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This cutting-edge technology effectively reduces dark spots, melasma, and sun damage, revealing a radiant complexion with minimal downtime



BOOK APPOINTMENT

## Colleges In Kashmir To Reopen Today

Agencies

Srinagar: Colleges in the Kashmir Valley are set to resume academic activities on Saturday after a 50-day winter vacation.

The Jammu and Kashmir Higher Education Department announced the winter break on December 20, 2024, for degree colleges in the winter zones of the Kashmir division. According to the official notification, degree colleges in the Kashmir division and those in the winter zone of the Jammu division observed winter vacations from December 27, 2024, to February 14, 2025.

Additionally, the government had declared a winter break for colleges in the summer zones of the Jammu region from January 1 to January 10, 2025.

Meanwhile, more than 2 lakh students of the 10th and 12th standards are set to appear in the annual regular board exams starting tomorrow.

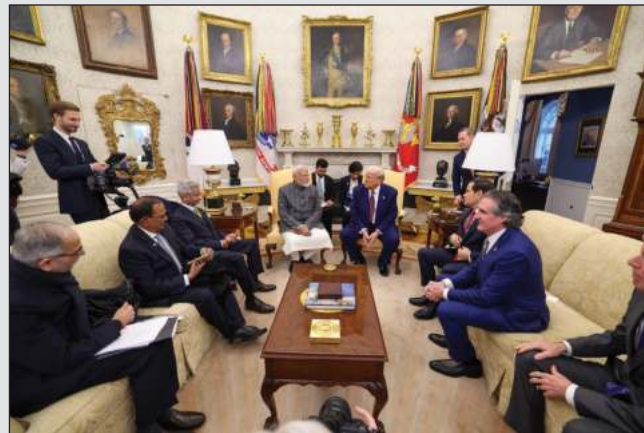
Schools in the Kashmir division and the winter zones of the Jammu division will reopen on March 1. According to the School Education Department, winter vacations were scheduled in phases: for students up to the 5th standard. [| More on P10](#)

## PM Modi Concludes US Visit India, U.S Unveil Strategic & Trade Agreements

KO Web Desk

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Donald Trump for the first time since his return to the White House on January 20 for his second term as US President. The two leaders praised their strong bond and hoped for stronger ties and trade deals as the meeting took place amid concerns over Donald Trump's reciprocal tariff plans, which can impact India hard.

PM Modi began a two-day US visit on Thursday with a meeting with US National Security Advisor Michael Waltz, and also held talks with the world's richest man Elon Musk at the Blair House in Washington, which is hosting him during his two-day US visit. PM Modi also met Republican leader



PM Modi Holds Talks With US President Trump At White House

Vivek Ramaswamy.

Right before meeting PM Modi, US President Donald Trump announced reciprocal tariffs, stating that the United States will levy the same

charges as countries impose on it, singling out India as one of the highest charging countries. PM Modi's visit to the US comes after a two-day trip to France, during [| More on P10](#)

### Trump Shows Praises On PM Modi 'We Missed You A Lot'

US President Donald Trump displayed warmth and camaraderie towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to the United States. Trump also praised PM Modi's negotiation skills, calling him a tougher and better negotiator than himself. Upon PM Modi's arrival at the White House on Thursday, President Trump greeted him with a warm hug, setting the [| More on P10](#)

### US Plans To Sell F-35 Stealth Fighter Jets To India

India and the US unveiled an ambitious plan to ink a new 10-year defence partnership and pursue co-production of key weapons and platforms with President Donald Trump announcing that Washington would increase sales of military hardware to New Delhi by millions of dollars including possible supply of F-35 stealth combat jets.

US and Indian militaries in the Indo-Pacific, including for enhancing logistics and intelligence sharing.

India's proposed procurement of six additional P-8I long-range maritime surveillance and anti-submarine warfare from the US was officially confirmed. The Indian Navy already operates 11 P-8I aircraft.

The two leaders also announced plans to pursue this year new procurements and co-production arrangements for 'Javelin' anti-tank guided missiles and 'Stryker' infantry combat vehicles in India to rapidly meet its defence requirements. The ambitious [| More on P10](#)

After their wide-ranging talks at the White House on Thursday (Friday India time), Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Trump vowed to break "new ground" to support and sustain overseas deployments of the

### Pulwama Anniversary Homage Paid To Slain Personnel

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday paid homage to the CRPF personnel who lost their lives in a suicide attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama on this day in 2019 and praised their unwavering dedication to the nation.

"Homage to the courageous heroes we lost in Pulwama in 2019. The coming generations will never forget their sacrifice and their unwavering dedication to the nation," he said in a post on X.

Meanwhile, Union Home Minister Amit Shah also paid tribute to the 40 CRPF personnel killed in the attack.

The Narendra Modi government is determined to completely destroy terrorists by carrying out a campaign with a "zero-tolerance" policy against them, Shah also said.

"On behalf of a grateful nation, I pay my heartfelt tribute to the soldiers who were martyred in the cowardly terror attack in Pulwama on this day in 2019," he said in Hindi in a post on X.

Terrorism is the biggest enemy of the entire humanity and the whole [| More on P10](#)

## J&K Budget To Be Tabled In Assembly On Mar 7

» LG to Address House on March 3

» 2 Days Earmarked for Private Member Resolutions

Observer News Service

Srinagar: After a gap of seven years, Jammu & Kashmir's annual budget will be presented in the Legislative Assembly on March 7. According to the tentative calendar issued by the Legislative Assembly secretariat, the budget for the Union Territory for 2025-26 will be presented in the Assembly on March 7 during the session commencing from March 3 and culminating on April 11.

The annual financial statement of expenditure for 2025-26 and the supplementary statement of expenditure for 2024-25 will be presented in the House on March 7. This will be the first time in seven years that the budget of J&K will be presented in the Assembly.



Following the imposition of central rule, the budget for successive financial years was presented in the Parliament.

The budget session will have a total of 22 sittings. According to the calendar, the session will commence on March 3 with the LG's address to the House. There will be discussions on the

LG's address on March 4, 5, and 6, concluding with the Chief Minister's reply on March 6.

As per the calendar, there will be general discussions on the budget on March 8, 10, and 11. The Finance Minister, who is also the Chief Minister, will conclude the general discussion on the budget on [| More on P10](#)

### CM Continues Pre-budget Consultations

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah as part of his ongoing pre-budget consultations held deliberations with public representatives from Poonch and

Rajouri districts at the Civil Secretariat on Friday. The discussions were attended by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary and Minister Javed Ahmad

Rana, who represented their respective assembly constituencies - Nowshera in Rajouri and Mendhar in Poonch. The chairpersons of District [| More on P10](#)

### Gang Rape: HC Junks Plea To Quash FIR On Compromise

M Ahmad

Srinagar: Underlining that rape is not an offence against the person alone but it is against society, the High Court of J&K and Ladakh has dismissed petition to quash FIR in connection with gang rape of a woman despite the victim marrying one of the accused persons.

Dismissing a petition, a bench of Vinod Chatterji Koul held that the court's inherent power cannot be used to quash FIR based on compromise if it is in respect of heinous offences which are not private in nature and have a serious impact on the society.

According to the government, on 19th July 2021, police station Uri upon receipt of a written complaint lodged an FIR no.70/2021 and set into motion investigation. During the course of investigation, statements of witnesses under Section 161 Cr.P.C. was recorded, by which it came to know that a woman was kidnapped by the petitioner—Syed Imtiaz Hussain with the help of his brothers. The Prosecutrix was [| More on P10](#)

## Art 370 was Temporary, Meant to Fade Away: Former CJ

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Former Chief Justice of India, DY Chandrachud, has defended his decision on Article 370, stating that it was always meant to be a "transitional provision" in the Indian Constitution. He argued that the provision was intended to eventually dissolve and merge with the rest of the Constitution over time.

Speaking in an interview with BBC journalist Stephen

Sackur, Chandrachud responded to criticism from legal scholars who were disappointed with his ruling on Article 370. The provision, which granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir, was revoked by the Indian government in August 2019. A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court, led by Chandrachud, upheld this decision on December 13, affirming the President's power to abrogate Article 370.

During the [| More on P10](#)

## CM Pushes For Stronger Emergency Services, Rural Healthcare



Addresses First Ever National Medical Conference, MediCon-2025

Observer News Service

Jammu: Highlighting his government's commitment to improving healthcare accessibility across Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday emphasized the need to improve handling of emergency

cases and capacity at various Government Medical Colleges to ease the burden on major hospitals.

Abdullah also stressed the importance of ensuring that doctors serve beyond urban centers.

"We need to augment and improve the emergency handling capability and capacity in new GMCs so that the pressure on GMC Jammu and GMC Srinagar is [| More on P10](#)

### Sajad Lone Submits Resolution For Art 370, 35A Restoration

Setting the stage for a stormy session of the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Peoples Conference president Sajad Gani Lone has submitted a resolution in the Legislative Assembly secretariat condemning the abrogation [| More on P10](#)



# MIRCHI FOOD FESTIVALS

Sher-i-Kashmir Park, Polo View, Residency Road

14th, 15th, 16th February 2025

AIYYAY, KHAIYYAY, KHILAYYAY...  
AUR ZINDAGI KA ZAIQA BADHAIYYAY!

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## 'Depression Could Hasten Pace Of Developing Physical Conditions By Over 30%

Press Trust Of India

Adults with depression could develop chronic conditions, such as osteoarthritis and hypertension, 30 per cent faster as compared to those with no history of the mental disorder, according to a study that suggested physical effects of the mental condition. Researchers, led by those from the University of Edinburgh, UK, said that treating depression should, therefore, involve methods that help manage both mental and physical health. The mental disorder, marked by a persistent low mood, is known to heighten one's chance of developing heart disease or diabetes, with previous studies having looked at a patient's risk of developing a small number of illnesses, according to the authors. However, the study, published in the journal PLOS Medicine, examined people with a history of depression for their risk of developing 69 physical conditions. Over 1.7 lakh people from the UK Biobank were followed for an average of about seven years. The team noted that those with depression had an average of three physical conditions, hypertension being the most common, compared with an average of two in those without. Over the study period, the participants with a history of depression developed



an average of 0.2 additional physical conditions a year, while those without accrued 0.16. "The most common new conditions were osteoarthritis (15.7 per cent of those with depression at baseline vs 12.5 per cent without), hypertension (12.9 per cent vs 12 per cent) and gastroesophageal reflux disease (13.8 per cent vs 9.6 per cent)," the authors wrote. The results revealed that a history of depression could be a marker indicating a risk of developing physical conditions in the long-term. The team added that while most healthcare systems are designed to treat conditions individually rather than individuals with multiple condi-

tions, approaches combining methods to manage mental and physical health could improve outcomes. Risk factors, such as smoking, high body mass index and low physical activity, could also contribute to how quickly an individual with depression develops physical conditions in middle- and old-age, which present opportunities for improving future health, the authors said. About 18 per cent of the study group had a history of depression at the start of the study. Widespread pain in the body, sleeplessness, stressful life events, loneliness and obesity were more common among these participants, compared to those without depression.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

The spelling of my name in the class X Board certificate of my son Afaan Arif is incorrectly entered as Sajad Hussian Arif in place of Sajad Hussain Arif. Also the spelling of his mother's name is incorrectly entered as Rehana Tabassum in place of Rehana Tabasum. I am therefore applying for correction of the same. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may contact concerned authorities within a period of 7 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

Sajad Hussain Arif  
 F/o Afaan Arif  
 R/o Nai Basti Anantnag

### PUBLIC NOTICE

I have changed my name from Bubby D/o Mohammad Rajab Wani R/o Gupt Ganga Nishat to Mudasar Bano W/o Nisar Ahmad Wani R/o Ishber Nishat Srinagar. I have applied for the necessary update in her Aadhaar card records. If any person has any objection to this name change, they may submit their objection in the concerned office within seven (7) days from the date of this notice. After this period, no objections shall be entertained. Mudasar Bano W/o Nisar Ahmad Wani R/o Ishber Nishat Srinagar. fko

### PUBLIC NOTICE

I Toiba Hameed, currently residing at zakura Srinagar, hereby declare that my name has been wrongly recorded on my Adhaar Card as Toiba Hamid. The correct name is Toiba Hameed. I am applying for the correction of the same in my official records. If anyone has any objections to this change, they may kindly inform in writing to the undersigned the concerned authority within 7 days of publication of this notice. Media Line Ads

### OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER BUDGAM

Subject:- Necessary Correction/change in address in data to the License No. JK-0420130021722 issued in favour of BILAL AHMAD MALLA Parentage ABDUL AZIZ MALLA. Whereas an application has been received by one BILAL AHMAD MALLA Parentage ABDUL AZIZ MALLA wherein he claimed that the Fathers Name has been wrongly recorded in the records of Driving Licenses as AB AZIZ MALLA Which needs to be changed as ABDUL AZIZ MALLA. Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any in this regard shall reach in written in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office Budgam within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper. After expiry of stipulated time no objection will be entertained. Assistant Regional Transport officer Budgam Kashmir mcb

### Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan

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

#### PUBLIC NOTICE..

The registrar birth EO MC pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Mehwish Altaf D/o Altaf Hussain Mir R/o Kripalpora Payeen Tehsil Singapora with verified date of birth 07/02/2017 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.

fko Naib Tehsildar Pattan SD

### PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Mohammad Lateef Bhat, father of Maira Lateef (formerly known as Haani Jan), resident of Karfali Mohalla, Habba Kadal, Srinagar, hereby declare that I have officially changed my daughter's name from Haani Jan D/o Mohd Lateef Bhat to Maira Lateef D/o Mohammad Lateef Bhat. I have applied for the necessary update in her Aadhaar card records. If any person has any objection to this name change, they may submit their objection in the concerned office within seven (7) days from the date of this notice. After this period, no objections shall be entertained. Mohammad Lateef Bhat Father of Maira Lateef R/o Karfali Mohalla, Habba Kadal, Srinagar fko

### Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PUBLIC WORKS(R&B) DIVISION AWANTIPORA

Email:rbdivisionawantipora@gmail.com

NO:T-1/EEA/ 9959-64

Dated: 13/02/2025

#### Extension Corrigendum

#### Subject:-

S.No.	Name of Work
1	Construction of road /drain from H/O Syed Ab rashid to H/O Gh Mohammad Bhat at Harpora Ward No 06 at MC Awantipora.

Reference: 1. This office E-NIT No. Fresh-138 /EEA/RNB/Of 2024-25/9682-92 Dated:07 /02/2025

It is notified for the information of all concerned that zero bidder has participated for above said work in subject for S.No. (1). Hence the above-mentioned work/Tender is hereby extended/modified and fixed as under:

1	Bid Submission End Date	17 -02-2025 up to 3.00 PM
2	Date & time of opening of Technical Bids (Online)	18 -02-2025 at 12.00 PM

All other terms & Conditions shall remain same as per above mentioned NITs

DIPK-11998/24 dated: 14-02-2025

Sd/- Executive Engineer R&B Division Awantipora

### GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR, OFFICE OF THE CUSTODIAN EVACUEE PROPERTY DEPARTMENT KASHMIR, SRINAGAR. Notice inviting of Quotations

Quotations affixed with revenue stamp worth Rs. 5/- are invited from the registered /authorized agencies dealing with Decoration ( Zool) for Installation of Modern and New LED type Decoration fixal ( Zool) and lighting during functions to be conducted at Sir Mohammad Iqbal Mini Convention Center Sanatnagr Srinagar situated at Srinagar for the year 2025 The interested agency ( Quotationer) should offer the rates to be charged from the concerned customers / parties within below mentioned limits.

S.No	Duration of function.	Rupees below
1.	Decoration of exterior building (Rooftop /side walls/ front side facing Garden along with garden for 01 day function.	Rs.16000/-
2.	Decoration of exterior building (Roof top/side walls/front side facing garden along with garden for 02 days function.	Rs.18000/-
3.	Decoration of exterior building (Roof top/side walls/front side facing garden along with garden and theme (upto 50*12 feet in area) for 1 day function.	Rs.18000/-
4.	Decoration of exterior building (Roof top/side walls/front side facing garden along with garden and themes (upto 50*12 feet in area) for 2 days function.	Rs.22000/-
5.	Decoration of exterior building (Roof top/side walls/front side facing garden along with garden or without garden for additional day.	Rs.6000/-

- The Quotations should be accompanied with a CDR worth Rs.70000/- ( Rupees seventy Thousand Only) Pledged to Custodian Evacuee Property Kashmir Srinagar and quotations without CDR and Revenue stamp will not be entertained at all.(Cheques will not be accepted)
- The quotationer shall have to provide Registration Certificate, pan Card, and GST/ TIN Registration and latest clearance certificate from GST 4B i.e, for the month of December 2024.
- The quotations should reach to the office of undersigned by or before 25th of Feb 2025, 4 PM and shall be opened on the same day or any other convenient day.
- The successful quotationer shall have to pay an amount of Rs.8000/- for each function towards the department.
- The successful quotationer shall have to pay an amount of Rs.150000/- (One lakh fifty thousand only) in advance to the department against proper receipt which shall be adjusted at the time of expiry of the contract for the year 2025.
- The successful agency holder shall take care of property and in case of any damage to the property. The contract shall be terminated without any notice.
- The successful agency holder shall submit an undertaking duly authenticated for abiding terms and conditions.

