

## 80% Deficit In Winter Precipitation

# MeT Warns Of Possible 'Drought' In Kashmir



Observer News Service

Srinagar: Kashmir has witnessed a dry winter this year with the months of January and February recording a precipitation deficit of around 80 per

cent, which has raised the possibility of drought in the valley this summer, the MeT department officials said.

Several water bodies are flowing below the zero level mark at many places | [More on P10](#)

## 'Declining Snow Threatens Economy, Ecology'

Renowned earth scientist and Vice-Chancellor of the Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) Prof Shakeel Romshoo on Tuesday said that snowless winters during the past five years have pushed Kashmir to the brink. In an exclusive interview, Prof. Romshoo said that Kashmir has experienced a | [More on P10](#)

## Chillai Khurd Likely To Bring Rain, Snow On Last Day

After Chilla-i-Kalan-- the 40-day harshest winter period-- ended on a dry note in Kashmir, the 20-day small cold known as "Chillai Khurd" too failed to bring any major respite. However, as the 20-day small cold is all set | [More on P10](#)

**J&K GOVERNMENT TAKES UP ISSUE of drying Achabal stream with Geological Survey of India."**

# Shah Outlines Criminal Law Roadmap for J&K 'With Terror Declining, J&K Police Must Focus On Citizen Rights'

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Stating that the Jammu & Kashmir police should now prioritize safeguarding citizen rights, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday directed the Union Territory administration to ensure the full implementation of three new criminal laws by April 2025.

Shah, who chaired a high-level review meeting on the implementation of these laws in Jammu & Kashmir, noted that with the decline in terror activities and improvement in the security scenario in the



region, the police should now prioritize safeguarding the rights of its citizens.

Shah, who reviewed the implementation of the laws in the presence of LG Manoj

Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, asked the UT administration to ensure the full implementation of the three new criminal laws, made under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, by April 2025.

The three criminal laws— Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and the Bharatiya Sakshaya Act—came into effect on July 1, 2024. These laws replaced the Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure, and Evidence Act.

Shah said that for the full implementation | [More on P10](#)

## Meeting Focused On Victim-centric Approach: CM

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Tuesday said that his meeting with Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on the implementation of the new criminal laws in J&K focused on modernization, expediting justice, and adopting a victim-centric

approach to law enforcement. Office of Chief Minister, J&K in a post on X, said, "As part of the ongoing review meetings by the Union Home Minister with various States and UTs, I attended a meeting today to discuss the implementation of New Criminal | [More on P10](#)

## MULTI-CRORE LOAN 'SCAM'

# Bank Officer Among 5 Held

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: The crime branch of the Jammu and Kashmir Police has arrested five accused, including a former manager of the Jammu and Kashmir Bank, in connection with an alleged multi-crore-rupee loan scam here, the agency said on Tuesday.

The case was registered in 2023 on a written complaint from Mohammad Shakeel, the chief manager of the supervision and control | [More on P10](#)

# Gyanesh Kumar To Take Over As 26th CEC Today

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Gyanesh Kumar, who as a senior Union Home Ministry official played a key role in the government's move to abrogate provisions of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir and setting up the

Ram temple trust, will assume the office of the chief election commissioner on Wednesday.

Kumar retired as Secretary in the Cooperation ministry in January 2024 and was appointed as an election commissioner in March 2024. He will become the | [More on P10](#)

## SC To Hear Pleas Against CEC, ECs Appointments

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said it would on February 19 take up on "priority basis" the pleas against the appointments of the chief election commissioner (CEC) | [More on P10](#)

## Development At A Cost?

# 'Road Project' Triggers Wildlife Conflicts In Rajwar Handwara

RTI Reveals 128 Incidents Since 2018

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A surge in human-animal conflict in the Rajwar area of Handwara has claimed four lives and injured nine others since 2018, according to data obtained through a Right to Information (RTI) request. Local

residents attribute the increase in incidents to the construction of the Handwara-Bangus road, which they say has disrupted the wildlife habitat.

