

# KASHMIR OBSERVER®

Clarity in the Chaos

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## Historic First: Zojila Pass Stays Open In Feb



**Saliq Manzoor**

Srinagar: Zojila Pass, an important mountain pass linking Ladakh to Kashmir and beyond, is situated at an elevation of 11,575 feet. In a historic achievement, it has remained open during February for the first time ever, despite the region's notoriously harsh winter conditions. This remarkable achievement is credited to the tireless efforts of the local administration, district authorities, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), and the Indian Army, who have persevered despite subzero temperatures and challenging weather conditions. Zojila Pass is an essential connection between Kashmir and Ladakh, important for defence,

trade, civilian movement, and tourism. It facilitates military transport near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and guarantees the delivery of vital goods to Ladakh. The recent developments in connectivity, including the Z-Morh Tunnel, further enhance accessibility in the region. The Z-Morh Tunnel is a game-changing infrastructure project in Jammu and Kashmir. Spanning 6.5 kilometres, this two-lane tunnel connects Gagangir to Sonamarg, ensuring year-round access to the hill station, which was previously cut off during harsh winters due to avalanche-prone roads. Built at a cost of ₹2,400 crore on the Srinagar-Leh National Highway, the tunnel serves as a crucial link. | [More on P10](#)

**6** **ALTHOUGH SNOWFALL HAS BEEN LOW** this year, the use of modern equipment and efficient operations has enabled us to keep the Zojila Pass open.

## BJP Sweeps AAP Out of Delhi's Power Corridor

» Prevents AAP Hatrick, Congress Draws Blank » To Form Govt In Delhi After Over 26 Years

**Observer News Service**

New Delhi: The BJP will form its government in Delhi after a gap of more than 26 years as it won 48 of the 70 seats in the Assembly polls, the results of which were announced on Saturday, while the AAP secured victories from 22 seats and the Congress drew a blank for a third straight time. AAP candidate from Matia Mahal Aaley Mohammad Iqbal registered the highest victory margin of 42,724 votes in the polls, defeating BJP's Deepti Indora, according to the Election Commission's (EC) data.



KO Photo | Abid Bhat

BJP's Chandan Kumar Choudhary won the Sangam Vihar seat by the lowest margin of 344 votes.

The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) vote share was 45.56 per cent, while the AAP secured | [More on P10](#)

### Omar Taunts INDIA Bloc Over 'Infighting'

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Saturday passed a snide remark on opposition parties as the BJP was heading for a decisive victory in the Delhi assembly polls. "Aur lado | [More on P10](#)

### PM Modi Declares Delhi 'AAP-da Free'

■ SEE INSIDE ON P4

## Light Rain, Snow In Next 3 Days: MeT

**Observer News Service**

Srinagar: The Meteorological Department has predicted isolated to scattered light rain and snow in Jammu and Kashmir for next three days beginning on Sunday. Winter this year has been quite unusual, with colder-than-normal nights and unexpectedly warmer days. The winter has also witnessed a deficit precipitation. Officials said Jammu and Kashmir has seen a significant rainfall deficit in January, with data showing an 87% shortfall from January 1 to January 29. According to the MeT forecast, there is a possibility of light rain | [More on P10](#)

## OMSA Drafts Reservation Amendment Bill 2025

**Nida Sadiq**

Srinagar: The Open Merit Students Association (OMSA) has taken a major step by drafting a Reservation Amendment Bill 2025 after the Jammu and Kashmir Government failed to respond to their concerns about the existing reservation system by the February 7 deadline. Addressing the media, OMSA leaders said that the Government's silence left them with no choice but to take action. After detailed discussions with constitutional experts, the association has prepared a proposal that aims | [More on P10](#)

## Bond With Ladakh Will Remain Strong: CM



**Observer News Service**

Jammu: Stressing the historical ties between Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Saturday reaffirmed that administrative reorganisation

would not alter the deep-rooted relationship between the two regions. Ladakh was carved out as a separate Union Territory from Jammu and Kashmir on October 31, 2019, following abrogation of | [More on P10](#)

## Women's Tribal Status Unaffected After Marriage: HC

**Agencies**

Srinagar: The High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh has directed authorities to reconsider their decision to deny a Scheduled Tribe (ST) certificate to a woman from the Padri tribe, following her marriage to a non-Padri individual. Justice Wasim Sadiq Nargal issued this order while referring to a clarification from the Ministry of Home Affairs stating that those belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC) or

Scheduled Tribes (ST) retain their community status even after marrying outside their community. The petitioner, Shivaeta Rani, a member of the Padri tribe, was denied an ST certificate by the concerned authorities due to her marriage to a person outside her community. She challenged this decision before the Additional Deputy Commissioner in Kishtwar, who dismissed her appeal, saying that the matter involved technical issues best addressed under the Reservation Act or by the | [More on P10](#)

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# Scholarships This Week

Kashmir Observer in association with Buddy4Study.com presents scholarships available for the meritorious students of Jammu and Kashmir

## Scholarship Name 1: Narotam Sekhsaria Scholarships for Higher Studies 2025-26

Description: Narotam Sekhsaria Scholarships for Higher Studies 2025-26 is a merit-based scholarship initiative of the Narotam Sekhsaria Foundation that aims to provide financial assistance to outstanding Indian students aspiring to pursue higher education at prestigious institutions in India and abroad.

Eligibility: Applicants must be an Indian national residing in India and a graduate from an accredited Indian university. They should be under 30 years old as of 31st January 2025. They must plan to pursue a postgraduate degree in top-ranking institutions in India or abroad, starting in the Fall 2025.

Prizes & Rewards: The scholarship offers interest-free loans as financial assistance including mentorship support.

- Last Date to Apply: 17-03-2025
- Application mode: Online applications only
- Short Url: [www.b4s.in/observer/NSSP1](http://www.b4s.in/observer/NSSP1)

QR Code: <https://d2w711p59qkl0r.cloudfront.net/static/images/scho-media/narotam-sekhsaria-scholarships-for-higher-studies-2025-261738298856.png>

## Scholarship Name 2: J N Tata Endowment Loan Scholarship for Fall 2025 to Spring 2026

Description: The J N Tata Endowment invites loan scholarship applications from Indian students who wish to pursue higher studies overseas. Students who are selected for the loan scholarship may be recommended for a partial 'Travel Grant' and a 'Gift Award' which is linked to their academic performance in their overseas studies at the sole discretion of the Trustees of the concerned Trusts.

Eligibility: Open for Indian citizens who have completed at least one undergraduate degree OR students who are in the final year of



any undergraduate programme at a recognised university/college/institution in India.

- Candidates must be interested in pursuing Post-graduate/Doctoral/Postdoctoral studies abroad.
- The course for which candidates are admitted must be recognized as a Graduate Program (post-graduate in Indian terminology).
- Candidates who did not get selected in the previous year/earlier for the J N Tata Endowment loan scholarship and candidates who could not avail of the loan scholarship when they were selected, are eligible to apply afresh.
- Candidates who are already pursuing post-graduate studies overseas may apply either at the end of their 1st of studies or at the commencement of the 2nd year, provided there is a minimum of one full academic year (12 months) remaining to be completed at the time of the loan scholarship award, typically in July of any calendar year.
- Candidates must have scored at least 60% marks on average in their undergraduate or post-graduate studies.
- Candidates must not be older than 45 years as on June 30, 2025.

Prizes & Rewards: Loan scholarship of upto Rs. 10 lakhs

- Last Date to Apply: 07-03-2025
- Application mode: Online applications only
- Short Url: [www.b4s.in/observer/JNT9](http://www.b4s.in/observer/JNT9)

QR Code: <https://d2w711p59qkl0r.cloudfront.net/static/images/scho-media/quad-fellowship-20241738298859.png>

cloudfront.net/static/images/scho-media/j-n-tata-endowment-loan-scholarship-for-fall-2025-to-spring-20261736494251.png

## Scholarship Name 3: Quad Fellowship 2025

Description: The Quad Fellowship 2025, initiated by the governments of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, is administered by the Institute of International Education (IIE). It aims to connect future scientists and technologists from these Quad countries and, starting in 2025, from ten ASEAN member states.

Eligibility: Open to citizens or legal permanent residents of specific countries including India. Applicants must be at least 18 years of age at the time of application submission and possess a bachelor's degree or equivalent in a STEM field by August 2025. Students must show a record of exceptional undergraduate academic achievement.

Prizes & Rewards: The fellowship offers a one-time stipend of \$40,000 and other benefits.

- Last Date to Apply: 03-03-2025
- Application mode: Online applications only
- Short Url: [www.b4s.in/observer/QUFD1](http://www.b4s.in/observer/QUFD1)

QR Code: <https://d2w711p59qkl0r.cloudfront.net/static/images/scho-media/quad-fellowship-20241738298859.png>

## Office Of Advocate Yakoob Hussain Sofi J&K High Court Srinagar

CHAMBER NO. 07 MUNSIF/JMFC AT MAGAM  
 Cell No. 9906517553, 9419068005

a. Bashir Ahmad Sheikh S/ O Mohammad Sultan Sheikh  
 R/O Hazarpora Aripanthan  
 b. Showkat Ah wani S/ o Gh Mohi ud din wani  
 R/ o Lalpora Beerwah

v/S ...Caveators  
 PUBLIC AT LARGE ...Non-caveato

IN THE MATTER OF:

Caveat Petition in terms of Section 148-A of C.P.C. The Caveators have reasons to believe/apprehension that non-Caveator (s) may file a suit/application/petition or any other type of proceedings before the Hon'ble High Court, District Courts, Revenue Courts or any other forum may succeed in obtaining some relief/order at his back/ex-parte against the caveators and in such eventuality, the caveators will be put to an irreparable loss and inconvenience. It would be proper that caveators may be given an opportunity of being heard by the Hon'ble Court before passing any other or direction.

Seal & signature  
 Yakoob Hussain Sofi  
 (Advocate)

Subject:- Grant Of Registration of the Proposed Travel unit under the name & Style "M/S Veer Zara Tour and Travels Situated at Gulmarg Road Magam

### Public Notice

Whereas I, Mr. Tanveer Ahmad Kumar S/o Abdul Fateh Kumar R/o Zahid Bagh Kwarahama Baramulla KASHMIR intend to apply in the Department of Tourism for registration of my proposed travel unit under the name & style of M/ S Veer Zara Tour and Travels Situated at Gulmarg Road Magam under tourist trade act 1978/82/2011-12. Whereas I will submit state subject / Domicile certificate, Qualification Certificate, pan card \ Experience Certificate( Minimum 5years), Police character certificate, Bank statement (minimum balance 10000), site plan, Affidavit, Rent deed duly attested by sub Registrar, printing material (Letter head / Visiting card ) Photograph of the unit (Indoor and outdoor) and Two passport size photographs to the department of Tourism as per prescribed checklist I Prior to Registration of my unit as an Excursion Agency. / Adventure Tour Operator Now as per J&K Registration of Tourist Trade Act 1978/82/2011/12) before my case is processed for my registration by the Competent Authority, the matter is hereby notified for information of general public/ Financial institutions/Bank/ Organisation, etc for objection, if any and the same should reach to the Deputy Director Tourism Registration(email id: ddtregl23@gmail.com) within a period of 7days from the publication of this notice in a leading newspaper/newspapers of the valley. No objection beyond a period of 7 days shall be entertained.

bmg

Government Of Jammu And Kashmir

## OFFICE OF THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT OFFICER POSHAN PROJECT SINGHPORA

### ADVERTISEMENT NOTICE

Applications on prescribed proforma (Annexure-I) are hereby invited from the eligible female candidates of the Panch Wards shown against the below mentioned Panchayat Halqas, for the engagement of Sahayikas (AWHs) "Preferably married" for the Anganwadi Centres of POSHAN Project Singhpora on "Honorarium basis". The applications along with required documents shall be deposited in the Office of the undersigned i.e Child Development Project Officer Singhpora by or before 24-02-2025 upto 4.30pm against proper receipt.

S.NO	NAME OF THE DISTRICT	NAME OF THE PROJECT	NAME OF PANCHAYAT/MUNICIPAL WARD	VACANCY OF SAHAYIKAS (ANGANWADI HELPERS)	
				NO. OF PANCH WARD/MC WARD	NAME OF AWC
1			Diver Yakhmanpora	01	Lohlpura Diver A
2			Agrikalan	04	Bhat Mohalla Agrikalan
3			Goom Ahmadpora	02	Malpora Goom
4			Nowlari	01	NC Nowlari
5			OM Buran	04	Malik Mohalla
6			Malmooch	08	Sofi Mohalla Malbuchan

Criteria for Selection of Sahayikas (Aanganwadi Helpers) shall remain as envisaged in the Govt. Order No: 103 JK (SWD) OF 2023 Dated 28.4.2023 i.e.

Women candidates in the age group of 18-37 years as on 01-01-2025 shall be considered for the post.

- > The candidate should be a domicile of the UT of J&K.
- > The candidate should be a resident of the Electoral Ward where Anganwadi Centre is located.
- > Minimum qualification for Anganwadi Helper shall be Matriculation.
- > In case no matriculate candidate is available in the Panch Ward/MC Ward, candidates with qualification not less than 8th standard shall be considered.
- > In case no married candidate is available, unmarried candidate can also be considered.
- > In case of tie in merit of the eligible candidate, candidate with higher age will be preferred.

### Self-attested copies of documents to be attached with the application form:-

- Panch Ward /MC Ward Certificate/Electoral Card/Present /continuous, Ward residence certificate issued by the concerned BDO.
  - Domicile Certificate issued by Tehsildar concerned.
  - Date of Birth Certificate.
  - Academic Qualification Certificates with Marks card of 10th.
  - Ration card/ e ticket.
  - Marital status certificate.
  - In case the applicant is unmarried certificate from the concerned Tehsildar certifying the same
  - Non employment Certificate from a Gazetted Officer.
- Affidavit from first class magistrate stating following facts.*
- All Documents submitted are correct, without any mismatch, scanning, duplicate or fallacious in nature. If found incorrect or in any of the above stated situation the candidature of deponent may be cancelled and liable to action under law.
  - The deponent has read the HR policy no. 222-1K(SWD) of 2022 dated: 30.11.2022 and is well versed with all salient features of the policy and shall be applicable to the deponent in case of selection as Sahayika (AWH)
  - Incomplete form submitted any respect shall be cancelled without any further correspondence/notice.

Note: Prescribed Application Proforma can also be had from the undersigned office "Free of Cost"

No:CDPO/ICDS/Sing/Estt/2024/650  
 Dated: 08-02-2025

DIPK-11738/24 dated: 08-02-2025

Child Development  
 Officer Poshan Project Singhpora

### Annexure -I

#### Application form for engagement of Sahayika (Anganwadi Helper)

- Name of the District :- Baramulla
- Name of the ICDS Project \_\_\_\_\_
- Name of the Anganwadi Centre for which engagement sought \_\_\_\_\_
- Panch ward/ MC Ward \_\_\_\_\_ Panchayat Halqa \_\_\_\_\_
- Name of the candidate ( In Block Letters) \_\_\_\_\_
- Fathers Name (In Block Letters) \_\_\_\_\_
- Marital Status:- Married /Un Married \_\_\_\_\_
- Husbands Name (if married) \_\_\_\_\_
- place of Permanent Residence \_\_\_\_\_
- a. Mohalla \_\_\_\_\_ Village \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Panch Ward Constituency \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Name of the Panchayat Halqa \_\_\_\_\_
- d. House No \_\_\_\_\_ (As per latest Panchayat Ward Electoral)
- E Block: \_\_\_\_\_
10. Address for Correspondence \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile No.: \_\_\_\_\_
11. Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

D	D	M	M	Y	Y	Y	Y

12. Age as on 01-01-2025

13. Academic Qualification

S.No	Examination passed	Board/School	Year of passing	Marks Obt.	Max. Marks	%age
1	Matric					
2	Middle					

14. Do candidate belong to family of retired AWH (Yes/No).

- Documents attached.
- Panch Ward Certificate/ Present /continuous, Ward residence certificate issued by BDO duly countersigned by ACR/SDM.
- Domicile Certificate issued by Tehsildar concerned.
- Date of Birth Certificate.
- Academic Qualification Certificates with Marks card of 10th.
- If candidate belong to family of retired AWH then copy of the e-ration card/any other proof.
- Non employment Certificate from a Gazetted Officer.
- Copy of Ration card/ e ticket.
- Marital status certificate issued by the competent authority.

### UNDERTAKING

I \_\_\_\_\_ D/o,W/o \_\_\_\_\_ R/o \_\_\_\_\_ do hereby certify that the contents of the application given above are correct and true to the best of my knowledge. In case any of the above contents is found incorrect, the selection committee shall have the right to reject my application and similarly revoke my engagement order.

Signature of Candidate

Signature of Candidate

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

## OFFICE OF THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OFFICER POSHAN PROJECT B.K. PORA

Email-cdpobkp905@gmail.com

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Subject: Tentative Provisional Selection List of Candidates who have applied for engagement as Sanginis (Anganwadi Workers) for AW Centres of Poshan Project B.K.Pora and inviting of objections thereof under.

In pursuance to the Government Order No.103-JK (SWD) of 2023 dated: 28.04.2023 and approval from Mission Director Poshan J&K, Advertisement Notice was issued by the office of undersigned Child Development Project Officer B.K.Pora under Phase 3rd ( Adverised posts) vide this office Advertisement Notice No. 14 of 2024 dated 09-12-2024 issued under endorsement CDPO/ Poshan/BKP /2024/ Adv/1113-23 Dated:- 09-12-2024 followed by extension Notice No. CDPO/ Poshan/ BKP/ 2024/Adv/1240-54 Dated:- 31-12-2024 for receipt of application forms from the eligible candidates for the posts of Sanginis (Anganwadi Workers). Accordingly, merit list of the candidates has been prepared as per the criteria laid down vide Government Order No.103-JK (SWD) of 2023 dated: 28.04.2023 wherein a total of 14 (fourteen) application forms were received and tentative provisional merit list has been framed for 02 (two) Sanginis (Anganwadi Workers) against 02 (two) Anganwadi centers purely on the basis of merit by the District Level Selection Committee.