8. The successful bidder is bound to make electrification of waza shed and waza top

during marriage function

No:- CEPS/Acctts/ 1714-17  
 DIPK-12014/24 dated: 14-02-2025

Tariq Hussain Naik (JKAS)  
 Custodian Evacuee Property Kashmir Srinagar

### Government of Jammu & Kashmir OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B) DIVISION GANDEBAL

#### NOTICE INVITING TENDER

#### CIVIL WORKS

#### SINGLE COVER SYSTEM (upto Rs.2.50 Crores)

EE/R&B/Divn/Gbl/e-Tender NITNo. 104 of 2024-25 issued under endorsement No. 9870-75

Dated:13-02-2025

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, UT J&K, e-tenders (In single cover system) are invited on Percentage basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K Govt. CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works:-

S. No	Name of the Work	Adv. Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/ Doc. (In Rupees)	Earnest Money (In Rupees)	Time of Completion	Class Of Contractor
01	Re-construction/Repairs of C.C drain at Sheikh Mohalla Shuhama.	Rs.02.00 Lacs	Rs. 200/=	Rs. 4000/=	10-Days	DEE
02	Re-construction/Repairs of C.C drain near Abdal Lane on Pandach-Saidpora road near Warpoh.	Rs. 02.00 Lacs	Rs. 200/=	Rs. 4000/=	10-Days	DEE
03	Re-construction/Repairs of C.C drain at Warpoh near Playground.	Rs.02.00 Lacs	Rs. 200/=	Rs. 4000/=	10-Days	DEE
04	Re-construction/Repairs of R/Wall near Gate of Higher Secondary School Khalmulla.	Rs. 02.00 Lacs	Rs. 200/=	Rs. 4000/=	10-Days	DEE
05	Reconstruction/Repairs of R/Wall at Malshahibagh near Malshah Masjid.	Rs. 02.45Lacs	Rs. 200/=	Rs.4900/=	10-Days	DEE
06	Reconstruction/Repairs of R/Wall and drain Gulshan Colony, Makalbagh.	Rs.01.75Lacs	Rs.200/=	Rs.3500/=	10-Days	DEE
07	Reconstruction/Repairs of R/Wall at Baba Daryadin Road Rangil.	Rs.01.96Lacs	Rs. 200/=	Rs. 3920/=	10-Days	DEE
08	Reconstruction/Repairs of R/Wall at Shah Mohalla, Babadaryadin.	Rs.01.96Lacs	Rs. 200/=	Rs. 3920/=	10-Days	DEE
09	Reconstruction/Repairs of R/Wall on road at Malshahibagh.	Rs.02.00 Lacs	Rs. 200/=	Rs. 4000/=	10-Days	DEE
10	Reconstruction/Repairs of R/Wall at Gujierpatim Malshahibagh.	Rs.02.50 Lacs	Rs. 200/=	Rs. 5000/=	10-Days	DEE
11	Reconstruction/Repairs of C.C drain at Mir Mohalla Rangil.	Rs. 01.75Lacs	Rs. 200/=	Rs. 3500/=	10-Days	DEE
12	Reconstruction/Repairs of R/Wall at Dignibal Road Bakura.	Rs.01.96Lacs	Rs. 200/=	Rs. 3920/=	10-Days	DEE
13	Reconstruction/Repairs of R/Wall at Malshahibagh near high School near L/o Jalal ud din Bhat.	Rs.01.96Lacs	Rs. 200/=	Rs. 3920/=	10-Days	DEE
14	Reconstruction/Repairs of R/Wall at Malshahibagh H/o Bashir AhmmadBhat along road side.	Rs.01.96Lacs	Rs. 200/=	Rs. 3920/=	10-Days	DEE
15	Reconstruction/Repairs of C.C pavement at Khanee Mohalla Darend.	Rs.02.00 Lacs	Rs. 200/=	Rs. 4000/=	10-Days	DEE
16	Reconstruction/Repairs of CC drain at Urpash near H/O Javeed Ahmed.	Rs.02.00 Lacs	Rs. 200/=	Rs. 4000/=	10-Days	DEE
17	Reconstruction/ Repairs of R/wall at Kmlst on Rangil Fishries road Rangil	Rs.02.00 Lacs	Rs. 200/=	Rs. 4000/=	10-Days	DEE

Major Head:MH-3054 (M&R)

Position of AA: Accorded

Project Authority:R&B Department

The Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:-

1.	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	13-02-2025
2.	Period of downloading of bidding documents	13-02-2025
3.	Bid submission Start Date	13-02-2025 from 06:00 PM.
4.	Bid Submission End Date	18-02-2025 from 06:00 PM.
5.	Date & time of opening of Technical Bids (Online)	19-02-2025 at 11:00 AM in the office of PW(R&B) Division Ganderbal

1. Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document (as mentioned above) in shape of Treasury Receipt/e-Challan in favour of Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Ganderbal. Note:- The Date of Treasury Challan and CDR must be between the date of start of bid and Bid Submission End date. Any deviation shall render the bidder as Non-responsive.

The Bidders shall upload earnest money equal to 2% of the Advertised Cost in the shape of CDR/FDR at the time of tendering pledged in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Ganderbal.

2. The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bid of Responsive bidders shall be opened Online on same Web Site in the Office of Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Ganderbal (tender receiving authority).

3. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of Technical

4. The earnest money shall be forfeited if:- a) Any bidder/tenderer withdraws his bid/tender during the period of bid validity or makes any modifications in the terms and conditions of the bid.

b) Failure of Successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within the specified time limit.

c) Failure of Successful bidder to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.

9. The tender/bid is liable to rejection if it does not fulfill the requirements as laid down in NIT.

10. All other terms conditions are as per PWD Form 25 (Double agreement Form)

No:-9870-75  
 DIPK-11983/24 Date: 14-02-2025

Sd/- Executive Engineer R&B Division Ganderbal



NON-PAYMENT OF BILLS

## KPDCL Disconnects Power Supply Of 50 Families

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Scores of families in Mir Mohalla and Wagay Mohalla of Zainakote on the outskirts of Srinagar are reeling under darkness after Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL) disconnected their electricity connections over non-payment of bills.

The affected households, comprising mostly downtrodden families, have been without electricity for the past two months. The power disconnection has sparked outrage among the residents, who took to the streets on Friday, pleading for mercy. Men, women, and children staged protests, carrying placards urging authorities to restore their power supply.



One of the protesters said that the decision to cut off power for certain households while others continue to have electricity has led to resentment and a sense of discrimination. "Those who can afford hefty power bills enjoy electricity, while the poor suffer in darkness. This situation has created a deep divide among the people," he said.

The residents have appealed to the administration to intervene and find a solution that ensures equitable access to electricity for all, regardless of financial status. They argued that cutting off power to impoverished families during the harsh winter months is unjust and inhumane. [KNT]

## Fire Guts Five Tin-Sheds In City Outskirts

Agencies

SRINAGAR: A devastating fire broke out late Thursday evening in the Maloora Shalteng area on the outskirts of Srinagar, reducing five tin-shed structures used for residential purposes to ashes. The incident occurred around 10 pm, at a time when most of the male members of the affected families were away at Hazratbal shrine, offering prayers on the occasion of Shab-e-Barat.

ey kept for business transactions. One resident displayed a bundle of partially burnt Rs 500 notes, highlighting the financial losses suffered in the tragedy.

A victim lamented the loss of Rs 5.5 lakh, which he had set aside for trading in blankets and pillows. "The fire took everything away, including my earnings and the money I owed to my business partner," he said.

Fire and emergency services rushed to the spot and managed to douse the flames, but by then, the damage had already been done. Locals have urged authorities to extend financial aid to the victims, many of whom have lost their means of livelihood in the incident. [KNT]

Eyewitnesses described scenes of chaos as flames quickly engulfed the temporary structures, destroying not only household items but also significant amounts of cash. Locals reported that several victims had lost mon-

## Financial Assistance Provided To Association Of Deaf & Dumb

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Police in Srinagar have distributed a laptop to a specially-abled woman and granted financial assistance to the Association of Deaf & Dumb, along with specially-abled cricket players.

Eidgah, Srinagar, and distributed financial assistance to the Association of Deaf & Dumb and ten specially-abled cricket players.

The event was attended by DySP Hqrs Srinagar Syed Sleet Shah and DySP DAR Srinagar Mohammad Rafi. While interacting with the beneficiaries, SSP Srinagar assured them of continued support and cooperation from J&K Police. [KINS]

## Police Arrest Accused In Card Swapping Scam

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In a commendable breakthrough, Police in Srinagar on Friday have successfully apprehended an accused involved in an ATM card swapping fraud.

said that a case under FIR number 14/2025 U/S 318(4), 305 BNS was registered in Police Station Safakadal and investigation was taken up.

"During the course of investigation, a team headed by Incharge Police Post Bagyas was constituted. After strenuous efforts and with the help of technical input and analysis of CCTV footage from the ATM, it led to the identification of the suspect as Burhan Al Rah son of Gh Qadir Rah resident of Bonpora, Nowgam. The accused person has been subsequently arrested, and multiple ATM cards were recovered from his possession," police said.

Further investigation is going on to ascertain the involvement of the accused person in other similar fraudulent activities. More recoveries are expected, police said.

## DEMISE

With profound grief and sorrow we inform the sad demise of our beloved mother W/O late Gh. Nabi Bulla and mother in law of Dr Reyaz Ahmad Untoo R/O Bulla lane New Colony Sopore who left for heavenly abode on the morning of 14th Feb 2025 (Friday) after brief illness. May Almighty Allah grant jannatul Firdous to the departed soul. It is also informed that there will be only three days of mourning.

**Bereaved Bulla Family**  
Dr. Reyaz Ahmad Untoo, Showkat Saleem Bulla  
Shad Saleem Bulla,  
Ph. No # 7006179907, 7006408974



## Mirchi 98.7 Hosts First-Ever Grand Food Festival

Syed Mohammad Burhan

SRINAGAR: In an initiative to bring food lovers together, Mirchi 98.7 has initiated a Mirchi Food Festival at Sher-i-Kashmir Park, offering a diverse range of cuisines from small street food vendors to renowned Kashmiri food brands.

The festival, which commenced on Friday, features an array of dishes including Indian, Chinese, Kashmiri, and Continental delicacies, creating a culinary paradise for visitors.

Speaking to *Kashmir Observer*, RJ Madeeha described the festival as the first of its kind in Kashmir, bringing together local, national, and international flavors under one roof.

"The festival has everything a food lover desires. From tradi-

tional Kashmiri wazwan to global cuisines, there is something for everyone. There's even a separate zone for children, making it a perfect family outing," she said.

Renowned Chef Yaseen Reshi, who is also part of the festival, emphasized the importance of such events in fostering a food culture in the Valley.

"This food festival is a golden opportunity for people to come together, enjoy good food, and make memories with their families. I encourage everyone to visit and relish the experience," he urged.

Adding to the festival's vibrance, popular food vlogger Muskan Khan lauded the initiative, highlighting the platform it provides to small-scale food vendors and established restaurants alike.

"It is incredible to see both small street food owners and big restaurant chains participating. This festival is truly unique, and events like these should be held more frequently in Kashmir. It not only attracts food enthusiasts but also helps boost local businesses," she stated, appreciating Mirchi 98.7 FM for the initiative.

The Mirchi Food Festival, which runs until February 16, 2024, is expected to attract a significant footfall, including tourists and food bloggers eager to explore Kashmir's rich culinary heritage alongside international flavors.

Organizers say that the visitors can explore a wide range of Kashmiri delicacies, authentic street food, and gourmet dishes while soaking in the lively atmosphere of Sher-i-Kashmir Park.



**"THIS FOOD FESTIVAL IS A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO COME TOGETHER, enjoy good food, and make memories with their families. I encourage everyone to visit and relish the experience," he urged.**

## River Jhelum, Dal Lake Face Slow Suffocation

Agencies

SRINAGAR: River Jhelum and Dal Lake, iconic water bodies in Srinagar, are facing "slow suffocation" as their banks have turned into "dumping grounds."

A stroll along Abi Guzar, Lal Chowk Bund paints a grim picture, with plastic bottles, polythene bags, and heaps of waste floating on the water's surface, emanating a foul smell.

As per the details, fishermen, boatmen, and residents living near these water bodies are witness to how the iconic water bodies are losing their sheen.

"Every day, we see waste piling up along the Jhelum banks, yet no one seems to care," said Firdous Ahmad, of Rajbagh. "We are destroying our own lifeline with our negligence," he said.

Another resident, Zubair from Dalgate, said, "It's unfortunate but true that people throw garbage in these waters. We need to put in a collective effort to stop this," he said.

Similarly, shopkeepers along the Jhelum and opposite Dal Lake stretch voiced similar concerns. "Tourists used to stop here to admire the beauty of the river. Now, they turn away in disgust. If we don't act now, we will lose our heritage forever," said a shopkeeper.



He said the situation at Dal Lake is no better, with houseboat owners raising alarms over dwindling water quality.

"Our livelihood depends on the lake. If this pollution continues, tourism will suffer badly," said Nazir Ahmad, a Shikara owner in Dal Lake. "We appeal to our people, to let's not wait for the administration. We must stop throwing garbage into the Jhelum and Dal Lake and start cleaning them together," he said.

Meanwhile, an official from the Lakes Conservation and Management Authority (LCMA) said they are working to keep Dal Lake clean. "We have deployed several machinists round the clock to conduct manual

clean-ups. Additionally, we are taking action against those littering the lake," he said.

Notably, as reported in March 2024, CEF Group, "an energy solutions company," launched a waste processing plant in Srinagar to remove waste from Dal Lake. This project was part of collaboration between the J&K Lake Conservation & Management Authority (LCMA) and NAFED, with CEF Group as the technical and financial partner of the latter.

It is worth mentioning that Prime Minister Narendra Modi e-inaugurated this project along with others, collectively worth ₹30,500 crore for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir—(KNO)

### OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

8 WEEK FREE GROUP THERAPY

I did wash my hand ... but did I clean it enough? Wash it again? Is it clean now?

It's not just RECURRENT HANDWASHING AND CHECKING BUT UNSEEN PAIN, distress, myths and stigma associated with OCD

KASHMER / Kashmir American Society of Healthcare, Medical Education & Research, in collaboration with HPVT (Help Poor Voluntary Trust) is initiating a Free 8 weeks Group Therapy for the individuals suffering with OCD by a team of counselling clinical psychologists led by leading consultant clinical psychologist of J&K

If you or some one you know is experiencing symptoms of OCD, seeking professional help is crucial.

You do not have to fight your battles alone.

There is no need for referral, simply call us for registration.

Happy & Healthy minds Office, HPVT Building (1st Floor), Duresh Kadai Chowk, Srinagar

9070806160

- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092, 2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488, 2452222, 2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081
- Ambulance: Kashmir EMS Service: +91 94841 00200

**AIRPORTS**  
SHIEKH UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

**RAILWAYS**

- SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259
- ANANTNAG: 01932-228243
- BARAMULLA: 0194-102029
- BIJBERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORE: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

**HIGHWAY STATUS**

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

PRAYERS	
FAJR	5: 52
ZUHR	12: 45
ASR	4:35
Magrib	6:17
ISHA	7:39

## This Day In History

- 1563- Russian troops occupy Polotsk Lithuania
- 1637- Ferdinand III succeeds Ferdinand II as Holy Roman Emperor
- 1676- Isaac Newton writes to Robert Hooke "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants" (O.S. 5 Feb)
- 1677- King Charles II reports anti-French covenant with Netherlands
- 1763- Austria, Prussia & Saxony sign the Treaty of Hubertusburg, marking the end of the French and Indian War and of the Seven Years' War
- 1775- Angelo Braschi chosen as Pope Pius VI
- 1799- 1st US printed ballots authorized, Pennsylvania
- 1804- New Jersey becomes last northern state to abolish slavery
- 1830- Beginning of the famous debate between French naturalists Georges Cuvier and Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire on animal structure
- 1842- 1st adhesive postage stamps in US (private delivery company), NYC
- 1851- Black abolitionists invade Boston courtroom rescuing a fugitive slave
- 1852- Great Ormond St Hospital for Sick Children, London, admits 1st patient
- 1869- Charges of Treason against Jefferson Davis are dropped
- 1876- Historic Elm at Boston blown down
- 1898- USS Maine sinks in Havana harbor, cause unknown, 258 sailors die
- 1900- Boer War: Siege of Kimberley broken by British troops under Lieutenant-General John French after a 124 day siege. Kimberley defense led by Cecil Rhodes.
- 1906- British Labour Party founded
- 1918- US army troop ship torpedoed & sunk by Germany off Ireland
- 1922- Marconi begins regular broadcasting transmissions from Essex
- 1933 - President-elect Franklin Roosevelt survives assassination attempt
- 1936 - Hitler announce building of Volkswagens (the People's Car, aka the Kaefer/beetle)
- 1939 - German battleship Bismarck was launched
- 1942 - German U-boat shells Antillian oil refinery
- 1942 - Japanese troops march into Palembang, South Sumatra
- 1942 - WWII: British ruled Singapore surrenders to the Japanese
- 1944 - 891 British bombers attack Berlin
- 1944 - Attack begins at Monte Cassino monastery, Italy
- 1948 - Mao Zedong's army occupies Yenan.
- 1955 - 1st pilot plant to produce man-made diamonds announced.
- 1956 - Pirates & KC As cancel an exhibition game in Birmingham Alabama, because of local ordinance barring black from playing against white.
- 1959 - Antonio Segni forms Italian government
- 1965 - Canada replaces Union Jack flag with Maple Leaf
- 1965 - Maple Leaf becomes official flag of Canada
- 1966 - KeesVerkerk becomes world champion all-round skater
- 1967 - 1st anti-bootleg recording laws enacted
- 1970 - Dominican DC-9 crashes into sea at Santo Domingo, kills 102
- 1970 - Nationalists disrupt UN session on Congo
- 1971 - After 1,200 years Great Britain abandons pence & shilling system for decimal currency
- 1973 - USSR launches Prognoz 3 to study sun (589/200,300 km)
- 1977 - Social-democrats win Danish parliamentary election
- 1984 500,000 Iranian soldiers move into Iraq
- 1985 - STS 51-E vehicle moves to launch pad
- 1985 - World chess championship match abandoned-Karpov 25, Kasparov 23.
- 1989 - Israel attacks border strip Taba near Egypt
- 1989 - Soviet military occupation of Afghanistan ends
- 1993 - Bombings by mafia drug lords kill 14 in Bogota, Colombia
- 1994 - US asks Aristide to adopt a peace plan from Haiti
- 1995 - Population of People's Republic of China hits 1.2 billion
- 1996 - Mortar attack on the US Embassy in Athens, Greece.
- 2000 - Indian Point II nuclear power plant in New York State vents a small amount of radioactive steam when a steam generator fails.



## After Revolution, Bangladesh Textbooks Rewrite History

Agencies

Dhaka: Bangladeshi high schooler Laiba is being educated for the future, but what she learns has been determined by the latest chapter in her country's battle over its past.

Last year, a student-led revolution overthrew the government of iron-fisted premier Sheikh Hasina when public anger over her increasingly autocratic rule boiled over.

