsildar Pattan
fko

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan.

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

Public Notice...

The registrar birth EO Pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Azan Ali Ganie s/o Ali Mohammad Ganie R/o Nowlari pattan Tehsil Pattan with verified date of birth 26/09/2020 occurred at SDH pattan.in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

SD Naib Tehsildar Pattan
fko

Public Notice

My name has been wrongly written in my PNB Metlife bearing policy No 24064790 as Ms Tabasum Ganaie, insteadof Tabasum Nabi. Now I have applied for the correction of fht esame. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file in the office of the PNB Metlife within seven days. after that no objection shall be entertained.

Tabasum Nabi
C/o Ghulam Nabi
R/O Housing Colony, Near Shah I Hamdan Masjid Bemina Srinagar bmg

Public Notice

My name has been wrongly written in my PNB Metlife bearing policy No 22757945 as Gowher Ganaie instead of Gowher Nabi . Now I have applied for the correction of fht esame. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file in the office of the PNB Metlife within seven days. after that no objection shall be entertained.

Gowher Nabi bmg

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NGT Steps In as J&K Fails to Enforce Environmental Laws

This matter needs to be taken seriously by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah so that the executive is held accountable and made to enforce all environmental laws in letter and spirit



Dr. Raja Muzaffar Bhat

are now knocking on the doors of the National Green Tribunal (NGT). This is a very serious issue that our elected government, especially the Chief Minister, must address urgently!

Latest Case Study from Bandipora

Recently, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had to intervene because the District Administration of Bandipora and the J&K Pollution Control Committee failed to shut down an illegal hollow cement brick manufacturing unit at the Naidkhai locality in Bandipora district. This pollution-causing unit is located just next to a Government Higher Secondary School. The school principal made a written complaint to the local Tehsildar in 2022, who then sought a report from his Naib Tehsildar. Despite this, the officers failed to act, even after the aggrieved parties approached the SDM Sumbal and the DC Bandipora. They then turned to the J&K Pollution Control Committee (JKPCC), which ordered the closure of the unit for violating the Water Pollution Act of 1974 and the Air Pollution Act of 1981. The unit owner challenged the closure order before the

Act. We also find that the order of the Member Secretary, JKPCC, dated May 27, 2024, is also under Section 31A of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, and the Air Act also creates a jurisdictional bar under Section 46 of the Air Act."

The NGT's Principal Bench advised the JKPCC to bring this matter to the attention of the CJM of Srinagar to modify the order accordingly. The NGT's order further reads:

"The JKPCC must bring the said jurisdictional bar to the notice of the Civil Court which passed the order in the civil suit, where the order of JKPCC dated May 27, 2024, under the Air Act, Water Act, and EP Act has been stayed. The OA raises substantial issues related to compliance with environmental norms. Issue notice to the respondents to file their response/reply by affidavit before the Tribunal at least one week before the next date of hearing. If any respondent files the reply directly without routing it through their advocate, they must remain virtually present to assist the Tribunal. The applicant is directed to serve the respondents and file an affidavit of service at least one

“The environmental legal regime in Jammu & Kashmir has many facets and institutions, but they have failed to address our concerns. Ironically, some institutions have not only been mute spectators but have even become collaborators in environmental crimes, as evidenced by the NGT's orders over the last 4 to 5 years

Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) of Srinagar. Technically, the CJM had no jurisdiction to handle this case, and relief was granted to the brick manufacturing plant owner. Ironically, the JKPCC did not challenge this order before the District Court or the National Green Tribunal (NGT).

With all executive avenues closed and even the lower judiciary passing a defective order, the aggrieved locals, through one Zahoor Ahmad Dar, had no option but to seek the indulgence of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in New Delhi. The case was listed before the Principal Bench of Justice Prakash Srivastava (Chairperson of NGT) and Dr. Afroz Ahmad (Expert Member) on January 21, 2025.

NGT's Order on January 21, 2025

The petitioner, Zahoor Ahmad Dar, was present before the NGT's Principal Bench on January 21, 2025, through virtual mode. He pointed out that the J&K Pollution Control Committee (JKPCC) had passed a closure order on May 27, 2024, based on his complaint, but the brick plant owner had challenged the order in a Civil Suit before the Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) of Srinagar. The CJM passed an interim order on October 28, 2024. In compliance with the CJM's order, the closure order was kept in abeyance by the Member Secretary of JKPCC on January 8, 2025. The Principal Bench of the NGT stated that the CJM of Srinagar had no jurisdiction to issue an order in this case.

The NGT's order reads:

"We find that the order dated May 27, 2024, was passed by the Member Secretary, JKPCC under Section 33A of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, and Section 58 of the Water Act, 1974, which creates a jurisdictional bar for civil courts to entertain any suit or proceeding in matters under this

week before the next date of hearing."

The case is now listed for hearing again on May 5, 2025.

Conclusion

The environmental legal regime in Jammu & Kashmir has many facets and institutions, but they have failed to address our concerns. Ironically, some institutions have not only been mute spectators but have even become collaborators in environmental crimes, as evidenced by the NGT's orders over the last 4 to 5 years. Had the Tehsildar of Hajin acted on the application of the Principal of the Higher Secondary School of Naidkhai Sonwarai in 2022, the locals wouldn't have had to approach the NGT. Similarly, had the J&K Pollution Control Committee (JKPCC) challenged the CJM Srinagar's order, the NGT wouldn't have had to intervene in this petty case. Earlier, it was only I who sought the indulgence of the NGT, then we had a case filed by Rasikh Rasool from Kupwara, and now another application has been moved from Naidkhai, Bandipora. When I examine all these cases, it is clear that the local administration and regulatory authorities could have addressed these petty environmental violations, but they didn't, forcing all of us to approach the NGT. I believe this matter needs to be taken seriously by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah so that the executive is held accountable and made to enforce all environmental laws in letter and spirit.

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

Dr. Raja Muzaffar Bhat is an Acumen Fellow and Chairman of the Jammu & Kashmir RTI Movement

KO VIEW

Cycle Of Violence

The killing of ex-Territorial Army soldier Manzoor Ahmad Wagay in Kulgam is a reminder of how fragile the situation in Kashmir remains. His wife and young niece, wounded in the attack, are now struggling to recover. For Kashmir, it is another reminder that the militancy in the Valley is very much alive and can strike at any time, without warning.

Security forces have detained hundreds in overnight raids, and interrogations are underway to try and identify the perpetrators. But the forces have to ensure that the innocent people do not suffer. This will only alienate more people, something that has never served the cause of peace in the union territory in the past.

That said, this attack has raised difficult questions. Was it a random act of terror, or a revenge killing? Just weeks ago, security forces killed top Hizbul Mujahideen commanders in the same area. Was this strike meant to show that militant groups still have the ability to hit back? These patterns are all too familiar in Kashmir—an encounter, followed by a retaliatory killing, and then by another crackdown. The cycle repeats itself, and ordinary people remain trapped in its grip.

The statements of condemnation have come, as they always do. Leaders have expressed their grief, vowed justice, and promised that the perpetrators will be punished. But what does justice look like for a family that has lost its provider?

The reality is that despite repeated claims of improved security, attacks like this prove that the threat has not gone away. Militants still manage to regroup, and strike where it hurts. The fight against militancy cannot be won through arrests alone. It requires deeper efforts—better intelligence, stronger community trust, and a strategy that does not rely solely on force. The central government has certainly taken steps in this direction. Last year, Assembly polls were held and an elected government led by the National Conference assumed power. This has made the governance approachable and given people a sense of stake in the system.

It is also true that the situation has significantly improved in recent years. Although the militancy has persisted in one form or another, its local component has by and large been reigned in. As for the militancy sustained by infiltration, here again the forces have pulled the situation back from the brink. The results are already visible in Rajouri and Poonch, where terror incidents have notably declined. But the challenge is far from over. Militancy in J&K has often shown the ability to adapt to the situation and survive, hence all the more reason for the security forces to stay one step ahead.



Did You Know?

Understanding Common Mistakes Investors Make

Irshad Mushtaq

Investing in the stock market can be intimidating, especially for beginners who often fall into common traps. One of the biggest mistakes new investors make is believing that once they purchase a stock, it will immediately rise in value, leading to quick profits. However, stock prices fluctuate due to a variety of factors, and immediate returns are not guaranteed.