The details of the posts indicating name of AWC, Panchayat ward with no. of Application forms received against the said vacant posts and also name of newspapers in which advertisement notices were published is given as under: - Phase 3rd

Details of newspapers viz. Gadyal, Moring Kashmir, and Seerete Kashmir Weekly dated: - 11-12-2024 and Extension notice newspapers viz. Gadyal & Kashmir Horizon dated 04-01-2025

S.No.	Anganwadi centre	Ward No.	No. of posts of Anganwadi Worker	Application forms received
1	Malikgund	Panch Ward No (08)	01	12
2	Natipora "A"	MC Ward No (10)	01	02
Grand total		02	14	

The tentative provisional selection list (Annexure A) is hereby published for information of public in general and Applicants/Candidates in particular for filing appeal/objections, if any within 10 (ten) days in the office of Child Development Project Officer B.K.Pora during office hours from the date of publication of this notification. No objection/appeal shall be entertained after expiry of last date of filing the objection/appeal.

Sd/-

Child Development Project Officer  
 B.K. Pora

No. CDPO/POSHAN/BKP/2025/1406-18 DIPK-11723/24 Dated: 08 / 02 /2025

### OFFICE OF THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OFFICER POSHAN PROJECT B.K.PORA

Subject: Tentative Selection List of candidates who have applied for engagement as SANGINIS (AWWs) for AW Centre of Poshan Project B.K.Pora vide Advertisement Notice No CDPO/Poshan/BKP/2024/Adv/1113-23 Dated:- 09-12-2024 published in Daily Newspaper Gadyal, Moring Kashmir, and Seerete Kashmir Weekly on 11-12-2024 & Extension notice No:- CDPO/Poshan/BKP/2024/Adv/1240-54 Dated:- 31-12-2024 published in Daily Newspaper Gadyal & Kashmir Horizon on 04-01-2025 arranged in order of Merit as shown below (Phase-3rd)

S.No.	Index No.	Name of the Candidate with Parentage and Residence	Name of Anganwadi centre	Name of Panchayat Halqa/M.C Ward	Name of Panch Ward/ MC Ward	Date of Birth	Age as on 01-01-2023	Qualification	12th Merit				Total Merit	
									Max. Marks	Marks obtained 10+2	%age	Weightage		
1	13	Kulsuma Akhter D/o Ghulam Ahmad Tell R/o Malikgund	Malikgund	Dooniwara	Panch Ward No (08)	3/7/2005	20 Years	10+2	500	376	75.20	75.20	0	75.20
2	22	Rozy Akhter W/o Shabir Ahmad Bhat R/o Natipora	Natipora "A"	MC Ward No (10)	MC Ward No (10)	2/10/1991	34 Years	10+2	750	520	69.33	69.33	0	69.33

Copy for information and necessary action to the selection committee for the approval of selection for the post of Saginis (AWW) constituted vide Govt Order No:222-JK(SWD)of 2023 Dated:30.11.2022 and Govt order No. 103-JK(SWD) of 2023 Dated : 28.04.2023 However this would be strictly conditional and is subject to objections, if any, as received from the general public within 10 days after publication of the tentative selection list in the newspaper.

District Programme officer Poshan Projects District Budgam ( Chairperson )	General Manager DIC Budgam (Member)	Assistant Director Employment Budgam (Member)
District Social Welfare officer Budgam	Child Development Project officer B.K.Pora	



## City Girl Makes 250 'Origami', Achieves Guinness World Record

### Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Setting a new record in the art of paper folding by making 250 Origami paper boats in one hour, multi-talented Rutba Showkat from Srinagar has once again made Kashmir proud by achieving a Guinness World Record.

Rutba is a national-level martial arts player having won 60 medals, including a gold medal. She is a calligrapher and a painter.

Rutba expressed her joy about achieving another feat. "I had been applying for this record (Guinness World Record) for the past three years, and after two failed attempts, I finally achieved it. Alhamdulillah, hard work never disappoints," she said.

"I had kept my Guinness World Record attempt a secret to surprise my family. My parents have always been my biggest supporters, encouraging me in both athletics and artistic endeavors. This international recognition is a proud moment for me and my entire family," she said.

Moreover, Rutba also holds records in the India Book of Records and has won national-level awards.

Referring to her latest achievement she said, "Origami is about creating models by folding paper in different ways. I managed to make four

**6** NOTABLY, THE CERTIFICATE OF RUTBA SHOWKAT TOOK PART IN A "GUINNESS WORLD RECORD™" attempt, and the most Origami boats made in one hour is 250, achieved by Rutba Showkat (India) in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India.

boats per minute, which means one boat every 15 seconds. The journey was difficult and sometimes frustrating, but I stayed confident and kept working hard. After three years, I have finally achieved my dream."

Notably, the certificate of Rutba reads: Rutba Showkat took part in a "GUINNESS WORLD RECORD™" attempt, and the most Origami boats made in one hour is 250, achieved by Rutba Showkat (India) in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India.

It is worth mentioning that a Guinness World Record is an official recognition of a person's achievement or a natural phenomenon. The Guinness World Records (GWR) organization maintains a database of these records and publishes them annually in a book—(KNO)

## Blame Game Over Defunct Streetlights Leaves Residents Struggling

### Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Srinagar interiors have been left in darkness following the installation of smart meters, as most streetlights have become defunct, triggering inconvenience and safety concerns among residents.

According to locals, the agency responsible for installing smart meters uprooted existing streetlights during the process but failed to restore them. The agency reportedly shifted responsibility to the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), claiming it was their job to re-install the lights. However, SMC, in turn, has passed the buck to the Power Development Department (PDD), which has distanced itself from the issue.

Residents complain

that despite repeated appeals, no concrete solution has been provided. "Ever since these smart meters were installed, our streets have remained in complete darkness. We don't know whom to approach as the departments are shifting responsibility onto each other," a local from Srinagar's uptown said.

The lack of proper street lighting has heightened safety concerns, especially for pedestrians, elderly residents, and women traveling at night. Many alleys and roads, which were well-lit earlier, have now turned into dark spots, increasing the risk of accidents and thefts.

The locals have urged the administration to intervene and resolve the issue at the earliest to restore the lighting system in affected areas. [KNT]

## Public Demands Scrapping Of Airport Entry Fee

### Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** The imposition of entry fee at Srinagar Airport has become a continuous source of inconvenience and frustration for commuters, drawing criticism from various quarters.

Drivers of both private and passenger vehicles are required to pay an entry fee of Rs 80, irrespective of whether they park or merely drop off passengers at the airport.

Concerned citizens had repeatedly urged the authorities to abolish this fee, arguing that it amounts to exploitation and resembles a form of "forced tax."

Despite these appeals, the practice continues unabated,

affecting not only tourism operators but also ordinary individuals dropping off friends, family members, or guests.

People visiting the Srinagar Airport said that the entry fee is levied even on vehicles that do not utilize parking facilities, which they deem unfair and unnecessary. The contract for collecting the entry fee has been awarded to a non-local party.

A netizen, RJ Sameen wrote on X: "Here is another scam where you pay 80 rupees for just entry at the airport, leaving within 4 minutes. Still was charged 80 rupees. Who says 14 mins are free? The said netizen added that this is a loot. [KNT]"

## Police Arrests 2 Drug Peddlers

### Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Continuing its efforts to eradicate the menace of drugs from the society, Srinagar Police has arrested two drug peddlers and recovered contraband substances from their possession.

A police team of PS Chanapora during naka checking near Estate Quarter intercepted a motorcycle bearing registration number JK01AB-3331 with two per-

sons on board, who tried to flee from the spot but were apprehended tactfully. During the search, a substantial quantity of drugs and narcotic substances was recovered from their possession. Subsequently, they were arrested and have been identified as Shahrim Anasari son of Tasleem Anasari resident of Muzaffar Nagar UP A/P Mandir Bagh and Saqib Anasari son of Sajad Anasari resident of Muzaffar Nagar UP A/P Mandir Bagh Srinagar.



## Intensive Food Safety Inspection Drive Conducted In City

### Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** A team of food safety officials from the Drug and Food Control Organisation conducted an intensive inspection drive at Jehangir Chowk and HSHS in Srinagar. The drive, led by Assistant Commissioner Food Safety Srinagar, Yameen ul Nabi Asstt. Commissioner food safety Srinagar focused on roadside eateries and Kashmiri snack stalls.

The primary objective of the inspection was to ensure compliance with the Food Safety and Standards Act, particularly in terms of sanitary and hygienic

conditions. The team inspected various food stalls and vendors, checking for adherence to proper food handling, storage, and preparation practices.

During the inspection, roadside vendors were educated on the importance of maintaining hygiene and sanitary standards. They were also instructed to take measures to protect prepared food from environmental hazards and pests. Failure to comply with these regulations would result in the cessation of their operations under the FSS Act.

Furthermore, food business operators involved in the preparation of ready-to-eat food were

directed to undergo pest control measures at their premises. They were also advised against setting up temporary stalls near or over drains, as this could lead to contamination and other health risks. Non-compliance with these directives would invite action under relevant rules and regulations.

The inspection drive is part of the ongoing efforts by the Drug and Food Control Organization to ensure food safety and quality in Srinagar. The organization is committed to protecting public health and promoting a culture of food safety awareness among food business operators.

**6** THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF THE INSPECTION WAS TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE with the Food Safety and Standards Act, particularly in terms of sanitary and hygienic conditions.

## NIT To Setup Drone Pilot Training Centre

### Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar, in collaboration with NIELIT, is planning to set up a state-of-the-art Drone Pilot Training Centre.

It was announced during a six-week-long Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Program (ESDP) (Hands-on Training) which concluded on Saturday at NIT Srinagar.

The workshop was organized by the Department of Mechanical Engineering, NIT Srinagar, in collaboration with MSME PPDC Sanath Nagar and NIELIT Srinagar. The initiative was sponsored by the Ministry of MSME, Government of India.

The valedictory session was presided over by Prof. Marouf Wani, Head of the Mechanical Engineering Department, NIT Srinagar.

Dr. Dinesh Kumar Rajendran, the Nodal Officer of the MSME ESDP Scheme, summarized the six-week training activities, emphasizing the growing need for drone technology in Kashmir and the various funding opportunities available through government support.

Ajaz Hussain, Workshop Coordinator and Faculty at MSME PPDC, welcomed the gathering and highlighted key insights from the program. The workshop was attended by 25 participants from different parts of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh.

Prof. Marouf Wani stated that the ESDP Program on "Drone Technology" provides a comprehensive and



immersive learning experience, equipping participants with essential knowledge and skills in Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) technology.

He further announced that the Department of Mechanical Engineering at NIT Srinagar is signing an MoU with NIELIT Srinagar to establish the Drone Pilot Training Centre on the NIT campus.

This initiative will introduce a six-month collaborative certificate course, jointly run by both institutes. Faculty members and scientists from NIT Srinagar and NIELIT will work together to foster drone technology research and development in Kashmir.

Dr. Wani also shared that one of the faculty members, Dr. Rajendran, has obtained a DGCA license to fly drones up to 25 kg and will soon undergo RPTO Trainer license train-

ing. This development will further strengthen the department's expertise in drone technology and pilot training.

Prof. Sheikh Nazir Ahmed reminisced about his time studying Aerospace Engineering at IIT Madras and elaborated on flight dynamics and control systems, explaining how these technologies can enhance people's lives.

The conveners of the workshop were Prof. Babar Ahmed (MED), Dr. Mohammad Mursal (MED), and Dr. Dinesh Kumar Rajendran (MED).

Ms. Hiba, one of the participants, expressed her enthusiasm for the growing interest in drone technology. "It is encouraging to see more people, especially women, taking an interest in this field. When I first started, very few women were involved, but now the numbers are increasing," she remarked.

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**HIGHWAY STATUS**

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

  
**HIJRI CALENDAR**  
10 Shaban  
1446

**PRAYERS**

FAJR	5: 58
ZUHR	12: 45
ASR	4: 28
Magrib	6: 11
ISHA	7: 32

## This Day In History

- 1499 - France & Venice sign treaty against Milan
- 1525 - Albert of Prussia pledges a personal oath to Sigismund I and is invested with the duchy for himself and his heirs
- 1537 - Pope Paul III routes Cardinal Pole to England
- 1540 - The first recorded race meet in England (Roodee Fields, Chester)
- 1554 - Battle at London: Sir Thomas Wyatt defeated and his rebellion against Queen Mary crushed
- 1555 - Bishop of Gloucester John Hooper is burned at the stake for heresy
- 1574 - Louis of Nassau ends siege of Maastricht
- 1621 - Alexander Ludovisi is elected Pope Gregory XV (-1623)
- 1667 - Treaty of Andrussovo: Russia and Poland signs peace treaty
- 1674 - English reconquer NY from Netherlands
- 1682 - Thomas Otway's "Venice Preserved" premieres in London
- 1713 - Netherlands & Britain sign accord concerning anti-French Barrier [OS=Jan 31].
- 1720 - Edmund Halley appointed 2nd Astronomer Royal of England
- 1763 - Treaty of Paris ends French-Indian War, surrendering Canada to Britain
- 1801 - France & Austria sign Peace of Luneville
- 1814 - Napoleonic Wars: Battle of Champaubert, the French beat the Russians
- 1846 - British defeat Sikhs in battle of Sobraon, India
- 1859 - Gen Horsford defeats Begum of Oude & Nana Sahib in Indian mutiny
- 1861 Jefferson Davis & Alexander Stephens elected President & VP of the Confederate States of America (US Civil War) 1899 - Treaty of Paris which ended the Spanish-American War is signed by President McKinley; US acquires Philippines, Puerto Rico & Guam
- 1904 - Japan and Russia declare war
- 1914 - In accordance with the understanding reached by General J.C. Smuts and Mahatma Gandhi, 60 passive resistance prisoners released from Pietermaritzburg Prison; 40 passive resisters released in Durban, 8 in Newcastle, 11 in Port Elizabeth
- 1918 - Trotsky declares that Russia is leaving the war
- 1931 - New Delhi becomes capital of India
- 1933 - Hitler proclaims end of Marxism
- 1934 - Stalin ends 17th CPSU-congress, says "Life becomes merrier"
- 1947 - Italy cedes most of Venezia Giulia to Yugoslavia
- 1947 - Province of Petsamo returned to Soviet Union by Finland
- 1947 - WW II peace treaties signed.
- 1961 - Niagara Falls hydroelectric project begins producing power
- 1970 - Dry powder avalanche moving at 120 mph smashes into youth hostel at Val d'Isere, France, killing 40 Belgian, French, & German youths
- 1974 - Iran/Iraq border fight breaks out
- 1975 - The Provisional Irish Republican Army agrees to a truce and ceasefire with the British government and the Northern Ireland Office; Seven "incident centres" are established in nationalist areas to monitor the ceasefire
- 1985 - USSR performs nuclear test at Eastern Kazakh/Semipalatinsk USSR
- 1990 - 6th Largest wrestling crowd (63,900-Tokyo Dome)
- 1990 - South African President F. W. de Klerk announces Nelson Mandela will be freed on February 11th
- 1996 - IBM computer Deep Blue becomes the first computer to win a game of chess against a reigning (human) chess champion, Gary Kasparov.
- 1997 - Comet Shoemaker-Holt 2 Closest Approach to Earth (1.9245 AU)
- 1997 - Soyuz TM-25 launches to the MIR.
- 2003 - France and Belgium break the NATO procedure of silent approval concerning the timing of protective measures for Turkey in case of a possible war with Iraq.
- 2013 - 36 people are killed and 39 are injured in a stampede at a train station in Allahabad, India

## Hamas Frees Three Hostages, Israel Begins Releasing Palestinians

Agencies

Jerusalem: Palestinian militant group Hamas handed over three Israeli hostages on Saturday, whose gaunt appearance shocked Israelis, while Israel began freeing dozens of Palestinians in the latest stage of a ceasefire deal aimed at

tages over to the International Committee of the Red Cross. They were then driven in ICRC vehicles to Israeli forces.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the sight of the frail hostages forced into an apparent staged interview by Hamas militants was shocking and would be addressed.



ending the 15-month war in Gaza.

Ohad Ben Ami and Eli Sharabi, both taken hostage from Kibbutz Be'eri during the cross-border Hamas-led attack on October 7, 2023, and Or Levy, abducted that day from the Nova music festival, were led onto a Hamas podium by gunmen.

The three men all appeared thin, weak and pale, and in worse condition than the 18 hostages who had previously been freed under the truce agreed last month.

"He looked like a skeleton. It was awful to see," Ohad Ben Ami's mother-in-law, Michal Cohen, told Channel 13 News as she watched the Hamas-directed handover ceremony, which included the hostages answering questions posed by a masked man as militants armed with automatic rifles stood on each side.

In another show of force by Hamas, which has paraded fighters during previous releases, dozens of its militants deployed in central Gaza as it handed hos-

Palestinian prisoners freed

Israel's President Isaac Herzog described the release ceremony as cynical and vicious. "This is what a crime against humanity looks like," he said.

In exchange for the hostages' release, Israel is freeing 183 Palestinian prisoners, some convicted of involvement in attacks that killed dozens of people, as well as 111 detained in Gaza during the war.