Her ouster has prompted Bangladesh to do something that has followed every sudden change in national leadership: rewrite its history books to suit new orthodoxies.

"The tradition of altering history must stop at some point — the sooner, the better," Laiba's mother Suraiya Akhtar Jahan

1975 in a military coup, is also Hasina's father and his daughter's disgrace and exile has dented the late leader's stature.

"The books had turned into one side's political manifesto," AKM Riazul Hassan, head of the national agency tasked with re-writing the curriculum, told AFP.

"That does not conform to the purpose of textbooks. We tried to get them back on track."

New history books have expunged dozens of poems, speeches and articles penned by Mujib, alongside images of his daughter.

They instead now valorise the hundreds of people killed in the protests that ultimately toppled Hasina last summer while bringing back from exile other previously erased heroes of Bangladesh's early history.



told AFP.

"Textbooks should not change every time a new government takes office."

Radical changes to the school curriculum are routine in Bangladesh, where febrile political divisions dating back to its ruinous 1971 independence have persisted.

Until this year, textbooks gave special exaltation to the country's first president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for spearheading that liberation struggle.

But Mujib, assassinated in

Among them is former army chief Ziaur Rahman — no relation to Mujib — credited with issuing the first public proclamation of Bangladesh's independence during the 1971 war.

Zia had been left out of the curriculum during Hasina's time because he founded the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), her chief opposition. His return to the page augurs the resurgence of the political force he created, which is strongly favoured to win elections expected by next year.

## Trump Ok's Tahawwur Rana's Extradition to India

Agencies

Washington: US President Donald Trump has announced that his administration has approved the extradition of "very evil" Tahawwur Rana, wanted by Indian probe agencies for his role in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, "to face justice in India".

Rana, a Canadian national of Pakistani origin, is currently lodged at a metropolitan detention centre in Los Angeles. He is known to be associated with Pakistani-American terrorist David Coleman Headley, one of the main conspirators of the 26/11 attacks.

Speaking at a joint press meet along with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is on a US visit, President Donald Trump on Thursday said, "Today I am pleased to announce that my administration has approved the extradition of one of the plotters and very evil people of the world, and having to do with the horrific Mumbai terrorist attack, to face justice in India."



So, he is going back to India to face justice."

The extradition of Rana was cleared by the US Supreme Court in January as it rejected his review petition in the case.

India last month said it was working with American authorities for the early extradition of Rana.

"The US Supreme Court on January 21 declined to hear a petition from the accused. We are now working with the US side on procedural issues for early extradition to India of the accused in the Mumbai terror attack," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal had said.



## Defence Ties In Focus As Modi Meets US Security Advisor

Press Trust Of India

Washington: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he had a "fruitful meeting" with US National Security Advisor Michael Waltz and they discussed defence, technology and security areas, which are important aspects of the India-US ties.

"Had a fruitful meeting with NSA @michaelwaltz. He has always been a great friend of India," PM Modi said in a post on X.

"Defence, technology and security are important aspects of India-USA ties and we had a wonderful discussion around these issues. There is strong potential for cooperation in sectors like AI, semiconductors, space and more," he said.

After his meeting with Waltz,

**The meeting with Waltz was the first engagement of the day. External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval were present at the meeting.**

a bilateral meeting with President Donald Trump.

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After arriving at Blair House, the President's Guest House, PM Modi met US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. "Congratulations on her confirmation. Discussed various aspects of the India-USA friendship, of which she's always been a strong votary," PM Modi said on X.

Just hours before her meeting with PM Modi, Tulsi Gabbard took the oath of office as the 8th Director of National Intelligence in the presence of Trump.

## Pesticides Causing Widespread Harm To Animals And Plants: Study

Agencies

PARIS: Pesticides are significantly harming wildlife across the planet, stunting growth, damaging reproduction and even causing behavioural changes in animals not meant to be targeted, according to a large-scale study published on Thursday.

Species loss has reached a level not seen since an asteroid smashed into earth and wiped out the dinosaurs 66 million years ago, with scientists warning that human activity is pushing the world into its sixth mass extinction event.

Researchers have already shown that pesticides are detrimental to a wide range of species — adding to the damage to the natural world caused by habitat loss and, increasingly, climate change.

In a new study, published in the journal Nature Communications, scientists in China and Europe looked at 1,700 previous research papers to look into how these chemicals harm animals and plants across the world. The authors said that unlike previous studies with a narrower focus on specific habitats or species like fish or bees, the new research looked to build a comprehensive picture of global impacts from 471

different pesticide types used in farms, businesses and homes.

"It is often assumed that pesticides are toxic primarily to the target pest and closely related organisms but this is clearly not true," said co-author Dave Goulson of the University of Sussex.

"Concerningly, we found pervasive negative impacts across plants, animals, fungi and mi-



crobes, threatening the integrity of ecosystems." More than 800 species in land and in water were assessed to have suffered detrimental effects, including reducing how fast they grow, their reproductive success and even their ability to catch prey or attract mates. Ultimately, the authors said this can lead to death.

**UN talks on protecting nature**  
Co-author Dr Ben Woodcock, at the UK Centre for Ecology and

Hydrology, said the chemicals were "a necessary evil, without which global food production and farmers' livelihoods would likely collapse". But researchers in the latest study said that farmers can cut pesticide use by planting crops at different times, or sowing wildflowers to encourage pest-eating species.

The study comes ahead of United Nations negotiations on biodiversity in Rome later in February that aim to secure funding to protect species from deforestation, overexploitation, climate change and pollution.

In a landmark report in December, UN biodiversity experts warned that overconsumption and unsustainable farming are fuelling overlapping crises in nature and the climate, having already warned that a million species are threatened with extinction.

Antonis Myridakis of Brunel University in London — who was not part of the research — said the study reinforced concerns that pesticides are "contributing significantly to biodiversity loss".

He said the dataset used only covered a relatively small sample of species potentially affected. "Therefore, there is the possibility that the true extent of pesticide harm is even greater than reported."

## US Sending 1 More Planeload of Illegal Immigrants to India

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: A US plane carrying 119 illegal immigrants is likely to land at Amritsar airport on February 15, the second such batch of Indians deported by the Trump government as part of a crackdown it resolved to carry out when it was sworn in last month.

According to official sources, the plane is expected to land at the airport around 10 pm on Saturday.

Among the 119 illegal Indian immigrants, 67 hail from Punjab, 33 from Haryana, eight from Gujarat, three from Uttar Pradesh, two each from Goa, Maharashtra and Rajasthan and one each from Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, they said.

Another US plane carrying deportees is also expected to land on February 16.

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The development came days after a US military aircraft carrying 104 illegal Indian immigrants landed at the Amritsar airport last week. Of them, 33 each were from Haryana and Gujarat and 30 from Punjab.

Most of the deportees hailing from Punjab had said they wanted to migrate to the US for a better life for their families. However, their

dreams were shattered when they were caught at the US border and brought back in shackles.

After Donald Trump assumed office as the US President, the country's law enforcement agencies have launched a crackdown against illegal immigrants.

Many people from Punjab and some other states, who entered the US through "donkey routes" — an illegal and risky pathway used by migrants to enter America or other illegal means by spending lakhs of rupees — are now facing deportation.

Several political leaders in Punjab had questioned the landing of a US aircraft in Amritsar.

"The BJP-led Central government wants to defame Punjab. Why does it not land in Gujarat, Haryana or Delhi?" Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said on Thursday while replying to a question on the likely arrival of another US plane carrying illegal immigrants.

Notably, the Punjab government had recently formed a special investigation team to probe the issue of illegal human trafficking following the deportation of Indian citizens domiciled in Punjab from the US.

The SIT has so far registered 10 FIRs against fraudulent immigration consultants on the statements of deportees, said a senior police official.

## Bollywood Music Seeks to Challenge OpenAI in India



A group of India's top Bollywood music labels, from T-Series to Saregama and Sony, is seeking to join a copyright lawsuit against OpenAI in New Delhi, highlighting worries about improper use of recordings to train AI models, legal documents show.

Microsoft-backed OpenAI's legal challenges are mounting globally and in India, its second biggest market by users. But the company says it follows fair-use principles in employing publicly available data to build its AI models.

On Thursday, the Indian Music Industry (IMI) group, T-Series and Saregama India asked a New Delhi court to hear concerns about "unauthorised use of sound recordings" in training AI models that breaches their copyright.

The companies' contentions in the lawsuit "are crucial for the entire music industry in India, and even worldwide," they said in their filing, which is not public but was reviewed by Reuters.

OpenAI and the music labels did not respond to requests for comments on Friday.

The music labels want to join

a lawsuit launched last year by Indian news agency ANI that accused OpenAI's ChatGPT application of using its content without permission to train AI models.

Since then, book publishers and media groups, some backed by billionaires Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani, have banded together to oppose the company in the New Delhi court.

Bollywood and Hindi pop music are big business in India.

T-Series is one of India's largest music record labels which releases about 2,000 sound records or songs annually, while Saregama, more than 100 years old, owns a repertoire of famed Indian singers such as Mohammed Rafi and Lata Mangeshkar.

On its website, the IMI group says it also represents global names such as Sony Music and Warner Music.

In India, the music labels are "concerned OpenAI and other AI systems can extract lyrics, music compositions and sound recordings from the internet," said an industry source who spoke on condition of anonymity as the matter is in court.

### NEWS MAKERS

## The Scent Of The Mummy. Research Discovers Ancient Egyptian Remains Smell Nice

LONDON: At first whiff, it sounds repulsive: sniff the essence of an ancient corpse.

But researchers who indulged their curiosity in the name of science found that well-preserved Egyptian mummies actually smell pretty good.

"In films and books, terrible things happen to those who smell mummified bodies," said Cecilia Bembibre, director of research at University College London's Institute for Sustainable Heritage. "We were surprised at the pleasantness of them."

"Woody," "spicy" and "sweet" were the leading descriptions from what sounded more like a wine tasting than a mummy sniffing exercise. Floral notes were also detected, which could be from pine and



juniper resins used in embalming.

The study published Thursday in the Journal of the American Chemical Society used both chemi-

cal analysis and a panel of human sniffers to evaluate the odors from nine mummies as old as 5,000 years that had been either in storage or

on display at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

The researchers wanted to systematically study the smell of mummies because it has long been a subject of fascination for the public and researchers alike, said Bembibre, one of the report's authors. Archaeologists, historians, conservators and even fiction writers have devoted pages of their work to the subject — for good reason.

Scent was an important consideration in the mummification process that used oils, waxes and balms to preserve the body and its spirit for the afterlife. The practice was largely reserved for pharaohs and nobility and pleasant smells were associated with purity and deities while bad odors were signs of corruption and decay.

## Class 12 Students Arrive In 35 Luxury Cars For School Farewell In Surat

After the video shocked many people in the city, the school management clarified that students had been

categorically asked not to drive to the school even if they have a driving licence. Photo: A video grab/ X

The police here have registered cases against the parents after a group of Class 12 students went to the school farewell function in a convoy of 35 high-end cars while performing stunts on the way, an official said on Thursday.

As many as 22 cars have been seized, he said. The action was taken after a video showing underage school boys driving cars such as BMW, Maserati, Mercedes and Porsche on a city road on February 7 went viral.

Some of them were seen holding smoke

guns in their hands while sitting dangerously on car doors or sticking out their heads through the sunroof.



Six FIRs were registered at the Pal police station on Wednesday, said DCP RP Barot. "We identified 26 of the 35 cars and have detained 22 of them so far. Their owners were issued notices," he said.



## JKP Raid Bookstores, Seize 688 Books Linked To Jel

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu and Kashmir Police have allegedly seized literature affiliated with Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel), a religious-political organisation, which has been banned in Jammu and Kashmir for the last six years. Police teams arrived at several bookshops in the city centre and seized over 650 books, officials said.

"Based on credible intelligence regarding the clandestine sale and distribution of literature promoting the

ideology of a banned organisation, police conducted a search in Srinagar, leading to the seizure of 668 books. Legal action has been initiated under Section 126 of the BNSS," Srinagar district police said in a post on X.

Under Section 126 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, an executive magistrate can order a person "to show cause why he should not be ordered to execute a bond or bail bond for keeping the peace for such period, not exceeding one year, as the magistrate thinks fit".

## MP Ruhullah Questions Move

Member of Parliament leader Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi described the move as "unacceptable overreach," demanding the order must be revoked immediately. "Interference in the religious affairs of Kashmiri Muslims is crossing a red line—it is blatant state oppression and intolerance. First, the Shab-e-Barat prayers at Jama Masjid were barred, and the masjid itself was sealed. If that wasn't

enough, there are reports of police seizing literature by Maulana Maududi (RA)," he posted on X. "Will the state now dictate what Kashmiris read, learn, and believe? This is an unacceptable overreach. If such an order exists, it must be revoked immediately." The state must stop harassing Kashmiris and meddling in their religious affairs, warning, "The cost of this reckless exercise will be heavy, he added.

## Dir Information Reviews Performance, Functioning Of Department

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Director Information J&K, Nitish Rajora, emphasized enhanced public outreach, efficient communication strategies, timely dissemination of government initiatives as well as strengthening media coordination and improving public engagement through digital platforms.

The Director made these remarks while chairing a meeting to review the performance and functioning of the Department of Information and Public Relations at Media Complex here today.

Joint Director Information (Hqrs), Viveik Puri; Joint Director Information Jammu, Atul Gupta; Joint Director Information Kashmir, Shah Nawaz Bhukhari; Deputy Director Information (PR) Deepak Dubey; Deputy Director Information (Central) Sunil Kumar; Deputy Director PR Kashmir Ahsan Ul Haq Chisti; Deputy Director PR Jammu Ankush Hans; Cultural Officers, Field Publicity Officers,

Information Officers and other concerned officers attended the meeting, either in person or through video conferencing.

During the meeting, the Director underscored the importance of proactive communication for the public good. He urged the officers to adopt innovative approaches to highlight developmental programs, welfare schemes and policy decisions of the government.

The Director laid special emphasis on leveraging social media and digital platforms for real-time updates and public feedback, ensuring transparency and accountability. He called upon the officers to adopt timely strategies for debunking fake news.

While reviewing manpower position and other issues of the department, he called upon the officers to speed up the process for filling of vacant posts. He also called upon the officers to organise regular training courses for staff of the department to abreast them with latest trends of public relations.

## Islamic Global School Takes Legal Action Against BOSE Over Student Exam Rejections

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Islamic Global School has taken legal action against the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (BOSE) after the board rejected the examination forms of 22 students, citing the alleged non-registration of the school.

A spokesperson from the school said that the institution holds formal registration, and despite obtaining tagging orders from the Directorate of School Education, the students have been denied permission to appear in the Class 10th board examinations.

"It is ironic that our students

are being barred from taking their exams when our school has proper registration. We are unable to understand why our students are being singled out," the spokesperson said, confirming that the school management has filed a case against BOSE in court.

Meanwhile, renowned educationist GN Var expressed concern over the plight of the students, stating that their academic careers are now at risk. "It is unfortunate that innocent students are suffering due to hurdles. Despite repeated attempts to contact the BOSE chairman for clarification, there has been no response," he said. [KNT]

## Kashmir: Sangtarash See Their Art Dying

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Sangtarash (stone carving workmen) in Kashmir are facing an uncertain future as the demand for the carved stones is on decline.

Ghulam Rasool Mir, 60, of Sempora, a sangtarash, who has chiseled hardest of stones into decorative shapes since his childhood believes that this work will be over soon.

Mir said, "I see the art of stone carving dying as the demand of the products is decreasing with each passing day. The introduction of modern techniques has led to decline in the demand for the carved stones."

"Youngsters don't want to learn the art of stone carving as most of them believe that it has no future prospects," he added.

He said, "Now other material

is being used in Hammam and other things in Kashmir which is much cheaper than the famous Devri stone."

"We suffered huge damage in the 2014 floods as our whole material was washed away but no compensation was paid to us," Mir lamented.

He said that despite sangtarash working from morning to evening, they are hardly earning a few hundred rupees on a daily basis.

Abdul Gani another sangtarash said, "The government has been repeatedly asking us to vacate the state land where we are working. If we are displaced around 100 families dependent on this art will get affected."

Sangtarash urged LG Manoj Sinha and CM Omar Abdullah to intervene and take steps for reviving this art—(KNO)

## LG, Union Minister For Social Justice Inaugurate Divya Kala Mela

'I Urge The Innovators Of J&K UT To Invent More User-Friendly Aids & Devices For Divyangjan With The Help Of Modern Technology'

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha and Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Dr Virendra Kumar inaugurated the 11-day long Divya Kala Mela, a unique initiative of Government of India towards the economic empowerment of Divyangjan, at Gulshan Ground.

Divya Kala Mela being organised by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) (DEPWD) under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment in collaboration with the National Divyangjan Finance and Development Corporation (NDFDC) showcased the extraordinary talent, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit of Divyang artisans and entrepreneurs, and artists from across J&K UT and various other States and UTs.

In his address, the Lieutenant Governor expressed gratitude to the Government of India and all the stakeholders associated with the noble endeavour. He said the Divya Kala Mela reflects the Hon'ble Prime Minister's commitment to make Divyangjan economically empowered and self-reliant.

Reiterating his resolve to bring qualitative change in the lives of Divyangjan, the Lieutenant Governor said the Union Territory of J&K is committed to create a conducive environment to provide equal opportunities and protect rights of Divyangjan.

"I always believe in God's gift and doing good for others. I have made the administration's primary goal to take steps that will lead to mainstreaming of Divyangjan in society.

In 2020 I had introduced a multi-faceted approach in Administration so that Divyangjan can realise their potential and become active participants in the develop-

ment process", the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted the dedicated efforts made by the J&K Administration to make assistive devices accessible to differently abled.

"I want to make sure every Divyangjan has access to Assistive Equipment that empowers them and minimizes the disability impact.

Devices like hearing aids, wheel chairs, limb prosthetics, and motorised Scooty, which improve functional capacity and help the differently abled to live independently has been made available to them in far flung areas of Union Territory," the Lieutenant Governor further added.

The Lieutenant Governor urged the individual and social service organisations to help Divyangjan in procuring suitable devices as per their needs.

He also urged the innovators of J&K UT to invent more user-friendly aids and devices for Divyangjan with the help of modern technology.