During bear markets, when stock prices generally decline, it's crucial to understand that your investments may not yield immediate returns, even if some sectors perform better than others. Most investors do not have significant exposure to these lucky sectors, which can lead to frustration and disappointment. This highlights the importance of building a quality portfolio focused on stocks with long-term potential.

Diversification is key. Investing should never involve putting all your money into one sector or company. A well-diversified portfolio across multiple industries helps limit risk and protect against market volatility. Ideally, a well-rounded portfolio should include no more than 20 different stocks, offering a balanced distribution across sectors.

Moreover, following solid financial rules is essential. While short-term trading may generate minor gains, it should always be approached with discipline and strategy. Emotional decision-making—buying based on hope rather than thorough analysis—can lead to costly mistakes. Before investing in any company, examine its profit and loss statements, management team, and overall industry performance.

Even well-established companies can face downturns, and it's vital to understand their fundamentals. While market dips can lead to panic, they also present opportunities to buy stocks at lower prices. Staying calm and seizing these moments can ultimately strengthen your portfolio.

In summary, successful stock market investing requires discipline, knowledge, and experience. By focusing on quality investments and maintaining a diversified portfolio, you can better navigate market fluctuations, leading to more favorable long-term outcomes.

Learn from the insights of @Irshad Mushtaq, Writer, Investor, Entrepreneur & Founder of MI Securities! Connect at misecurities@bp.sharekhan.com.

Disclaimer: This article is for informational purposes only and does not offer investment advice. It is not an endorsement or an offer to buy or sell any financial products. Any actions taken based on the information here are at your own risk.

The Snow that Rarely Visits

The Altering Winters of Kashmir and Their Influence on Its Identity

Zubair Lone

The winters of Kashmir have long been classified by snow. The arrival of snow followed a predictable timeline and impacted day-to-day activities, binding people to their roots. However, with snowfall now becoming increasingly unpredictable, Kashmiris are undergoing deep emotional and cultural changes. The decrease in snowfall is not just an environmental concern—it is changing how Kashmiris view their past, present, and future.

The Importance of Blizzard to the People of Kashmir

In earlier times, the first snowfall was a cause for celebration. For the older generations, snow was an integral part of life, intertwining with memories, traditions, and activities. Ghulam Mohammad, a retired teacher from Baramulla, says, "I remember winters when the valley was covered in a thick layer of snow." For Ghulam, snow was more than just a weather phenomenon—it was deeply embedded in life and culture.

Snow also helped keep track of time. It marked the onset of winter, and life was structured around these seasonal rhythms. In Kashmir, snow evoked a sense of calmness—people spent more time indoors, sharing stories over warm Nun chai and dried fruits. It was a time to reflect, rest, and bond with one another.

A Changed Environment

Baramulla, otherwise known

as the 'Venice of the North,' was once famous for consistent snow falls during winter. However, these days, snowfall in Kashmir is no longer a guarantee. Nowadays, it's a guessing game for winters, as snow can arrive too early, too late, or not at all. The world as a whole has changed, and so has Kashmir due to the climate crisis, leaving the region with this unfortunate inconsis-

The loss of snow in Kashmir is much more than an environmental change; it reflects something of greater emotional magnitude. For hundreds of years, snow has served as the uniting factor of the community and as a marker of time. In its absence, many Kashmiris feel a quiet disconnection and sorrow



tency in the weather.

For many older people, this adjustment is not easy. "Genuinely, it was snow that gave us a sense of comfort," says Mohammad Afzal, a local history teacher. "It was there every year. Nowadays, it seems like time is running out, and we don't really know what to look forward to."

The Younger Generation: Creating Innovations

Younger Kashmiris have had to adapt to changed winters,

as snow no longer seems to be guaranteed. Some of these young Kashmiri students are now trying to get accustomed to this new 'normal.' Faizan, a 23-year-old student, commented, "We don't experience winter the same way our elders did, but winter for us is still special. It's a time when we can get together and relax with our friends over hot drinks and cozy houses."

Young Kashmiris have started carving out their own ways to celebrate winter in the absence

of heavy snow. They are using these newfound customs to highlight their experiences while preserving the tales of previous generations. "I feel like it's okay to alter the way winter is celebrated. That means we still have some of our grandparents' memories alive, but we get to create our own too," Faizan said.

Even with these adaptations in place, some people still feel a sense of loss. Younger individuals like Tanveer appreciate and respect the tales, even if they're never able

to live through them. There is a missing attachment to a world that seems to be slowly disappearing.

The loss of snow in Kashmir is much more than an environmental change; it reflects something of greater emotional magnitude. For hundreds of years, snow has served as the uniting factor of the community and as a marker of time. In its absence, many Kashmiris feel a quiet disconnection and sorrow.

As the winters in Kashmir change, so does the perception of time and identity for its inhabitants. The snow symbolizes the progression of time, but for the people of Kashmir, snow is now something incredibly unpredictable, raising the question of what it means to cherish the past.

Initially, this transformation may seem harsh, but in reality, it is not. Younger Kashmiris are learning how to engage with their land's history and understand what it means to belong to Kashmir. This, in turn, fosters respect for the past as they build new ways for the future.

Kashmir may be confronting a future without the snow it once cherished, but its spirit remains resilient. The region's cultural identity is adapting, finding new ways to thrive in a changing world while holding on to what truly matters—the strength, beauty, and resilience of its people. As time progresses, Kashmiris are rewriting the narrative of their land, ensuring that their connection to it remains as strong as ever.

The author is an intern with KO

A Critical Analysis of Iqbal's Shikwa and Jawab-e-Shikwa

A Poetic Masterpiece or a Theological Dilemma?

Newsheena Mushtaq

Allama Iqbal's *Shikwa* (Complaint) and *Jawab-e-Shikwa* (Reply to the Complaint) are two of his best-known poems. They are highly praised for their powerful message to the Muslim Ummah, urging them to get back on track and become more self-aware. However, a closer examination of these poems reveals theological concerns that conflict with core Islamic beliefs. In *Shikwa*, the direct complaint is made against God, questioning His fairness and suggesting that He has forsaken His people. *Jawab-e-Shikwa*, claimed to be Allah's reply, attempts to provide answers, and if true, could ascribe human speech to the Godhead, which has no place in Islamic theology.

The Problems in *Shikwa*

From an Islamic point of view, one should not complain in an accusatory way to Allah. Islam recommends that believers approach Allah with humility and submission, framed by the practices of patience (Sabr) and gratitude (Shukr) when seeking from Allah, rather than questioning divine wisdom. Nevertheless, in *Shikwa*, Iqbal's poetry expresses resentment toward Allah in a way that contradicts these principles.

One of the most controversial lines states:

"Tujhko maloom hai leta tha koi naam tera?"

"Do You even know if anyone used to take Your name?"

This line assumes that Muslims were the only ones who gave proper account of God and that He has something to give them in return. This misrepresents the relationship between humans and the Creator. Allah does not require human remembrance, as He is completely independent of all creation:

"O mankind, you are those in need of Allah, while Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy." (Surah Fatir 35:15)

Similarly, Iqbal writes:

"Hum wafadar nahi, tu bhi to dildar nahi."

"We are not loyal, but You are also not generous."

This verse questions Allah's bounty, implying that divine mercy comes with a trading requirement. Islam teaches, however, that Allah's mercy is boundless and not contingent upon human actions:

"My mercy encompasses all things." (Surah Al-Araf 7:156)

Another problematic aspect of *Shikwa* is that it absolves Muslims of their responsibilities to Allah, instead of urging introspection. The Quran repeatedly emphasizes that human actions determine their success or failure:

"Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." (Surah Ar-Ra'd 13:11)

However, *Shikwa* frames the decline of Muslims as if Allah has punished them inequitably, rather than as a consequence of their own failures. This contradicts the Islamic conviction that all things happen through divine providence and that problems should lead to repentance, not grumbling.

Iqbal, however, expresses doubt as to why a deity would favor angels and celestial beings over Muslims:

"Hoor aur ghilman ki kyun qatre hai humse?"

"Why are the angels and heavenly beings favored over us?"

Islam believes that all created things have a design, and it is not for humanity to deny Allah's design:

"He is not questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned." (Surah Al-Anbiya 21:23)

Such complaints suggest a sense of entitlement before Allah, which goes against the Islamic principle of humility.