The RTI, filed by activist and lawyer Rasikh Rasool Bhat, reveals 128 incidents of human-animal conflict in Rajwar between 2017-18 and the present. It also shows that wildlife authorities received 136 SOS calls regarding | [More on P10](#)

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# AIIMS Delhi Acquires Cutting-Edge Technology With Surgical Robot

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi- AIIMS Delhi has installed a state-of-the-art surgical robot in its department of surgical disciplines, making it one of the first general surgery units in a government hospital in India to acquire such cutting-edge technology. The introduction of robotic surgery underscores AIIMS's commitment to enhancing patient care, enabling the execution of complex procedures with unmatched precision, and keeping pace with global advancements in medical technology, said Dr Hemang Bhattacharjee, professor of surgery at AIIMS. "The initiative to incorporate robotic surgery into its general

surgery department is a strategic move to elevate the standard of care provided in a government healthcare setting," he said. The surgical robot allows for a magnified, three-dimensional view of the operative field and offers unparalleled dexterity through robotic arms, enabling surgeons to perform intricate procedures with precision. The technology is particularly advantageous for surgeries requiring meticulous dissection and suturing in confined anatomical spaces, Bhattacharjee said. "For example, complex colorectal surgeries, esophagectomies, and pancreatic surgeries that were traditionally challenging due to their invasive nature can now be performed with reduced complications, shorter hospital stays and faster recovery times," he said.



While private hospitals in metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Chennai have embraced ro-

botic systems in specialties such as urology and gynaecology over the last decade, its adoption in

government hospitals, especially for general surgery, has been relatively limited, Bhattacharjee

said. AIIMS Delhi is bridging this gap by bringing advanced robotic capabilities to a public healthcare setup, ensuring that patients from diverse socio-economic backgrounds benefit from the technology, Sunil Chumber, head, department of surgical disciplines, said. "AIIMS is an academic institute and more than 100 surgical residents pursue their training in the department at any given point of time. "Successful installation of the system will provide our resident doctors ample opportunity to get trained on this latest technology during their residency period. This has positioned our training curriculum on par with any of the renowned medical institutes of the world," Chumber said.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

I want to change my name in my aadhar card bearing no 8674 6864 4346 from Bitti kour to Bitty kour. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned office within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained. Sabeena Bano W/o Mohd Shafi Dar R/o Kripalpora Payeen, Tehsil Singhpora, District Baramulla jvd

## PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that the power connection registered under Consumer ID No. 0212010015905 in Division Baramulla is currently in the names of:  
 1. Mehraj U Din Bhat, S/O Gh Mohammad Bhat, R/O Badam Bagh Sopore  
 2. Mohammad Ayoob Ganie, S/O Abdul Samad Ganie, R/O Wagoora Baramulla  
 The said connection is now requested to be transferred solely to: Mohammad Ayoob Ganie S/O Abdul Samad Ganie R/O Wagoora Baramulla. If any individual has objections regarding this change, they may submit their objections to the concerned PDD office within seven (07) days from the date of publication of this notice. No objections will be entertained beyond this period.  
 Name: Mohammad Ayoob Ganie  
 S/O: Abdul Samad Ganie  
 R/O: Wagoora Baramulla fko

## OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER BUDGAM

Subject:- Necessary Correction/change in address in data to the License No. JK-0420110012822 issued in favour of MUBASHIR PANDITH Parentage ALI MOHAMAD PANDITH. Whereas an application has been received by one MUBASHIR PANDITH Parentage ALI MOHAMAD PANDITH wherein he claimed that the Fathers Name has been wrongly recorded in the records of Driving Licenses as ALI MOHD which needs to be changed as ALI MOHAMAD PANDITH. 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

## PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Rukhsana Akhter, W/O Mushtaq Ahmad Malla, R/O Pahali Pora, Shopian, hereby request the correction of my ward's details in Aadhaar records under Aadhaar No. 346811352731, which have been incorrectly entered as follows:  
 • Name: Recorded as Safan Malla instead of Abdul Safan Malla  
 • Date of Birth: Recorded as 21-05-2015 instead of 12-08-2017  
 • Residence: Recorded as Utterpora Pahali Pora instead of Pahali Pora, Shopian  
 I seek the necessary corrections in the records. If anyone has any objections regarding this correction, they may contact the concerned office within seven (07) days from the date of publication of this notice. No objections will be entertained thereafter.  
 Name: Rukhsana Akhter  
 W/O: Mushtaq Ahmad Malla  
 R/O: Pahali Pora, Shopian fko

## PUBLIC NOTICE

The name of my daughter, namely Irha Shafi, has inadvertently been recorded as Soziya Zehra in Aadhaar card bearing number 9278-8397-6272, which is incorrect, and her actual name is Soziya Zehra which needs to be corrected. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned office within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.  
 Sabeena Bano W/o Mohd Shafi Dar  
 R/o Kripalpora Payeen, Tehsil Singhpora,  
 District Baramulla FKO

## PUBLIC NOTICE

This is information for the general public that in I have lost my passport bearing number J2233611 in Main Bus Stand Budgam while travelling. If any body found please return to the below mentioned address or mobile number, in this regard if anybody having any objection may contact REGIONAL PASSPORT OFFICE SRINAGAR with in a period of seven days. No objection shall be entertained after that.  
 ABDUL RASHID GANAIE  
 S/O ABDUL SALAM GANAIE  
 R/O FALCHILL BUDGAM  
 CELL. 7889678923 mcb

## OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR KREERI

Subject: Application Adil Ahmad Najar S/o, D/o, W/o Mohammad Maqbool Najar R/o Reshi Pora, Tehsil Kreeri, for the issuance of OBC (Other Backward Classes) in his/her/their favor.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the subject cited above, the applicant has submitted the file in the office of the undersigned for the issuance of an OBC certificate. In this connection, a report of Patwari Halqa concerned has been sought, which reveals that the applicant is currently residing in the village Reshi Pora of Tehsil Kreeri and belongs to the Najar community, having an annual income of Rs. 2,00,000/-. The details of the family of the applicant are as follows:

S No	Name of the Family Member	Relationship with the Applicant	Age	Occupation	Annual Income
01	Mohammad Maqbool Najar	H.O.F	52	Carpenter	
02	Hafeeza Begum	House wife	50	Nil	
03	Adil Ahmad Najar	Son	24	Student	
04	Rayees Ahmad Najar	Son	22	"	
05	Tahiba Maqbool	D.T.R	19	"	
06	Yawar Ahmad Najar	Son	18	"	

Therefore, through this Public Notice, objections are being sought from the public. If any person has any objection, he/she can submit their objections in the office of the undersigned within 07 (seven) days positively from the date this notice has been published. No objection shall be entertained after the stipulated time period.

Naib Tehsildar  
Kreeri

## PUBLIC NOTICE

I Feroz Ahmad Wani S/o Gh Ahmad Wani R/o Lalbazar Srinagar have lost the number plate of my Activa Scooty, while traveling from Hazratbal, Bearing Registration No. JK01AH 5387. If found, please contact the mentioned No. Otherwise, I want to be applying for its duplicate.

9796905036

Govt. of Jammu & Kashmir (U.T)

## OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD(R&B) DIVISION VAILOO

FRESH NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

CALL II

NIT No.89/8477-86 of R&B/Vailoo /2024-2025/e-tendering/ DATED:18/02/2025

For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory J&K e-tenders (In Single cover system) are invited on %age basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works.