The Lieutenant Governor directed the Social Welfare Department to work on mission mode for skilling of Divyangjans.

He further shared the dedicated measures taken by the administration to encourage the private sector to provide employment opportunities to Divyangjan and the necessary changes made in the reservation policy in

government jobs based on various benchmarks.

The Lieutenant Governor urged the Union Minister for organize a mega fair for Divyangjan in Jammu division and Kashmir division.

He also thanked the Union Minister for his assurance to provide a platform for the Divyang Artisans and Entrepreneurs of J&K in fairs in other parts of the country.

The Lieutenant Governor and the Union Minister visited the stalls set up by Divyang artisans and entrepreneurs, various government institutions and civil society groups. They also handed over mobility devices and sanction letters to the beneficiaries.

The Lieutenant Governor assured all the support and necessary handholding by the administration to the participating artisans and entrepreneurs in scaling-up their business and marketing of their products.

Ms Sakina Itoo, Minister for Social Welfare J&K; Sh Jugal Kishore Sharma, Member of Parliament; Sh Sanjeev Verma, Commissioner Secretary, Social Welfare Department, J&K; Sh Rajeev Sharma, Joint Secretary, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, GoI; Sh Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; senior officials, representatives of various social organizations, artists, artisans and entrepreneurs, and people from all walks of life were present.

**"I ALWAYS BELIEVE IN GOD'S GIFT AND DOING GOOD FOR OTHERS. I have made the administration's primary goal to take steps that will lead to mainstreaming of Divyangjan in society."**

## Fruit Growers Meet CM, Demand Implementation Of Crop Insurance

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** The fruit growers association of Kashmir on Friday met Chief Minister of J&K, Omar Abdullah in Jammu and demanded various steps for the upliftment of the horticulture sector.

Fruits growers association demanded implementation of crop insurance scheme and market intervention scheme.

They said that the crop insurance scheme, though announced, has not been implemented so far. "It is accordingly requested that the Budget Provision may kindly be considered in the Budget Estimates for the year 2025-26 for implementation of Crop Insurance Scheme for Horticulture Industry and necessary orders in this behalf issued as well so that the poor Fruit Growers of the Valley may have a sigh of relief particularly at the time of Natural Disaster."

The fruit growers further added that more than 40% of Apple Crop during every fruit season is always found in the shape of "Grade C" and "Ghiran" (Fallen Apple) pushing the Fruit Growers of the Valley towards the loser side. "The Government of the time had once introduced a Market Intervention Scheme and the entire "Grade C" apple under this scheme was lifted by the Horticulture Department against the rates as fixed by the government. The Valley based Fruit Growers benefited to some extent from the losses under this scheme."

"It is unfortunate that the

scheme has been shelved for the last several years. It is accordingly requested that the Budget Provision may kindly be considered in the Budget Estimates for the year 2025-26 for re-introduction of Market Intervention Scheme in the interest of Fruit Growers of the

Factories, Juice Plants and other allied Industries could be established with single window system facility for convenience of Valley based Fruit Growers Cum Dealers.

"In order to facilitate the marginal Fruit Growers of the Valley necessary measures may



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"In order to facilitate the marginal Fruit Growers of the Valley necessary measures may kindly be taken up for setting up of CA-Stores in the valley on a society basis with the facility of a single window system and grant of subsidy," they said.

Valley and Horticulture Industry in particular."

They demanded that the provision of allotment of funds in the Budget Estimates for the year 2025-26 may kindly be considered for Establishment of Separate "Horticulture Estate" on the pattern of Industrial Estate of J&K (UT) and provision for allotment of funds provided in the Budget Estimates for the year 2025-26 so that CA-Stores/ Canning

kindly be taken up for setting up of CA-Stores in the valley on a society basis with the facility of a single window system and grant of subsidy," they said.

They said that the wooden patties were always used for transportation of fresh fruits from the Valley to various destinations of the Country. "Since the paplur (Safaid) trees are now used by Veneers for manufacturing ply boards and rates of wooden patties have, therefore, risen."

Fruit growers association requested that all necessary arrangements may kindly be provided for transportation of Cherry Crop which is considered extremely delicious to Mumbai from Jammu/ Amritsar Rail Head. They said that Chief Minister Omar Abdullah gave a patient hearing to the Delegation and assured that all the demands will be looked into—(KNO)

## J&K Sees 79% Deficit Rainfall, All Districts Record Deficiency



Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** With no forecast of any weather activity in Jammu and Kashmir, all the districts across the Union Territory have recorded a large deficit of rainfall in the last one and a half months. Kathua tops the list with 97 per cent deficiency from January 01 to February 12, 2025.

J&K has recorded a deficit rainfall of 79 per cent as against the normal precipitation of 140 mm, the rainfall of just 29.8 was recorded during the period.

As per the data, Jammu has recorded a deficit rainfall of 94 per cent while Udhampur and Samba districts have recorded a deficiency of 92 per cent each.

Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, has recorded a deficit rainfall of 82 per cent during the period while seven other places including Shopian, Reasi, Ramban, Kulgam, Doda, Budgam and Anantnag have recorded a deficiency in between 80 to 89 per cent.

Pulwama, Kupwara, Baniptora and Baramulla districts have a deficiency of between 70 to 79 per cent during the period, according to the data. Four districts including Poonch, Ra-

jouri, Kishtwar and Ganderbal have recorded a deficiency in between 60 to 69 per cent.

All the districts across the Union Territory have been categorised in large deficiency, the data reveals.

Meanwhile, the weatherman here has predicted dry weather conditions till tomorrow.

Director Meteorological Department Dr Mukhtar Ahmad, said that on February 16, the weather will remain partly to generally cloudy with light rain and snow expected at isolated higher reaches of north & central Kashmir mainly towards evening and night.

On February 17-18, partly to generally cloudy weather is expected with the possibility of a brief spell of light rain and snow at isolated higher reaches, he said, adding that nothing significant is expected till February 18.

On February 19 and 20, generally cloudy weather is expected with the possibility of light rain and snow at scattered places during the 19th night and late night to 20th afternoon, Dr Ahmad said, adding that partly cloudy with a possibility of light rain and snow is expected at isolated places on February 21 and 22—(KNO)

## CM Urges Doctors To Serve Beyond Cities

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday said the government is trying to ensure that doctors do not simply practice in cities only as the people living in the rural areas also deserve access to medicine as well as medical facilities.

Addressing a gathering of medics during the Medic-25 medical conference held here, the Chief Minister said, "I believe it is the younger doctors who can drive this change."

Omar said that the government—particularly Health and Medical Education Minister Saakeena Itoo and Secretary Health Syed Abid Rashid Shah—is actively working to improve healthcare

services in rural regions.

The administration is also exploring ways to enhance the lives of doctors by increasing funding and improving medical facilities, he said.

Praising the dedication of healthcare professionals, the Chief Minister said doctors are engaged in God's work, saving lives and bringing hope to patients and their families. "You are there to celebrate moments of joy with your patients and also stand by them in times of grief," he said.

Abdullah said that medicine is a continuously evolving field, and doctors must keep learning new techniques and advancements to provide the best care—(KNO)

## BMO-Led Committee Formed To Inquire Death Of Woman At CHC Hajan

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The Block Medical Office (BMO) Hajan has constituted a committee to inquire into the death of a woman at CHC Hajan in north Kashmir's Baniptora district on Friday.

As per an order issued by BMO Hajan, a copy of which lies with officials involved in medical negligence will face disciplinary action.

"In view of the maternal death that occurred today, 14-02-2025, at CHC Hajan, it is imperative to conduct a thorough inquiry to assess the circumstances leading to the unfortunate incident and to identify any lapses in patient management," reads the order.

As per order, BMO Hajan has been appointed as the Chairperson of the committee while Shaheen Chalkoo, Consultant Anaesthesia CHC Sumbal, Dr Nisar Ahmad Medical Officer CHC Hajan, Nasreena Kousar In-Charge Labour Room and Mohammad Yaqoob Ganaie BM&EO Hajan are its members.

The committee has been asked to do a detailed case analysis of the deceased patient, including medical history, antenatal care received, and any complications noted during pregnancy. It has been asked to examine the treatment protocol followed during admission, delivery, and post-operative care and also assess the role of duty doctors, nursing staff, and support staff in managing the case.

Identify any medical negligence, procedural lapses, or delays in providing emergency care, the committee has been told and also reviewing the hospital records, staff duty rosters, and patient monitoring sheets to evaluate adherence to standard protocols and also the recommendations for corrective measures to prevent future incidents and improve maternal care services at CHC Hajan.

The committee has been directed to submit its detailed report within 48 hours to the Block Medical Officer, CHC Hajan.

## Police Attach Property Worth Lacs Under UAPA In Sopore

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** In a significant operation, Police in Sopore on Friday said to have attached a single-storied house along with a single-storied poultry farm and two kanals of land under Survey No. 529/1 in the estate of Rakhi Sultanpora Sumbal.

"This action, taken under Sec-

tion 25 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) of 1967, is linked to Case FIR No. 307/2023 of Police Station Sopore. The attachment was carried out in the presence of a duly constituted police team and the Executive Magistrate, ensuring strict compliance with all legal procedures," a police spokesman said in a statement issued to.



# Curtailing Benefits of the Golden Card Scheme is Anti-Poor

Reserving some surgical procedures to be done only in government hospitals violates the Right to Health. The health budget in J&K needs to be enhanced



Dr. Raja Muzaffar Bhat



**Now, the issue is about reserving certain surgical procedures to be done only in government hospitals. The PM and LG Administration had received much appreciation for this public welfare health program, but due to various reasons, the Golden Card scheme may not benefit the poor in the months to come**

The Jammu & Kashmir's much-appreciated health insurance scheme (Golden Card), launched in 2020, is losing its sheen day by day. Initially, there was a legal tussle between the government and the insurance company. Now, the issue is about reserving certain surgical procedures to be done only in government hospitals. The PM and LG Administration had received much appreciation for this public welfare health program, but due to various reasons, the Golden Card scheme may not benefit the poor in the months to come.

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PM-JAY), commonly known as the Golden Card scheme, was launched around December 2018 in Jammu & Kashmir. This is a medical insurance scheme meant to benefit only the poor population living under the Below Poverty Line (BPL). By the end of 2020, this scheme was renamed the AB-PM-JAY SEHAT scheme, and its benefits were extended to all 20 lakh families living in J&K. The scheme was formally launched by Prime Minister Modi on December 26, 2020.

#### What is this scheme all about?

The main focus of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) - SEHAT scheme is protection from catastrophic health expenditures. According to the State Health Agency (SHA), this scheme is delivered through both public and private healthcare providers for providing secondary and tertiary care health services.

- The scheme provides a cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family per year. All medical and surgical conditions are included with minimal exclusions.
- It covers both pre- and post-hospitalization expenses.
- All pre-existing conditions are covered from day one.
- There is no family size or age limit.
- Public hospitals are deemed empanelled, while private healthcare facilities have been empanelled based on defined criteria (including specialty-specific criteria).

#### How did the problem start?

Bajaj Allianz GIC was the implementing agency for Ayushman



Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) and AB-PM-JAY SEHAT in Jammu & Kashmir until 2022. After the contract ended with Bajaj Allianz, IFFCO-TOKIO General Insurance Company signed the contract with the State Health Agency (SHA) in November 2023. The contract, which came into effect on March 10, 2022, was supposed to continue for three years (until March 2025). However, IFFCO-TOKIO, according to media reports, suffered financial losses and ended the contract much before its expiry date. The State Health Agency (SHA) requested IFFCO-TOKIO to continue the contract "in the interest of patient care," but the company refused.

#### SHA moved to the High Court

As the company was unable to continue its work, the State Health Agency (SHA) sought judicial intervention by filing a writ petition against IFFCO-TOKIO in the Jammu & Kashmir High Court. SHA requested the court to stay the termination of the contract and order the insurance company to fulfill the contract until its expiry on March 14, 2025, citing the importance of "patient care" and public well-being. The SHA also urged the court to direct the company to refrain from opting out of the contract. In September last year, the High Court directed the J&K government to utilize a premium amount of Rs. 427.73 crores lying with it for reimbursement of medical claims.

The division bench of Justice Sanjeev Kumar and Justice Sindhu Sharma, however, said that reimbursement of the premium amount

would be subject to the outcome of an appeal filed by IFFCO-Tokio General Insurance Co. Ltd against an order by the court's single bench, which had earlier asked the company to continue with the existing arrangement. This order helped service providers (private hospitals) receive payments that had been held up for the last few years. As this issue started getting addressed, another issue regarding the health insurance scheme arose: the government, according to media reports, plans to exclude some surgical procedures under the ABPM-JAY SEHAT scheme.

#### Excluding Some Surgical Procedures

Four surgical procedures—cholecystectomy, hemorrhoidectomy, appendectomy, and fissure surgery—are said to be excluded from the ABPMJAY SEHAT scheme, and they will no longer be covered in private hospitals starting from March 15, 2025. This is a major policy shift under active consideration by the government. This change will lead to prolonged waiting times in government-run hospitals. It is a known fact that for smaller surgical procedures, like fissures or piles, one has to wait for months to get the surgery done. Once private hospitals are exempted from these procedures, it will directly impact poor patients. The wealthy will go to private hospitals and pay the surgical charges, but where will poor patients go? The J&K Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, chaired the 9th Governing Council Meeting of the State Health Agency (SHA) on January 19, 2025, and it is said that this decision was taken in

that meeting.

#### Decision Against the Private Sector

The decision taken during the governing council meeting, chaired by the Chief Secretary, is not only against poor patients but also against the interests of private hospitals. It is a known fact that private hospitals providing Golden Card services have already suffered a lot in the past 10 months due to the legal tussle between the State Health Agency (SHA) and Insurance Company IFFCO-TOKIO. In the governing council meeting, nothing was decided regarding the release of long-pending payments to these service providers, 1% interest for the delayed payments, or other issues. The Private Hospital Association has written to the government and believes that the contract with the State Health Agency, after the completion of the three-year term starting on March 15, 2025, can no longer be tenable, as it won't be possible for them to meet the expenses at the diminishing rates, especially with delayed payments.

"Neither have the packages been revised, even after the Union Government's enhancement of the budget for the Ayushman Bharat scheme by 24%, raising it to Rs. 9,406 crores," reads a representation from the Private Hospitals and Dialysis Centre Association.

#### Conclusion

To make the Golden Card health insurance scheme viable, the government must increase the budget allocation from the current Rs. 589 crores to Rs. 900-950 crores for the smooth running of the AB-PMJAY SEHAT scheme in J&K. There should be no reservations for any surgical procedures to be done in private hospitals, as the right to health is a constitutional right guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and Health Minister Sakina Masood must intervene personally because this will not only impact the economically weaker sections of society but also give a significant jolt to the National Conference politically.

*Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. The author is an Acumen Fellow and Founder/Chairman, Jammu & Kashmir RTI Movement*

## Are We Ready To Dream Bigger?

Atul Soneja

Artificial Intelligence is no longer a concept of the future; it is the driving force behind our digital realities, heralding the fifth Industrial Revolution. With the global AI market set to grow from \$235 billion to over \$631 billion by 2028, its impact spans across industries — from predictive analytics in agriculture to personalised healthcare. But are we fully capitalising its potential?

AI is a catalyst for businesses striving to deliver exceptional customer value by enhancing efficiency, optimising operations and enabling automation. Its transformative power extends to societal progress, offering solutions to regional challenges. For example, AI optimises renewable energy grids in Europe to reduce emissions, while AI-powered microgrids in sub-Saharan Africa bring electricity to off-grid communities, fostering economic empowerment. These advancements highlight AI's dual role — fueling industrial growth and enabling equitable progress.

Initiatives by the Indian government such as "AI for All" and the National AI Strategy further underline the potential to harness AI for building sustainable and inclusive societies. Yet, AI's real value lies not just in genera-



tive applications but in leveraging its broader capabilities to address challenges like climate change, resource management and equitable access to technology.

We must dream beyond immediate efficiencies to capitalise on AI's profound potential as a force for global good, driving inclusive, ethical & sustainable innovation.

A global AI survey finds only 10% of organisations see significant financial

gains from AI. For MSMEs, the barriers—high implementation costs, limited budgets and a lack of skilled talent, are formidable.

A unified effort is needed across organisations to transition from potential to performance. Successful AI adoption starts with strong leadership, a clear vision and an "AI-first mindset". AI sponsors must strategically integrate AI into business models to streamline supply chains and reduce inefficiencies.



**A unified effort is needed across organisations to transition from potential to performance. Successful AI adoption starts with strong leadership, a clear vision and an "AI-first mindset"**

AI success depends on robust data infrastructure. Proper governance, security, and accessibility protocols are vital for managing data pools, as seen in smart city initiatives that optimise urban resources.

Addressing the skill gap requires strong collaboration between academic institutions and industries to develop courses and training programmes that build an AI-skilled workforce. Ethical AI governance is key to building trust. Establishing effective governance structures, like ethical AI audits, ensures AI results are accurate, reliable, and fostering public trust.

AI's future lies in purpose-driven transformation and the opportunity to harness AI for profitability, inclusivity, and sustainability is immense. By committing to purposeful innovation, we can ensure that AI's potential is fully realised — as a business enabler and a force for good. We must dream bigger, act bolder, and seize AI's transformative power. The possibilities are immense; let's be ready.

*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 Financial Express*



## The Reckless Race for Social Media Stardom in Kashmir

Gowher Bhat

The hunger to be seen. It started slow. A picture here, a video there. A wedding clip. A funeral post. A plate of food, steaming, untouched. Someone liked it. Someone commented. Someone asked, Where is this? Someone said, Mashallah. Someone else said, Overrated.

Then it picked up speed. Now, nothing is just what it is. A wedding isn't a wedding. It's an event. The bride looks perfect. Too perfect. There's a filter on her face. The groom is smiling. It's his third take. The guests are clapping. The phone is shaking in someone's hand. The whole thing will be up on Instagram in an hour, cut into parts, wrapped in a song someone else chose.

A funeral isn't a funeral. Someone posts a story. "Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un". Someone else takes a video. The body is wrapped. The mother is crying. Someone films the mother crying. Someone posts that too. "May Allah grant him Jannah." The likes come in. The comments flood. What happened to him? How did he die? Was he sick? The body is lowered into the ground. Someone else posts a picture of the grave. "Gone too soon".