"Reh gayi rasm-e-azan, rooh-e-bilal na rahi."

"The ritual of Azan remains, but the spirit of Bilal is no more."

This sentence presumes that the heart of Islam has been lost, almost accusing Allah of it. However, Islam teaches that faith is an individual responsibility. The dissolution of Muslims is not caused by Allah's negligence, but due to the mistakes of Muslims. Verily, a believer should replace questioning the divine will with self-correction and seeking Allah's mercy.

"Qahar tujhko, magar hum tujhe razi kar len."

"You are angry, but we will find a way to please You."

This sentence suggests that divine blessings are embedded in a commercial negotiation with God, in which Muslims must make efforts to ask God to make blessings move in their favor. But Allah's mercy is not limited to human effort. His grace is vast and unconditional:

"My mercy encompasses all things." (Surah Al-Araf 7:156)

The notion of bargaining with Allah is incompatible with Islamic beliefs, where submission and thankfulness, rather than complaints, are conducive to divine grace.

"Chheen li mard ki masti, bhi to be-daar nahi"

"You took away the zeal of men, but You are not even aware."

This sentence implies that Allah has purposefully made the power and will of Muslim males feeble, painting Allah as apathetic to their sufferings. This contradicts the Islamic belief that Allah is always aware and never unjust:

"And your Lord is not ever unjust to [His] servants." (Surah Fussilat 41:46)

The Problems in *Jawab-e-Shikwa*

Although *Shikwa* voices issues from a Muslim perspective, *Jawab-e-Shikwa*

tries to address them by framing the issue in the form of a divine response from God, Allah. This very structure is problematic because Islam teaches that God's words are absolute and final in the Qur'an. No human can assume Allah's voice without revelation, and doing so is likely to falsely attribute words to Him. *Jawab-e-Shikwa* contradicts the Quranic principle:

"He is not questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned." (Surah Al-Anbiya 21:23)

Even if one maintains that *Jawab-e-Shikwa* is metaphorical, it establishes a potentially harmful precedent. Islam has very few limitations on who is permitted to speak in Allah's name, i.e., only the holy Prophets. Once revelation ended with Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), no one—not even a great poet like Iqbal—could claim the right to present "Allah's words" in poetic form.

Furthermore, *Jawab-e-Shikwa* presents a debate-like exchange between Allah and Muslims. This concept does not exist in Islamic theology. The Quran makes it clear that human beings have no capacity to contest the ruling of Allah or to request rationalization:

"And your Lord is not ever unjust to [His] servants." (Surah Fussilat 41:46)

Another issue is that *Jawab-e-Shikwa* presents Allah's response in a way that suggests He has to explain Himself, almost as if justifying His actions. Islam teaches that Allah's wisdom is beyond human comprehension and does not need to be defended. It is expected, however, that the faithful yield to His will with trust and patience.

Conclusion

Although both *Shikwa* and *Jawab-e-Shikwa* are highly praised for their poetic merit, their theological points of controversy conflict with the tenets of Islamic teachings. *Shikwa* represents God in a way that suggests He has let humans down, asking about His justice and mercy in a manner that contradicts Quranic teachings. *Jawab-e-Shikwa*, in an effort to answer, adopts the form of God—an extremely sensitive issue in Muslim theology, as it can never be claimed by any human to represent the Divine.

Islam teaches that suffering should be borne with prayer, contrition, and self-betterment, not by grumbling at God. The true revival of the Muslim Ummah is not attained by doubting the will of Allah but by being so pious that acts of thanksgiving and betterment for the community flow from a sincere heart, good deeds, and unshakeable trust in Allah's wisdom.

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Social Media and Mental Pressure: The Unseen Strain

Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The advent of social media has reshaped how we interact, communicate, and express ourselves. In a matter of years, platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and others have become integral to daily life, offering numerous benefits in terms of connectivity and entertainment. Despite its many positives, social media has also brought forth a new set of challenges, particularly concerning mental well-being. Behind the filters, likes, and posts lies a growing concern about the psychological toll these platforms take on individuals. The pressures exerted by social media—whether from the need to conform to unrealistic beauty standards, the desire for online validation, or the constant exposure to others' curated lives—are often not fully understood. These pressures affect people in different ways, but the emotional strain can be profound and far-reaching.

One of the most significant aspects of social media that contributes to mental pressure is the constant comparison to others. The nature of these platforms is such that users are exposed to a never-ending stream of perfectly filtered photos and videos. Influencers, celebrities, and even friends showcase their lives in ways that often appear flawless. Beautiful vacations, perfect relationships, and career successes are frequently displayed in an effort to attract attention and validation. For many, this can trigger feelings of inadequacy. The gap between their own lives and the idealized images they see can lead to self-doubt and a lack of fulfillment. The more they scroll, the more they find themselves measuring their own lives against these seemingly perfect snapshots, unaware that most of what is shared is a highly curated and distorted version of reality.

The need for approval also weighs heavily on users. Social media platforms encourage validation in the form of likes, comments, and shares, which can feel like an affirmation of one's self-worth. As a result, many people begin to associate their value with the amount of attention they receive online. When posts fail to garner the expected amount of likes or engagement, it can lead to disappointment or even feelings of rejection. The desire for validation becomes a powerful force, influencing both how individuals present themselves online and how they perceive themselves in real life. For younger users, in particular, who are still developing their sense of self, this need for approval can be overwhelming. The psychological pres-

sure to maintain an online persona that fits social expectations can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and a distorted self-image.

In addition to these issues, the rise of cyberbullying has introduced a new dimension to the mental strain caused by social media. Unlike traditional bullying, which occurs in physical spaces, online harassment can happen at any time and from any location. The anonymity provided by the internet gives individuals the freedom to say things they might never utter in person. Mean-spirited comments, insults, and even public shaming are common forms of cyberbullying that can leave lasting emotional scars. Victims often feel helpless, as the harassment follows them everywhere through their devices. This constant exposure to negativity can lead to feelings of isolation, depression, and anxiety, especially when users find themselves unable to escape the toxic environment. While the internet promises to connect people, it has also become a platform for some to tear others down, making it harder for many to feel safe and supported in online spaces.

Social media also has a way of overwhelming users with information. The endless scrolling through posts, news stories, and updates can create a sense of digital fatigue. The fear of missing out on trends, news, or social interactions drives people to remain constantly connected, checking their phones multiple times a day. This constant engagement can result in cognitive overload, leaving individuals mentally drained. Many users find themselves inundated with an endless stream of content, some of which may be distressing or anxiety-inducing. While staying informed is important, the pressure to keep up with the flood of information can take a toll on mental health, contributing to stress and even burnout. The inability to disconnect can make it difficult for individuals to unwind, leading to sleep disruptions and an overall sense of being constantly "on edge."

The superficial nature of online interactions further complicates the mental pressure associated with social media. While these platforms provide opportunities for socializing, the relationships that form online often lack the depth and emotional connection of face-to-face conversations. What might seem like a close-knit group of friends or followers can sometimes feel hollow, as interactions are reduced to likes, shares, and brief comments. This can create a sense of loneliness, as people may find themselves surrounded by "friends" yet feel emotionally distant.

The quest for more followers, likes, or comments can sometimes take precedence over nurturing genuine relationships, leaving individuals feeling more isolated despite their apparent popularity in the digital world. The constant need for validation from strangers can overshadow the importance of building meaningful, in-person connections that are crucial for emotional well-being.

In many ways, social media encourages a constant performance, where individuals feel compelled to portray their best selves. Whether it's posting a picture that reflects a perfect moment, sharing an accomplishment, or showcasing a happy life, there is an underlying pressure to be seen in a certain light. This desire to craft an idealized version of one's life can be exhausting and, at times, emotionally draining. The gap between one's real, everyday experience and the version they present online can create a dissonance that increases stress. The pressure to maintain this curated image, especially in a world where everything is easily visible and often scrutinized, can lead to burnout.

While these pressures are undeniably pervasive, social media is not inherently harmful. The key lies in how it is used. Platforms can be a source of connection, inspiration, and support when utilized mindfully. In fact, many people find communities online that offer a sense of belonging and emotional support. Social media can be a powerful tool for raising awareness about mental health, promoting causes, and connecting like-minded individuals. However, when used excessively or without boundaries, it can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy, stress, and isolation. A healthy relationship with social media involves limiting exposure to harmful content, curating feeds that inspire rather than induce anxiety, and fostering genuine connections both online and offline.