In Ramallah, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, a bus carrying 42 freed Palestinian prisoners was welcomed by a cheering crowd. Some waved Palestinian flags and others chanted "Allahu akbar" or "God is the greatest".

Among Palestinian prisoners freed on Saturday was Eyad Abu Shkaidem, sentenced to 18 life terms in Israel for masterminding suicide attacks in revenge for Israel's 2004 assassinations of former Hamas chiefs Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and Abdel-Aziz al-Rantissi.

## Sayyed Khamenei Receives Senior Hamas Delegation, Praises Resistance

Agencies

Tehran: Iranian leader Sayyed Ali Khamenei praised the Palestinian Resistance during a meeting with a Hamas delegation, stating that they had defeated the Israeli occupation and the United States in the war on Gaza. He also hailed the ceasefire agreement as a "great achievement."

Sayyed Khamenei received Hamas Shura Council chairman Mohammad Ismail Darwish, as well as the Resistance group's acting leader Khalil al-Hayya and other members of the group's political bureau in Tehran on Saturday.

Hamas's Shura Council, the key consultative body responsible for electing its politburo, is on a regional tour led by Darwish and his delegation. The tour includes stops in Egypt, Turkiye, and now Tehran.



Sayyed Khamenei called on the Palestinian Resistance to persevere, stressing it is "necessary to plan for cultural works and continue the current path of PR works alongside military affairs and the reconstruction of Gaza."

The Leader described faith as the main "asymmetric weapon" of the Resistance front against the enemy, adding, "It is because of this faith that the Islamic Republic and the Resistance front do not feel weak against the enemies."



## Congress Fails To Open Account In Delhi For Third Consecutive Time

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The Congress was decimated in the Delhi elections on Saturday, failing to open its account in the 70-member assembly for a third consecutive time and its key candidates suffering crushing defeats.

The only consolation, however, was a slight improvement in the party's vote share, with leaders proclaiming that they would win back the trust of the people and exuded confidence of forming its government in 2030.

An early one segment lead in Badli was soon lost and the party, now a pale shadow of its glorious past under late chief minister Sheila Dikshit, failed to open its account once again.

Her son Sandeep Dikshit finished third in New Delhi segment where BJP's Parvesh Sahib Verma defeated AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal by over 3000 votes. While Verma polled 25057 votes and Kejriwal 22057, Dikshit gathered just 3873, in a shock culmination of the Sheila Dikshit legacy. Sheila Dikshit was the chief minister of Delhi for three terms.

A majority of Congress candidates lost their deposits and only three of them managed to save them. These include Abhishek Dutt from Kasturba Nagar, who was the only Congress leader to finish second, Rohit Choudhary from Nangloi Jat and Devendra Yadav from Badli.

Most Congress candidates fin-



**A majority of Congress candidates lost their deposits and only three of them managed to save them. These include Abhishek Dutt from Kasturba Nagar, who was the only Congress leader to finish second, Rohit Choudhary from Nangloi Jat and Devendra Yadav from Badli.**

ished third after BJP or AAP, but in some even finished fourth after the AIMIM where they had put up its candidates in Muslim dominated segments.

Congress heavyweights were decimated - state unit chief Devender Yadav ended up third in Badli, Mahila Congress president Alka Lamba finished third in Kalkaji where Chief Minister Atishi won; former minister Haroon Yusuf was third in Ballimaran which he represented five times between 1993 to 2013.

Congress scripted the same story of losses everywhere with only one tiny consolation of a 2.1 per cent improvement in vote

share over 2020.

The party polled 6.39 per cent of the valid votes as against 4.3 per cent in the 2020 assembly polls, massively denting its INDIA bloc partner Aam Aadmi Party across segments.

AAP's vote share loss was massive - down from 53.6 per cent in 2020 to 43.19 per cent - a drop of over ten per cent.

The Congress managed to play a spoiler for the AAP which suffered heavily in Scheduled Caste and Muslim-dominated segments where Congress made minor gains at AAP's cost and BJP's advantage.

"Aur lado apas mein!! (Keep on fighting each other)," National Conference leader and Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah posted on X with a meme, in an apparent jibe at the AAP and the Congress.

The decimation of the Congress and its role of a spoiler are bound to impact the unity of an already-fragile INDIA bloc whose partners have been at variance over ideological issues and electoral alignments. The friction between INDIA bloc partners may be visible in the assembly polls in Bihar.

The poor show of the Congress in Delhi, after Haryana and Maharashtra, will also lead to further diminishing of its dominant position in the Opposition bloc.

So while Congress and AAP had tied up for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in Delhi, Chandigarh and Haryana, they decided to go it alone in Delhi.

## Respite from AAP-DA, says PM Modi

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Hailing the BJP's Delhi Assembly polls victory as "historic", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the people of the national capital have shown the door to 'AAP-da' and now a double-engine government will ensure development at a double speed. He said Delhiites are celebrating BJP's victory and respite from 'AAP-da', a term he used throughout the campaign to criticise the Aam Aadmi Party's rule.

"People of Delhi today have enthusiasm and satisfaction. There is relief of liberating Delhi from 'AAP-da'. I thank



all Delhiites for entrusting their faith in 'Modi ki guarantee', the prime minister said in his address from BJP headquarters.

"Now Delhi's double-engine government will ensure development at double speed. It is a historic win and not a usual victory as the people of Delhi have shown the door to

'AAP-da'. Delhi has become Aapda-mukt," Modi said.

The prime minister said the people of Delhi have short-circuited the politics of short-cuts.

They have made it clear that they are real owners of Delhi and they have rejected those who treated it as their property, he said.

The BJP on Saturday trounced the Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi and returned to power in the city after more than 26 years, extending its saffron imprint and dealing a devastating blow to the Arvind Kejriwal-led party whose top leadership crumbled or barely made it.

## US Envoy's Anti-Hezbollah Stance Causes Controversy In Lebanon

Agencies

BEIRUT: Morgan Ortagus, US deputy special envoy to the Middle East, caused controversy following her meeting with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun on Friday, after making comments about militant group Hezbollah.

Ortagus, who arrived in Beirut on Thursday evening, emphasized "US commitment to strengthening close relations with Lebanon."

However, she told reporters that she believes excitement from the Lebanese diaspora about the future of Lebanon "is largely in part, of course, because Hezbollah was defeated by Israel. And we are grateful to our ally, Israel, for defeating Hezbollah."

"But it's also thanks to you, thanks to the Lebanese people. It is thanks to President Aoun and Prime Minister-designate Nawaf Salam, and everyone in this government who is committed to an end of corruption, who is committed to reforms and who are committed to making sure that Hezbollah is not a part of this government in any form, and that Hezbollah remains disarmed and militarily defeated."

She continued: "That, of course, starts with the pressure that US President Donald Trump is now placing on the Islamic Republic of Iran so that they can no longer fund their terror proxies through the region."

Ortagus added: "We will be working again to make sure that the Islamic Republic of Iran doesn't achieve a nuclear



weapon and that they are unable to inflict chaos and harm into this country and to so many other countries around the region, which they were allowed to do for decades. That ends with President Trump.

"We're incredibly hopeful that hope comes because we know that we have men and women of character, of resilience, of transparency. The men and women of character in this government will ensure that we start to end corruption. That we end influence from Hezbollah and that we embark on the reforms for Lebanon, that all of you, the people of Lebanon, deserve."

Ortagus said she informed Aoun that "we don't want to look at Lebanon as a donor country. You're a beautiful, sophisticated country that deserves to have the most impressive businessmen and women, the most impressive businesses, companies and country from around the world investing in here. We want to get to Lebanon, back to that place where it is, the place and the hope of the Middle East. And I know we'll get there together."

## U.S. Envoy's "Zionist" Ring Sends Shockwaves On Social Media



U.S. deputy Mideast envoy Morgan Ortagus (L) with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun Official handout photo

A photo showing U.S. President Donald Trump's deputy Middle East envoy donning a ring embellished with the Star of David to a meeting with Lebanon's leader triggered outrage in Arabic social and broadcast media.

As Morgan Ortagus, who is Jewish, shook hands with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, her Star of David ring was visible in the frame, sparking accusations such as her being "more Zionist than her predecessors."

Her direct superior, Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff, is likewise Jewish-American, as is his predecessor Amos Hochstein, who was born in Jerusalem and served in the Israel Defense Forces.

Ortagus is the first senior Trump admin official to visit Lebanon amid the fragile ceasefire agreed by Israel and the Lebanon-based Shiite jihadists of Hezbollah.

## Verma, Marwah Emerge Giant Slayers By Defeating Kejriwal, Sisodia

A case has been registered against a motorist for allegedly giving Rs 10 to a beggar in Madhya Pradesh's Indore, where the administration has enforced a ban on begging and giving alms, police said on Tuesday.

This is the second such case registered in the city within a fortnight, an official said. He said a first information report has been registered under section 223 (disobedience to order issued by a public servant) of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) against an unidentified motorist who gave alms of Rs 10 to a beggar sitting in front of a temple in the Lasudia police station area on Monday.

The case was registered based on a complaint by an



officer of the administration's beggary eradication team.

Under BNS section 223, the guilty can be punished with imprisonment up to one year or a fine up to Rs 5,000 or both. administration, which has set a target to make Indore the



country's first beggar-free city, has imposed a legal ban on begging, giving alms and buying any goods from beggars.

Earlier, an FIR was registered against an unidentified person who gave alms to a beggar in front of a temple on

Khandwa Road on January 23. Talking to PTI, Phool Singh, an officer of the administration's Beggary Eradication Team, said, "In the last six months, more than 600 people involved in begging in the city have been sent to shelter homes for rehabilitation. Around 100 children were sent to childcare institutions."

He said many of these people were begging on the pretext of selling balloons and other small items at traffic signals.

The administration has also announced a reward of Rs 1,000 to persons providing information about begging in the city.

The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has started a pilot project to make 10 cities of the country beggar-free.

## CM Atishi wins Kalkaji seat by 3,521 votes

Delhi Chief Minister and AAP's candidate from Kalkaji won the assembly seat by a margin of 3,521 votes defeating BJP's Ramesh Bidhuri.

According to the Election Commission, Atishi got 52,154 votes, whereas Bidhuri polled 48,633 votes with Congress's Alka Lamba securing the third place with 4,392 votes.

Atishi has won the Kalkaji seat for the second consecutive term.

The CM is among a few AAP ministers and senior leaders who won the elections as most of the party big guns have lost including AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, and Saurabh Bharadwaj.

With the BJP leading in 48 out of 70 seats, AAP is heading towards a significant defeat, managing to get only 22 seats.

AAP's defeat marks a significant political shift in the national capital, signalling the BJP's resurgence after 12 years of AAP dominance. The BJP will return to power in the national capital after more than 26 years.



**With the BJP leading in 48 out of 70 seats, AAP is heading towards a significant defeat, managing to get only 22 seats.**

## Massive Fire Damages Around 50 Shops In Sonamarg Market



Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** A massive fire damaged approximately 50 shops in Sonamarg's main market on Saturday evening. An official from the Fire and Emergency Services told news agency JKNS that 25 shops on the upper floor were severely damaged, while 25 on the lower floor suffered partial damage.

The official added that as soon as they received the call, firefighting teams were rushed from Gund, Kangan,

Ganderbal, and Nowshera, Srinagar.

"We tried our best to control the blaze, we managed to control it now" the official said.

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah expressed deep sorrow over the incident, stating that his office is in constant touch with the local administration to ensure all possible assistance reaches those affected.

The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained, and an investigation has been initiated. (JKNS)

**“WE TRIED OUR BEST to control the blaze, we managed to control it now” the official said.**

## NH-1 Signboards To Feature Urdu Language Alongside English, Hindi

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has decided to update signboards along the National Highway by incorporating the local language, Urdu, alongside English and Hindi.

This change will be implemented in the upcoming working season to ensure better accessibility for travelers.

Notably, Urdu was one of the official languages of Jammu and Kashmir, recognized alongside Kashmiri, Dogri, Hindi, and English.

The J&K Official Languages Bill, 2020, passed by the Indian Parliament, granted official status to these languages for administrative and communication purposes in the region.

Currently, the signboards installed in the Area of Responsibility (AoR) of BRO's Project Beacon are written in English and Hindi.

In response to an RTI query, BRO has confirmed that corrections will be made to include Urdu, considering the linguistic demographics of the region.

The decision is part of an effort to improve communication and clarity for all commuters, it said.

"The inclusion of Urdu aligns with the guidelines of the Indian Roads Congress (IRC:67), which emphasize the importance of bilingual or multilingual road signs for improved safety. By adding Urdu, BRO aims to make road signage more user-friendly for resi-



dents who primarily use the language," it added.

"Future signboards within the jurisdiction of Project Beacon will follow this multilingual approach," it added. "Urdu will be incorporated as a standard language alongside English and Hindi on all newly installed signboards," the BRO said.

This measure is expected to assist local commuters, making directions and road instructions more accessible to a broader section of the population.

BRO has outlined that the necessary corrections will be made in the next working season. The project will ensure that new signboards conform to this policy, helping travelers navigate roads more efficiently. The initiative reflects an effort to enhance road safety and improve ease of travel for local residents.

The updated signboards will be placed along NH-1 in accordance with the planned schedule, ensuring that all necessary modifications are completed in a timely manner—(KNO)

## SED Delivers 60% Free Textbooks To Govt Schools

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The School Education Department (SED) Kashmir on Saturday said it has delivered nearly 60 percent of free textbooks to government schools across the region.

Besides, the Director School Education Kashmir, G N Itoo said that the government was examining the infrastructure and academic gaps highlighted in the ASER-2025 survey. Speaking to the reporters, DSEK said, "The restoration of Nov-Dec academic session upto 9th standard was taken in a very short span of time. JKBOSE did not get enough time for the ground work but as of now at least 60 percent of free textbooks have reached the government schools and the distribution process is going simultaneously."

Itoo assured that all the government schools will receive 100 percent free textbooks pri-

or to reopening of schools after the winter vacations.

"We have book banks in the schools wherein we store the sets of old books. As of now, we have nearly 200 winter tutorial centers in the Kashmir division in which 33,000 are being taught. We have provided them with all those old books," he said.

The Director further said that the department was examining the recent gaps highlighted in the ASER survey.

"DSEK have constituted a special team in this regard. Besides, an administrative level meeting in this regard was also conducted," he said.

Itoo further said that the directorate will soon submit a comprehensive roadmap to the government to overcome these challenges.

"At certain levels we have done extremely well in comparison to national level," he said.

WINTER 2025

## Hygam Wetland Bustles With Nearly 3 Lakh Migratory Birds

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** The Hygam Wetland in north Kashmir has once again become a haven for migratory birds, with around 3 lakh avian visitors flocking the area this winter, even as anti-poaching squads are on high alert, officials said.

Wetland serves as a seasonal home to thousands of migratory birds including White Heeled Duck, Shoveller, Red-Crested Pochard, White-Eyed Pochard, Pintail, Mallard, Gadwall, Coot and Graylag. It spans over 7.25 kilometres and has around 1,400 hectares of land and is designated Ramsar site.

The officer concerned with Hygam Wetland, said, "During peak winter, when the water tends to freeze, the movement of birds helps keep some pathways open. However, we intervene where necessary to ensure their survival, particularly in terms of food availability."

Approximately 3 lakh migratory birds are there, however, the exact count will be determined and rounded up at the end of the season, he said, adding that the final figures will be compiled through a detailed field and comprehensive surveys.

Historically, poaching was rampant in the region, posing a severe threat to migratory birds. However, officials have taken strong measures to curb illegal hunting.



"During the tenure of Maharaja Hari Singh, hunting was allowed under a licensing system. However, after the Supreme Court ruling and the enactment of the Wildlife Protection Act in 1972, hunting was completely banned," Mohammad Iqbal Wani, an official said.

To further tighten regulations, the Wildlife Protection Act was amended in 2022, introducing stricter penalties for poaching, Wani said, adding, "Now, even an attempt to hunt birds is treated as a serious offence. The law mandates fines up to Rs 1 lakh and imprisonment of 3 to 7 years for violators."

To enforce the law effectively, the Wildlife Department has established anti-poaching squads, comprising members from the Forest Protection Force and Wildlife Department. These teams conduct regular surveillance operations, particularly during peak poaching hours—

early morning and evening.

The official said they have carried out several operations/seizures, and those caught are facing legal action under the Wildlife Protection Act. Despite repeated awareness campaigns, some individuals still believe poaching is permitted. However, strict action is being taken against violators, he added.

Wani claimed that poaching has been reduced by 98%, and a 100% target is in sight. He said the ongoing efforts have yielded significant results. "We are now working towards achieving a 100% poaching-free wetland," he added.

The official said they have been conducting awareness drives to educate locals about the legal implications of hunting migratory birds. "We urge people to mend their ways and respect the law to avoid legal consequences. These birds are a vital part of our ecosystem and must be protected at all costs," he said—(KNO)

## Kashmir Wetlands Witness Bird Resurgence

With subzero temperatures subsiding in the Kashmir valley, wetlands are witnessing a resurgence in migratory bird populations, with authorities preparing for an extensive bird census between February 15 and 20, officials said.

Altaf Hussain, Wildlife Warden Wetlands, Department of Wildlife Protection said that with an improvement in both day and night temperature, the valley wetlands were witnessing resurgence in migratory bird population.

The official said the department is planning a yearly census to provide precise data on migratory bird population, stating that the guest

birds have shown a promising increase over the last two years.

"Currently, our wetlands have a significant bird population, and we anticipate similar numbers to last year," the official said, adding that previous censuses recorded over 12 lakh birds across Kashmir's wetlands.