A meal isn't a meal. A mother makes rice. A son takes a picture before eating. The food gets cold. He angles his phone again. "Best wazwan in town." No one touches the plate before the camera does. The roti is breaking apart in someone's hands, but they don't eat. Not yet. Not before they pick the right filter. Not before they check how many people are watching.

It used to be simple. It used to be different. It used to be enough just to live. Then came the screens. Then came the hunger to be seen. The game of Influence. Scroll down. They're everywhere. The influencers. They talk into the camera. They laugh. They pose. They sell a dream. A soft, glowing dream. Their skin is clear. Their homes are big. They smile just right. They hold up products. This is the best face wash I've ever used. This changed my life. They tell you what to wear, what to eat, how to live. They



are perfect. Or they seem perfect. But perfect gets boring. So they add drama. A fight with another influencer. A long, emotional apology. I never meant to hurt anyone. A breakup. A video of them crying. The views double. The comments explode. Someone takes sides. Someone else digs up an old post. You were fake all along. And when that stops working? When the numbers start slipping? They do something bigger. The joke is, even the ones who hate them watch. Even the ones who call them fake check their stories every morning. Even the ones who complain about these attention seek-

ers know their names. And when the audience gets bored? When the likes slow down? They start again. They make it louder. Bigger. More reckless. It's a game. And in the end, no one wins. The Reckless Race for Views. Somewhere in Kashmir, a boy stands on the ledge of a bridge. His friend holds a phone. Jump, he says. The boy looks at the camera. He smiles. He jumps. Somewhere else, another boy smashes a brick on his head. The video ends before the blood starts. Before the dizziness. Before the regret. A girl swallows a spoonful of cinnamon. She coughs. She gasps. She tries to breathe.

But the camera keeps rolling. Because views. Because engagement. Because the algorithm wants more. And the real victims? The ones watching. The kid who sees the stunt and tries it. Who doesn't know the first take ended in a broken arm. The teenager who copies a challenge, not knowing the influencer had a safety net. The hospital fills. The injuries pile up. Someone dies. And the influencer? They move on. The audience forgets. The cycle repeats. The Mental Toll of Social Media Stardom. But it's not just broken bones. There's something else.

Something quiet. A boy posts a video. He waits. He refreshes. Again. Again. The likes aren't coming. His heart beats faster. His palms sweat. He deletes the post. He tries again. A girl films for hours. She picks the right song. The right filter. The right timing. She posts. She waits. The numbers are slow. A pit forms in her stomach. Am I not good enough? Not pretty enough? Not funny enough? The internet is fast. One wrong move, one bad post, one bad angle—and the same people who lifted you up will tear you down. Anxiety. Depression. Self-doubt. A life built on likes is a fragile one. The Responsibility We Ignore. Who is to blame? The influencers? The parents? The viewers? The truth is, it's all of us. We watch. We click. We share. We make them famous. We make them reckless. And when something goes wrong, we shake our heads. What a tragedy, we say. So sad. And we move on. No one steps in. No one says: This should stop. There are no rules. No limits. Shouldn't there be awareness campaigns? Shouldn't someone say, This is dangerous? Or will we wait? Until the next headline. The next death. The next mistake that can't be undone. What Really Matters. So what now? Do we keep chasing something that won't last? Or do we stop? Step back? Think? A father sits with his son under a chinar tree. He tells him a story. No cameras. No filters. Just words, passed down the way they used to be. A boy walks home in the rain. His phone is in his pocket. No reels. No captions. Just rain. Just cold. Just life. A girl deletes the app. She takes a deep breath. She opens a book. Because fame is temporary. Folly is permanent. And no number of likes is worth losing yourself.

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## How to get control of your time

Kamila Kolpashnikova

You wake up at 7:00 and reflexively reach for your phone. Between the stream of emails, WhatsApps and breaking news alerts, you see a worrying reminder: you averaged 11 hours of daily screen time last week. You swipe the notification away and open TikTok, where a woman in a matching athleisure set and glossy, slicked-back ponytail urges you to "get ready with me for my 5-9 before my 9-5".

You think about getting out of bed for a workout or meditation before you start answering those emails. But before you know it, it's 8:57 – and if you don't get off the apps and onto your computer, you'll be late.

Sound familiar? Though many people have more leisure time now than in the past, paradoxically, more free time comes with increased time pressure. For many of us, it feels as if we don't have control over our time – rather, time is controlling us. This is because our collective experience of time both comes from and governs society.

Instead of saving us time, the pace of modernity has led to many of us feeling as if our time is slipping away. And any time we "gain back", we devote – by necessity or choice – to making more money, maybe through a side hustle. Losing control over time can have negative consequences for both physical and mental wellbeing.

We are trapped in a perpetual cycle of rushing to survive and consume. But consumption also takes time, so the time available to enjoy our newly acquired possessions declines. You buy a faster new computer, but then need to spend multiple, frustrating hours configuring it to your preferences.

Even trying to save time by mastering a productivity hack or reading a self-help book takes (you guessed it) time.

As time use researchers, we often grapple with an uncomfortable truth – your time is not fully yours – it belongs to us all. Time is a network good. We live in a web of time: giving, taking and sharing time with everyone around us. In other words, the decisions and actions of the people around



**THOUGH MANY PEOPLE HAVE MORE LEISURE TIME NOW THAN IN THE PAST, PARADOXICALLY, MORE FREE TIME COMES WITH INCREASED TIME PRESSURE.** For many of us, it feels as if we don't have control over our time – rather, time is controlling us. This is because our collective experience of time both comes from and governs society

you shape how much time you have. This presents a catch-22. Friends, family, colleagues and even neighbours require our time, and we need theirs, too. We share time with our social network members because we need strong ties for our wellbeing. However, building lasting relationships means that we have to control our time in order to share it with others. Unfortunately, we don't all have the same amount of control. Socioeconomic

and demographic factors – gender, financial circumstances, age, race, and where you live – all influence how you can make decisions about time. These factors shape how we can interact with others. Even seemingly mundane choices, such as how many extra minutes of sleep you give yourself in the morning, are shaped by societal expectations, power structures and economic constraints. If your job starts at 8am and your commute is two hours, it

is unlikely that you can afford extra time to sleep in the mornings. If you are a parent, you might have to wake up even earlier to make sure that everyone has their breakfast and lunch packed for school. This is why the hundreds of self-help articles telling you how to optimise your time by carefully budgeting every minute of it never manage to give you full control. Breaking this vicious cycle starts with understanding, then practising self-com-

passion in the face of the demands on your time.

Get in control

Gaining control over your time starts with "why". We don't all have the luxury of saying no to tasks we deem unnecessary or unpleasant.

We can, however, ask ourselves why we are spending our time on certain things. Before your next decision, big or small, try asking yourself: why am I doing this?

If the answer is rooted in social pressure, outdated norms, or an obligation toward someone who does not deserve the gift of your precious time, consider how you could switch to doing something else.

Try to spend your time on activities and with people who nourish you, enriching your moments. You may not be able to completely avoid spending part of your time as your boss dictates. But understanding the larger power dynamics shaping your personal situation and your time will help you approach decisions with conscious intention, giving you greater control over this irreplaceable resource.

Regularly questioning the reason behind your actions will reveal the social patterns driving your decision-making processes. Why did you agree to do something, only to regret it later? Why are you always the one donating time to emotional labour at the office?

Consistently asking "why" creates a habit of mindfulness, and will give you the insight needed to begin to make more informed choices that reflect your true priorities. Ultimately, gaining more control over your time is not about rigidly adhering to a schedule or productivity hacks. It is impossible to subject every minute of your existence to your will – time is not yours to hold on to.

But you can make the most of the time you do have control over by making conscious decisions that align with your own desires and goals. Like one of our research participants, you may soon find yourself looking in the mirror and proclaiming: "I love time! Time lets me become!"

By arrangements with *The Conversation*



# Study Suggests Reason Behind People Showing Increased Creativity After Brain Injuries Disorders

Press Trust Of India

Researchers have identified a brain circuit for creativity and suggested that people with brain injuries or neurodegenerative diseases – in whom the circuit is affected – may have increased creativity.

"Some people with neurologic diseases experience a new onset of creative behaviour and show specific patterns of damage that align with our creativity circuit," lead author Julian Kutsche, a research fellow at Brigham and Women's Hospital, US.

Co-senior author Isaiah Kletnik, a neurologist at Brigham and Women's Hospital, said, "We wanted to answer the questions, 'What brain regions are key for human creativity and how does this relate to the effects of brain injuries?'"

The study, published in The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open, first looked at brain scans of



857 people to identify regions that help perform creative activities such as drawing, creative writing and making music. The brain scans were taken from a review of studies published between 2004 and 2019. The researchers then analysed

data of patients who had changes in creativity due to brain injury and neurodegenerative diseases.

The team found that brain regions involved in creative tasks are part of one common brain circuit, defined by a simultaneous reduced

activity in the right frontal pole – important for monitoring and rule-based behaviours.

The reduced activity could align with the hypothesis that creativity requires shutting down the 'inner critic's' function, according to Kletnik.

"To be creative, you may have to turn off your inner critic to allow yourself to find new directions and even make mistakes," Kletnik said.

"These findings could help explain how some neurodegenerative diseases might lead to decreases in creativity while others may show a paradoxical increase in creativity," the author added.

"Brain regions activated by creativity tasks map to a brain circuit defined by negative functional connectivity to the right frontal pole. Damage to this circuit aligned with changes in creativity observed in individuals with certain brain diseases, including paradoxical creativity increases," the authors wrote.

# Mitochondria May Hold Key To Curing Diabetes: Study

ANI

Mitochondria are responsible for creating energy, which fuels cells and keeps them functioning. However, mitochondrial abnormalities have been linked to the development of disorders like type 2 diabetes. Patients with this illness are unable to produce enough insulin or use the insulin produced by their pancreas to maintain normal blood sugar levels.

Researchers at the University of Michigan used mice to show that dysfunctional mitochondria trigger a response that affects the maturation and function of b-cells.

Several studies have shown that insulin-producing pancreatic b-cells of patients with diabetes have abnormal mitochondria and are unable to generate energy. Yet, these

man pancreatic islet cells.

Their results prompted the team to expand their search into other cells that are affected by diabetes.

Losing your b-cells is the most direct path to getting type 2 diabetes. Through our study we now have an explanation for what might be happening and how we can intervene and fix the root cause," said Scott A. Soleimanpour, M.D.

"Diabetes is a multi-system disease—you gain weight, your liver produces too much sugar and your muscles are affected. That's why we wanted to look at other tissues as well," said Scott A. Soleimanpour, M.D., director of the Michigan Diabetes Research Center and senior author of the study.

The team repeated their mouse experiments in liver cells and fat-storing cells and saw that the same stress response was turned on. Both



studies were unable to explain why the cells behaved this way.

"We wanted to determine which pathways are important for maintaining the proper mitochondrial function," said Emily M. Walker, Ph.D, a research assistant professor of internal medicine and first author of the study.

To do so, the team damaged three components that are essential for mitochondrial function: their DNA, a pathway used to get rid of damaged mitochondria, and one that maintains a healthy pool of mitochondria in the cell.

"In all three cases, the exact same stress response was turned on, which caused b-cells to become immature, stop making enough insulin, and essentially stop being b-cells," Walker said. "Our results demonstrate that the mitochondria can send signals to the nucleus and change the fate of the cell."

The researchers also confirmed their findings in hu-

man cell types were unable to mature and function properly.

"Although we haven't tested all possible cell types, we believe that our results could be applicable to all the different tissues that are affected by diabetes," Soleimanpour said.

Regardless of the cell type, the researchers found that damage to the mitochondria did not cause cell death.

This observation brought up the possibility that if they could reverse the damage, the cells would function normally.

To do so, they used a drug called ISRIB that blocked the stress response. They found that after four weeks, the b-cells regained their ability to control glucose levels in mice.

"Losing your b-cells is the most direct path to getting type 2 diabetes. Through our study we now have an explanation for what might be happening and how we can intervene and fix the root cause," Soleimanpour said.

# IIT Guwahati Researchers Develop Selfcleaning, Exible Heating Fabric For Cold Climates

Press Trust Of India

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati have developed a self-cleaning, exible heating fabric for cold climates, which can mitigate health risks from prolonged exposure to extreme cold.

The findings of the research have been published in the journal Nano-Micro-Small.

According to Uttam Manna, Professor at the Department of Chemistry, IIT Guwahati, extreme cold temperatures can lead to health problems that may even be fatal.

"Studies indicate that deaths due to extreme cold outnumber those caused by extreme heat.

Traditional solutions for protecting oneself from extreme cold, such as heaters or layered clothing, are often bulky or require a constant power source. Conductive textiles offer a lightweight, exible alternative, but existing versions often have limitations, such as poor durability, high power consumption, and vulnerability to water exposure," Manna said.

To overcome these challenges, the IIT Guwahati research team developed a novel approach by spraying ultra-thin, clean silver nanowires onto cotton fabric to make it conductive.

"These nanowires are 100,000 times thinner than a human hair, allowing electricity to ow through the fabric, helping it generate heat while remaining soft and exible. Due to its exceptional electrical conductivity and the ability to convert both electricity and sunlight into heat, silver nanowires were chosen for this experiment. The low electrical resistance of silver allows for electrothermal conversion at low applied voltage, eliminating the risk of electrocution," Manna

# 3.5 Kilometres Underwater, Scientists Found A Staggeringly Energetic Particle From Outer Space

The Conversation

Three and a half kilometres beneath the Mediterranean Sea, around 80km off the coast of Sicily, lies half of a very unusual telescope called KM3NeT.

The enormous device is still under construction, but today the telescope's scientific team announced they have already detected a particle from outer space with a staggering amount of energy.

In fact, as the team report in Nature, they found the most energetic neutrino anyone has ever seen – and it represents a tremendous leap forward in exploring the uncharted waters of the extreme universe.

To explain why it's such a remarkable discovery, we need to understand what KM3NeT is, what it's looking for, and what it saw.

What is KM3NeT?

KM3NeT is a gigantic deep sea telescope being built by an international collaboration of more than 300 scientists and engineers from 21 countries.

At the site off Sicily, and another off the coast of Provence in France, KM3NeT will be made up of more than 6,000 light detectors hanging in the pitch-black depths. When the telescope is complete, it will cover about a cubic kilometre of sea.

Down deep, KM3NeT is shielded from ordinary sources of light, such as the Sun. It is



also shielded from other particles like electrons and protons, which are absorbed by the water long before they reach the detectors. So what does it see?

What is KM3NeT looking for?

Of all the particles that physicists have discovered, only the elusive neutrino can reach all the way down to KM3NeT.

The neutrino is an elementary particle with no electric charge and only a very tiny mass. It interacts with matter so weakly that it can pass through kilometres of ocean – and even thousands of kilometres of Earth itself – to reach the detector. That's why KM3NeT is at the bottom of the sea: to see neu-

trinos, and only neutrinos.

But won't the neutrinos pass through the detector, too? Yes, almost all of them.

But very rarely, a neutrino will crash right into a water molecule. When it does, it can pack an enormous punch.

The energy of the neutrino can create many more particles. As these particles blast through the water, they create a bluish glow. That's what KM3NeT detectors see.

By analysing this bluish light, and by timing each flash, scientists can reconstruct the original energy of the neutrino, and the direction from which it came. (Either that, or they've just clocked one of those deep-sea glowing fish travelling at nearly the speed of light.)

The most energetic neutrino ever detected On February 13 2023, KM3NeT detected a neutrino travelling so fast it had 30 times more energy than any previously detected.

The amount of energy is 220 petaelectronvolts, but that doesn't mean much to a non-particle physicist. It's hard to imagine, but let's try.

The neutrino had 100 trillion times more energy than a typical particle at the centre of the Sun. It's a trillion times more energy than medical X-rays, and ten billion times more than the most dangerous radioactive particles. Earth's biggest particle accelerators can't produce a particle with even one ten thousandth of this energy.

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**Ishfaq Rasool and Associates**  
In the case of  
1.Sara  
D/o: Late Nabir Doom  
W/o: Bashir Ahmad Ganie  
2. Bashir Ahmad Ganie  
S/o: Gh Ahmad Ganie  
Both Residents of Raipora Palthallan Pattan Baramulla (Caveators)  
Vs  
Public At Large (Non Caveator)  
In the Petition in terms of Section 148-A  
The caveators have reason to believe that Non-Caveator may file any Application, Petition, Ap- peal, Suit or any other type of proceeding before the Hon'ble Court and on the ground of distorted facts/misrepresentation and cooked story and may seed in obtaining some relief/order at their back/in exparte against the caveators and in such eventuality the caveators will be put in irreparable loss and inconvenience. It would be proper that caveators be given an opportunity of being heard by the Hon'ble court before passing any order.  
fko Sd/advocate

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## Gold Zooms Past Record ₹89k-Mark, Silver Rallies ₹2,000 To 4-Month High

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI-** Gold prices soared by Rs 1,300 to hit an all-time high of Rs 89,400 per 10 grams amid heavy buying from jewelers and retailers, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 88,100 per 10 grams on Thursday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity climbed by Rs 1,300 to hit a fresh peak of Rs 89,000 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 87,700 per 10 grams.

Silver also rallied by Rs 2,000 to hit a four-month high of Rs 1 lakh per kg on Friday. The metal had finished at Rs 98,000 per kg on Thursday.

In futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for April delivery rose Rs 184 to Rs 85,993 per 10 grams. "Gold prices continued their upward momentum, driven by a weaker dollar index and sustained support from US tariff policies. Gold rose on MCX, while Comex gold gained to trade at USD 2,935 per ounce," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities.

The focus now shifts to upcoming US Retail Sales and Core Retail Sales data, which

could influence the next move in gold, Trivedi added.

Silver futures zoomed by Rs 2,517 or 2.64 per cent to Rs 97,750 per kg on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

Globally, Comex gold futures for April delivery rose USD 6.49 per ounce to USD 2,951.89 per ounce. Meanwhile, spot gold traded higher at USD 2,929.79 per ounce.