As social media continues to play an ever-increasing role in our lives, it is crucial to recognize the mental pressures it can impose. It is important to develop a balanced approach—one that allows us to enjoy the benefits of online interaction without falling victim to the negative effects. Ultimately, the goal is not to abandon social media, but to engage with it in a way that prioritizes mental health and well-being. By being aware of its impact and taking steps to protect ourselves, we can navigate the digital world with greater mindfulness and resilience.

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BIS, IMPARD Hold First Training On Standardization For ITI Principals In Kashmir



Observer News Service

Srinagar: Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), Jammu and Kashmir Branch Office (JKBO), in collaboration with the J&K Institute of Management, Public Administration & Rural Development (IMPARD), Government of Jammu and Kashmir, successfully conducted its first-ever training program on standardization for ITI principals and superintendents from the Kashmir region. The program took place on 5th February 2025 at the IMPARD Institute, Srinagar.

Pankaj Atri, Joint Director, BIS-JKBO, delivered an insightful session, providing an overview of BIS as the National Standards Body and elaborating on the standard formulation process, use of BIS standards in curriculum and encouraging

participation in Standard formulation activities. He gave a detailed presentation on BIS activities and standardization, highlighting key features of the BIS website, such as Know Your Standards, the Hallmarking Scheme, and the BIS Care App.

Emphasizing the significance of consumer protection, he elaborated on various initiatives undertaken by BIS to enhance stakeholder engagement at the grassroots level. He further explained how such involvement contributes to the technical upgradation of national standards and broadens their reach among end users.

Dr Khurshid, Associate Professor, IMPARD welcomed the initiative of BIS in this collaborative program and expressed his valuable insights about the significance of such programs.

Swift Settlement Of Insurance Claims Bring Relief To Families Of J&K Bank Customers

Observer News Service

Srinagar: In a major relief to bereaved families, J&K Bank recently facilitated the quick settlement of insurance claims under its MetLoan & Life Suraksha (MLLS) product for deceased borrowers in its Srinagar Zone. Insurance claims amounting to Rs 1.53 Crore were paid to 48 families thereby easing their financial burden during difficult times.

The symbolic cheque representing the disbursed amount was jointly displayed by the Bank's Zonal Head (Srinagar) Raja Zaffer Khan alongside Associate Director & Head (PNB MetLife) Irfan Ali Zargar in the presence of Cluster Heads (Srinagar I & II) Shabir Ahmad Bulla and Asmat Ara, Credit Head (LCU) Nisar John Tak, AGM Mushtaq Ahmad Bayroo, and other senior officials at the Bank's Srinagar Zonal Office. The event was also attended by Branch Heads, Advances Managers, Zonal Insurance Coordinator (Srinagar) Manzoor Ahmad and senior representatives from PNB MetLife, including Regional Manager Mudasar Hassan Khanyari and Area Manager Zubair Ahmad Dar.

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

While urging the branches to continue make sure that every claim is settled swiftly in case of death of the borrower, Cluster Heads said, "With a single premium option and the bank funding available, insuring loans goes a long way in reducing the financial burden on families during such difficult times."

Associate Director & Head (PNB MetLife) Irfan Ali Zargar also advised customers to consider loan insurance for their peace of mind. "While we cannot compensate for the emotional loss, promoting good insurance products can provide much-needed financial support to bereaved families, relieving them from the burden of liabilities in unforeseen circumstances," he said.

DPAP's Political Journey At 'Fag End' In J&K

Barring Party Chief Azad, All Leaders Set To Rejoin Congress



Agencies

Srinagar: Political journey of Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) led by former J&K Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad seems to be at its 'fag end' in the Union Territory. Sources said that all the leaders who had quit Congress in 2022 have decided to rejoin the "grand old party" again.

Many leaders under the leadership of former legislator Taj Mohi-ud-din are set to rejoin Congress in the next few days, they said.

Taj had quit Congress in August 2022 to join DPAP. He later announced his resignation from the party in August last year and contested 2024 Assembly polls unsuccessfully as an independent candidate from Uri constituency.

Other leaders who intend to rejoin Congress include G M Saroori, Muhammad Amin Bhat from Devsar, Ashok Kumar, Gulzar Ahmad Wani and others, sources privy to the development said.

"The mass rejoining is expected to take place in Jammu or in New Delhi this week," they said. Several leaders, who are expected to rejoin Congress, have already resigned from DPAP last year.

Pertinently, KNO had reported that the DPAP is facing an uncertain future following its crushing defeat in the 2024 assembly elections.

The party's activities have come to a standstill, with Azad himself maintaining an unusual silence and absence from the political scene in Jammu and Kashmir. (KNO)

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Trump Lays Claim

talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House, where the two also discussed shared concerns about Islamic Republic of Iran.

"I don't think people should be going back," Trump said. "You can't live in Gaza right now. I think we need another location. I think it should be a location that's going to make people happy."

Trump, a former New York property developer, in his first major Middle East policy announcement, said the US would take ownership of the Gaza Strip and redevelop it after Palestinians are resettled elsewhere and turn the territory into "the Riviera of the Middle East" in which the "world's people" — including Palestinians — would live. He offered no detail about what authority the US would use to take the land and develop it.

"We'll make sure that it's done world class," Trump said. "It'll be wonderful for the people — Palestinians, Palestinians mostly, we're talking about."

Trump's son-in-law and former aide, Jared Kushner, last year described Gaza as "valuable" waterfront property.

Trump insisted the Palestinians "have no alternative" but to leave the "big pile of rubble" that is Gaza.

Trump said that he plans to visit Gaza, Israel and Saudi Arabia, but did not say when he plans to go.

Last week, both Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and Jordanian King Abdullah II dismissed Trump's calls to resettle Gazans.

But Trump said he believes Egypt and Jordan — as well as other countries, which he did not name — will ultimately agree to take in Palestinians.

"You look over the decades, it's all death in Gaza," Trump said. "This has been happening for years. It's all death. If we can get a beautiful area to resettle people, permanently, in nice homes where they can be happy and not be shot and not be killed and not be knifed to death like what's happening in Gaza."

Trump also said he isn't ruling out deploying US troops to support reconstruction of Gaza. He envisions "long-term" US ownership of a redevelopment of the territory.

"We'll do what is necessary," Trump said about the possibility of deploying American troops to fill any security vacuum.

Netanyahu Elated

outside Israel since the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants in November for him, his former defense minister and Hamas' slain military chief, accusing them of crimes against humanity during the war in Gaza. The US does not recognize the ICC's authority over its citizens or territory

'Unacceptable, Absurd'

with some calling it 'dangerous' and some 'ridiculous and absurd'.

Countries from Russia, China, Germany, Spain, Ireland and the UK said they continued to support the two-state solution that has formed the basis of Washington's policy in the region for decades, which has held that Gaza would be part of a future Palestinian state that includes the occupied West Bank.

Welcoming Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the White House on Tuesday, Trump said he would support an effort to permanently resettle Palestinians from Gaza to places where they can live without fear of violence, and he and his team had been discussing this possibility with Jordan, Egypt and other regional countries.

An official from Hamas, which ruled the Gaza Strip before fighting Israel in a brutal war there, said Trump's statement about taking over the enclave was "ridiculous and absurd".

"Any ideas of this kind are capable of igniting the region," Sami Abu Zuhri told Reuters, saying Hamas remains committed to the ceasefire

accord with Israel and "ensuring the success of the negotiation in the second phase".

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said, "There are Israeli plans to take full control of the occupied West Bank and attempts to displace Palestinians from the Gaza Strip," adding that, "practicing a policy of collective punishment is a method that Russia rejects," Al Jazeera reported.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry expressed opposition to the forced transfer of the people of Gaza and expressed hope that all parties will take ceasefire and post-conflict governance as an opportunity to bring the Palestinian issue back to a political settlement on the basis of the two-state solution. Some of the toughest criticism came from France, which said the forced displacement of Gazans would be a serious violation of international law, an attack on the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians and destabilise the region.

Permanent displacement

Russia believes a settlement in the Middle East is only possible on the basis of a two-state solution, the Kremlin said on Wednesday, while Spain's Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares said "Gaza is the land of Gazan Palestinians and they must stay in Gaza".