S. No	Name of Work	Approved Amount (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc. in form of Treasury challan / Receipt (in Rs.)	Earnest Money (2% of Adv. Cost) (in Rs.)	Time of completion	Project Intending Department	Class of Contractor	Major Head of account
1	Repair/ Renovation of Divisional Office at Vailoo including allied works	5.048	300	10096	15 Days	PWD	CEE/DEE Class	MnR

Position of AA: Accorded

Position of TS: Accorded

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	18.02.2025
2.	Period of Downloading of bidder documents.	From 18.02.2025 To 01.00 pm
3.	Bid submission Start Date	From 18.02.2025 To 01.00 pm
4.	Bid Submission End Date	To 24.02.2025 To 01.00 pm
5.	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	24.02.2025 at 01.30 P.M in the Office of the Executive Engineer R&B Division Vailoo

- Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of Treasury Receipt/ challan remitted in Head-0059 and Earnest Money for 2% of Advertised Cost in shape of CDR/ FDR only. Pledged to Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Division vailoo (tender receiving authority) (Name of work or ENIT no. and Item No. to be mentioned on the Treasury receipt/ challan (The date of Treasury receipt /Challan should be between the date of start of bid end Bid submission End date) pledged to Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division Vailoo (Tendering Inviting Authority). 5% Performance Security of the allotted cost in the shape of CDR/ FDR by the Successful bidder. Minimum of Two bids are necessary to decide L-1 bidder in case of Contractors.
- The 1st Lowest Bidder has to produce an amount equal to 5% of allotted cost as performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR within 07 days before fixation of contract and shall be released after successful completion of defective liability period of the work.
- The EMD of 2% of successful bidders shall be released after receipt of 5% Performance Security.
- Only those contractors are eligible for taking part in the bidding process whose contractor registration card is enrolled online on the JKPWDOMS portal.
- The Advertised cost is inclusive of GST@18%. The bidder has to quote the rate exclusive of GST.
- Security Deposit shall be deposited by the contractor within 10 days of issuance of LOI, failing which the concerned tender
- The contractor shall initiate the work within 10 days of entering into the agreement, failing which the undersigned shall terminate the contract and issue a fresh tender after imposing penalties viz forfeit security/LD as per T&C of the Bid document and recommend contractor for blacklisting.
- The work shall be completed by the concerned contractor as per the timeline stipulated in the bid document/agreement, failing which action shall be initiated against contractor by forfeiting EMD and shall be recommended for blacklisting.
- 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 bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the Office of Executive Engineer R&B Division vailoo (tender receiving authority).
- The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of Technical bids
- 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.
- The intending bidders should write the name of work / serial No. of NIT and Item No. on the Treasury receipt / challan while uploading their bids.
- All other terms conditions are as per PWD Form 25 (Double agreement Form)

DIPK-12122/24  
dated:18-02-2025

-Sd/-  
Executive Engineer  
PWD(R&B) Division Vailoo

## Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir

### OFFICE OF THE ZONAL EDUCATION OFFICER - JHULLA

TEHSIL URI, DISTRICT BARAMULLA, PO MOHURA - 193123

### AUCTION NOTICE

It is for the information of the interested parties that an open auction of two School Building BMS Katha & GMS Lachipora-A in Educational Zone Chandanwari of Tehsil Boniyar will be auctioned on 27th of February 2025 by the auction committee framed by the Chief Education Officer Baramulla vide their Letter No: CEO/Plg/Bl/15730-33 and CEO/Plg/Bl/15734-37 Dated: 24/01/2025 in terms of Govt. Order No. 774-Edu of 2017 Dated 12/10/2017. The list of the articles/items is available in the office of Zonal Education Officer Chandanwari and can be seen during working hours w.e.f 19/02/2025 to 28/02/2025.