According to Kotak Securities, Comex gold futures extended their rally for a third consecutive day, approaching a record high of USD 2,960 per ounce as upward trend positions gold for a seventh straight week of gains, the longest such streak since August 2020.

The potential for reciprocal tariffs against several nations, as directed by US President Donald Trump, has introduced uncertainty into global trade and economic outlook.

This development coincides with existing tariffs on Chinese goods and impending duties on steel and aluminium imports. The combined effect of these factors is likely contributing to gold's safe-haven appeal and driving its price upward, the brokerage firm said.

Comex silver futures in the Asian market hours quoted nearly 4 per cent higher at USD 34 per ounce.



Gold of 99.5 per cent purity climbed by Rs 1,300 to hit a fresh peak of Rs 89,000 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 87,700 per 10 grams.

## RBI Sacks New India Coop Bank Board, Bans Cash Takeout For 6 Months



Press Trust Of India

**MUMBAI-** A day after imposing several restrictions on city-based New India Co-operative Bank, the RBI on Friday superseded its board citing poor governance standards.

A large number of bank's customers had gathered at its branches on Friday following RBI's restrictions, which included a bar on issuing new loans and suspension of deposit withdrawals for six months. The bank has 28 branches, mostly located in the Mumbai region.

In a statement, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said it has appointed Shreekanth, a former chief general manager of State Bank of India (SBI) as 'Administrator' to manage the affairs of the bank.

The Board of Directors of New India Co-operative Bank, Mumbai, has been superseded for 12 months, the RBI said in a statement.

It has also appointed a 'Committee of Advisors' to assist the Administrator in discharging his duties. The members of the Committee of Advisors are Ravindra Sapra (former General Manager, SBI) and Abhijeet Deshmukh (chartered accountant).

"The action is necessitated due to certain material concerns emanating from poor governance standards observed in the bank," it said.

On Thursday, the RBI had imposed several restrictions

the bank has been directed not to allow withdrawal of any amount from savings bank or current accounts or any other account of a depositor..." the RBI said while imposing the restrictions.

The lender, however, has been allowed to set off loans against deposits subject to the conditions stated in the RBI directions. It may incur expenditure in respect of certain essential items such as salaries of employees, rent, and electricity bills.

The RBI further said as from the close of business on February 13, 2025, the bank shall not, without prior approval, grant or renew any loans and advances, make any investment, and incur any liability, including acceptance of fresh deposits.

It further said the directions were necessitated due to supervisory concerns emanating from the recent material developments in the bank, and to protect the interest of depositors of the bank.

Further, eligible depositors would be entitled to receive deposit insurance claim amount of their deposits up to Rs 5 lakh from the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC).

on the lender including withdrawal of funds by depositors, amid supervisory concerns.

The restrictions came into force from the close of business on Thursday and would remain in force for a period of six months and are subject to review.

"Considering the bank's present liquidity position,

The Chief Minister patiently listened to all stakeholders, underscoring the importance of these discussions in addressing economic challenges and promoting growth.

## New I-T Bill To Simplify Tax Framework, Help Boost MSME Growth: ICAI



Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI-** The new Income Tax Bill will simplify the country's six-decade old tax structure as well as help boost growth of MSMEs, chartered accountants' body ICAI said on Friday.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), a key stakeholder in tax matters, is also setting up a five-member group to closely examine various provisions of the bill.

Introduced in Lok Sabha on Thursday, the bill seeks to achieve tax certainty by minimising the scope of litigation and fresh interpretation.

With an intent to simplify the six-decade old tax framework, the main objective was to streamline the provisions, removing obsolete references and creating a simpler legal framework, ICAI said in a release.

It said the objectives have been sought to be achieved by replacing the concept/terminology of previous year and assessment year with 'tax year' and 'financial year succeeding the tax year', doing away with the provisos and explanations, among others.

ICAI President Charanjot Singh Nanda said the bill is a measure for strengthening employment generation and MSME growth as it would simplify India's tax structure and will give a boost to the Indian economy at large.

"The provisions relating to charitable trusts spread across different Chapters of the Income Tax Act, 1961 are being simplified and consolidated in a single chapter. All the TDS provisions are now contained in one section and presented in the form of a table.

"All presumptive income provisions for residents have been grouped and presented in a single clause," the release said.

Also, all presumptive income provisions for non-residents have been grouped and presented in a single clause.

## Fund Misappropriation Led To RBI Action

Press Trust Of India

**MUMBAI-** The RBI action on New India Co-operative Bank was prompted by alleged misappropriation of funds by the lender's staffers, sources said on Friday.

Over 90 per cent of the city-based bank's 1.3 lakh depositors have up to Rs 5 lakh in their accounts, and will be in a position to get their entire money by way of deposit insurance, they said.

As per the sources, the bank's chief compliance officer (CCO) approached the Mumbai Police's Economic Offence Wing on Thursday following the discovery of some lapses in a 'spot inspection' of its books by RBI.

The issue pertains to misappropriation of funds by some staff members of the bank, they said, without re-

ceiving the amount.

As of March 2024, the bank had 28 branches. Its overall assets decreased to Rs 1,175 crore from the year-ago period's Rs 1,330 crore, and the gross non-performing assets ratio increased to nearly 7.96 per cent.

Harried depositors of the bank had gathered at its branches on Friday following RBI's restrictions, which included a bar on issuing new loans and suspension of deposit withdrawals for six months. The bank has 28 branches, mostly located in the Mumbai region.

The overall deposit base increased marginally to Rs 2,436 crore at the end of FY24 from Rs 2,406 crore in the year-ago period. Over two-thirds of the deposits are term deposits, as per the bank's annual report.



**AS OF MARCH 2024, THE BANK HAD 28 BRANCHES. ITS OVERALL ASSETS DECREASED TO RS 1,175 crore from the year-ago period's Rs 1,330 crore, and the gross non-performing assets ratio increased to nearly 7.96 per cent.**

## Trump's Tariffs And India: An Explainer

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI-** US President Donald Trump has asserted that Washington will not spare India from reciprocal tariffs.

The President has set in motion his plan to impose reciprocal tariffs on imports, which is expected to further deepen the global trade war.

During 2021-24, the US was the largest trading partner of India.

During April-November 2024-25, the bilateral trade in goods between the two countries stood at USD 82.52 billion (USD 52.89 billion exports, USD 29.63 imports). The trade gap was USD 23.26 billion which is in the favour of India.

The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total goods exports, 6.22 per cent in imports, and 10.73 per cent in bilateral trade.

Trump has announced a 25 per

cent duty on all steel and aluminium imports. It will come into effect from March 12.

Moody's Ratings has stated that Indian steel producers will face increased challenges in exporting their products following the US decision to impose the 25 per cent tariff.

"What are tariffs? In international trade parlance, tariffs or customs duties or taxes are imposed on the import of goods. The importer has to pay this duty to the government. Normally, companies pass on these taxes to end users.

For example, if a company is importing a product 'X', having 10 per cent customs duty, valued at Rs 100 from other country, the cost of the product will go up to Rs 110.

These duties, which are indirect taxes, are a source of revenue for a country.

Anti-dumping duty, counter-

vailing duty or safeguard duty are also kinds of tariffs.

"What are reciprocal and retaliatory tariffs?

Normally, both can be used synonymously. They are imposed by countries to match hike in duties or high tariffs by trading partners. For example when in 2018, the US imposed higher duties on certain steel and aluminium products, India retaliated by raising tariffs on 29 US products, recovering equivalent revenue.

"Why countries impose tariffs? These tariffs are imposed to make imported goods expensive and in turn, promote domestic manufacturing and job creation.

It also protects domestic players from cheaper imports.

"What are the negative impacts of tariffs?

Higher import duties are inflationary in nature and make inputs expensive for the domestic

industry. For example, if an auto company needs some component, which is not produced in the country, it will have to pay a higher price for its import because of tariffs.

This will make the product expensive for domestic users.

"Why Trump is talking about imposing reciprocal tariffs?

The US is facing huge trade imbalances with countries, especially with China. With India, the US has a trade deficit of USD 35.31 billion in goods in 2023-24. To bridge this gap, the US President is imposing these duties.

"Is there any substance in Trump's allegations that India is a 'tariff king' or 'tariff abuser'?

According to the economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), these are unfair and the US itself imposes high duties on several goods to safeguard its domestic markets.

## Bears Tighten Grip On D-Street: Investors Suffer Wealth Erosion Of ₹25.31 Lakh Cr In 8 Days

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI-** Investors' wealth eroded sharply by Rs 25.31 lakh crore in eight days of market crash wherein the BSE benchmark Sensex tumbled over 3 per cent amid concerns over unabated foreign fund outflows, lower-than-expected quarterly earnings and uncertainty over global trade war.

In eight trading days, the BSE benchmark tanked 2,644.6 points or 3.36 per cent, and the NSE Nifty slumped 810 points or 3.41 per cent.

On Friday, the 30-share BSE bellwether gauge dropped 199.76 points or 0.26 per cent to settle at 75,939.21, registering its eighth day of decline.

Tracking an extremely weak trend in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms dropped by Rs 25,31,579.11 crore to Rs 4,00,19,247 crore (USD 4.61 trillion) in eight days.

"The gloomy mood continued as investors are perturbed by lingering foreign fund outflows," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

US President Donald Trump has asserted that Washington will not spare India from reciprocal tariffs.

The President has set in motion his plan to impose reciprocal tariffs on imports, which is expected to further deepen the global trade war.

Vishnu Kant Upadhyay, AVP - Research & Advisory, Master



Capital Services, said, "Investor sentiment took a hit after Trump reiterated his stance on imposing reciprocal tariffs on trade partners, which includes India too, reigniting fears of a potential trade war. Uncertainty surrounding tariff structures could weigh on investor confidence."

"Weak corporate earnings for the December quarter further dampened market sentiment with several sectors showing weaker-than-anticipated recovery. Further, the high valuations on which the Indian equity market was trading were not able to justify the growth. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) are continuously selling their stakes in the Indian equity market."

From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Adani Ports dropped over 4 per cent. UltraTech Cement, Sun Pharma, IndusInd Bank, NTPC and Tata Steel were also among the laggards.

Nestle, ICICI Bank, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services and HCL Tech were among the gainers.

## Wholesale Price Inflation Eases To 2.31% In Jan Helped By Moderation In Food Prices



Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI-** Wholesale price inflation moderated marginally to 2.31 per cent in January due to the decline in prices of food items especially vegetables, government data released on Friday showed.

The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) based inflation was 2.37 per cent in December 2024. It was 0.33 per cent in January 2024.

As per the data, inflation in food items eased to 5.88 per cent in January, as against 8.47 per cent in December 2024. Inflation in vegetables came down significantly to 8.35 per cent, as against 28.65 per cent in December 2024.

In the eggs, meat and fish category inflation declined to 3.56 per cent as against 5.43 per cent last month.

Within vegetables, tomato prices declined to 18.9 per cent while inflation in potato continued to be high at 74.28 per cent, and in onion it spiked to 28.33 per cent in January.

The fuel and power category witnessed a deflation of 2.78 per cent in January, against a

deflation of 3.79 per cent in December. In manufactured items, inflation was 2.51 per cent as compared to 2.14 per cent in December 2024.

Retail inflation data released on Wednesday showed that Consumer Price Index (CPI) based inflation eased to a 5-month low of 4.31 per cent in January on easing prices of food items.

ICRA Senior Economist Rahul Agrawal said, "We project the WPI to average at 2.4 per cent in FY2025 and inch up further to 3 per cent in FY2026, despite expectations of a cooling in the prints for the food segment".

According to CARE Ratings Chief Economist Rajani Sinha, food prices are likely to ease in the coming months driven by seasonal correction in prices.

However, there are headwinds as far as global commodity prices are concerned. Their prices have been hardening amid growing uncertainty around the impact of the US protectionist trade policies. This would exert an upward pressure on the WPI non-food component.

## Rs 262 Crore In Q3: BSNL Posts Quarterly Profit For First Time In 17 Years

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI-** BSNL has posted a net profit of Rs 262 crore for December quarter, marking its return to profitability after almost 17 years, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Friday terming it a "significant turning point" for the state-owned telco that has been focused on expansion of service offerings and subscriber base.

BSNL scripted an improvement on several counts, clinching 14-18 per cent growth across mobility, FTTH and leased line service offering. Scindia, Minister for Communications said adding that the subscriber base too has risen to about 9 crore in December, from 8.4 crore in June.

"Today is an important day for BSNL, and for the journey of the telecom sector in India... BSNL has, in third quarter of FY2024-25, for the first time in 17 years, posted a profit on a quarterly basis. The last time that BSNL posted a quarterly profit was in the year 2007," he said on BSNL's earnings.

The net profit came in at about Rs 262 crore in the third quarter of the financial year. Mobility services revenue grew by 15 per cent, Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) revenue increased by 18 per cent and leased line services revenue rose by 14 per cent over Q3 of the previous year.

The Q3 scorecard underlined the telco's focus on innovation, network expansion, cost optimisation, and customer-centric service improvements.

Additionally, BSNL has cut its finance cost and overall expenditure, leading to a decline in losses by over Rs 1,800 crore compared to last year.

With a view to enhancing customer experience, BSNL has introduced offerings such as National WiFi Roaming, BiTV - Free Entertainment for All Mobile Customers, and IFTV for All FTTH Customers, and first private 5G connectivity for mining.

"We certainly hope that this year will not just see an increase in revenues at the end of fourth quarter for the full financial year, but will also (see BSNL) keep expenditure and costs under control and significantly reduce losses from the figures of last year," the minister said.



# CONT. FROM PAGE 1

## India, U.S Unveil

which he held bilateral talks with French President Emmanuel Macron and discussed a wide range of issues, including collaboration on AI and civil nuclear energy.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with US President Donald Trump at the White House for high-stakes discussions spanning defence, trade, technology and energy. President Trump welcomed PM Modi with a warm hug before they sat down for talks. The meeting, which follows PM Modi's pit stop in France, came just hours after President Trump announced a new reciprocal tariff policy targeting all US trading partners, including India.

PM Modi and President Trump's meeting announced the COMPACT (Catalyzing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce & Technology for the 21st Century), an initiative aimed at transforming bilateral cooperation across defence, investment, trade, energy, innovation, and multilateral partnerships.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump will activate new initiatives under the Quad grouping and convene partners from the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor and the I2U2 Group to announce new initiatives, said the joint statement issued by India and the US after the two leaders met in Washington DC Friday.

The statement said PM Modi and President Trump launched a new bilateral forum, Indian Ocean Strategic Venture, and that they are also expected to announce new partnership initiatives across the Western Indian Ocean, Middle East, and the Indo-Pacific.

This comes at a time when President Trump has been talking about walking out of multilateral groupings and initiatives. Sources said this means that Trump is strategic in his approach on which initiatives to invest in. He has walked out of the Paris Climate Agreement, the World Health Organization (WHO), and has threatened North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries by asking them to share the financial burden.

Under the rubric of "Multilateral Cooperation", the joint statement said PM Modi looks forward to hosting President Trump in New Delhi for the Quad leaders' Summit, ahead of which the "leaders will activate new Quad initiatives on shared airlift capacity to support civilian response to natural disasters and maritime patrols to improve interoperability". The Quad grouping comprises India, Japan, Australia and the United States.

Here are the key announcements from the PM Modi-Trump meeting:

### Defence

A new ten-year framework for US-India Major Defence Partnership will be signed later this year. Key developments include expansion of US platforms in Indian defence services, with new deals for Javelin anti-tank missiles and Stryker armoured fighting vehicles and procurement of six additional P8I maritime surveillance aircraft.

A review of International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) to streamline technology transfers and spare part supplies. Opening negotiations for a Reciprocal Defense Procurement (RDP) agreement, expected to facilitate mutual defence purchases.

Acceleration of defence technology collaboration across space, air defence, missile, maritime, and undersea warfare. The US announced a policy review on releasing fifth-generation fighter jets and undersea warfare systems to India.

India and the US launched the Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance (ASIA) to scale industry partnerships in underwater domain awareness (UDA) technologies. India is the first country with which the US has agreed to co-develop sensitive UDA technologies.

Discussions are ongoing for joint development and production of Sea Picket Autonomous Surveillance Systems (Thayer Mahan), Wave Glider Unmanned Surface Vehicles (Boeing & Sagar Defence Engineering - 60 units planned for India), Low Frequency Active Towed Sonars (L3 Harris & Bharat Electronics), Multi-Static Active Sonobuoys (Ultra-Maritime & Bharat Dynamics Ltd.), Large Diameter Autonomous Undersea Vehicles (Anduril) and Triton Autonomous Underwater and Surface Vehicles (Ocean Aero).

### Trade

On the economic front, both leaders set a new target -- "Mission 500" -- to increase bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030.

Some of the major economic pacts are a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) by autumn 2025, covering multiple sectors and a commitment to resolving trade barriers, including the controversial reciprocal tariffs.

Recognition of Indian investments worth \$7.355 billion in the US, supporting 3,000 high-quality jobs.

The trade discussions took place against the backdrop of Trump's 25 per cent tariff on global steel and aluminium imports, a move that could impact Indian exports.

### Technology

India and the US announced the TRUST ("Transforming the Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technology") Initiative which will facilitate partnerships between governments, academia, and the private sector in critical and emerging technologies.

A US-India AI Roadmap to be finalised by the end of the year. Next-generation data centres and AI processing partnerships were also announced.

INDUS Innovation, modelled after INDUS-X, to advance industry-academic collaboration in space, energy, and biotechnology.

Expansion of Indian pharmaceutical manufacturing in the US, particularly for critical medicines.

A Strategic Mineral Recovery initiative to recover and process rare earth minerals, lithium, and cobalt for high-tech industries.

An MoU was also signed between the US National Science Foundation (NSF) and India's

Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) to boost research collaboration in emerging technologies.

### Energy

PM Modi and President Trump recommitted to the India-US Energy Security Partnership, with plans to support India's full membership in the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Move forward with the India-US 123 Civil Nuclear Agreement, enabling US-designed nuclear reactors in India.

Collaborate on advanced small modular reactors to scale up nuclear energy production.

### People-To-People Ties: Migration

Both leaders committed to expanding joint degrees, offshore campuses, and Centres of Excellence. The 300,000-strong Indian student community in the US contributes over \$8 billion annually to the economy.