Trump's proposal raises questions whether Middle East power Saudi Arabia would be willing to join a renewed U.S.-brokered push for a historic normalisation of relations with U.S. ally Israel.

Saudi Arabia, a key U.S. ally, said it would not establish ties with Israel without the creation of a Palestinian state, contradicting Trump's claim that Riyadh was not demanding a Palestinian homeland.

Trump would like Saudi Arabia to follow in the footsteps of the United Arab Emirates, a Middle East trade and business hub, and Bahrain which signed the so-called Abraham Accords in 2020 and normalised ties with Israel.

In doing so, they became the first Arab states in a quarter century to break a longstanding taboo.

Michael Milshtein, a former intelligence officer and one of Israel's leading specialists on Hamas, said Trump's comments put Israel on a collision course with its Arab neighbours.

"Maybe Trump is trying to promote pressure on the Arab states (so) that they will not create any obstacles if he will try to promote a normalisation between Saudi Arabia and Israel," he said.

Netanyahu would not be drawn into discussing the proposal, other than to praise Trump for trying a new approach.

Palestinians fear another 'Nakba'

Displacement is a highly sensitive issue among both Palestinians and Arab countries.

As fighting raged in the Gaza war, Palestinians feared they would suffer from another "Nakba", or catastrophe, referring to the time when hundreds of thousands were dispossessed of their homes in the 1948 war at the birth of the state of Israel.

"Trump can go to hell, with his ideas, with his money, and with his beliefs. We are going nowhere. We are not some of his assets," Samir Abu Basil, 40, a father of five from Gaza City, told Reuters via a chat app.

"The easier for him if he wants to resolve this conflict is to take the Israelis and put them in one of the states there.

They are strangers and not the Palestinians. We are the owner of the land.

Step Up Fight

improvement in all parameters of the security scenario in Jammu and Kashmir.

The home minister reviewed the security situation of Jammu and Kashmir with top officials of the Army, police, paramilitary forces and others in two back-to-back meetings held on Tuesday and Wednesday. This was for the first time that the home minister had such threadbare discussions on the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir in two consecutive days.

Those who attended the meetings included

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, Director of Intelligence Bureau Tapan Deka, DGP Nalin Prabhat, Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi and other top army, police and civil officials.

The meetings were held in the wake of a terror attack in south Kashmir's Kulgam district, in which ex-serviceman Manzoor Ahmad Wagay was killed and his wife and niece were injured.

Aga Khan Passes

imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims, died in Portugal surrounded by his family.

His successor was designated in his will, which will be read in the presence of his family and religious leaders in Lisbon before the name is made public. A date has not been announced. The successor is chosen from among his male progeny or other relatives, according to the Ismaili community's website.

Considered by his followers to be spiritual leader or Imam, His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV was a student when his grandfather passed over his father as his successor to lead the diaspora of Shia Ismaili Muslims, saying his followers should be led by a young man "who has been brought up in the midst of the new age."

Over decades, the Aga Khan evolved into a business magnate and a philanthropist, moving between the spiritual and the worldly with ease.

While his death was announced late in the day in Europe and the Middle East, ceremonies were already being held Tuesday in Ismaili communities across the world. Condolences poured in online from charity groups he supported, as well as the equestrian world, where he was a well-known figure.

"An extraordinarily compassionate global leader," Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Tuesday, calling him a very good friend. "He will be deeply, deeply missed by people around the world."

Treated as a head of state, the Aga Khan was given the title of "His Highness" by Queen Elizabeth in July 1957, two weeks after his grandfather the Aga Khan III unexpectedly made him heir to the family's 1,300-year dynasty as leader of the Ismaili Muslim sect.

He became the Aga Khan IV on October 19, 1957, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on the spot where his grandfather once had his weight equalled in diamonds in gifts from his followers.

He had left Harvard to be at his ailing grandfather's side, and returned to school 18 months later with an entourage and a deep sense of responsibility.

"I was an undergraduate who knew what his work for the rest of his life was going to be," he said in a 2012 interview with Vanity Fair magazine. "I don't think anyone in my situation would have been prepared."

A defender of Islamic culture and values, he was widely regarded as a builder of bridges between Muslim societies and the West despite — or perhaps because of — his reticence to become involved in politics.

The Aga Khan Development Network, his main philanthropic organization, deals mainly with issues of health care, housing, education and rural economic development. It says it works in over 30 countries and has an annual budget of about USD 1 billion for nonprofit development activities.

A network of hospitals bearing his name are scattered in places where health care had lacked for the poorest, including Bangladesh, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, where he spent tens of millions of dollars for development of local economies.

The extent of the Aga Khan's financial empire is hard to measure. Some reports estimated his personal wealth to be in the billions.

The Ismailis — a sect originally centred in India but which expanded to large communities in east Africa, Central and South Asia and the Middle East — consider it a duty to tithe up to

12.5 per cent of their income to him as steward. "We have no notion of the accumulation of wealth being evil," he told Vanity Fair in 2012. "The Islamic ethic is that if God has given you the capacity or good fortune to be a privileged individual in society, you have a moral responsibility to society."

The Ismaili community's website said he was born on December 13, 1936, in Creux-de-Genthod, near Geneva, Switzerland, the son of Joan Yarde-Buller and Aly Khan, and spent part of his childhood in Nairobi, Kenya — where a hospital now bears his name.

He became well-known as a horse breeder and owner, and he represented Iran in the 1964 Winter Olympics as a skier. His eye for building and design led him to establish an architecture prize, and programmes for Islamic Architecture at MIT and Harvard. He restored ancient Islamic structures throughout the world.

The Aga Khan lived at length in France and had been based in Portugal for the past several years. His development network and foundation are based in Switzerland.

The Aga Khan will be buried in Lisbon. The date was not released.

He is survived by three sons and a daughter and several grandchildren.

J&K Govt Appoints

(Prevention) Act, 1956 and in supersession of all the previous notifications issued on the subject," reads a notification issued by home department J&K.

The Government of Jammu and Kashmir hereby appoint all SHO's, not below the rank of Inspector and SDPOs/DySP Headquarters of J&K Police as Special Police Officers within their respective Jurisdictions for the purposes of the said Act, it reads.

Budget Will Not

in you. Their expectations are tied to your leadership, and through this meeting, we aim to align budget priorities with the hopes of those who voted and participated in the democratic process," he told the elected representatives, including DDC chairpersons and MLAs.

Abdullah, who also holds the finance portfolio, held pre-budget consultations in Jammu via video conferencing joined in by MLAs from Anantnag, Budgam, Kathua, and Samba districts.

J&K Legislative Assembly Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather, who represented the Charar-i-Sharif Constituency, also participated in the meeting virtually from his office.

Abdullah said, "We want to ensure that this budget is not just by the government but by the people, for the people. Your voices will be represented, as you represent the people of Jammu and Kashmir."

He added, "These consultations are not a one-off event. We aim to establish consistent coordination with public representatives, ensuring transparency and inclusiveness in governance."

The CM claimed the budget will aim to uplift the socio-economic conditions of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"These consultations are not a one-off event. We aim to establish consistent coordination with the people's representatives, ensuring transparency and inclusiveness in governance," he said.

Reassuring the participants, he said, "This consultation process will continue, and we will consult with you regularly to address your concerns and provide all possible support." Addressing the participants, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah expressed confidence that the forthcoming budget session in the J&K Assembly would reflect a collective commitment to serving the people with dedication and sincerity. "Together, we will work to uplift the socio-economic conditions of our people and ensure sustainable development across J&K," the chief minister added.

Earlier in the consultation sessions, the DDC Chairpersons and MLAs from these four

districts highlighted various issues and projects requiring priority attention in the upcoming budget. Key concerns and demands raised included road widening projects, new road projects, enhancement of sports infrastructure, upgradation of health and educational institutions, provision of potable drinking water, development of tourist destinations, strengthening healthcare facilities with adequate staffing and the establishment of new colleges and schools in their constituencies.

The elected representatives expressed their gratitude to the Chief Minister Omar Abdullah for initiating these consultations, appreciating the government's efforts to incorporate grassroots perspectives into the budgetary framework.

Ruhullah Flays

the Territorial Army soldier and his family. Violence, especially against women and children, is abhorrent. But to punish an entire population for the crimes of a few is not counter-terrorism — it is collective retribution," Mehdi said in a post on X.