Water Regulation Success in Hokersar Wetland

The top officer also added that they achieved a major breakthrough in maintaining the water levels inside the Hokersar wetland, stating that newly constructed water regulation gates have successfully maintained optimal water levels.

"These gates ensure water retention, preventing unregulated leakage. As a result, areas that had remained dry for decades are now submerged, naturally reclaiming wetland habitat and deterring encroachment," an official said.

The officer also added that they are also focusing on other key wetlands, like Haigam and Shalbugh, stating that better habitat restoration there was also among the top priorities.

"Siltation and waste accumulation are major challenges. A strategic plan is being developed to mitigate these issues and restore the wetland's ecological balance," the official said—(KNO)

## Circular Road Turns Into Garbage Dump At Pulwama

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Authorities putting in abeyance under construction solid waste management project here in South Kashmir have turned the Circular Road in the main town into a "garbage dump."

Locals said that the Municipal Committee, after collecting the garbage from various areas of the town, throws it on the Circular Road near Government Degree College (GDC) for Women. "This all important road has turned into a garbage dump," they said, adding, "Foul and filthy smell emanating from the garbage has engulfed the entire area. If the dumping continues it can lead to an outbreak of an epidemic."

"Shopkeepers in the area are suffering losses as people want to stay away from the

area where garbage is being dumped," said Zakir Ahmad, a social activist.

He said that the dumping site has made the life of the people residing close to spot hell as they are unable to open their doors and windows.

Javid Ahmad Bhat that another local resident said that for the last two years they have been hearing that the site will be shifted soon but till date nothing has been done. "The garbage dumping site has also become a breeding ground for dogs," he added.

"Despite ample space available at multiple locations, the authorities have chosen to dump garbage in a residential area, causing significant inconvenience to the residents," Bhat said.

Residents and passersby stated that, despite repeatedly bringing the issue to the

attention of the concerned authorities, no action has been taken on the ground.

They demanded immediate intervention from the government to relocate the dumping site, emphasizing the difficulty of living under such conditions.

Deputy Commissioner Pulwama Dr Basharat Qayoom told KNO that the solid waste management project is complete at Newa while a mechanical part is being installed. "The mechanical part is being tendered over several times but it hasn't got any response due to which it will be re-tendered on 12th of this month and we are expecting to get a response this time."

He said that installation process won't take much time and Newa site will become operational soon—(KNO)

## Sakeena Itoo Attends CAC Meeting Of PM-AJAY At New Delhi

Observer News Service

**NEW DELHI:** Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, attended the Central Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting of Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana (PM-AJAY) here on Saturday.

The CAC meeting was held under the Chairmanship of Union Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Dr. Virendra Kumar to review progress on the scheme and formulate strategies

aimed at the socio-economic upliftment of Scheduled Castes (SC) communities across India.

During the meeting, the CAC held extensive discussions on three components of the scheme i.e; Adarsh Gram, Grant-in-aid and Hostel component. The committee further deliberated on strategies to expand the scheme's reach to larger SC population and enhance its effectiveness. Emphasis was placed on strengthening collaboration at the States and District levels, fostering greater com-



munity participation, ensuring timely project implementation, and monitoring the outcomes to achieve maximum impact.

While presenting the status

## No Breakthrough In Identifying Cause Of Deaths In Rajouri

Patients Remain Under Observation, Await Government Nod For Return

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** More than two months have passed since the mysterious deaths in Rajouri's Budhal village, yet authorities remain unable to determine the exact cause of the tragedy. Despite extensive investigations, locals are still waiting for answers.

Since December 7, 2024, a total of 17 people—including 13 children—have died from an unidentified illness. While no new cases have been reported in the last 20 days, and all previously admitted patients have recovered, the fear and uncertainty continue to grip the village.

Residents said that while the government's preventive measures have helped contain the crisis, they remain deeply concerned about the lack of clarity regarding the cause of deaths. They urged authorities to expedite the investigation so that appropriate safety measures can be put in place and normal life can resume without fear.

Expressing frustration over the slow pace of the probe, locals said the issue should have been treated as a health emergency and resolved on priority. "More than 20 days have passed since high-level teams, including an inter-ministerial delegation, visited the area, yet no concrete findings have been shared," they said.

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted by the police has questioned multiple individuals but has not uncovered any leads.

Meanwhile, the Indian Council

of Medical Research (ICMR) has ruled out infectious agents as the cause and is focusing on the possibility of toxic substances.

Experts from AIIMS Delhi and PGIMER Chandigarh have visited the affected village, collected samples, and are currently analysing them for possible toxins.

A senior doctor said that all patients at GMC Rajouri have now recovered and have been shifted to observation wards. "The antidotes administered to the affected individuals have been effective, but we still lack conclusive evidence about the exact cause of deaths. We are awaiting the final reports from the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL)," the doctor said.

He added that investigators had already narrowed down their focus to toxins such as Aldicarb, Cadmium, and other salts, but official confirmation is still pending.

The district administration continues to monitor the situation closely, and the village remains under strict surveillance to prevent any further incidents. An official said that there has been no further development, and authorities are waiting for government approval before allowing the people of Badhaal to return home.

"The recovered patients are currently being kept in hospital observation wards, along with their immediate family members. We expect the final reports from premier health institutes soon, after which the government will take a decision," the official added—(KNO)

## Much-Awaited Bridge Connecting Pulwama With Budgam Completed



Agencies

**PULWAMA:** A vital bridge on Romshi rivulet in Rohmoov village in South Kashmir's Pulwama district that was damaged in 2014 floods has been completed and is expected to be thrown open for public soon.

Locals from Rohmoov said that this bridge was washed out during 2014 floods and since then the people of this area have been facing hardships.

They said that a bailey bridge was installed in the area but that isn't enough to manage the rush on the vital route.

Zahoor Ahmad, a local resident said that this bridge connects Pulwama district with neighbouring Budgam district and is of vital importance but most of the time the work on the bridge remained on halt due to which it took more than 10 years for completion.

He said that many bridges,

which were approved after 2014, were completed much before but due to unknown reasons this bridge wasn't completed on time.

Irshad Ahmad, another local resident, said that this bridge funded by the World Bank was taken up by JKPC nine years ago and work was started accordingly, however, they worked at a very slow pace.

He said that after the intervention of DC Pulwama, Dr Basharat Qayoom, JKPC was merged and good progress on the bridge was made and has been completed now.

Locals said that they are thankful to DC Pulwama for his intervention and it was possible only due to his intervention.

Meanwhile, an official of R&B said bridge is complete and minor work on the sides of the bridge will take just a few days following which it will be thrown open for public—(KNO)

of Jammu and Kashmir in the meeting, Sakeena Itoo highlighted that 91 CSCs, 4993 Solar lights, 63 Smart classes, 21 Gyms (Open/ Indoor), 11 Smart Libraries and other infrastructure has been established at various locations across J&K under the scheme. She also informed that 1715 students were trained under various trades like Data Entry Operator, Beauty Therapist, CCTV and Solar Panel Installation Technicians under this scheme.

The Minister, during the meeting, underscored the im-

portance of this scheme for enhancing the livelihood, education and empowerment opportunities for SC communities. She emphasised the need for effective grassroots implementation, ensuring that the benefits of the scheme reach the intended beneficiaries in a transparent and efficient manner.

Additional Secretary, Social Welfare department J&K Government and Nodal Officer coordination PM-AJAY, Dr. Rehana Akhter Bijli also accompanied the Minister for the meeting—(KNO)

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Is that possible? At the same time, it is also true that the separatist politico-religious outfit Jamaat-i-Islami, or a faction of it, did join the political mainstream last year and unsuccessfully fought Assembly elections. This was a turn of events that once seemed unthinkable. But even with Jamaat precedent behind us, Hurriyat following suit may not be as easy



## Navigating Change?

Mirwaiz's recent Delhi meetings have reignited political speculation

RIYAZ WANI

Ever since withdrawal of Kashmir's special constitutional position in August 2019, centre has strictly denied separatist politics a space and a role in Jammu and Kashmir. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, the head of one faction of the Hurriyat Conference, was too sidelined in the shifting political landscape of Jammu and Kashmir. He has been under a prolonged house arrest, often kept away from delivering his Friday sermons at the Grand Mosque and denied freedom to freely meet people. Yet now, with a series of high-profile meetings in Delhi, murmurs of Centre-Hurriyat dialogue, and his involvement in an interfaith committee for Kashmiri Pandit rehabilitation, Mirwaiz finds

himself back in the news. What does this mean for Kashmir, for New Delhi, and for Mirwaiz himself? There are no clear answers to these questions. Mirwaiz's meeting with BJP MP Jagdambika Pal over the Waqf Bill, his interactions with Kashmiri Pandit representatives, and his heading the interfaith committee do not necessarily signal a shift. Considering Mirwaiz's role has traditionally straddled politics and religion, the recent activities can easily fall within the scope of his religious responsibilities.

Over five years after the withdrawal of Article 370, Kashmir has changed beyond recognition. Once vaunted separatist conglomerate Hurriyat Conference has become

extinct. Many of the grouping's top leaders continue to be in jail or are under house arrest. This has hobbled its capacity to organize any political activity.

But even if the separatist leaders were free - and some of them are free - the situation would hardly be different. The government has outlawed any sign of separatist activity in whatever form and disproportionately raised the costs for any leader or an activist to go out and champion the cause.

Similarly, while Pakistan may not have reconciled to the constitutional changes in Kashmir, it has now kind of gotten used to the new state of affairs in the region. Its protestations about India's actions

in Kashmir haven't found adequate traction across the world. In fact, the US and Europe, which largely influence world opinion, have been barely responsive - their attention is now centered on the ongoing war in Ukraine.

What does the future hold for Kashmir? The probability is that it will be more of the same. Even if the BJP loses power in the future, the Article 370 move remains a fait accompli. Although militancy has persisted in some form, it hasn't affected the drift of normalcy that has by and large prevailed.

Hurriyat-centre dialogue has had a chequered past. Although the two have interacted frequently in the past, nothing was ever achieved.

This is because the expectation of both the parties from the talks have been a polar opposite of each other. The Centre wants Hurriyat to join the national mainstream and play a role as a mainstream political party, but Hurriyat has long fought for the resolution of the Kashmir issue.

After the abrogation of Article 370, New Delhi no longer wants to engage with either Pakistan or any local entity in J&K over the resolution of what is seen as the Kashmir issue. It has also by and large successfully overcome the political and armed separatist campaign within the union territory. This has transformed the situation, and, in a sense, rendering not just India-Pakistan dialogue redundant but the Centre-Hurriyat engagement too. More so, the latter. Only discussion that appears to have been left to pursue between the two is if and when Hurriyat joins the mainstream.

Is that possible? On the face of it, such a prospect seems highly improbable. At the same time, it is also true that the separatist politico-religious outfit Jamaat-i-Islami, or a faction of it, did join the political mainstream last year and unsuccessfully fought Assembly elections. This was a turn of events that once seemed unthinkable. But even with Jamaat precedent behind us, Hurriyat following suit may not be as easy. Not just for ideological reasons, which are currently challenged by a dramatically transformed context, but also for the reasons of survival. Once cut off from its ideological moorings, Hurriyat would in all likelihood shrink into yet another mainstream party, more or less like yet another Apni Party, with no political future, as was amply demonstrated by the last year's Assembly polls where even cadre-based Jamaat sank without a trace. While Hurriyat has the option to die as an organization, it has none to adapt to the altered situation. This makes it a tricky situation for the grouping to deal with. For now, everything is in the world of speculation. Mirwaiz has a prominent religious role in the Valley and his current activities are in line with that. As for his politics, the coming weeks and months will make things clearer.

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

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## India Cheered Trump's Return. Now It's Worried

India has already offered a concession by agreeing to work with the White House to take back its undocumented workers, despite the political embarrassment the government will face back home.

Andy Mukherjee

Even as recently as November, when the US election outcome was clear, the mood in India was optimistic. The Hindu right wing, which supplies Prime Minister Narendra Modi with some of his most ardent supporters, held religious ceremonies to celebrate Donald Trump's win. Many in the analyst community cheered from the sidelines, expecting India to be a net beneficiary of new tariffs of 60 per cent on all Chinese exports to the US, which is what the president had promised during his campaign.

India's challenge around the time of the vote was largely domestic: Cost-of-living pressures, especially high food prices, were taking a toll on urban consumption. Growth was slowing rapidly; yet stubborn inflation was delaying monetary stimulus. As I wrote back then, the bigger headache for Indian authorities was tomatoes, not Trump.

While the domestic slowdown is still the biggest headache for policymakers, the drum beats of Trump's trade war are no longer so distant. From even before his return as president, there has been some unease around how the relationship between Trump and Modi will evolve. Their personal bonhomie was at its peak five years ago, with Trump showing up for the "Howdy Modi" extravaganza in Houston, and Modi returning the favor with a "Namaste Trump" spectacle in his home state of Gujarat a few months later. But this time around, there was a palpable lack of enthusiasm — from Trump's side.

And it was noticed in India. Rahul Gandhi, the main opposition leader, said in parliament that S Jaishankar, the Indian foreign minister, had been sent to the US to secure an invitation for Modi to Trump's swearing-in ceremony. Jaishankar accused Gandhi of spreading a deliberate falsehood. "At no stage was an invitation (for) the prime minister discussed," he said in a post on X, the social-media platform.

Aside from the political point-scoring, what is true, however, is that even before Trump's Jan. 20 inauguration, jitters about the US-India relationship had begun to replace complacency, with first signs of trouble showing up not in trade but immigration. The Make America



Great Again camp split down the middle on the issue of H-1B visas, which allow Indian-born software professionals to live and work in the US pending permanent residency. Outsourcing firms from Bengaluru, India's Silicon Valley, compete furiously for these visas for their employees to serve their biggest market.

The sense of foreboding worsened when, soon after moving into the White House, the new president passed a Birthright Citizenship Order, which has been temporarily blocked by a federal judge. It denies US citizenship for children born to parents who aren't permanent residents: Techies on H-1B visas can take years — sometimes decades — to obtain their so-called green cards. Many young Indian couples in the US opted for pre-term deliveries to beat the Feb. 20 deadline in Trump's order.

This is just the white-collar angst. At the other end of the immigration spectrum are undocumented workers. Between 2019 and 2022, Indians were the third-largest group to enter the US illegally, often via the risky "donkey" route of border crossing. The fact that Trump sent back an estimated 104 of them in a military plane before Modi could have a chance to meet

him during a much-anticipated visit to Washington shows that the US president wants to negotiate from a position of strength.

India has already offered a concession by agreeing to work with the White House to take back its undocumented workers, despite the political embarrassment the government will face back home. Every incoming flight of deportees would shine a spotlight on the Modi administration's record of employment creation: Why are so many Indians desperate to leave the world's fastest-growing major economy? Don't they have jobs at home?

That's just one of the aces the US president holds as he looks to play trade and immigration policy cards to bargain for greater access for the likes of Walmart Inc. to the Indian market. The Modi government is already striking a conciliatory tone: Its annual budget on Saturday cut import tariffs on many products. Additionally, it could offer to limit imports of crude oil from Russia, which the US has sanctioned for its invasion of Ukraine. It might even set aside national-security concerns — and ignore vehement opposition from local elites — to allow Elon Musk's Starlink Inc. and Amazon.com Inc.

to offer satellite broadband services in the most-populous nation.

New Delhi might want a few things in return, like a mothballing of the US Justice Department's bribery charges against Indian infrastructure tycoon Gautam Adani, a prominent Modi ally. Separately, it would hope that Washington would not push it any further on allegations of organizing a conspiracy to murder an American citizen on US soil. (India has said it's recommended legal action against an individual it believes is involved in the plot.)

Trouble is, nobody can predict if the concessions currently on the table will be enough, or whether the White House will ask for more. After all, were Trump to pick his adversaries by how much they contributed to the US trade deficit, Asia's old and new export powerhouses — China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea — would all be juicier targets than a far more inwardly focused economy like India.

It's that navel-gazing approach to trade, and the favoring of domestic corporate interests over foreign players, that has put a target on India's back. The budget, which has finally started to walk back several years of increases in import duties, is a sign that fear of Trump reigns supreme. "We are signaling that India is not a tariff king," Finance Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey told Bloomberg News in an interview Sunday, trying to shake off the label that the new US president has used to describe the country in the past. "We are indicating that we are a competitive economy and we are open for business."

Even as the world's largest economy lurches toward Trump's "America First" brand of protectionism, it's making smaller economies open up. That may not be a bad thing altogether. As a businessman who just lost his startup to bankruptcy told me in Mumbai, anybody can float an enterprise in India, though only a half dozen or so local conglomerates have the wherewithal to keep it afloat amid bureaucratic red tape. That lock may be about to open. Fear — of Trump — is the key.

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. The article was originally published by Bloomberg Opinion

# My Love Affair with Radio

Peer Mohammad Amir Qureshi

Picture this—it's a little past 3 PM, and the day is crisp, the kind of crisp that makes the air feel alive, carrying with it the faint scent of earth and smoke. The kitchen is kucha, its walls painted with the earthy aroma of muddy water, a scent that feels ancient, grounding, as if the very soil has seeped into the room. My mother sits in the corner, her hands moving rhythmically, kneading flour into a soft, pliable mound. Few doughs rest on a plate dusted with flour that keeps it from clinging to the surface. In the corner, the Daanbur—a traditional stove—crackles and hums, its flames dancing like mischievous spirits, leaping and twirling, playing a game only they understand. The twigs and wood snap and hiss, their burning scent mingling with the earthy air, creating a symphony of warmth and nostalgia. The firelight flickers, casting golden shadows on the walls, painting the room in hues of amber and ochre. The ghee would glisten and melt in a small cup, fondly called chin pyalie, perched delicately on a pan resting atop the Daanbur, the traditional stove that crackled with life. The flames danced beneath, their warmth infusing the air with a comforting, buttery aroma that seemed to wrap the kitchen in a golden embrace. But what truly brought the household to life was the radio—a steadfast companion in every home, its voice echoing from the crack of dawn until the stars claimed the night. It was the heartbeat of the home, a constant hum of news, music, and stories that wove itself into the fabric of daily life.