Streamlining student and professional mobility, while addressing illegal immigration and human trafficking.

Strengthening law enforcement ties to combat organised crime, drug trafficking, and terrorism.

### Multilateral Cooperation

On counterterrorism, both countries condemned Pakistan's failure to act against terrorist networks, demanding accountability for the 26/11 Mumbai and Pathankot attacks.

President Trump announced that the extradition of 26/11 convict Tahawwur Rana to India has been approved.

The Quad alliance (India, US, Japan, Australia), with PM Modi set to host President Trump for the next Quad Leaders' Summit.

The India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) and I2U2 Group, with plans to announce new initiatives in 2025.

The Indian Ocean Strategic Venture, a forum for economic and security cooperation.

Tech giant Meta's announcement of a 50,000 km undersea cable project.

### US Plans To Sell F-35

plan to boost India-US defence ties comes against the backdrop of China's increasing military muscle-flexing along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) as well as in the Indian Ocean Region.

Modi and Trump also called for opening negotiations this year for an India-US Reciprocal Defense Procurement (RDP) agreement to better align procurement systems and enable the reciprocal supply of defence goods and services.

The leaders resolved to accelerate defence technology cooperation across space, air defence, missile, maritime and undersea technologies, with the US announcing a review of its policy on releasing fifth-generation fighters (F-35) and undersea systems to India.

"Starting this year, we will be increasing military sales to India by many billions of dollars," Trump said at a joint media briefing with Modi. "We are also paving the way to ultimately provide India with F-35 stealth fighters," he added.

The F35 jets are known as the most lethal, survivable and connected fighter aircraft in the world.

Asked at a media briefing if India plans to procure F-35 jets from the US, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, said it is at a proposal stage.

"This is currently something that's at the stage of a proposal. But I don't think the formal process in this regard has started yet," he said.

In his remarks, PM Modi said the US has an important role in India's defence preparedness. "As strategic and trusted partners, we are actively moving in the direction of joint development, joint production and transfer of technology," he said.

"In the coming time, new technology and equipment will increase our capability. We have decided to launch the Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance," he said.

The prime minister said the defence cooperation framework will be created for the next decade, adding defence interoperability, logistics, repair and maintenance will also be its main parts.

Highlighting the deepening convergence of US-India strategic interests, the leaders reaffirmed their "unwavering" commitment to a dynamic defence partnership spanning multiple domains.

To advance defence ties further, the leaders announced plans to sign this year a new 10-year framework for the US-India 'Major Defense Partnership' in the 21st Century, a joint statement said.

"They announced plans to pursue this year new procurements and co-production arrangements for 'Javelin' anti-tank guided missiles and 'Stryker' infantry combat vehicles in India," it said.

In another important move, the two sides decided to review their respective arms transfer regulations, including International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), in order to streamline defence trade, technology exchange and maintenance and in-country repair and overhaul of US-provided systems.

Modi and Trump also announced a new initiative - the Autonomous Systems Industry Alliance (ASIA) - to scale industry partnerships and production in the Indo-Pacific.

The leaders welcomed a new partnership between Anduril Industries and Mahindra Group on advanced autonomous technologies to co-develop and co-produce state-of-the-art maritime systems and advanced AI-enabled counter Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) to strengthen regional security.

### Homage Paid To

world has united against it, the home minister added.

"Be it through a surgical strike or an air strike, the Modi government is determined to completely destroy terrorists by carrying out a campaign with a 'zero-tolerance' policy against them," Shah said.

"Heartfelt tribute to the courageous martyrs of the heinous Pulwama attack of 2019. Their supreme sacrifice in the service of the motherland will forever be remembered. The

courage & selfless commitment of our gallant heroes will continue to inspire generations," the Jammu & Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha said in a post on X.

A suicide bomber crashed his explosive-laden vehicle into a bus ferrying Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel on February 14 in 2019, killing 40 jawans.

Days later, India launched a retaliatory attack, which came to be known as the Balakot airstrike.

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) on Friday paid tributes to the 40 jawans who were killed in the Pulwama attack on Jammu-Srinagar national highway on the sixth anniversary of the terror attack.

"A solemn ceremony organised at Lethpora-Pulwama to pay homage and respect to the martyrs of CRPF who attained martyrdom in line of duty on 14/2/2019 in Pulwama," a spokesman of the CRPF said.

He said the officers from all forces and civil administration attended the ceremony. Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha also paid tributes to the fallen CRPF jawans.

"Heartfelt tribute to the courageous martyrs of the heinous Pulwama attack of 2019. Their supreme sacrifice in the service of motherland will forever be remembered. The courage & selfless commitment of our gallant heroes will continue to inspire generations," Sinha wrote in a post on X.

Several local BJP leaders also paid floral tributes to the CRPF jawans at the site of the incident. Among those who visited the spot included BJP spokespersons Altaf Thakur and Sajid Yousuf Shah.

### 'We Missed

tone for their meeting.

As they met, President Trump expressed his appreciation, saying, "We missed you; we missed you a lot," reflecting the strong and cordial relationship that dates back to Trump's first term in 2017.

Here are seven things President Trump said about PM Modi:

- "He is doing a really great job in India. Everybody talks about him. He's doing a really fantastic job."

- "He's a great leader." - On welcoming him at the White House with a warm hug, President Trump said, "We missed you a lot."

- President Trump praised the PM and wrote in the book Our Journey Together, which he presented to the PM, "Mr. Prime Minister, you are great." - "I am thrilled to welcome my friend PM Modi. He is a special man."

- "PM Modi has been a friend for a long time."

- "He is a much tougher negotiator than me, and he is a much better negotiator than me. There is not even a contest."

During the meeting, Trump stressed that the ties between the two nations are going to get closer.

PM Modi expressed his delight at seeing President Trump back at the White House for a second term and conveyed confidence that India and the US will continue to advance their strategic partnership with "the same bond, trust, and excitement."

In his remarks, PM Modi said the people of India had also given him the opportunity to serve them for a third successive term, and this has happened after 60 years in the country's history.

This was PM Modi's first visit to the United States since President Trump's second-term inauguration last month. PM Modi is among the first few world leaders to visit the US following Trump's re-election and was invited to visit within just three weeks of the new administration taking office.

### Colleges In

from December 10 to February 28, 2025, and for students from the 6th to the 12th standard, from December 16 to February 28, 2025.

Furthermore, the department had directed that teaching staff of Government High and Higher Secondary Schools remain available at their respective headquarters from February 10, 2025, onwards to prepare for the upcoming board examinations for classes 10th, 11th, and 12th. (KNO)

### J&K Budget To Be

March 11 with his reply.

The House will discuss the demand of grants till March 24, appropriation bills on March 25 and will have a break till April 7 when private members bills will be taken up, the calendar said, adding April 8 will again witness tabling of private members bills and April 9 private members resolutions and April 11 government business.

There will be a total of six holidays -- three on account of Sunday (March 9, 16 and 23) and three on account of Holi (March 14), Navroz (March 21) and Mahavir Jayanti (April 10) -- during the budget session.

The Legislative Assembly will go on recess for 12 days after the budget is approved.

The second part of the budget session will begin on March 7, which has been earmarked for private members' resolutions. The House will take up private member bills on March 8 and private member resolutions again on March 9. As per the calendar, government business will be taken up on March 11. (inputs from KNO)

### CM Continues

Development Councils and members of the legislative assembly from the twin border districts participated, both in person and through virtual mode, an official spokesman said.

Addressing the participants, the chief minister reiterated that the purpose of these consultations was to gain firsthand insight into the priorities and aspirations of people through their elected representatives.

"When we undertake new projects, it is our duty and responsibility to ensure that ongoing projects are completed with as much priority as new ones. Every project belongs to people and all ongoing works need to be completed on time," Abdullah said.

He assured that the issues and priorities raised by the representatives had been duly noted and would be considered for inclusion in the upcoming budget.

"You are the primary stakeholders -- you

meet people daily and understand their most pressing concerns. Our aim is to involve you in planning and development so that the voices of people find a place in our governance," he said.

The chief minister emphasized the crucial role of elected representatives in grassroots governance, stating that their feedback and inputs were vital in ensuring effective administration.

"Nobody understands the people and their issues better than you. We want to take Jammu and Kashmir to new heights of development and progress," he said.

During the meeting, the deputy commissioners of Rajouri and Poonch presented district-wise updates on capex works that would be prioritized in the upcoming budget session.

### Gang Rape: HC

recovered from the possession of the accused person at NS Bridge Uriand in her statement under Section 164 Cr.P.C. she deposed that she was jointly raped by accused persons at unknown place, so offences punishable under Section 376D (gang rape), 384 (extortion), 506 (criminal intimidation) were incorporated in the case. The government said that the petitioners were involved in a heinous offence against a woman.

As per the petitioner, Syed Imtiaz Hussain married a woman who is an adult and entered into the marriage of her own free will and consent on July 28, 2021.

"Worthwhile to mention here that settlement or compromise must satisfy the conscience of the Court. Quashing of offence or criminal proceedings on the ground of settlement between an offender and victim is not same as compounding of offence," the court said, adding, "For serious offences, like murder, rape, dacoity, etc., or other offences of mental depravity under Indian Penal Code or offences of moral turpitude under special statutes, like the Prevention of Corruption Act or the offences committed by public servants while working in that capacity, settlement between offender and victim can have no legal sanction at all."

Each case will depend on its own facts and no hard-and-fast category can be prescribed, the court said.

The bench said that the High Court must consider whether it would be unfair or contrary to the interest of justice to continue with the criminal proceeding or continuation of the criminal proceeding would tantamount to abuse of process of law despite settlement and compromise between the victim and the wrongdoer and whether to secure the ends of justice, it is appropriate that the criminal case is put to an end.

"The rape is not an offence against the person alone, but it is against society -- in legal terms the victim gets a right in rem -- which will entail the State to take necessary measures to fend the victim and ameliorate them," the court said, adding, "The Courts have to take a victim-sensitive approach and not pronounce verdicts that could infringe upon the victim's rights while being under the influence of various cultural or gender biases which could seriously jeopardise the credibility of the judiciary."

In a country like India where religious practices are centered around deities who are women, the court said, it must recognise the strength of this gender and take all measures to show unwavering respect to uphold their mental as well as bodily integrity, rather than treating them as mere chattels of men.

"In view of the nature of offences alleged in the present case, the power under Section 482 Cr.P.C. cannot be used to quash the proceedings based on compromise if it is in respect of heinous offence which are not private in nature and have a serious impact on the society," the court said, adding, "In cases of this nature, the fact that in view of compromise entered into between parties, the chance of conviction is remote and bleak also cannot be a ground to terminate the investigation and quash FIR and all the proceedings emanating therefrom by invoking the power under Section 482 Cr.P.C. In such circumstances, an impugned FIR does not call for any interference." Consequently, the court dismissed the plea.

### Art 370 was Temporary,

interview, Sackur asked Chandrachud whether he believed that 75 years was too short a period to revoke Article 370, considering its historical significance. Chandrachud explained that Article 370 was originally part of the transitional provisions in the Constitution and was never meant to be permanent. He said, "Since I was the author of one of the judgments in the case, a judge by their very nature of profession has some restraints on either defending or critiquing their judgments... Article 370 of the Constitution when it was introduced into the Constitution at the birth of the Constitution was part of a chapter which is titled 'transitional arrangements' or 'transitional provisions'. It was later renamed as 'temporary and transitional provisions', and therefore at the birth of the Constitution, the assumption was that what was transitional would have to fade away and have to merge with the overall text, the context of the Constitution. Now is 75 plus years too less for abrogating a transitional provision."

Chandrachud explained that the Supreme Court recognized the power of an elected government to revoke a provision that was meant to be transitional. He stated that if the government, which is accountable to the people, decides to remove such a provision, it is legally valid.

Furthermore, the Supreme Court emphasized the need to restore democracy in Jammu and Kashmir, setting a timeline for the revival of its democratic process. Chandrachud remarked, "We said that what was intended to be transitional provision, if the government which is accountable to the people and the elected government takes the view, the Centre that we are abrogating what was essentially transitional that is fine. Second, the Supreme Court said that the democratic process in Jammu and Kashmir must be restored, effectively setting a timeline for that."

The former CJ also addressed allegations

regarding his faith and its potential impact on his judgments. "I make no bones of the fact that I am a man of faith," he said. "Our Constitution does not require you to be an atheist to be an independent judge, and I value my faith." Justice Chandrachud emphasised that his faith teaches him the universality of religion and the importance of dispensing equal and even-handed justice.

Justice Chandrachud also dismissed concerns about his perceived closeness to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, asserting that basic courtesies between high constitutional officials do not sway judicial outcomes.

He pointed out that the Supreme Court had, in fact, ruled against the government in the electoral bonds case, showcasing the judiciary's independence.

### Sajad Lone Submits

of Article 370 and Article 35A in the strongest terms. The resolution also calls for the restoration of the pre-August 5, 2019 constitutional position of Jammu & Kashmir.

Sources said that Lone, who maintains that the resolution brought by the National Conference-led government in the first session of the House was ambiguous and did not clearly reject the August 5, 2019 decisions, has brought a fresh resolution on the issue.

"The resolution brought by Lone calls for condemning all actions of August 5, 2019 in the strongest terms and seeks the restoration of the pre-August 5, 2019 constitutional position," they said, adding that the resolution has been submitted in the Legislative Assembly secretariat.

In the last assembly session, the National Conference-led government had brought a "mild-worded" resolution on the issue of special status. "This Legislative Assembly reaffirms the importance of the special status and constitutional guarantees, which safeguarded the identity, culture, and rights of the people of J&K, and expresses concern over their unilateral removal," the NC-led resolution read.

It further stated that the assembly "emphasizes that any process for restoration must safeguard both national unity and the legitimate aspirations of the people of J&K."

While all Kashmir-based opposition parties, including PDP and PC, had accused NC of bringing a "watered-down" resolution on the issue, the Congress had said that the resolution only seeks the restoration of statehood and doesn't call for the reinstatement of Article 370. (KNO)

### CM Pushes For

automatically reduced. Similarly, we must ensure that our doctors do not just practice in cities. I know it's not a popular thing to say, but rural areas also deserve proper healthcare access," he said.

The chief minister was addressing JK MediCon-2025, the first ever national conference-cum-workshop, at Government Medical College (GMC) here. The event was organized by the J&K Medical Council in collaboration with the Student Research Development Council (SRDC).

"Our challenge is to make healthcare more easily accessible. The excessive pressure on GMC Jammu's emergency services stems from the fact that healthcare in peripheral areas is not of the required standard. This forces people to flood into cities," he said.

Abdullah emphasized that the solution lies in improving healthcare infrastructure in rural areas.

"The way to reduce this pressure is not just by expanding our infrastructure in Jammu but by strengthening facilities in peripheral areas. There was a time when we only had GMC Jammu and GMC Srinagar. Now, we have GMCs at the district level," he said.

Speaking about MediCon-2025, the chief minister acknowledged its importance in fostering debates and discussions on key medical issues.

"There are all sorts of debates surrounding the topics that MediCon can address. The good thing is that students are involved through SRDC," he said.

Abdullah highlighted that the participants will earn 11 credits through MediCon, which will encourage greater engagement and enthusiasm.

"I hope the futuristic advancements in medical science will be part of our discussions -- how much technology is beneficial, how much human contact should be replaced by machines. While some tasks may be better performed by AI, there are things that only human beings can do," he said.

Touching on the ethical dimensions of modern medical trends, Abdullah raised concerns about the intersection of medicine and profit-driven healthcare.

"Where do we draw the ethical line in medicine? Is there such a thing as too much ethics? Does the pursuit of profit in medical care conflict with ethical responsibilities? Should hospitals treat patients as a means of revenue generation?" he asked.

The chief minister also noted the pressure on doctors working in corporate hospitals where their performance is measured not by the number of patients they treat but by the revenue they generate.

Delving into the future of robotic surgery and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in medicine, Abdullah highlighted both the potential and concerns surrounding these advancements.

"One trend that seems to be catching on is the use of robotic surgery. Principal GMC Jammu (Ashutosh Gupta) mentioned that AI could one day take over medical procedures. Honestly, I cannot imagine a scarier prospect than entrusting my life entirely to a machine," the chief minister said.

"At the end of the day, there is immense value in human contact and that's where doctors -- who literally do God's work -- play an irreplaceable role," he added.

The chief minister also acknowledged the growth plans for GMC Jammu and expressed his intent to contribute.

"Principal GMC Jammu presented several ideas for GMC Jammu's future growth. My colleagues and I will ensure at least one of those proposals is implemented so that I too can have a foundation stone here and not feel left out in future presentations," he said in a lighter vein.



# ICC Champions Trophy: Winners To Receive Prize Money Of USD 2.24 Million

Press Trust of India

**DUBAI:** Winners of the upcoming Champions Trophy will walk away with a whopping USD 2.24 million cash reward after the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced a 53 per cent hike in its prize money pool for the eight-team tournament starting February 19.

The winners' purse would be close to 20 crore in Indian currency. The runners-up will receive half the amount, USD 1.12 million (INR 9.72 crore), while each losing semi-finalist will take home USD 560,000 (INR 4.86 crore). The total prize pool has increased to USD 6.9 million (Rs 60 crore approx).

"The substantial prize pot underscores the ICC's ongoing commitment to investing in the sport and maintaining the global prestige of our events," ICC chairman Jay Shah said in a statement ahead of the tournament which will be held in Pakistan and the UAE.

Each group stage win would



be worth over USD 34,000 (INR 30 lakh) for the victorious team.

Teams finishing in fifth or sixth place will receive USD 350,000 each (INR three crore), while the seventh and eighth-placed sides will take home USD 140,000 (INR 1.2 crore).

Additionally, all eight teams will receive a guaranteed USD 125,000 each (INR 1.08 crore) for participating in the event.

This tournament marks the first time Pakistan will host an ICC event since 1996. However, India will play all their matches

in Dubai owing to security concerns related to travelling to Pakistan. Rohit Sharma's men will begin their campaign on February 20 against Bangladesh.

The Pakistan leg will feature games in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi.

The 2025 edition features eight teams split into two groups of four, with the top two from each group advancing to the semi-finals.

"The ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 represents a pivotal moment for cricket, reviving a tournament that highlights the pinnacle of ODI talent, where every match is critical," the ICC chairman emphasised in his statement.