The Lok Sabha member from Srinagar said he has been briefed about reports of over 500 persons being detained during raids in Kashmir.

"I have been briefed about reports of over 500 individuals being rounded up by the SOG in sweeping nocturnal raids across Kashmir. The number is suspected to be much higher in actuality.

"I fail to imagine the terror of a family whose loved ones now lie in the abyss of an opaque security system. This is not security. This is punishment by exile," he added.

Mehdi said the establishment in J&K and in Delhi need to arrive at a common denominator as far as conducting operations in Kashmir are concerned.

"The use of vague, legally unsound terminology such as 'OGWs', 'Hybrid Militants', etc. to justify human rights violations must be shunned. No regime in the world has successfully governed a population by making itself the object of its people's fear and resentment.

"I strongly remind you of the moral calculus at play here, if you must rule by repression, then you have already lost your legitimacy. If your idea of democracy is a valley silenced by fear rather than engaged in dialogue, then your democracy lies in darkness," he said.

Seeks EAM's Help

the case of a Kashmiri engineer, who has been detained in Saudi Arabia for the past four years.

Agas Ruhullah, in his appeal, as per the details obtained urged the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to expedite the release and safe return of Abdul Rafi Baba, a 36-year-old engineer from Srinagar's Soura area. He wrote that Baba has been held in a Saudi prison since March 1, 2020, and his family is desperate for government intervention.

"Urgent Appeal: @ruhullahmehdi has written to Hon'ble EAM @DrJaisankar regarding the detention of a Kashmiri citizen in Saudi Arabia. He urged immediate intervention to expedite the individual's release & safe return home. Hope @MEAIndia ensures swift action," the office of MP Ruhullah Mehdi wrote on X.

Meanwhile, it was earlier reported that Rafi Baba, employed at King Faisal University in Saudi Arabia, was arrested under unclear circumstances.

His family members said Rafi was the sole breadwinner for his family and had no criminal record in Jammu and Kashmir. "His father, Manzoor-ul-Haq Baba, said the arrest seemed linked to internal company disputes, with no valid legal charges against his son."

Now, Agas Ruhullah Mehdi's recent tweet on X (formerly Twitter) highlighted the urgency of the situation, urging the government to ensure that justice is served and Rafi Baba is brought back safely. As of now, there has been no official response from the Ministry of External Affairs. (KNO)

10 Kg Of Gold Coins Seized From 2 Kashmiri Passengers At IGI Airport

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Air Intelligence Unit (AIU) of Customs at Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport, New Delhi Wednesday seized 10.092 kg of gold coins, valued at Rs 7.8 crore, from two male passengers hailing from Kashmir.

An official said that the passengers, aged 45 and 43, were intercepted after displaying suspicious behavior during profiling.

He said although their baggage scans did not show any anomalies, a personal search triggered by DFMD alerts led to the discovery of concealed gold coins wrapped in plastic inside specially designed



waist belts.

He added that the passengers have been detained and further investigations are underway under the Customs Act, 1962. Customs Delhi noted its commitment to curbing smuggling activities and protecting national security.

Police Crack Mosque Burglary Case, 3 Arrested

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Srinagar Police have solved a burglary case involving the theft of cash from a mosque donation box in Nishat, leading to the arrest of three suspects and the recovery of stolen money.

According to an official statement, on February 2, Police Station Nishat received information about a break-in at a mosque located at Syed Rahman Chowk, where unidentified thieves had forcibly opened the donation box and taken away cash during the intervening night of February 1-2.

Following the complaint, an FIR (No. 07/2025) was registered, and an investigation was launched. Using a combination of intelligence inputs and technical evidence, the police swiftly identified and apprehended the suspects.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Aamir Rafiq, son of Rafiq Ahmad Sheikh alias Dohbi, a resident of Buchwara Dalgate

Mohd Sufyan Bage, son of Mohd Rafiq Bage, originally from Bage Mohalla Uri Baramulla, currently residing in Gulab Mohalla Dalgate

Danish Bashir Khan, son of Late Bashir Ahmad Khan, a resident of Buchwara Dalgate, presently living near Sumo Stand Khunmoh

It further reads, Police also seized a Swift car (registration number JK04A-5786) used in the commission of the crime. Upon questioning, the accused led investigators to the stolen cash, which has now been recovered.

Authorities have assured that further legal proceedings are underway, and the case remains under investigation.

Misbranded Pesticide Seized In Kashmir

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir government has directed the seizure of a pesticide product, Indofil M-45, after it was declared misbranded by the Agriculture Chemist at Lalmandi, Srinagar. The directive was issued by the Office of the Deputy Director of Law Enforcement following an intimation from the Assistant Director of Law Enforcement.

According to official documents, a sample of Indofil M-45, which contains Mancozeb 75% WP as its active ingredient, was tested and found to be misbranded. The batch

in question (CMZ24-660) was manufactured on December 13, 2024, by Indofil Industries Limited and has an expiry date of December 12, 2026.

The authorities have instructed law enforcement officers to seize the stock of the pesticide and take necessary action under the provisions of The Insecticides Act, 1968, and its associated rules. Further steps will be taken based on the findings and legal provisions.

"The move is part of efforts to regulate the quality of pesticides in Kashmir and ensure that only approved and effective products are available for agricultural use", said an official. [KNT]

Z-Morh Tunnel Transforms Sonamarg Into Winter Tourism Hotspot



Agencies

SRINAGAR: The newly inaugurated Z-Morh Tunnel in Ganderbal district is proving to be a game-changer for the Sonamarg tourist destination, boosting winter tourism in the region at a very large scale. Since its opening on January 13, more than 55,000 tourists have visited Sonamarg within just 16 days during the otherwise slow winter months.

The 6.5-kilometer-long tunnel, connecting Gagangir to Sonamarg, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and has since facilitated seamless access to the picturesque valley, which was previously difficult to reach due to heavy snowfall and road closures. Official data reveals that among the 55,935 tourists who arrived post-inauguration, 1,114 were foreign visitors.

According to Ghulam Mohammad Bhat, CEO of the Sonamarg Development Authority, 33,990

tourists had visited Sonamarg in the first 10 days of January 2025. However, after the opening of the tunnel, the number surged significantly.

"Earlier, due to the lack of road connectivity, Sonamarg would witness a sharp decline in visitors during December, January, and February, leaving local businesses struggling. This year, however, the scenario has changed completely," Bhat said.

The increase in tourism has revitalized the local economy, with hotels, restaurants, and shops witnessing a surge in activity. "This place, which usually remained silent during winters, is now bustling with visitors," Bhat added.

He also noted that Sonamarg currently has about 1.5 feet of snow, making it an ideal location for winter sports. The authorities are in talks with the sports department to organize skiing, skating, ice hockey, and other winter activities to further promote tourism.—(KNO)

Wildlife Dept Successfully Performs Corneal Repair Surgery On Leopard Cat

Syed Mohammad Burhan

SRINAGAR: In a significant step, the Department of Wildlife Protection, Kashmir Division, has successfully carried out a corneal repair surgery on a leopard cat with impaired vision.

Officials of the department said that this marks a crucial intervention in wildlife healthcare, highlighting the department's commitment to the conservation and rehabilitation of injured wild animals.

The Leopard Cat, found in distress, was rescued and provided with medical attention by experts, ensuring its chances of survival in the wild, officials said.

An official said that a leopard cat having approximate weight of 2.5-3 kg's was presented from Ajas control room Bandipora from north division with a history of trauma and injury in the left eye.

"The animal on examination showed signs of pain, distress, redness and swelling of left eye, corneal edema and cloudiness. The clinical examination also revealed that the animal was having a prolapsed mass of aqueous humor that had been solidified in the area inside the eye," he said.

Giving details of the surgical procedure, Veterinary Officer Department of Wildlife Protection Kashmir, Dr Mohsin Ali Gazi said the operation required utmost care due to the delicate nature of the eye and



precautions before and after the surgical procedure were also taken care of.

"At first the pre-surgical examination of the animal was conducted including tests and anesthesia was given keeping in view the body weight and other parameters of the animal" he said.

"The surgical technique involved superficial lamellar keratectomy, antibiotics, analgesics, topical medications, ophthalmic solutions, multivitamins and other necessary medication was given" he added.