I was just a child then, sitting cross-legged on the floor, sharing breakfast with my parents and grandparents. The radio would blare its morning messages, and I, too young to understand, would tilt my head in confusion. The women's voices, melodic yet foreign, would chant, "Subhuk Payaam soanie, shireen kalaam soanie, bouziv ti shaad roziv, Shireen kalaam soanie, payaam-e-subahi." To my innocent ears, it sounded like some mysterious Ladakhi incantation, a language of enchantment that I couldn't decipher.

Among the three treasures of my childhood—the Daanbur, the chini pyalie, and the Radio—none have survived the relentless march of time. They have faded into the annals of memory, relics of a bygone era that once defined the rhythm of our lives. Of these, the radio held a special place in my heart. I was utterly captivated by its magic, its ability to conjure voices and melodies from thin air. My grandfather, a man of simple pleasures, owned a small radio that he kept in an empty tea bag—a peculiar, sack-like pouch with the imprint of tea leaves on its fabric. It hung delicately to a nail in our old house, a humble vessel for something so extraordinary still remember the day my grandfather rummaged through that bag, his hands pulling out forgotten treasures. Among them was a watch, heavy and archaic, its weight surprising in my small hands. He told me it needed to be wound with a key to come alive, a notion that, at the time, failed to amuse my youthful curiosity. But then, he revealed the radio—a sleek, black device, elegantly designed, its surface gleaming with a quiet sophistication. It was beautiful, almost regal, and I was instantly mesmerized. From that moment, I harbored a dream, a burning desire to possess that radio at any cost. It wasn't just an object to me; it was a portal to a world of stories, songs, and voices that felt both intimate and infinite.

The radio symbolized something greater—a connection to my grandfather, to the past, and to the simple joys that once filled our home. Even now, as I think back, the image of that black radio lingers in my mind, an evidence to a time when life moved slower, and the smallest things held the greatest magic. But alas, I never mustered the courage to ask him for that radio. It wasn't fear that held me back, but a strange, unspoken reverence—a sense that some treasures were meant to remain where they were, untouched, as if asking for it would somehow break the spell it held over me. So, I contented myself with listening, absorbing every word, every note that spilled from its speakers. I became a devoted follower of its programs, my young mind meticulously memorizing the schedule—knowing exactly which show would air and when. The radio was my companion, my teacher, my window to a world beyond the confines of our home. From a tender age, I was enchanted by Urdu ghazals. The soulful melodies, the poignant verses, the way each word seemed to carry the weight of a thousand emotions—it all resonated deeply within me. The radio brought these ghazals to life, their haunting beauty filling the air and weaving themselves into the fabric of my childhood. I would sit for hours, lost in the cadence of the poetry, the rise and fall of the singer's voice, the delicate strumming of the sitar or the harmonium in the background. It was more than just music; it was an experience, a journey into the heart of something intense. Those moments by the radio were pure magic. Even now, the thought of it brings a bittersweet ache—a longing for those simpler days, for the sound of my grandfather's voice humming along to a naat, for the warmth of the Daanbur and the glistening chini pyalie. The radio may have vanished, but its echoes remain, a timeless melody that still plays softly in the corners of my heart.

Ah, Radio Kashmir Srinagar it wasn't just a station; it was an emotion, a lifeline that connected us to the pulse of our culture, our stories, and our shared humanity. The anchors and broadcasters were not just voices on the airwaves; they were institutions unto themselves, pillars of wisdom and eloquence. Their words flowed like a river, smooth and unerring, carrying with them the weight of authority and the grace of artistry. I used to imagine their faces the way an artist sketches from memory, shaping jawlines with syllables, filling in eyes with intonations, and tracing smiles from the

warmth or sharpness in their speech.

It was as if they had been sculpted by the very essence of their craft, their dedication evident in every syllable, every pause, every inflection. I often marveled at their precision, their flawless delivery, whether it was the crisp morning news or the evocative segments of "Aaj Ki Surkhian". Mistakes were unheard of, as though the very air of Radio Kashmir Srinagar was imbued with a kind of magic that shielded it from error. Each day began with the meticulous announcement of the day's program roster, a ritual that felt both ceremonial and intimate. The broadcaster's voice, steady and assured, would unfurl the schedule like a map, guiding us through the hours ahead.

It was a promise, a pledge that no matter what the day held, Radio Kashmir Srinagar would be there, a constant in an ever-changing world. The fluency of the anchors was not just a testament to their skill but a reflection of their deep connection to their work. They didn't just read scripts; they breathed life into them, their voices carrying the weight of history, the warmth of familiarity, and the spark of curiosity. They were masters of their craft, and their dedication was a quiet reminder of the power of passion and perseverance. The anchors were maestros, their voices mellifluous and magnetic, weaving words that didn't just reach the ears but touched the very strings of the heart. Each program was a masterpiece, carefully crafted to resonate with listeners of all ages, from wide-eyed children to wise elders who had seen the world unfold.

I remember Ghazal Usne Chaidi, a program that felt like a warm embrace for the soul. The ghazals, with their intricate poetry and soulful melodies, would transport me to a world where every word was a brushstroke painting emotions I could barely name. But Radio Kashmir Srinagar was more than just ghazals. It was a universe of programs, each catering to a different facet of life. There was Dhadkan, anchored by the brilliant Humayun Qaisar—a thrilling quiz show that kept listeners on the edge of their seats. The excitement of participants answering questions, the tension in the air, and the joy of learning something new made it a favourite in every household.

For women, there was "Bazm-e-Niswa", a platform where voices often unheard found their space. Women from all walks of life would share their stories, their struggles, and their triumphs, creating a tapestry of experiences that felt both personal and universal. And then there were programs for children, where young voices giggled, sang, and recited poetry, filling the air with innocence and hope.

Ah, "Hello Aapki Farmayish"—a program that wasn't just a show, but a celebration of connection, music, and the sheer joy of being heard. It was a jope for countless listeners, a space where dreams met reality, even if only for a few precious minutes. Anchored by the ever-graceful RJ Sakeena, the program was a symphony of voices, laughter, and melodies, a tapestry woven with the threads of countless hearts yearning to be part of something magical.

The premise was simple, yet it carried the weight of a thousand emotions. Listeners would call the radio station, hoping, praying, that their call would be the one to make it through the labyrinth of busy signals and endless rings. The competition was fierce, for the number of callers was always too many, and the chance to connect with RJ Sakeena felt like winning a golden ticket to a world of dreams. Months could pass before luck finally smiled upon a caller, but when it did, oh, what a moment it was!

The air would crackle with anticipation as the lucky listener's voice came through the speakers, trembling with excitement, their words tumbling out in a rush of joy and nervousness. RJ Sakeena, with her warm, inviting voice, would greet them like an old friend, her laughter a soothing balm to their racing hearts. The conversations that followed were nothing short of beautiful—raw, heartfelt, and brimming with the kind of authenticity that only the radio could capture.

Listeners, often artisans with calloused hands and stories etched into their souls, would share snippets of their lives with RJ Sakeena. They would speak of their struggles, their joys, their dreams, and, of course, their favorite songs. These weren't just songs; they were memories, emotions, pieces of their lives that they wanted to share with the world. And when RJ Sakeena played those songs, it was as if she was unlocking a treasure chest of emotions, letting the music spill out and fill the airwaves with love, longing, and nostalgia.

The joy of the listeners knew no bounds. For them, hearing their favorite song on the radio, requested by their own voice, was a moment of pure magic. It was validation, a reminder that their voice mattered, that their story was worth telling. And when the song played, they would often share the moment with friends and family, turning it into a collective celebration, a memory to be cherished for years to come.

The program "Gaemil Bayan Hiend Khatri Program" was a jewel in the crown of Radio Kashmir Srinagar, a cherished program of wisdom and guidance that reached deep into the hearts of the villagers. Each episode began with a sacred invocation—the Tilawat-e-Quran Pak, its verses flowing like a river of divine light,

setting the tone for what was to come. The recitation was followed by a soul-stirring Naat-e-Shareef, its melodic praise of the Prophet (peace be upon him) wrapping the listeners in a blanket of spiritual warmth. These opening moments were more than rituals; they were a reminder of the program's roots in faith and its commitment to uplifting the soul before the mind. Then came the heart of the program—the voices of the two anchors, steady and wise, like seasoned farmers sowing seeds of knowl-

They were fragments of life, love, and longing, each one a masterpiece painted with the colors of human emotion.

I was in the 11th grade then, a time when the heart is both tender and tempestuous. As I listened, I would lose myself in the labyrinth of love stories, each one more poignant than the last. The background music, a symphony of strings and sighs, would rise and fall with the rhythm of the narrative, while classic songs, carefully chosen to mirror the mood, would tug at my soul. It was as if the radio had become a portal, transporting me to a realm where every note, every word, was alive with meaning. Those nights were not just about listening; they were about losing myself, about finding pieces of me hidden in words, about living a hundred lives in the span of a single hour. When Neelesh Misra's voice would fade, and the melodies would take over, it felt as though my soul was being carried away on a gentle breeze, floating through time and space, unmoored and free. Those moments were pure magic, a symphony of sound and sentiment that I would carry with me long after the radio had been turned

off.

Even now, as I write these words, I can hear the faint echo of those nights—the crackle of the radio, the warmth of my father's voice, the haunting beauty of Neelesh Misra's storytelling. Ah, the bittersweet symphony of dreams and destiny! Neelesh Misra wasn't just a voice on the radio for me—he was a beacon, a guiding star that lit up the path to my own creative awakening. His stories didn't just entertain; they stirred something deep within me, a quiet yearning to weave my own tales, to pour my heart onto paper and let it breathe. And so, in the throes of my 11th-grade year, I dared to dream. I dared to write.

I remember it vividly, as though it were yesterday. The air was thick with inspiration, and my mind buzzed with the electricity of a story waiting to be told. It was a love story—raw, tender, and achingly real. I poured my soul into it, every word a heartbeat, every sentence a sigh. The characters came alive in my mind, their joys and sorrows spilling onto the page as I scribbled furiously, my pen dancing to the rhythm of my emotions. It was my debut, my first attempt at storytelling, and I was convinced it was my ticket to becoming a writer.

With trembling hands and a heart full of hope, I reached out to Neelesh Misra himself. I sent him my story, my little piece of the universe, wrapped in the fragile parchment of my dreams. I imagined him reading it, his voice narrating my words, his listeners captivated by the tale I had spun. It was a dream so vivid, so intoxicating, that it felt almost real.

But fate, as it often does, had other plans. My story, my precious creation, was written on a piece of paper—a paper that found its way into the pocket of my favorite hoodie. And one fateful day, my mother, in her endless quest to keep our lives tidy, washed that hoodie without a second thought. The water seeped into the fabric, and with it, my words dissolved into nothingness. The ink bled, the paper disintegrated, and my story was lost forever, like a whisper carried away by the wind.

I remember the moment I discovered it—the sinking feeling in my chest, the lump in my throat, the sting of tears I refused to shed. It was as though a part of me had been washed away too. That story wasn't just words on paper; it was a piece of my soul, a fragment of my dreams. And yet, in its loss, I found a strange kind of solace. It taught me that stories, like life, are fleeting. They come and go, leaving behind echoes that linger in the heart.

Neelesh Misra's impact on me didn't fade with that lost story. If anything, it grew stronger. He had shown me the power of words, the magic of storytelling, and the courage to dream. And though my debut tale was lost to the whims of a washing machine, it was never truly gone. It lives on in the stories I've written since, in the dreams I continue to chase, and in the belief that one day, my words will find their way to someone who needs them, just as his words found their way to me.

So, here's to lost stories and found dreams, to the hoodies that carry secrets, and to the voices that inspire us to create, to dream, and to believe. Because sometimes, it's not about the story that's lost—it's about the stories that are yet to be written.

Ah, Ramadan—the sacred month that transformed not just our hearts, but also our homes, into sanctuaries of faith, reflection, and togetherness. And at the center of it all, like a faithful companion, was the radio. It wasn't just a device; it was a lifeline, a spiritual guide, and a unifying force that brought every household closer to the essence of Ramadan. During those blessed days, the radio became more than a medium—it became a part of our souls. In the quiet, pre-dawn hours, when the world was still cloaked in darkness and the stars twinkled like scattered pearls, the radio would come alive. It was time for Sehri, the pre-dawn meal, and the airwaves would hum with the voices of Islamic scholars, their words illuminating our hearts like lanterns in the night. They would speak of the significance of Ramadan, the virtues of fasting, and the importance of intention (neeyat). Their voices, calm and wise, would weave a tapestry of faith, reminding us that Ramadan was not just about abstaining from food and drink, but about purifying the soul, seeking forgiveness, and drawing closer to the Divine. As we sat to-

gether, sharing the simple yet sacred meal of Sehri, the radio would accompany us, its presence as comforting as the warmth of the food. And then, as the time to end Sehri approached, the radio would announce the moment with a solemnity that sent shivers down the spine. The dua for fasting would be recited, its words echoing through the stillness of the morning, filling our hearts with a sense of purpose and devotion. It was a moment of collective spirituality, a reminder that we were all part of something greater, something divine.

But the radio's role didn't end with Sehri. As the day unfolded, it continued to be a source of guidance and inspiration, airing programs that delved into the teachings of Islam, the stories of the Prophets, and the lessons of patience, gratitude, and compassion. It was during these programs that the true spirit of Ramadan came alive, not just in our actions, but in our hearts and minds. And then, as the sun began its descent, painting the sky in hues of orange and gold, the anticipation for Iftar would grow. The entire household would gather, the air thick with the aroma of dates, kebabs, and freshly fried pakoras. But before we could break our fast, there was one thing we all waited for—the announcement from Radio Kashmir Srinagar. It was as if time itself held its breath, waiting for that moment. The radio's voice, steady and authoritative, would cut through the silence, declaring that it was time to break the fast. That announcement was more than just a signal; it was a guarantee, a trusted marker of time that united every household in the valley. The joy that followed was indescribable. The first sip of water, the first bite of a date—it was a moment of gratitude, of relief, of connection. And as we sat together, sharing the meal and the blessings of the day, the radio would continue to play, its melodies and messages adding to the warmth of the gathering. It was during these moments that the radio felt less like a machine and more like a member of the family, a silent participant in our prayers, our meals, and our conversations. During my post-graduation days in Dehradun, a strange emptiness settled in my heart every Ramadan—I longed for the familiar voice of "Radio Kashmir Srinagar." The air felt incomplete without its soulful naats, the rhythmic recitation of the Holy Quran, and the heartfelt Ramadan specials that once echoed through our home.

One evening, lost in nostalgia, my friend decided to bridge the distance between us and our homeland. With a hopeful smile, he fiddled with his phone, searching for a way to tune in. An app—our only lifeline—became the thread connecting us to home. But it was a fickle companion, working in bursts, teasing us with brief moments of joy before fading into silence.

Then, it happened. A sudden burst of static, a flicker of sound—and there it was! Radio Kashmir Srinagar, crackling through the tiny speakers, breaking the miles that separated us. Our joy knew no bounds! We sat there, grinning like children, absorbing every word, every note, as if it carried the scent of home, the warmth of our loved ones, and the spirit of Ramadan itself.

In that moment, Dehradun disappeared. We were home.

Ah, the radio—my first love, my silent confidant, my companion in the quiet hours of the night. There was something inexplicably magical about lying in bed, the room bathed in the soft glow of moonlight, with the radio resting beside me. Its hum, its crackle, its whispers—they were the lullabies that carried me into dreams. It wasn't just sound; it was a feeling, a warmth that wrapped around me like a blanket on a cold winter's night.

The radio was more than a machine; it was a storyteller, a musician, a friend. It carried the voices of strangers who felt like family, the melodies of songs that felt like memories, and the echoes of a culture that was slowly slipping away. It was a lifeline to a world beyond my own, a world where stories were told with passion, where music was played with soul, and where every word, every note, felt like it was meant just for me.

But then, as the years rolled on, the world began to change. The advent of mobile technology in 2013 marked the beginning of a new era—an era of instant gratification, of endless choices, of screens that glowed brighter than the moon. Suddenly, everyone had a mobile device in their hands, and the radio, once a cherished companion, began to fade into the background. Social media platforms, streaming apps like Spotify, YouTube, and YouTube Music became the new norm, offering convenience and variety at the tap of a finger.

And yet, with all their convenience, these platforms lacked something essential—the soul of the radio. They couldn't replicate the feeling of tuning into a live broadcast, of hearing a voice that felt like it was speaking directly to you, of stumbling upon a song or a story that felt like destiny. They couldn't capture the intimacy, the spontaneity, the magic of the radio.

Alas! the radio, which had fought so valiantly to preserve our culture, to keep our stories alive, to connect us in ways that technology never could, began to lose its battle. It was a slow, quiet decline, like the fading of a star in the night sky. But even as its light dimmed, its legacy remained. The radio had done its best to save our culture, to keep our traditions alive, to remind us of who we were and where we came from.

And though the world may have moved on, my love affair with the radio remains. It lives on in the memories of those quiet nights, in the echoes of the stories it told, in the melodies it played. It lives on in the part of me that still longs for the simplicity, the authenticity, the magic of those moments. The radio may have been replaced, but it will never be forgotten. It was, and always will be, my first love.