"Beyond the financial incentive, this tournament ignites fierce competition, captivates fans worldwide, and plays a vital role in fostering the growth and long-term sustainability of cricket for future generations," Shah added.

The men's Champions Trophy was held every four years from 2009 to 2017 before a COVID disruption and deliberations on its relevance led to it being postponed. The tournament was first introduced as a biennial event in 1998.

The women's Champions Trophy will make its debut in 2027 in the T20 format.

## Short TAKES

### Sonamarg To Host National Snowshoe Championship From Feb 17

Department of Tourism, Kashmir, in collaboration with J&K SnowShoe Association, will host the National SnowShoe Championship at Sonamarg on February 17 and 18.

It will be second time ever that any national level wintersport event would be held in Sonamarg after successfully hosting the 8th National SnowShoe Championship last year. However, it will be first time after opening of ZMorh Tunnel that Sonamarg will be holding any mega wintersports event.

The championship was earlier scheduled to be held in Gulmarg, but Department of Tourism, Kashmir stressed on to hold it in Sonamarg, so the J&K SnowShoe Association swiftly moved the event.

The event will witness participation of around 110 athletes representing 15-17 States/Union Territories, including J&K, Ladakh, Punjab, Chandigarh, Haryana, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Pondicherry, Kerala.

### Kargil's Shahnaz Parveen Selected For World University Games

Taekwondo star Shahnaz Parveen has been selected to represent India at the World University Games in Germany. Hailing from Sankoo, Kargil, Shahnaz has etched her name in history as the first female athlete from Ladakh to qualify for this prestigious global event for the second time.

Shahnaz is pursuing her post-graduation in B.P.Ed (1st year) at Maharishi Dayanand University (MDU), Rohtak, under the guidance of Head Coach Dr. Ashok Kumar.

Gulzar Hussain Munshi, President of the Ladakh Taekwondo Association, lauded Shahnaz's dedication and perseverance. Munshi also expressed heartfelt appreciation to MDU and Coach Kumar for their continuous guidance and support in shaping Shahnaz into an international-level athlete.

Shahnaz has consistently been a trailblazer in Ladakh's sports arena. She was awarded the State Award in Sports (UT Ladakh 2023) and has previously represented India at the World University Games in Chengdu, China. She also secured an impressive 8th place in the finals of the Group Women Under-30 category at the 8th Asian Taekwondo Poomsae Championship in Vietnam.

### Wellalage Takes 4 As Sri Lanka Beat Australia, Win Series 2-0

Kusal Mendis scored his fifth century and Dunith Wellalage took four wickets as Sri Lanka beat Australia by 174 runs in the second one-day international on Friday and swept the two-match series 2-0.

Sri Lanka made a competitive 281-4 in its 50 overs after captain Charith Asalanka had won the toss and elected to bat first. Australia lost its last seven wickets for 28 runs to be bowled out for 107 runs in the 25th over.

Mendis top scored with 101 and was well supported by Asalanka, who followed up a fighting century in the first game with an unbeaten 78.

Opener Nishan Madushka scored his second one-day international half-century to be dismissed for 51 Fast bowler Sean Abbot had the best bowling figures 1-41.

### Bayern Munich Ties Star Jamal Musiala To Contract Until 2030

Bayern Munich star Jamal Musiala has extended his contract with the club through June 2030.

The Bavarian powerhouse said Friday that the 21-year-old Musiala, who joined the club as a youth from English side Chelsea in 2019, signed a new deal extending the one he had for another season.

"People go to the stadium for players like Jamal Musiala. He's a truly exceptional player," Bayern president Herbert Hainer said. "Sometimes you feel like the rules of gravity don't apply to him. Credit to our sporting management and the board. Today is a very good day for FC Bayern."

Musiala's extension follows recently announced new deals for teammates Alphonso Davies and goalkeeper Manuel Neuer. Bayern midfielder Joshua Kimmich and forwards Leroy Sané and Thomas Müller still have contracts expiring at the end of this season.

## J&K Senior Cricketers Praise Team's 'Successful' Ranji Season

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Former J&K cricketers and members of J&K Cricket Association on Friday urged the government to improve cricket infrastructure in the region while praising the team's "successful" Ranji Trophy season.

J&KCA member Manzoor Wazir and former Ranji player Parvaiz Ahmad in a press conference said that the Ranji Trophy season has been successful, though the team narrowly missed semifinals berth.

"Our team's performance has been consistent, and the perception that J&K's victories are surprises is changing," they said.

Parvaiz said that while the team has improved over the years, further enhancements in training facilities and playing conditions are necessary.

Recalling J&K's cricket history, he said that the region has been participating in the Ranji Trophy for over 50 years. He highlighted that the first century in Ranji history for J&K was recorded in 1979.

"Now, our players are consistently scoring big runs, and this year, our youngsters have delivered strong performances," he added.



Abid Bhat/KO

**"When we defeated Mumbai, the team celebrated with restraint. The players maintained their dignity in both victory and defeat," he noted.**

Addressing concerns about infrastructure, he said that stadium conditions in Jammu and Kashmir has declined over the years. He emphasised the need for modern facilities to support

player development.

He also acknowledged the team's composure during key matches. He cited fast bowler Umar Nazir's reaction after dismissing Rohit Sharma as an example of professionalism.

"When we defeated Mumbai, the team celebrated with restraint. The players maintained their dignity in both victory and defeat," he noted.

He further pointed out that the team made bold decisions in selection, including benching key players when required. "These decisions indicate a shift in the team's approach. We are moving in the right direction," he said. (KNO)

## JKCA Felicitates Senior Cricket Team

JKCA felicitated the J&K senior men's cricket team for its brilliant performance in the 2024-25 Ranji Trophy on Friday. The ceremony was held at JKCA Ground.

J&K missed out on a semifinal berth after giving away a one-run lead in the first-innings against Kerala.

J&K, led by Paras Dogra, defeated teams like Baroda and Mumbai on their way to the quarter-final. Players like Aquib Nabi, Umar Nazir, Yudhvir Singh, Abid Mushtaq, Kanahya Wadhwan and Shubham were excellent throughout the campaign.

## FIFA Ban Threatens Pakistan's Involvement In Asian Cup

Agencies

Pakistan's international footballers are facing another spell in the sporting wilderness after the country's federation was hit with a third FIFA suspension in less than eight years, just a month before the men's national team was scheduled to start qualification for the 2027 Asian Cup.

FIFA recently announced the latest ban after the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) Congress voted on Jan. 25 to reject changes to its constitution that were recommended by the sport's world governing body and the Asian Football Confederation. It follows similar punishments in 2017 and 2021 which lasted five and 14 months respectively.

"It's not surprising any more as there are power struggles in Pakistan football with people promoting themselves and not caring about the game," Pakistan international Navid Rahman told The Associated Press. "Also FIFA and the AFC should take some of the blame as this is a recurring issue which should have been sorted out before."



In 2017 and 2021, FIFA banned Pakistan due to third-party interference in the running of the PFF. In 2019, FIFA installed a Normalization Committee to run Pakistan soccer and organizing PFF elections. With no elections yet held, the committee is still in place.

There has also been a lack of action on the field with no nationwide league in the country of more than 250 million since 2019 and no national team games

played at home for eight years after 2015.

That barren run ended in 2023 when Pakistan defeated Cambodia in Islamabad to progress to the second round of World Cup qualification for the first time. It meant six more official international fixtures and some optimism for the future.

"As soon as there is a little traction that develops in Pakistan football then something happens" Rahman said. "For a player my

age, the last 10 years have been terrible. There have been three FIFA bans and a global pandemic. So much time has been taken away from us."

Pakistan, which is No. 198 among FIFA's 210 ranked national teams, was set to start Asian Cup qualification against Syria on March 25. Soccer's Asian organizers have stated that if the national team is to compete, the ban needs to be lifted by March 4.

There may be a chance. The PFF has decided to hold an Extraordinary Congress on Feb. 27 at Lahore where "the revision of the PFF Constitution as suggested by FIFA and AFC," is on the agenda, according to a letter, dated Feb. 12, sent by Muhammad Shahid Niaz Khokhar, the PFF's acting general secretary, to congress members.

Any development would be welcomed by players.

"The Asian Cup qualifiers are huge," Rahman said. "The issue with the national team is a lack of official games. It's now time for a permanent solution that allows football to resume and whatever elections need to be held, should go ahead."

## Winter Games Attract Global Athletes To Gulmarg Slopes



Observer News Service

**GULMARG:** With the 2025 Khelo India Winter Games set to be held from February 22 to 25, an interesting cross-section of international players and fans are turning Gulmarg into a melting pot of cultures bound together by their passion for winter sports.

"The beauty here is overwhelming," says Melania Anderson, a yoga instructor from the United Kingdom based in Hong Kong.

Anderson, who works with the Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) through her charity 'Yama', is enchanted by the double appeal of Kashmir as both a sporting challenge and cultural treasure.

"The Kashmiri cuisine alone would have made the journey worthwhile," she said.

Ben Hurst, an Australian commercial prawn fisherman, has swapped the spray of the Pacific for the powder of the Himalayas.

"Standing in the mountains of Kashmir is safer than walking across the streets of Sydney," he says.

"What we have experienced is just gorgeous and beautiful. It's unlike most skiing resorts around

the world," he said and praised hospitality and friendliness of the locals.

The French team brings its own view to these games. Jean Marc Auge, who grew up in the French Alps, talked of the Himalayas with holy reverence.

"This is different," he said. His fellow-countryman Nabil El, who is now resident in Australia, nodded in agreement.

The locals, the athletes, see more in the games than sport.

Firdous Ahmad Sheikh from Tangmarg, Yasmeen Sajad from Sopore, Mehak Mushtaq from Palhalan Pattan, and Aalima Zainab from Tangmarg are in awe about meeting international ski and snowboarding experts.

"It's an out of this world experience," they say, with their enthusiasm clearly evident.

Others like Virginia Winstone, a New Zealander; Laura Thonton, from Wisconsin, USA, and Australian ski guide and patroller Bill Barker, too have been attracted to the games.

As preparations for the games enter the last leg, the air in Gulmarg is alive with expectation.

## Morning After His Historic Goal, Noonan, 16, Heads Back To School



Agencies

**DUBLIN:** Sixteen-year-old Michael Noonan didn't have much time to celebrate his historic goal for Shamrock Rovers.

The Irish teenager had school in the morning.

Noonan's second-half goal Thursday night gave the Hoops a 1-0 victory over Norwegian club Molde in the first leg of their UEFA Conference League playoff.

At 16 years, 197 days, he became the youngest-ever scorer in the competition but after a flight back to Dublin, he packed his bag for classes Friday morning.

His mother, Sandie Noonan, posted on X: "And back to school he goes..." with a picture of the teenager headed off to class.

Rovers said Noonan had become the youngest scorer in any European club competition, but Nii Lamptey was 16 years, 100 days when he netted for Anderlecht in a UEFA Cup game in 1991.

The second leg is next Thursday at Tallaght Stadium in Dublin.

Noonan, who had a trial with Manchester City, joined Rovers in January from St Patrick's Athletic, where he had become the Saints' youngest-ever starter at 15 years, 9 months.

He's an Under-17 international for Ireland.

Rovers coach Stephen Bradley said Noonan "just lives, breathes and sleeps football." A little less sleep Friday morning, though.



## Depression could hasten pace of developing physical conditions by over 30 pc study finds



### Agenceis

New Delhi, Feb 14: Adults with depression could develop chronic conditions, such as osteoarthritis and hypertension, 30 per cent faster as compared to those with no history of the mental disorder, according to a study that suggested physical effects of the mental condition.

Researchers, led by those from the University of Edinburgh, UK, said that treating depression should, therefore, involve methods that help manage both mental and physical health.

The mental disorder, marked by a persistent low mood, is known to heighten one's chance of developing heart disease or diabetes, with previous studies having looked at a patient's risk of developing a small number of illnesses, according to the authors.

However, the study, published in the journal PLOS Medicine, examined people with a history of depression for their risk of developing 69 physical conditions. Over 1.7 lakh people from the UK Biobank were followed for an average of about seven years.

The team noted that those with depression had an average of three physical conditions, hypertension being the most common, compared with an average of two in those without.

Over the study period, the participants with a history of depression developed an average of 0.2

additional physical conditions a year, while those without accrued 0.16.

"The most common new conditions were osteoarthritis (15.7 per cent of those with depression at baseline vs 12.5 per cent without), hypertension (12.9 per cent vs 12 per cent) and gastroesophageal reflux disease (13.8 per cent vs 9.6 per cent)," the authors wrote.

The results revealed that a history of depression could be a marker indicating a risk of developing physical conditions in the long-term.

The team added that while most healthcare systems are designed to treat conditions individually rather than individuals with multiple conditions, approaches combining methods to manage mental and physical health could improve outcomes.

Risk factors, such as smoking, high body mass index and low physical activity, could also contribute to how quickly an individual with depression develops physical conditions in middle- and old-age, which present opportunities for improving future health, the authors said.

About 18 per cent of the study group had a history of depression at the start of the study. Widespread pain in the body, sleeplessness, stressful life events, loneliness and obesity were more common among these participants, compared to those without depression.

## Russia detains another US citizen on drugs charges days after swap, reports say

### Agenceis

Moscow, Feb 14: Russia has detained another US citizen, after customs officials found cannabis-laced marmalade in his luggage, Russian media said Friday, days after a Moscow-Washington prisoner swap that the White House called a diplomatic thaw and a step toward ending the fighting in Ukraine.

Russian police said the 28-year-old American had attempted to smuggle a "significant amount" of drugs into the country, the Interfax agency reported, citing Russia's Federal Customs Service.

The agency said the American was detained at Moscow's Vnukovo airport after flying in from Istanbul last Friday.

Mash, a Russian Telegram channel with links to the security services, said the US citizen, identified only as K. Byers, faced up to seven years in prison if convicted.

There was no immediate



comment from the US State Department. The Washington-Moscow prisoner exchange this month saw Alexander Vinnik, a Russian cryptocurrency expert who faced Bitcoin fraud charges in the United States, returned to Russia after being freed for American Marc Fogel, a teacher from Pennsylvania who was detained in 2021 when traveling to Russia to work at a school. Fogel had been serving a 14-year sentence for having

with what his family and supporters said was medically prescribed marijuana. President Joe Biden's administration designated Fogel as wrongfully detained in December.

President Donald Trump on Wednesday upended three years of US policy toward Ukraine, saying he and Russian leader Vladimir Putin had agreed to begin negotiations on ending the conflict following a lengthy direct phone call.

## Military flight from US with 119 illegal immigrants to reach in Amritsar on Feb 15

### Agenceis

Washington, Feb 14: A military flight will deport 119 individuals, who were in the US illegally and will reach Amritsar in India on Saturday, hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted the need to fight against the "ecosystem" of human trafficking.

Earlier this month, a US military aircraft carrying 104 illegal immigrants from various states landed in Amritsar, the first such batch of Indians deported by the Trump government as part of a crackdown against illegal immigrants.

Sources told PTI on Friday here that one military flight will be reaching Amritsar on February 15 with 119 people.

On Thursday, Prime Minister Modi, during a joint press conference with US President Donald Trump here, asserted the need to fight against the "ecosystem" of human trafficking that lures people from ordinary families with big dreams and promises and are brought to other countries as illegal immigrants.

"This is not a question about India only but is a global issue," Modi said in response to a ques-

tion by PTI on the issue of illegal immigration during the joint press conference with Trump in the White House.

He said, "We are of the opinion that anybody who enters and lives in another country illegally, they have absolutely no legal right or authority to live in that country."

Modi added that as far as India and the US are concerned, "we have always said that those who are verified Indian citizens and who are living in the US illegally, India is prepared to take them back."

Later, in response to a question by PTI on the deportation of illegal immigrants from the US and whether the issue of the manner in which they were brought back to India in the first military aircraft and shackled was raised during Modi's meeting with Trump, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said "yes, it (issue of illegal immigration) did figure during the discussions today."

Misri added that Modi did emphasise during the discussions that the return of illegal immigrants is not the end of the story.

## Bakery owner in New England says he was offended over town's decision against pastry painting

### Agenceis

Concord, Feb 14: A New Hampshire bakery owner testified Friday that his excitement about displaying a painting by high school students of giant pastries quickly turned to annoyance after a zoning code officer told him it was a sign and had to be changed or removed.

Sean Young said the the work atop his bakery is art, and was never intended to be a sign.

"I was artistically offended for the students," said Young, who's suing the town of Conway because he says it violated the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech.

"It's offensive to move it," he said in court Friday. "I just didn't want to do it."

The bright painting atop Leavitt's Country Bakery shows



sunbeams shining down on a mountain range made of sprinkle-covered chocolate and strawberry doughnuts, a blueberry muffin, a cinnamon roll and other pastries.

A federal judge is considering whether the town is infringing

on Young's rights. For now, the painting has been allowed to remain since it was first displayed in June 2022. The zoning board determined the painting is not so much art as advertising.

If it didn't show what's sold

inside — baked goods — it wouldn't be considered a sign and could stay, board members said. But because of its size, they say it can't remain as-is. At about 90 square feet (8.6 square meters), it's four times bigger than the local sign code allows.

Jeremy Gibbs, the zoning officer who issued the citation, testified that he was following the town's definition of a sign, which some lawyers and even the judge remarked seemed to cover "everything."

A sign in Conway is "any device, fixture, placard, structure or attachment thereto that uses color, form, graphic, illumination, symbol, or writing to advertise, announce the purpose of, or identify the purpose of any person or entity, or to communicate information of any kind to the public, whether commercial or noncommercial,"

according to the sign code.

Gibbs testified that if there were no regulation, then signs could be placed anywhere and there could be safety concerns about lighting or distracted drivers. He also noted that Conway, near the White Mountains, draws tourists to its natural resources.

If signage was unregulated, he said, "we could lose a lot of that District Judge Joseph Laplante couldn't resist adding a bit of levity to the proceeding.

"It's shocking that no one brought doughnuts to this trial," he said at one point.

During another moment, he asked Young to describe each pastry in the painting, starting with a scone on the left. He quibbled over Young's description that a raspberry cookie was actually the top of a cupcake.

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