Gazi further said that the animal exhibited immediate post-operative visual recovery.

He said that post-operative care is critical for successful recovery and has been a big challenge after completion of this surgery and it took a lot of

effort from our team.

"Post-operative care included pain management, administration of regular antibiotics, analgesics, topical medications, regular follow-ups to monitor signs of infection and signs of recovery, even restricted movement inside premises and avoiding allergens which has been a big challenge and has been taken care in a very professional manner"

He thanked the Staff of Dept of Wildlife protection Kashmir Bashir Ahmed Reshi and Mehrajuddin who, according to him, provided all possible care to the animal during follow-ups.

"All necessary follow ups, feeding was done in hygienic manner and after a few days the animal was released into its natural habitat," he said.

Political Party Leaders Meet Family Of Ex-Serviceman Shot Dead By Terrorists

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Leaders of various political parties in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday visited the residence of ex-serviceman Manzoor Ahmad Wagar, who was shot dead by terrorists in Kulgam district on Monday.

Leader of Opposition in J-K Assembly and BJP leader Sunil Sharma, state president Sat Paul Sharma and former MLA Ravindra Raina were among those who visited the Wagay family.

PDP leader Iltija Mufti and National Conference spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar also visited the bereaved family to offer their condolences.

The BJP leaders said Pakistan had created a module which was targeting innocent and unarmed civilians after the neighbouring country was frustrated by the peace and development in Jammu and Kashmir.

"This is condemnable and the perpetrators will be brought to book," Raina said.

Sunil Sharma also blamed the National Conference for the large number of deaths in Kashmir, especially those which took place in 2010 during the first tenure of Omar Abdullah as chief minister.

"I believe the National Con-



ference is responsible for whatever happened in Jammu and Kashmir since 1931 till date. The party is fundamentally responsible for the bloodshed that has taken place in Kashmir. I want to remind the National Conference that the killer of 110 people in just 10 days was their chief minister," the leader of the opposition said.

He was responding to an earlier statement of NC spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar in which he had said the claims of the Centre about improvement in the situation in Jammu and Kashmir after abrogation of Article 370 have been proven wrong.

Reacting to Sharma's statement, Dar said the BJP leaders should be ashamed as they were doing politics even over the death of the former soldier.

"I did not name or blame

anyone but do they forget which party does the Lieutenant Governor belong to? It is the LG who is handling law and order," he added.

Iltija Mufti, after meeting the families, said the Wagay family has lost its only breadwinner.

"The family has to be compensated and a probe should be ordered as the family members are apprehensive that they might be targeted," Mufti said.

On the detention of a large number of youths following the killing, Mufti said the authorities were punishing everyone for the crime of one person.

"Are we all militants? There is an atmosphere of fear. People told me that they cannot sleep at night out of fear. Kashmir has been turned into an open prison," she added.

Residents Of Goshugh Protest Against Kulgam Terror Attack

Agencies

SRINAGAR: A protest march was organized by the residents of Goshugh in the Pattan block of Baramulla district to express their outrage over the recent terror attack in Kulgam.

The attack tragically claimed the life of ex-serviceman Manzoor Ahmed Waghey and left his wife and niece injured.

The local community gathered in large numbers, demanding justice for the victim's family and condemning the brutal attack. Protesters raised slogans calling for an end to such violence and urging authorities to take stronger actions against those responsible for the attack.

The protest march highlighted the deep sense of grief and anger felt by the residents, as they stood in solidarity with the bereaved family.—(KINS)

Muzaffar Ali's "Zooni" Kicks Off Filming In Tral

Agencies

PULWAMA: The reshoots for Muzaffar Ali's long-awaited film Zooni, which had been halted midway in 1988, have officially begun in Tral area of South Kashmir's Pulwama district.

The shooting took place in the picturesque Shikargah and Paner areas of Tral in Kashmir, marking a significant step in the revival of the 16th-century Kashmiri poet Habba Khatoon's story.

Director Muzaffar Ali, who is leading the reshoot, reminisced about the initial filming process and the challenges that halted the project years ago.

"We had shot about 75,000 feet in various locations, including Pampur, Srinagar, and Dachi village," Ali shared.

"The beauty of Kashmir, its rivers, and valleys left a deep impact on us. We are back now, and it feels like a journey of remembrance."

Ali's son, Shaad Ali, who also worked on the original shoot as an Assistant Director, spoke about his connection to the



film. "This is not the first time for us in Kashmir. We wanted to relive those memories from when we shot Zooni in the late '80s. Kashmir has always been a place of beauty, love, and hospitality, and it continues to inspire us."

Aaqib, a resident of Tral, who has worked in many movies and web series said that they have visited Tral as he along with the Director are liking the Tral area.

He said that this is very good news for Tral as it will help to bring Tral in the Tourism map and thus simultaneously generate employment opportunities for locals.—(KNO)

J&K Bank Fraud Cases Drop By 50% In 2023-24

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Bank has made significant progress in combating fraud with a 50% reduction in the number of such cases in 2023-24 compared to the previous year.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman provided data on fraud cases across all banks, including Jammu and Kashmir Bank, in response to a question in the Lok Sabha.

The amount involved in these frauds also saw a dramatic decline, dropping to just 2.7% of the total amount from 2022-23. This improvement reflects the bank's enhanced security measures and proactive risk mitigation efforts.

Despite efforts to strengthen security and compliance measures, the bank continues to grapple with varying levels of fraud, with some years seeing alarming spikes in the amounts involved.

The bank reported 13 fraud cases, involving a total of Rs 69.71 crore in 2019-20. In 2020-21, the fraud cases decreased to 10, but the amount involved surged by 42.3% to Rs 99.23 crore, marking the high-



est amount in this period.

In 2021-22, both the number of cases and the amount involved dropped, with 12 fraud cases and Rs 14.25 crore, representing an 85.6% decline in the amount compared to the previous year.

In 2022-23, the bank saw a sharp rise in fraud cases, recording 16 cases, the highest in five years, with the amount involved skyrocketing to Rs 298.75 crore, a staggering 1,996% increase from the previous year.

In 2023-24 (till December 2024): Fraud cases decreased to 8, with the amount involved dropping significantly to Rs. 8.10 crore, a 97.3% reduction compared to 2022-23. As of December 2024, only 2 fraud cases have been reported, involving Rs 0.69 crore.

The data reveals a volatile trend in fraud cases, with the amount involved peaking in 2022-23 at Rs 298.75 crore, the highest in the five-year period—(KNO)

Sunil Sharma Blames 'NC For Disturbances In J&K'

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Leader of the Opposition in Jammu and Kashmir and senior BJP leader Sunil Sharma on Wednesday visited the family of the Ex-Army soldier who was killed in Kulgam after terrorists opened fire on him and his family.

Speaking to reporters here in Srinagar, as per news agency KINS, Sharma said, "Today, we have come here to meet the family of the martyred ex-Army soldier who was killed in Kulgam after terrorists targeted him and his family. This is a tragic loss, and we stand in solidarity with the bereaved family."

The senior BJP leader further accused the National Conference of being involved in creating instability in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The National Conference has been responsible for shap-

ing the unrest in Jammu and Kashmir since 1931. Whether it was the situation leading to the 1989 exodus or the turmoil, NC has played a role in keeping the region in crisis," Sharma said.

During his visit, Sharma assured the martyr's family that the BJP and the government would ensure justice and provide all possible assistance.

He emphasized that such attacks would not be tolerated and reaffirmed the government's commitment to eliminating terrorism from the Union Territory.

The attack in Kulgam has sparked strong reactions from political and security circles, with BJP leaders vowing to take stringent action against those responsible.

Security forces have intensified operations in the region to track down the terrorists involved in the attack.—(KINS)

'Dawa Khana' Of Qadir Reshi Reopens After Allegations Proved 'baseless'

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The well-known 'Dawa Khana' of Hakeem Ghulam Qadir Reshi in Harwan has reopened to the public after a brief closure, following an investigation that found all allegations against him "baseless".

The reopening has been met with joy and relief by the community, with many people resuming their visits to the esteemed traditional healing center.

MLA Hazratbal, Salman Ali Sagar, welcomed the development and praised Hakeem Reshi for his patience and composure throughout the ordeal.