The author is a columnist and feature writer based in Ganderbal. He X's @peermohdhamir



**BUT WHAT TRULY BROUGHT THE HOUSEHOLD TO LIFE WAS THE RADIO— a steadfast companion in every home, its voice echoing from the crack of dawn until the stars claimed the night. It was the heartbeat of the home, a constant hum of news, music, and stories that wove itself into the fabric of daily life**

# 'Sleep Disorders Highly Individual In Nature, Ai Essential For Diagnosing'

Press Trust Of India

Artificial intelligence will be essential for diagnosing sleep disorders such as sleep apnoea or insomnia, which are increasingly acquiring an individual character, neurologist Dr Manvir Bhatia said.

Further, once diagnosed, are we able to say that a certain individual will be a good user of the treatment or not? That's where the role of AI is really going to come up, said Dr Bhatia, the vice-president of Indian Society for Sleep Research.

She was addressing a workshop conducted at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, ahead of the 11th Congress of Asian Sleep Research Society that will be held here during February 8-9.

Obstructive sleep apnoea is a common disorder, estimated to affect about a billion worldwide. Muscles in the throat narrow the airways, thereby affecting one's breathing and blood oxygen levels.

A 2023 study by the AIIMS estimated that 104 million Indians of working age suffer from obstructive sleep apnoea, of whom nearly 50 per cent have it moderate or severe.

First line of treatment usually includes PAP or 'positive airway pressure', in which pressured air is delivered to the patient via a mask to



**A 2023 study by the AIIMS estimated that 104 million Indians of working age suffer from obstructive sleep apnoea, of whom nearly 50 per cent have it moderate or severe.**

keep the upper airway open, thereby preventing 'apnoea' or breaks in breathing.

"It's ok that the technology will be to say about the usage of PAP. But are we able to say that a certain individual will be a good user of the treatment or not, similar to how we are now able to predict one's risk of having a stroke or a cardiac event? That's where the role of AI is really going to come up -- in predicting one's PAP compliance," said Dr Bhatia, who runs Neurology and Sleep Centre in New Delhi.

While sleep has been studied extensively over the years,

the focus has largely been on AHI (apnoea-hypopnoea index) and sleep stages because the human eye could see only so much, according to the neurologist. AHI measures how often one's breathing stops or slows down.

She added that as sleep technology becomes more compact and sophisticated, and the recorded information more granular and voluminous, artificial intelligence will be almost indispensable for analysing the data.

"There's no way that the human mind can analyse all this data," the neurologist said.

"Sleep disorders are very

heterogenous in nature, be it sleep apnoea or insomnia - there must be something that we are missing. It's never one treatment or diagnostic method that fits all and that's why, we definitely need to incorporate AI into sleep medicine," she said.

Dr Bhatia also acknowledged the resistance of medical doctors in turning away from how sleep studies have been traditionally conducted towards newer technologies.

A traditional sleep study or a polysomnography uses wires and sensors attached to a participant to measure physiological activity, including

brain waves, breathing and heart rates, and oxygen levels during sleep.

However, polysomnography is expensive and "technology, technique, and technician-dependent", Dr Bhatia said.

Further, the sensors on the body can interfere and "if you're trying to assess someone's sleep, are we really doing a good job?", she added.

Home sleep testing devices, including patches, therefore, can be comfortable, convenient and less tech-heavy, Dr Bhatia said.

She also pointed out that consumer wearable technologies, including smartwatches, are increasingly highlighting the importance of sleep, even though data may not be accurate.

"People are becoming very conscious. The devices are creating an awareness that sleep is important," Dr Bhatia said.

However, she cautioned these wearable devices are different from those used for medically diagnosing sleep disorders. She also advised taking an "overall, temporal" view of the information provided by wearables, rather than diving deep into a "night-by-night" analysis.

"Sleep apnoea is a highly prevalent condition, with serious comorbidities and consequences. No way are we going to be able to diagnose so many people using traditional systems, even though they will continue to have a place," Dr Bhatia said in conclusion.

## 'Exposure To Air Pollution Can Affect One's Cognition, Daily Task Performance'

Press Trust Of India

The short-term exposure to air pollution can cloud one's judgment, affecting emotional intelligence and focus and potentially making routine activities more challenging, according to a new study.

Researchers, including

zheimer's and dementia, where cognition and memory are affected.

The long-term exposure to PM2.5 air pollution has also been linked with poor learning and memory among children.

However, the study, published in the Nature Communications journal, showed that "even short-term exposure to particu-



those from the University of Birmingham, UK, compared the performance of 26 adults divided into two groups - one exposed to high levels of air pollution, using candle smoke, and the other to clean air.

The team found that brief exposure to high levels of particulate matter (PM) pollution could affect the participants' higher-order cognitive functions, including self-control and sustained attention, which are critical for work and other aspects of life.

Air pollution has been studied as a major risk factor for neurological diseases, including Al-

late matter can have immediate negative effects on brain functions essential for daily activities, such as doing the weekly supermarket shop," co-author Thomas Faherty from the University of Birmingham said.

For the study, the cognitive abilities of the participants, including attention and emotion recognition, were tested before exposure to polluted air and four hours after.

"Results showed significant reductions in selective attention and emotion expression discrimination after enhanced PM exposure versus clean air exposure," the authors wrote.

**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 Irtifa Jan D.o.B 02/09/2016 and Zeenat Jan D.o.B 08/02/2018 DD/ o Mohammad Adil Bhat R/o Hanjiwera Tehsil Pattan 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.

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**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 Sofi Dada Ayrah Mushtaq S/o Mushtaq Ahmad Sofi R/o Nehalpora Tehsil Pattan with verified date of birth 25/09/2021 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.

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GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR  
**OFFICE OF THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OFFICER POSHAN CHADOORA**  
Email-cdpchadoora@gmail.com

**CORRIGENDUM**

Due to oversight and typing error during framing of tentative provisional selection list of candidates for the posts of Sanginis (Anganwadi Workers) of Poshan Project Chadoora, Kindly read the marks obtained as 412/600 and %age of marks as 68.67 instead of marks 392/600 and %age of marks 65.33 in 12th class against the tentatively selected candidate namely Zamrooda Farooq W/o- Firdous Ahmad Ganie R/o- Bugam figuring at serial number 3 and index number 24 in the tentative selection list duly vetted by the District Level Selection Committee against the Anganwadi Centre Bugam "A" for Panch Ward No. (06) Bugam issued vide this office Public Notice No. CDPO/POSHAN/CHD/2025/171-182 dated 0702-2025 and the same which was uploaded on district and departmental website and published in daily newspapers viz. Rising Kashmir, Kashmir Observer, Veyth and Kashmir Aman dated 08-02-2025 as well. However, other contents/figures remain the same as per above referred tentative selection list cum public notice.

Child Development Project Officer  
Chadoora (Member Secretary DLSC)

No. CDPO/POSHAN/CHD/2025/193-203  
DIPK-11748/24  
Dated 8/02/2025

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

I have applied for the issuance of PESTICIDES, FERTILIZERS AND SEEDS licence for my business unit under name and style KASHMIR ORCHARD SOLUTIONS . If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the concerned office within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

PROP. BILAL AHMAD BHAT  
S/O:- BASHIR AHMAD BHAT  
R/O :- PALHALLAN PATTAN BARAMULLA fko

**NAME CORRECTION**

The General Public is hereby informed that my name had been inadvertently recorded in the Aadhaar Card as Ghulam Nabi Mir S/o Mohammad Mir R/o Dharam Bugh, Tehsil Baghat Kanipora, District Budgam however; the correct name is Naba Mir S/o Mohammad Mir R/o Dharam Bugh, Tehsil Baghat Kanipora, District Budgam.

In view of the above I want to correct my name as Naba Mir S/o Mohammad Mir R/o Dharam Bugh, Tehsil Baghat Kanipora, District Budgam instead of Ghulam Nabi Mir S/o Mohammad Mir R/o Dharam Bugh, Tehsil Baghat Kanipora, District Budgam.

If anyone has any objections regarding this name correction, he/she may submit their objections to the concerned authorities within seven days from the date of publication of this notice. No objections shall be entertained after the said period.

Naba Mir D/O Mohammad Mir  
R/o Dharam Bugh, Tehsil Baghat Kanipora, District Budgam inf

**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 Ayesha Firdous D/o Firdous Ahmad BhatR/o Gund Jahangir Shahgund with verified date of birth 03/05/2021 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.

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**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 Aisha Ashraf D/o Mohd Ashraf Bhat R/o Usan Kohie tehsil pattan with verified date of birth 21/02/2023 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.

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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 Abdul Aleem D.o.B 02/11/2018 and Aisha Altaf D o.B 07/03/2016 DD/o Altaf Ahmad Karneia R/o Doabgah Watergam Sopore 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.

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## Fiscal And Monetary Measures To Boost Consumption, Pvt Investment: FM

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said fiscal and monetary measures announced recently will help boost consumption and promote private investment.

The Budget presented by the Finance Minister on February 1 proposed a slew of measures including significant income tax cuts for the middle class.

Individuals earning up to Rs 12.75 lakh in a year will not have to pay any taxes, benefiting 1 crore taxpayers.

On the monetary side, the Reserve Bank on Friday slashed the policy rate by 25 basis points, the first rate cut in five years to support growth.

"After the Budget, the few inputs I've had from some business leaders is that the orders for fast-moving consumer goods for April-June are already getting booked, and the industry is clearly seeing signs of a possible recovery of con-

sumption," she said at a media interaction after addressing the Board of the RBI in the customary post-budget meeting.

As a result, she said, many of them are looking at reviewing their capacity utilisation itself, which means you can safely see that the triggers for a consumption-driven cycle are clearly being felt by those who have to make investment decisions.

"So, I see this as a positive sign and with yesterday's decision of the RBI, together things can move in alignment and the required traction we made in this course," she said.

She also said both the government and the Reserve Bank of India will continue to work in a well-coordinated fashion to prop up growth and contain inflation.

Fiscal and monetary policy are working in tandem and there has been good coordination between the government and the RBI, she added.

## Hope To Introduce New Income Tax Bill In Lok Sabha Next Week: Sitharaman

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said she is likely to introduce the new income tax bill, which will replace the six-decade-old I-T Act, in the Lok Sabha in the coming week.

After introduction in the Upper House, the bill will be sent to a parliamentary standing committee for scrutiny.

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the bill on Friday.

"Yesterday, the Cabinet cleared the New Income Tax proposal, I hope to have it introduced in the Lok Sabha in the coming week. Post that it will go to a committee," Sitharaman said at a media briefing after addressing the post-Budget customary meeting with the central board of directors of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The bill will again go to the Cabinet after the parliamentary committee gives its recommendations on it. After Cabinet approval, it will again be introduced in Parliament.

"I still have three critical stages to pass through," Sitharaman said to the query regarding rollout of the new income tax law.

Sitharaman had first announced a comprehensive review of the Income-Tax Act, 1961 in the July 2024 Budget. The CBDT had set up an internal committee to oversee



"Yesterday, the Cabinet cleared the New Income Tax proposal, I hope to have it introduced in the Lok Sabha in the coming week. Post that it will go to a committee"

the review and make the Act concise, clear, and easy to understand, which will reduce disputes, litigations, and provide greater tax certainty to taxpayers.

Also, 22 specialised sub-committees have been established to review the various aspects of the Income Tax Act.

To another question, the Finance Minister said the last week's Budget announcement on customs duty rationalisa-

tion is a work that has been on since the last two years.

"So we had rationalised some even two years ago. We also set certain norms saying evergreening is not going to happen on anti-dumping duties, which had played a big role in giving some kind of a protection for India's own manufacturing capabilities," she said.

Sitharaman further said with every such expiry date getting closer, the government will review it thoroughly, and only in exceptional cases duties will be extended, but most often they should be concluded so that the protection does not become a perpetual protection.

"So, this is an ongoing process. We want to make India a lot more investor-friendly, trade friendly, and at the same time, balance it with Aatmanibharat where we need to have production, particularly through the MSMEs. We will provide the tariff protection as required by the industry," the Finance Minister, who presented her eighth straight Budget on February 1, said.

In her Budget speech, Sitharaman had announced rationalisation of customs tariff structure for industrial goods.

As part of comprehensive review of customs rate structure announced in July 2024 Budget, on February 1, 2025 she proposed to remove seven tariff rates.

## No Level For Rupee In Mind, Market Forces Decides Forex Rate: RBI Guv

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI:** Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Saturday said that the market forces decide the value of rupee with respect to the US dollar and the central bank is not worried about day-to-day movement of the currency value.

Addressing the media after the meeting of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with the Reserve Bank board, Malhotra said that the central bank focuses on the value of the rupee in the medium to long term.

"There is no change in RBI's approach. It does not look at any price level or band. It is our endeavour to curb excessive volatility. We should not be looking at daily movement or exchange rate," he said in reply to a query on the rupee depreciation.

On the impact of the depreciation of the rupee against the US dollar on price rise, he said 5 per cent depreciation impacts domestic inflation to the extent of 30-35 bps.

He further said that RBI took on board the current rupee-dollar rate while working out the growth and inflation projections for the next financial year.

The rupee recovered 9 paise from its all-time low level to close at 87.50 against the US dollar on Friday after the Reserve Bank of India reduced the key policy rate by 25 basis points in line with street expectations.

The Governor also said most of the depreciation in the Indian currency is driven by the uncertainties which have



come up because the global issues and especially, the tariff-related announcements by US President Donald Trump.

"...hopefully that should settle down and that should help us in the downward movement of inflation," he said.

Malhotra also sought to assure that the RBI will be "nimble and agile" to provide adequate liquidity in the banking system.

"We have a number of instruments at our hands to control and manage liquidity and we will use them. We have OMO, we have the buy-sell swaps of forex, we have various other tools, we have the LAF, we have the VRR and we are using all of these measures to provide sufficient liquidity. We need not be worried on that account," the Governor said.

On a question related to crypto-currencies, the Governor said a working group has been set up by the government to look into issues related to crypto assets and a discussion paper on crypto will also be issued.

## RBI's Decision To Cut Repo Rate By 25 Bps To Boost Housing Demand: Realtors



Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI:** Real estate developers hailed the RBI's decision to cut the benchmark lending rate by 25 basis points, saying this will benefit existing home loan borrowers and also encourage the fence sitters to invest in residential properties.

Realtors' apex body CREDAI feels that the RBI's decision might have a "limited direct impact" on the sector and made a case for further reduction for "stronger impetus" to housing demand.

Another leading association Naredco said the RBI's move to slash the repo rate by 25 basis points to 6.25% could lead to lowering of interest rates on home loans, which in turn will boost housing sales.

CREDAI National President Boman Irani said, "The RBI's decision to reduce the repo rate supplements recent announcements in the budget aimed at boosting spending and spurring economic growth."

"While the current cut may have a limited direct impact, we anticipate that a further rate cut in the next MPC (monetary policy committee) meeting will provide stronger impetus to overall demand, accelerating housing sales, particularly in the mid-income and affordable segments," Irani observed.

Naredco national president G. Hari Babu said the rate cut will have a positive impact on the

real estate sector, making home loans more affordable and increasing demand for housing.

"With lower interest rates, we expect to see increased sales, improved liquidity, and a reduction in the inventory of unsold homes. This, in turn, will encourage developers to launch new projects," he added.

Domnic Romell, President of CREDAI-MCHI, said the rate cut, combined with the increase in the income tax exemption limit to ₹12 lakh, creates an environment that encourages consumer spending and home ownership.

Prashant Sharma, president of Naredco-Maharashtra, expected banks to ensure swift transmission of the reduced rates.

Among developers, Tata Realty and Infrastructure MD and CEO Sanjay Dutt said, the RBI's decision would make home loans more affordable, thus easing the financial burden on aspiring homeowners.

Dutt said the rate cut will immensely benefit the affordable housing segment, especially in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.

Venkatesh Gopalakrishnan, Director Group Promoter's Office and MD of Shapoorji Pallonji Real Estate, said, "This thoughtful step highlights the central bank's commitment to bolstering economic growth while fostering a favourable environment for investors and homebuyers."

## New Income Tax Law Explainer: No New Taxes, Simple Read For Common Man

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI:** The new Income Tax Bill, which will replace the six-decade old Income Tax Act of 1961, will make direct tax laws simple to understand, remove ambiguities and reduce litigations.

The law, which is expected to be tabled in Parliament in the Budget session, will go to the Standing Committee on Finance for further scrutiny, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said.

Finance Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey has already indicated that the new Bill will not have provisos and explanations or long sentences. It will be tax neutral.

Following is an explainer of what the government intends to do and what can the new law hold for taxpayers:

**Q. Why is a review of the I-T Act needed?**  
A. Income tax law was enacted about 60 years ago in 1961 and since then a lot of changes have taken place in the society, in the way people earn money and companies do business. The 1961 Act was framed at a time when Indian republic was young and faced challenges peculiar to those times. Over the time, as the country progressed, the Income Tax Act was amended to keep pace with changing times. Presently, technology has changed the way people pay taxes and file return of

income. There is also a system where ITR forms are pre-filled based on data available to the tax department from various other sources, like TDS statement filed by banks, employers, forex dealers and at the time of property transactions.



advancement and changes in the socio-economic fabric of the country, there is a pressing need to completely overhaul the archaic Income Tax Act which has become bulky on account of hundreds of amendments in the law. It was become almost impossible for the common man to comprehend the law and multiple references to different sections, sub-sections, and provisos.

**Q. What did the Finance Minister announce?**

A. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech on July 23, 2024, had announced a comprehensive review of the Income Tax Act, 1961, within six months. The purpose of the review is to make the Act concise, lucid, easy to read

and understand, Sitharaman had said in her July 2024 budget speech. This will reduce disputes and litigations, thereby providing tax certainty to the taxpayers. It will also bring down the demand embroiled in litigation, she had said.

In her 2025-26 Budget speech on February 1, 2025, she announced that the Bill will be introduced in Parliament in the ongoing Budget session.

**Q. What the new Income Tax Act proposes to do?**

A. The new law is expected to be leaner and more reader-friendly, which even a common man could comprehend. The intention of the government is to halve the volume and make the language simpler so that taxpayer can know his exact tax liability. It would also help in reducing litigations and thereby cut down on disputed tax demands.

**Q. How will the new law will be leaner?**

A. The Income Tax Act, 1961, deals with imposition of direct taxes — personal I-T, corporate tax, securities transaction tax, besides gift and wealth tax. The Act currently has about 298 sections and 23 chapters. Over the time, the government has abolished various levies including wealth tax, gift tax, fringe benefit tax and banking cash transaction tax.

## Pakistan Requests China To Reschedule USD 3.4 Billion Debt

Press Trust Of India

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan has requested China to reschedule USD 3.4 billion debt for two years to bridge a foreign funding gap identified by the International Monetary Fund, according to a media report on Saturday.

This is the second time in the past five months that Islamabad has requested Beijing to reschedule loans provided by its Exim bank.

Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar made the formal request during this week's visit to Beijing. The Express Tribune newspaper reported, quoting government sources.

Pakistan requested the Export-Import (Exim) Bank of China to consider rearrangement of its loans due from October 2024 to

September 2027, said the government officials.

A two-year extension was sought to repay the official and guaranteed debt obtained from the Exim Bank. Pakistan would keep making interest payments.

Sources said that Pakistan was required to identify financing sources to fill the external financing gap of USD 5 billion for the three-year programme period.

They added the Chinese authorities were positive and that Beijing would hopefully accept the request to lessen Pakistan's external funding woes.

Earlier, in September last year, the Finance Minister wrote to the Exim Bank, requesting the rescheduling.

According to a joint China-Pakistan statement issued on

Thursday, the Pakistani side reiterated its high appreciation for China's valuable support for its fiscal and financial stability. The statement was issued after President Asif Ali Zardari's state visit to Beijing.

The USD 3.4 billion debt was maturing between October 2024 and September 2027, which coincided with the three-year IMF programme period. According to the sources, the bank has given two types of loans, direct lending and guaranteed lending to State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs).

The rescheduling is said to be critical for Pakistan and is part of the overall USD 5 billion external financing plan that Islamabad has to implement to bridge the gap identified by the IMF at the time of the bailout package's signing in September last year.

## Big Corporates Set To Lead In Tech Adoption Including AI, Data Analytics

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI:** Big corporates are likely to lead the way in adopting new-age technology such as AI, data analytics, and cybersecurity solutions for improving their bottomline, a report said.

The demand for technologies such as AI, data analytics, and cybersecurity solutions is expected to grow significantly and larger businesses are likely to lead the way in adopting these tools, given their greater capacity for investment, as per the latest Business Technology Report published by CPA Australia.

The report highlighted numerous benefits that technology adoption brings to business, particularly in improving cybersecurity and the customer experience, and enhancing employee skills and satisfaction.

It also emphasised the importance of integrating technology to



address emerging challenges, particularly in ESG.

"Businesses should focus on expanding their use of technology to monitor emissions, improve supply chain transparency, and engage with stakeholders effectively. This will not only enhance operational efficiency but also assist compliance with evolving regulatory requirements," it said.

To accelerate technology adoption, it said, businesses need access to affordable and user-friendly solutions tailored to their specific needs.

## 32 Farmers Leave On 6 Day Exposure Visit To Punjab, Jammu

Observer News Service

**SHOPIAN-** The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta, Saturday flagged off a group of 32 farmers of the district from Shopian to Jammu & Punjab for a six-day exposure visit. The exposure visit is organized under the Sub Mission on Agriculture Extension (ATMA-2024-25).

The programme, facilitated by the Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Shopian, aims to enhance the knowledge and skills of farmers & agripreneurs by providing them with first-hand experience of advanced agricultural practices.

The exposure visit includes training sessions, covering modern & innovative farming techniques, sustainable agriculture and value-added farming practices along with visit to several research centres and universities and on field exposure in the state of Punjab.

They will also visit SKUAST Jammu for one day training on Mushroom Cultivation practices. During the flag-off ceremony, DC Shopian

## Soldiers On Patrolling Duty Fired Upon Near LoC In Rajouri

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: Soldiers on patrolling duty were fired upon from a forest across the Line of Control (LoC) in the Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday, prompting retaliation by the Indian troops, security officials said.

There was no casualty in the brief firing but an alert has been sounded to maintain strict vigil, the officials said.

They said the Indian troops were on patrolling duty in a forward village in the Keri sector when a few rounds were fired by suspected terrorists hiding in a forest across the border, apparently waiting for an opportunity to sneak into this side. The Army troops also fired a few rounds in retaliation, and subsequently the anti-infiltration grid was strengthened to keep a tight vigil in the area, the officials said.

## Lamrin Tech Skills University Partners with Sabr Education to Empower J&K Youth

Srinagar: Lamrin Tech Skills University Punjab (LTSU) is pleased to announce an exclusive partnership with Sabr Education Srinagar, aimed at equipping the youth of Jammu & Kashmir with market-ready, job-oriented university programs.

This strategic collaboration seeks to bridge the skill gap and enhance employment opportunities for students in the region. Addressing the press conference, "Dr. Sandeep Singh Kaura, Chancellor, Lamrin Tech Skills University Punjab and Advisor National Skill Development Corporation, Govt of India", reiterated the university's commitment to empowering J&K's youth through skill-based education.

Dr. Kaura emphasized that "LTSU's industry-driven programs, developed in collaboration with "NSDC, cater to both recent "Class 12 graduates" and "unemployed youth with degrees", offering them a pathway to meaningful employment.

He also highlighted LTSU's commitment to fostering a "safe and inclusive" environment for female students, noting that the university already has

representation from "21 states across India. Additionally, he introduced LTSU's innovative "payment after placement" model, which allows students to commence their education by paying "half the tuition fee upfront, with the remaining amount payable "after securing a job".

Dr. Kaura also announced that "LTSU will host the 54th National Convention of ISTE and Yuva Kaushal, a flagship initiative of the university. The event is scheduled on "February 13-14, 2025, at the university campus and will be graced by the "Governor of Punjab as the Chief Guest. Other esteemed dignitaries, including "Dr. V.K. Paul (NITI Aayog Member - P.M.O), the Education Minister of Punjab, AICTE Chairman, NAAC Chairman, and other prominent leaders in India's education sector", will also be in attendance.

As a gesture of appreciation, "Dr. Sandeep Singh Kaura and Mr. Mehran Reshi Managing Director of Sabr Education, presented awards to "outstanding school principals, hospitals, police officers, and individuals" who have made significant contributions to

## Kashmir Orchardists Warned As Govt Finds Pesticides Misbranded

Tashir Khan

Srinagar: The government of Jammu and Kashmir has warned orchardists after two commonly used pesticides were found to be misbranded in consecutive quality control tests, leading authorities to seize these products from the market.

On Wednesday, the Agriculture Department's Quality Control Laboratory declared Indofil M-45, a commonly used pesticide for apple orchards, as misbranded. This pesticide, which contains Mancozeb 75% WP as its active ingredient, was produced by Indofil Industries Limited on December 13, 2024, and has an expiry date of December 12, 2026.

A day later, the department identified another pesticide, CAPTAF, which contains 50% WP Captan, as misbranded. Manufactured by Rallis India Ltd. on November 4, 2024, it has an expiry date of November 3, 2026, and the product was also ordered for seizure.

Deputy Director of Law Enforcement Feroz Ahmad Shapoo instructed field officers to stop selling and confiscate all stocks of misbranded pesticides in accordance with the Insecticides Act of 1968.

As the horticulture season in Kashmir begins next month, farmers are expressing concerns about the quality control of pesticides. This region contributes nearly 70% of India's total apple production, generating an annual revenue of approximately 26-27 crore, making effective pesticide use crucial.

However, orchardists believe that the government's response to these concerns is inadequate compared to the support provided to farmers in states like Himachal Pradesh and in some European countries.

"The government collects



pesticide samples in April, but it takes almost a year to get the results back. What should take 10 to 15 days ends up taking months, leaving farmers exposed to ineffective pesticides," said Abdul Rehman Dar, General Secretary of the Fruit Growers Association in Ganderbal.

Farmers usually start pesticide spraying between March 1 and March 20, depending on the temperature. The use of substandard pesticides can have devastating effects on crops. As Dar explained, "Just as giving the wrong medicine to a human can lead to complications, using ineffective pesticides can cause irreparable damage to plants. Diseases such as scab and Alternaria cannot be cured if ineffective pesticides are applied."

Another challenge he pointed out is the lack of awareness among farmers. "Not every farmer is literate; some can't even read the label to understand what type of pesticide they are using," Dar emphasized, highlighting the need for stricter regulations and improved education initiatives.

"Misbranded refers to pesticides that contain a lower quantity of active ingredients, making them ineffective for controlling diseases. Therefore, farmers are advised not to use such products,"

Shapoo stated in an interview with a local news outlet.

According to the Insecticides Act of 1968, a pesticide is considered misbranded if it has misleading or incomplete labelling, exhibits toxicity levels exceeding prescribed limits, or does not match the claimed chemical composition.

Farmers are now urging authorities to expand testing to include other pesticide brands in order to ensure product quality and prevent economic losses.

"Our government must take this matter seriously. Farmers rely on these pesticides to protect their crops, and using ineffective products jeopardizes their livelihoods," Dar said.

"This year, we have accomplished a significant amount. We have seized approximately 31.105 metric tons and 6,442.75 Liters of pesticides, as well as 196 metric tons of fertilizers from various companies in Kashmir," Shapoo stated. "This process will continue, and the Honourable Minister of Agriculture in J&K has also created a task force to address these issues."

As enforcement officers continue to seize misbranded pesticide stocks, orchardists hope the government will take stronger measures to prevent such products from entering the market.

## J&K Has Vast Potential In Leather Goods Industry: Jitendra Singh

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir has vast potential in the leather goods industry, Union minister Jitendra Singh said on Saturday, asserting that proper training can significantly contribute to economic growth and generation of livelihoods.

The Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office was speaking at a function after flagging off an industrial training programme on leather goods manufacturing for women entrepreneurs here. The initiative is aimed at empowering women by providing them with skill development opportunities in the leather sector.

The training programme is being organised by the CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (IIIM), Jammu which was financially supported by Central Electronic Limited (CEL) under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

"Jammu and Kashmir has vast potential in the leather goods industry due to the availability of raw materials, traditional craftsmanship, and growing demand for handmade, high-quality leather products.



"Proper training in this sector can significantly contribute to economic growth and livelihood generation, especially to unemployed women," the minister said.

He said this is a unique initiative where three organisations -- CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (CSIR-IIIM), CSIR-Central Leather Research Institute (CSIR-CLRI) and CEL -- have collaborated to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir.

"This effort, spearheaded by CSIR-IIIM, aims to empower women in J&K and is expected to significantly benefit startups registered under the Atal Innovation Centre at CSIR-IIIM," the minister said, highlighting the importance of skill development in creating sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Earlier, Director, CSIR-IIIM, Jammu Zabeer Ahmed detailed the training programme, which is focused on various aspects of leather goods manufacturing, including design, production, and marketing, with the goal of equipping women with the necessary skills to establish their own startup and businesses enterprise.

## CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

### Historic First:

enhancing connectivity to Ladakh and improving military logistics in the region.

Abdul Rashid Lone, who works at Zojila Pass, emphasized the dedication of his team in maintaining the route. "So far this winter, Zojila has only been closed for a few days," he stated. "Our team begins work at 5:30 a.m. to monitor road conditions, particularly in areas prone to avalanches. The team is led by the junior engineer (JE). We are working tirelessly with snow cutters and JCB machines. Operating in such freezing conditions is extremely challenging."

He also highlighted the ongoing significance of the pass, even after the Zojila Tunnel is operational. "This road will continue to be necessary and provide its own advantages," he added.

Fayaz Ahmad Mir, who has been involved in clearance operations for over 20 years, highlighted the ongoing challenges faced by workers. "Although snowfall has been low this year, the difficulties remain unchanged," he said. "The strong winds and the need to work in subzero temperatures are always challenging."

Captain Sanjay Cohan, the officer in charge at Batal, emphasized the strategic and technical significance of keeping the pass clear. "I am responsible for the clearance of Zojila, and it has remained open every day so far," he stated. "Despite the severe cold, we are managing operations efficiently."

He praised the resilience of the workers who maintain the pass, saying, "The workers here face numerous challenges, but their resilience is commendable. We follow proper drills and use a set of advanced machines to manage operations. The strong winds and avalanche risks make this work even more critical. While the Zojila Tunnel will bring benefits, it is essential to keep this pass operational."

Chief Engineer Chirag Ghuru emphasized the importance of this achievement, stating, "Zojila is the only pass connecting Kashmir to Ladakh. It is essential for both civil administration and military operations, so our goal is to keep it open for as long as possible."

He also shared historical context regarding previous closures. "In 2015-16, it was closed for two to four months. Last year, it was closed for 30 days. This year, however, it has remained open so far, and we are hopeful it will stay open for a longer period," he explained.

He also highlighted the advantages of the Sonamarg Tunnel in improving travel and maintenance operations. "It will make the Amarnath Yatra more comfortable by reducing the need for extensive snow clearance," he explained. "Although snowfall has been low this year, the use of modern equipment and efficient operations has enabled us to keep the Zojila Pass open."

The ongoing accessibility of Zojila Pass, coupled with the development of the Z-Morh Tunnel, signifies a major advancement in regional connectivity and infrastructure. Although challenges remain, the commitment of teams working under extreme conditions guarantees that this vital link stays operational.

The successful maintenance of the pass during the peak winter months demonstrates the effectiveness of technological advancements, careful planning, and the dedication of those involved. Moving forward, continued efforts will be necessary to maintain this progress and improve winter connectivity in the region.

### BJP Sweeps AAP

43.57 per cent votes and the Congress's poll percentage was 6.34.

In the 2020 Delhi Assembly polls, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) got a 53.57-per cent vote share and bagged 62 seats. Despite a 38.51-per cent vote share, the BJP could win just eight of the 70 seats.

In the 1993 Assembly polls, the BJP won 49 seats in Delhi, while the Congress got 14 and the Janata Dal four. Three independent candidates had also secured victories in that election.

The BJP will form its "double-engine" government in the capital as there is a party-led government at the Centre.

BJP's Parvesh Verma and Tarvinder Singh Marwah emerged as the biggest giant-slayers, defeating AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal and former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia from the New Delhi and Jangpura constituencies respectively.

In a fierce contest in the New Delhi seat, Verma secured 30,088 votes, while Kejriwal trailed behind with 25,999 votes. Congress's Sandeep Dikshit finished a distant third with 4,568 votes.

In another major upset, Marwah defeated Sisodia from Jangpura by a narrow margin of 675 votes. Marwah polled 38,859 votes, while Sisodia secured 38,184 votes. Congress candidate Farhad Suri garnered 7,350 votes.

Amid the BJP's sweeping victory, Chief Minister Atishi and three ministers in the outgoing AAP government -- Gopal Rai, Mukesh Ahlawat and Imran Hussain -- managed to secure wins.

Atishi emerged victorious in Kalkaji, defeating BJP's Ramesh Bidhuri by a margin of 3,521 votes. Rai retained the Babarpur seat with a margin of 18,994 votes against BJP's Anil Kumar Vashisht.

Hussain, the food and civil supplies minister, won from Ballimaran with the highest margin among the AAP's prominent faces, defeating BJP's Kamal Bagri by 29,823 votes. Hussain's victory provided one of the few bright spots for the AAP in the Old Delhi region.

Outgoing health minister Saurabh Bharadwaj was defeated by BJP's Shikha Roy by a margin of 3,188 votes from Greater Kailash.

BJP's Mohan Singh Bisht won the Mustafabad seat by 17,578 votes, while his colleague Kapil Mishra secured victory in Karawal Nagar with a margin of 23,355 votes. AAP's Sanjeev Jha won the Burari seat by a margin of 20,601 votes.

BJP leader Raj Kumar Chauhan, who shifted to the saffron party from the Congress, bagged the Mangol Puri seat by a victory margin of 6,255 votes.

AAP's Virender Singh Kadian won the Delhi Cantonment seat by 2,029 votes, while his party colleague Kuldeep Kumar defeated his

closest rival by a margin of 6,293 votes in Kondli.

BJP's Ravinder Singh Negi won the Patparganj seat by a margin of 28,072 votes, defeating poll debutant Avadh Ojha, who was fielded by the AAP after replacing Sisodia, who had represented the seat in the Assembly for three consecutive terms.

AAP's Sahi Ram won the Tughlakabad seat by 14,711 votes. Ahlawat won from Sultanpur Majra by 17,126 votes, while AAP's Jarnail Singh secured victory from Tilak Nagar by a margin of 11,656 votes.

BJP's Rekha Gupta won the Shalimar Bagh seat, defeating her AAP rival by 29,595 votes, while the saffron party's Manjinder Singh Sirsa emerged victorious from Rajouri Garden by 18,190 votes.

While the AAP dominated Delhi's political landscape for the last 10 years, the BJP was out of power in the city since 1998.

The Congress, which ruled the capital from 1998 to 2013 and was hoping for a resurgence, finished third.