"I am delighted to hear that the renowned 'Dawa Khana' of Hakeem Ghulam Qadir Reshi Sahab in Harwan is once again open to the public, with Hakeem Sahab resuming his noble practice after the completion of

investigations. Although all the allegations were found baseless by the investigative agency, I commend Reshi Sahab for his tolerant attitude during this period," Salman wrote on social media.

He further stated that the public's enthusiasm over the reopening of the healing center is a testament to the trust and respect that Hakeem Reshi has earned over the years.

Recently, health authorities collected samples for testing as part of routine checks. However, with the 'Dawa Khana' resuming operations, many are hopeful that it will continue its long-standing tradition of providing healing services to the community.

The center has been a hub for traditional medicine in the region, attracting patients from different areas.—(KINS)

Traffic Violations Decline By 80%: SSP Traffic Rural

Agencies

KANGAN: The SSP Traffic Rural Kashmir, Ravinder Paul Singh, has stated that the traffic violations in the region have decreased by an impressive 70 to 80 per cent, crediting the progress to the concerted efforts of traffic police and public awareness campaigns.

Singh emphasized that while the decrease in violations is a positive development, his team is committed to further reducing the remaining 20 percent to ensure safer roads for everyone.

He stressed that traffic violations would not be tolerated and promised that strict legal action would be taken against those

found in violation of traffic laws.

Highlighting a significant concern, Singh urged parents to avoid handing over vehicles to their children and

cautioned young riders against performing dangerous stunts on the roads. He issued a stern warning, saying, "If anyone is caught performing stunts on bikes or other vehicles, they will face legal action along with a fine."

As part of the ongoing crackdown, Singh revealed that traffic police teams are actively checking vehicles for proper documentation. Any vehicle found lacking the necessary paperwork will be prohibited from continuing on the roads.—(KNO)

Focussed On England & CT: Rohit Plays Down Speculations On Future

Press Trust of India

NAGPUR: Indian captain Rohit Sharma on Wednesday played down speculations about his future in international cricket, saying it is irrelevant to talk about his career at a time when he is "focussed" on the three ODIs against England and the Champions Trophy.

India will tune up for the Champions Trophy, starting February 19, with the three One-Day Internationals against England beginning with the first one here on Thursday.

"How it is relevant that I talk about my future plans when there are three ODIs and a Champions Trophy. The reports

(on my future) are going on for a number of years and I am not here to clarify those reports," Rohit said at the pre-match press conference.

"For me, the three games (against England) and the Champions Trophy is very important. My focus is on these games and I will see what happens thereafter," the India skipper added.

The 37-year-old has been battling poor form for a while now, managing only 31 runs across five innings at an abysmal average of 6.20 in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia.

While there is no doubt that he is not looking to walk into international sunset anytime soon, there were reports that



the BCCI has asked him to spell out his future plans after the Champions Trophy.

With India now competing in ODI cricket, a format in which

Rohit has enjoyed a lot of success, the skipper stressed that instead of harping on the past, he is focussed on the assignments ahead of him.

"This is a different format, different time. As cricketers, there will be ups and downs and I have faced those a lot in my career. This is nothing new to me. We know everyday is a fresh day, every series is a fresh series," and irate Rohit said when asked how confident he is feeling after his recent failure in red-ball cricket.

"I am looking forward to the challenge, not looking at what has happened in the past. There is no reason for me to look behind too much.

"It's important that I focus on what is coming up and what lies ahead for me. Look to try and start this series on a high," he added.

Short TAKES

Real Kashmir Play Sreenidi Deccan In I-League Today

Real Kashmir FC will take on Sreenidi Deccan FC in an I-League 2024-25 match on Thursday at Deccan Arena in Hyderabad, Telangana.

It will be a crucial fixture for the Ishaq Ahmad-coached team as a win would keep them in the mix for the top four spots. The Snow Leopards are currently fifth on the I-League table, taking 19 points from their 12 games. They have won three of their last five games, losing once and drawing once in the time.

Meanwhile, Sreenidi is eighth on the table, picking up 15 points from their 12 games. They have won only once in their previous five outings, drawing thrice and losing once in the process. Thursday's game between Real Kashmir and Sreenidi Deccan will kick off at 7:00 PM and airs on Sony Sports 2 and SSN app/website.

Satish Sharma Interacts With Dutch Football Association Coaches



Minister for Youth Services and Sports, Satish Sharma, interacted with instructors from the KNVB Dutch Football Association on Wednesday and discussed football development initiatives in the region.

Satish Sharma reiterated the government's commitment towards promoting grassroots football, women's participation and expanding the sport in rural, tribal and border areas. He welcomed international collaborations to strengthen coach and referee education, youth exchange programs and football infrastructure in J&K.

As part of the initiative, a refresher course for coaches and referees is being conducted to enhance their skills and align with international best practices.

The Minister reaffirmed the government's support for structured training programs and global partnerships, ensuring better opportunities for young footballers in J&K.

DG YSS Inspects Sports Infra Projects Across Kashmir

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Director General, Department of Youth Services and Sports, Rajinder Singh Tara, along with a team of senior officers, conducted an extensive tour of Anantnag, Ganderbal and Srinagar districts to assess the progress of ongoing sports infrastructure projects.

During his visit to Anantnag, the DG inspected the construction of the District Youth Services and Sports Office building, which is being developed at a project cost of Rs. 138.00 lakh.

DG YSS also visited the proposed site for the construction of a hostel in Jablipora, Bijbehara, where land transfer is under consideration.

In Khimber, DG reviewed the construction of an open playfield, which includes leveling, fencing, and a gate. The project, with an estimated cost of Rs. 168.48 lakh, has already incurred Rs.



128.35 lakh as of March 2024 and is expected to be completed by March 2025.

At the Government College of Physical Education in Ganderbal, Tara inspected the construction of a Synthetic Athletic Track and a Synthetic Football Field. The athletic track, costing Rs. 582.00 lakh, and the football field, costing Rs. 478.00 lakh, are both 90% complete.

In Srinagar, the DG visited the Sports Complex at Wazir Bagh to check the status of ongoing works,

including the construction of a Youth Hostel, a conference hall, a warden office, and the repair and renovation of three rooms in the Directorate office.

Rajinder Singh Tara was accompanied by the Joint Director Kashmir YSS, the Executive Engineer of the Sports Council, the Accounts Officer of YSS, District Youth Services and Sports Officers of all the three districts, the Planning Officer, and other field officers from the Department of Youth Services and Sports, J&K.

JKCA Credits Ranji Success To Merit-Based Selection Process



Agencies

SRINAGAR: The J&K Cricket Association has credited its recent success to a transparent and merit-based selection process, ensuring a corruption-free and nepotism-free environment for players.

Brigadier Anil Gupta (retd), a key member of the BCCI-appointed committee overseeing J&K cricket said transparency in selection, confidence in players, giving them the best of facilities, good coaches,

enough match practice, pre-tournament matches, and the belief that they can win is what has made the change this season.

He further emphasized the role of unity and motivation in the dressing room. "The team is motivated, the players are mentally tough, the dressing room is cordial, and the players are enjoying. There is a good bonhomie in the group, and that is what makes the difference."

He further stated that one of the major reforms

initiated by the JKCA was ending regional favoritism in selections.

"We set the process in motion. One of the main things was the selection process—we made it very transparent, and we ensured that the best get selected, no favoritism or regionalism. J&K cricket was marred with regionalism, so we stopped that."

Notably, J&K defeated Mumbai and Baroda to qualify for their first Ranji Trophy quarter-final in five years. [KNT]

Abhishek Skyrockets To 2nd Spot In T20 Batters' Ranking

In-form India opener Abhishek Sharma leapfrogged 38 places to the second spot in the ICC Men's T20I Player Rankings for batters while his teammate Tilak Verma dropped a rung to the third place on Wednesday.

Abhishek produced the best innings of his fledgling international career when he smashed a quick-fire 135 in the fifth and final T20 against England in Mumbai, leading India to a thumping 4-1 series win.

Abhishek's innings came off just 54 deliveries and was adorned with 13 sixes. It was the highest score by an Indian men's player in the shortest format.

As a result, the 24-year-old zoomed to the second spot in the latest ranking.

Australia star Travis Head continues to lead the T20I batters' chart, but Abhishek is just 26 rating points behind him following his record-breaking effort at Wankhede.

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