### Omar Taunts

aapas mein!!! (Keep on fighting each other)," Abdullah posted on X with a meme.

He was referring to the trends emerging from the counting of votes for the Delhi assembly elections in which the BJP is leading against AAP while Congress was all set to draw a blank for the third consecutive polls.

The AAP and the Congress, who were both part of INDIA bloc for Lok Sabha polls last year, decided to go alone in the assembly polls in Delhi.

### Light Rain,

and snowfall at isolated locations on Sunday. The weather may turn slightly active on February 10 and 11, with light rain and snowfall expected at scattered places in Kashmir.

From February 12 to 14, the weather is expected to remain predominantly dry. However, another round of generally cloudy weather with chances of light rain and snow at isolated places is forecast for February 15 and 16.

Meanwhile, almost all the weather stations across Kashmir recorded sub zero temperatures during the intervening night of Friday and Saturday.

The MeT said Srinagar recorded a low of -2.9 degree celsius, while Qazigund and Kupwara in north Kashmir shivered at -2.5 degree Celsius and -3.7 degree celsius, respectively. The famous tourist destination Pahalgam in Anantnag, recorded a low of -5.0 degree celsius, while the ski resort of Gulmarg in Baramulla district settled at -5.2 degree celsius.

### OMSA Drafts

to balance merit-based selection with affirmative action.

"This Bill is designed to protect the rights of hardworking students while ensuring that reservation policies remain fair and inclusive. It promotes social justice while maintaining the credibility of competitive exams," OMSA

representatives stated.

The association stressed that the proposed changes would help create a system where deserving students get equal opportunities without weakening the principle of meritocracy. OMSA believes that their amendments will improve the reservation policy by making it more transparent, balanced, and beneficial for society as a whole.

OMSA has urged Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) to carefully review the Bill and take steps to introduce it in the Assembly. "It is now up to our lawmakers to address this critical issue and work towards a policy that supports both fairness and excellence," they said.

The association also emphasized its commitment to peaceful discussions and cooperation with all stakeholders. OMSA expressed its readiness to engage with policymakers, civil society groups, and education experts to ensure that the Bill gets the attention it deserves.

With the February 7 deadline passing without any response from the Government, OMSA has taken this proactive step to push for necessary reforms. The association hopes that its efforts will lead to a well-structured and just reservation policy that benefits all sections of society.

### Bond With Ladakh

Article 370 and the bifurcation of the erstwhile state under the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act in August, 2019.

"Maps may change, but changing maps will not affect our relationship with you. Our bond with Ladakh is centuries old, and it will remain strong," the chief minister said.

Abdullah chaired a high-level meeting here with a delegation from the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Kargil and senior officers of Jammu and Kashmir to discuss and resolve various concerns of students, patients and residents of Ladakh.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, Minister for Jal Shakti Javed Ahmed Rana, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary Education Shatmanu, Additional Chief Secretary to Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, and administrative secretaries from the departments of Social Welfare, Health and Medical Education, and Administrative Reforms, Inspections (ARI) and Trainings.

Representing LAHDC Kargil, the delegation was led by Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor Mohd Jaffer Akhoun, alongside Feroz Ahmad Khan and other councillors.

The delegation also included Member of Parliament Ladakh Haji Mohd Haneefa Jan and senior National Conference leader and former Minister Qamar Ali Akhoun, an official spokesperson said.

Addressing the delegation, Abdullah urged them to take up the matter with the Ladakh administration to ensure the posting of senior officers in Jammu and Srinagar, enabling them to address the challenges faced by Ladakh UT residents in J&K more effectively.

He assured that space would be provided at

SKIMS and other super-specialty hospitals in Kashmir for the establishment of a help desk, which will be managed by Ladakh administration staff to facilitate immediate assistance for patients from Kargil and Leh.

The CM also urged the delegation to create awareness among Ladakh students about the quota available in J&K, noting that many seats remain unutilized.

The deputy chief minister and minister for Jal Shakti assured the delegation that all their concerns related to roads, drinking water and other essential services would be addressed on priority.

Earlier, the Kargil delegation highlighted several pressing issues, including the appointment of nodal officers for patients referred to SKIMS Soura and other super-specialty hospitals in Srinagar.

They also raised concerns about the selection and training of paramedical students in J&K's paramedical training institutes, the extension of existing student hostels in Srinagar and Jammu, and the need for more admissions of Ladakh students in various colleges and universities of J&K, the officials said.

Additionally, they sought tourism promotion for Kargil and other areas of Ladakh UT through events organized in Srinagar.

Expressing their gratitude, the delegation thanked the Chief Minister for his patient hearing and proactive approach in addressing their concerns.

They appreciated the commitment of the J&K government towards ensuring better facilities and opportunities for the people of Ladakh, the officials said.

### Women's Tribal

Law Department. Subsequently, Rani approached the High Court for redress.

During the proceedings, Senior Additional Advocate General Monika Kohli, representing the government authority, acknowledged the Ministry of Home Affairs' clarification and expressed no opposition to granting relief in this case.

Kohli proposed that the petitioner could apply afresh for the ST certificate.

However, Rani's counsel highlighted the urgency of the matter, noting that she intended to apply for the civil services examination, with the application deadline on February 11.

Considering this time constraint, the court directed the concerned authority to review its earlier decision without requiring Rani to submit a new application.

The authority was instructed to communicate its decision by February 11, enabling Rani to apply for the examination within the stipulated time frame.

Justice Nargal said that the decision should align with the clarification issued by the Social Welfare Department, based on the Ministry of Home Affairs' opinion.

This ruling provides clarity on the rights of individuals from SC or ST communities who marry outside their communities, affirming that such marriages do not affect their original community status. (KNO)

## 2nd ODI: Rohit, Kohli In Focus As India Eye Series Win Over England

Press Trust of India

**CUTTACK:** The barren run of skipper Rohit Sharma and the selection conundrum that a fit-again Virat Kohli's return poses are the towering obstacles in India's quest for a series win against England in the second ODI here on Sunday.

India had taken a 1-0 lead after their four-wicket win at Nagpur and there was good news for the fans as batting coach Sitanshu Kotak confirmed that Virat Kohli is "completely fit and good to go" for Sunday's game.

India's batting megastar was in fact first to enter the nets during the optional session on Saturday evening and batted close to an hour with no apparent signs of discomfort. Kohli was ruled out of the first game due to sore right knee.

The vice-captain Shubman Gill had indicated after the opening game that Kohli could be back for the second match, which will be played at a venue



where the latter made a match-winning 85 against the West Indies in 2019. The Indian team will certainly welcome that sign, but it also raises a challenge in terms of selection. Combination questions apart, Kohli too is in need of runs, and

he will need a good outing here if he indeed makes a return.

Kohli's form has been under scrutiny in recent months, especially after his struggles in Australia, where he repeatedly nicked deliveries to the slip cordon or wicketkeeper.

His last competitive outing — for Delhi in the Ranji Trophy — too was a low-yielding one, managing just six before getting bowled by Railways pacer Himanshu Sangwan. But One-day cricket is Kohli's staple format, and the 36-year-

old needs just 94 runs to become the third batter to reach 14,000 runs in the format after Sachin Tendulkar (18,426) and Kumar Sangakkara (14,234).

Having played 283 ODI innings, Kohli can also become the fastest to this milestone ahead of Tendulkar (350 innings) and Sangakkara (378).

### Rohit's Lean Run

Rohit's struggles continued as he perished for just two in the first ODI, failing to shake off the disastrous run in the Test series against Australia.

His dismissal — a mis-timed lofted shot off Liam Livingstone that ballooned to midwicket — reflected his desperation for runs.

The Mumbai man has not scored a fifty in any format since August last year when he made 64 against Sri Lanka in Colombo in the third match.

If Rohit fails to get going in these two ODIs against England, it could raise deeper concerns about his form and future.

Match starts 1:30 pm IST.

## Short TAKES

### Shami Is Completely Fit: Kotak

With the Champions Trophy set to begin on February 19 in Dubai and Pakistan, batting coach Sitanshu Kotak expressed confidence about the team's preparation for the mega event.

"The entire team looks solid. Whether there is any experiment, new players will come to the XI or some senior players will be left out. It's the head coach and captain who will discuss and they will decide. So, I don't think I can make any comment on that."

On Mohammed Shami's fitness, Kotak reassured that the pacer was "completely fit". Shami returned to the International cricket in the preceding T20I series after a 14-month injury layoff.

Asked whether Arshdeep Singh might get a chance, he repeated, "That decision lies with the head coach and captain."

Regarding Jasprit Bumrah's injury status, he admitted he was unaware of the scan results.

"That's something the physio would know," he signed off.

### Injured New Zealand Pacer Ferguson May Miss Champions Trophy

Barely 11 days before their Champions Trophy opener against Pakistan, New Zealand's leading pace bowler Lockie Ferguson has been rendered doubtful for the ODI tournament after suffering a hamstring injury during an ILT20 match in the UAE.

New Zealand play their opening Group A match in the marquee event against Pakistan at the National Stadium, in Karachi, on February 19.

Coach Gary Stead confirmed the key bowler has undergone scans to know the extent of the injury and the preceding tri-series that also involves South Africa.

"Lockie had a scan yesterday (Thursday) in the UAE," Stead was quoted as saying by the ICC ahead of the start of the tri-series match against Pakistan in Lahore on Saturday.

"We've got the images here and (we are) waiting for our radiologist to give us a report on the extent of it," said Stead.

### 2nd Test: Mathews Rescues Sri Lanka But Australia Sniff Victory

Angelo Mathews's gutsy 76 helped Sri Lanka to avoid an innings defeat in the second Test in Galle on Saturday but Australia remained on course for a 2-0 series sweep.

Having conceded a first-innings lead of 157 on a track dominated by spinners from both sides, Sri Lanka risked a second successive innings defeat in the series when they slumped to 81-4.

Mathews produced a battling half-century to revive Sri Lanka, who finished day three on 211-8 — effectively 54 ahead with two second-innings wickets in hand.

Kusal Mendis was batting on 48 after the Australian spin duo of Matthew Kuhnemann (4-52) and Nathan Lyon (3-80) ran through the Sri Lankan batting order.

Earlier, resuming on 330-3, Australia lost their remaining seven wickets in the morning session to be all out for 414 in their reply to Sri Lanka's first innings of 257.

### PSG Extends Contracts For Enrique, Hakimi, Vitinha & Nunes



Paris Saint-Germain extended the contracts of coach Luis Enrique and three key players on Friday.

Enrique extended his deal until 2027, while goal-scoring right back Achraf Hakimi, creative midfielder Vitinha and speedy left back Nuno Mendes all signed on to 2029.

PSG also renewed 18-year-old defender Yoram Zague's contract until 2028.

PSG remains on course to defend its Ligue 1 title and is still involved in the Champions League and the French Cup.

## Pacer Nidheesh Takes 5 As J&K End Day 1 At 228/8

Press Trust of India

**PUNE:** Medium pacer MD Nidheesh scalped five wickets to help Kerala limit Jammu and Kashmir to 228 for eight on the opening day of their Ranji Trophy quarterfinal match here on Saturday.

Nidheesh (5/56) spelt trouble for Jammu and Kashmir batters from the start, picking up wickets at regular intervals after Kerala opted to field.

He accounted for the wickets of openers Shubham Khajuria, Yawer

“**He was ably supported by Basil Thampi (1/31), left-arm spinner Aditya Sarwate (1/32) and Nedumankuzhy Basil (1/59), who accounted for one wicket each.**

Wadhawan top-scored with 48 off 80 balls, while Muzaffar made 44. Sahil Lotra (35) and Hassan

a good start as Nidheesh sent Khajuria packing in seventh over before accounting for Sharma and Hassan to reduce their opponents to 48 for three in 21.2 overs.

It became worse when skipper Paras Dogra (14) was cleaned up Thampi in the 30th over.

Thereafter, Wadhawan and Lotra tried to steady the ship with a 55-run partnership for the fifth wicket before the former perished.

There was another crucial partnership, this time

## Real Task Is Not Just Winning CT But Also Beat India: Pakistan PM



Press Trust of India

**LAHORE:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif says the real task for Pakistan is not just winning the ICC Champions Trophy but also defeat arch-rivals India in Dubai on February 23.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the renovated and upgraded Gaddafi stadium on Friday night, Sharif said the players must give their best against India.

"We have a very good side and they have done well in recent times but the real task now is to not only win the Champions Trophy but also defeat our arch-rival, India in the upcoming match in Dubai. The entire nation stands behind them," Sharif said.

Pakistan and India have a history of cricket rivalry and generally the Indian team has held the advantage in ICC events since the 90s.

Pakistan's last win in an ICC event against India came in 2021 when they won in Dubai in the T20 World Cup.

But with India refusing to send their team to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy and given the recent tense relations between the two cricket boards, the February 23-match has that extra edge to it. Pakistan will enter the tournament as

defending champions. It was last held in 2017 in England with Pakistan winning the final.

"It is a big occasion for Pakistan that we are hosting a big ICC event after nearly 29 years," Sharif said.

Sharif expressed excitement about the opportunity to host the Champions Trophy in Pakistan after 29 years.

He was also thrilled with the new look stadium and the improved facilities and said the stadium now reflects the spirit of Pakistan's cricketing passion.

"I have full confidence that our team will continue to make the nation proud in the upcoming Champions Trophy."

The inauguration ceremony was attended by several prominent figures, including politicians, government officials, PCB representatives, members of the national men's cricket team, PSL franchise owners, and former PCB chairmen Zaka Ashraf and Najam Sethi.

The ceremony celebrated the completion of Gaddafi Stadium's renovation in just 117 days.

At the event, renowned singers Ali Zafar, Arif Lohar, and Aima Baig performed for the audience, followed by a stunning fireworks display, a vibrant drum show, and a unique light show.

## Maguire Heads Late Winner As Man United Beats Leicester In FA Cup

Agencies

**MANCHESTER:** Harry Maguire scored a controversial injury time winner as Manchester United came from behind to beat Leicester 2-1 and move into the last 16 of the FA Cup on Friday.

United went behind to a Bobby De Cordova-Reid goal four minutes before halftime. Joshua Zirkzee equalized in the 68th minute and Maguire grabbed the late winner.

There was a heated debate over whether the England center half was in an offside position but there is no VAR in the FA Cup and the goal stood.

"This (loss) wasn't necessary," an unhappy Leicester coach Ruud van Nistelrooy told broadcaster ITV.

"This was half a meter (offside). Then extra time, stay in the game, you never know what happens. We



deserved to go into extra time and maybe penalties. Decisions like these in our level are hard to swallow."

The result marked the first time in United's history that the club has won three times at home against the same team in the same season. United beat Leicester 5-2 in the League Cup and 3-0 in the Premier League at Old Trafford.

The result was a boost for new coach Ruben Amorim and a bitter let-

down for Van Nistelrooy, who was the interim manager at United before being moved on and taking charge at Leicester.

Leicester, a one-time FA Cup champion, was 1-0 up at the break. Manuel Ugarte was dispossessed near the touchline and Bilal El Khannouss' low cross was hit goal-bound by Wilfred Ndidi but deflected in off De Cordova-Reid.

The introduction of substitutes Alejandro Garnacho and Zirkzee lifted

United in the second half and Zirkzee got the equalizer with the simplest of finishes after good work from the Argentine player down the left flank.

Then, just as the game looked like going into extra time, Bruno Fernandes threw a long ball into the box for Maguire to head the winner.

"(It was a) great finish to the game," Maguire said. "The second half we played a lot better. The first half was nowhere near good enough, we played at a slow tempo and we didn't really get going."

"He (Garnacho) made a big impact. He always does that when he comes off the bench, so credit to him, he's ready, he's focused."

Manchester United are back in the Premier League next week on Sunday as they take on Tottenham Hotspurs at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, with kick-off at 10:00 PM IST. (AP)

## Man City Given Scare By Third-Tier Leyton Orient But Advances In FA Cup

Agencies

**M**anchester City survived a scare against third-division Leyton Orient on Saturday to advance to the fifth round of the FA Cup.

Orient threatened to pull off a famous upset when it led 1-0 at halftime against Pep Guardiola's four-time defending Premier League champion.

But City fought back after the break with goals from substitutes Abdulkodir Khusanov and Kevin De Bruyne.

"That's why this competition is unbelievable," Guardiola said.

Orient went ahead in spectacular fashion when Jamie Donley's shot from just past the halfway line hit the bar and rebounded off the back of City goalkeeper Stefan Ortega into the back of the net in the 16th minute at Bris-

bane Road.

It was officially credited as an own goal, but Donley took the congratulations as he celebrated wildly in

front of the home fans. He was also rewarded with the player-of-the-match award.

But the goal wasn't enough to hold off City's fightback.

Rico Lewis' effort deflected off Khusanov in the 56th

to level the match and De Bruyne flicked a shot past Josh Keeley in the 79th to seal victory.

It wasn't all good news



for Guardiola, however, with midfielder Nico Gonzalez injured and substituted after 22 minutes of his debut. The midfielder, who joined from Porto for a reported \$61.8 million on transfer deadline day, ap-

peared to hurt his ribs after falling awkwardly in a challenge with Leyton Orient's Sonny Perkins.

After receiving treatment, Gonzalez held his side as he left the field early.

His injury will be a concern for City manager Pep Guardiola ahead of Tuesday's Champions League playoff against Real Madrid.

The signing of Gonzalez was intended to help fill the void left by Ballon d'Or winner Rodri, who has been out since September because of an ACL injury. In Rodri's absence, City has seen its Premier League title defense unravel and needs to beat holder Madrid in a two-legged playoff to advance to the round of 16 in the Champions League.

Gonzalez was one of five signings in the January window as Guardiola attempted to salvage the season.

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