The terms & conditions for auction are as under:-

- All interested bidders may take part in the above auction after depositing the earnest money of as mentioned below which will be refunded/adjusted after the auction is over

S.NO	School Name	EMD Amount	Date & Time	Venue
01	BMS Kathal	Rs 15,000.00	27/02/2025 (11:00 AM)	BMS Kathal
02	GMS Lachipora-A	Rs 20,000.00	27/02/2025 (01:00 PM)	GMS Lachipora-A

- Mode of Payment : DEMAND DRAFT of amount mentioned above payable in favour of Zonal Education Officer - Chandanwari payable and J&K Bank Branch Chandanwari (0198) and the same should be deposited at the office of Zonal Education Officer Chandanwari during working hours w.e.f 19/02/2025 to 24/02/2025 after which no Demand Draft will be accepted.
- The successful bidder/purchaser shall have to deposit 25 % bid amount immediately i.e on the day of auction itself , and balance amount within Seven (07) days from the date of auction.
- If the 25% bid amount is not paid on the same day or the balance amount is not paid within Seven Days or if the successful bidder fails to adhere to the terms of sale, time or commits defaults in any manner, the earnest money deposited will be forfeited and the department will be at liberty to sell the property without any notice.
- The bidders will have to arrange their own transport for lifting the material.
- The bidder can anytime inspect the property/material on any date (Except Public Holidays) between 19/02/2025 to 24/02/2025 (During Working Hours) with prior intimation to this office.
- The decision of the committee members shall be final , binding and unquestionable
- The department reserves the right to cancel or postpone the auction without assigning any reasons.
- For any further details and queries call on 9596025900 , 9906614324.

No: ZEOC/2025/248-250  
DIPK-12158/24 Dated: 18/02/2025

S/d  
Zonal Education Officer  
Chandanwari

## Tsoonti Koul Turns Into Garbage Dumping Site, Locals Aghast

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** One famed Tsoonti Koul in Srinagar City, is rapidly turning into the garbage dumping site as the heaps of garbage could be seen piled up in the water body, causing concern among the local residents.

In Karfali Mohalla area of Habba Kadal Srinagar, the locals alleged the increasing garbage has been affecting their health badly.

The residents said that the steady rise in pollution levels in Tsoonti Koul is unbearable and all the silt and plastics have gathered in the stream.

"I have lived here for years, and I have never seen such a waste in the water body. The

water in Tsoonti Koul is contaminated. We can no longer use it for daily chores," said Umar, a resident of Karfali Mohalla.

Another local, Sahil, expressed frustration over the lack of action. "We have repeatedly raised the issue, but no steps have been taken to address it. We want the authorities to take responsibility and clean up this water body," he said.

Additionally, Danish, another resident, said pollution is not just limited to the water but extends to the air as well. "The increasing waste and lack of proper disposal methods are causing not only water pollution but air pollution too. The whole area stinks," he said—(KNO)

## 30-Hour Water Supply Shutdown In City on Feb 22-23

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The Executive Engineer Water Works Division Srinagar on Tuesday issued an "urgent public notice" regarding a 30-hour shutdown of the Sindh Power Canal HEP Old Ganderbal and desilting of the Forebay.

As per the Urgent Public Notice, this shutdown is scheduled to take place from 22nd to 23rd February 2025 as part of necessary repair work by the Department of Civil Investigation & Design Wing, JKPCDC.

It reads, as a result of this work, raw water supply to the Water Treatment Plants of Nishat, Alusteng, and Rangil will be severely impacted. Consequently, potable water supply will be affected in major parts of Srinagar City and surrounding areas.

The advisory also reads, the affected areas include: Zakoora, Gulab Bagh, Alusteng, Shuhama, Hadoora, Chatterhama, Kalamullah, Habak, Naseem Bagh, Busserbagh, Malla Bagh, Pandach, Buchpora, Soura, Anchar, Bohlouhpura, Zoonimar, Nowshera, Bagh I Ali Mardan Khan, Zaidibal, Hawal, Alamgari Bazar, Rajouri Kadal, Nallahmar, Nawakadal, Bohori Kadal, Nowhatta, Lal Bazar, Hazratbal, Sadribal, Nigeen, Saida Kadal, Rainawari, Khanyar, Khayam, Nowpora, Dalgate, Konkhan, Gagribal, Nehru Park, Dal areas, Brein, Gupkar, Sonwar, Indra Nagar, Shiv-

pura, Batwara, Pandrethan, Lal Chowk, Court road, Residency Road, M.A road, Bishembar Nagar, Babademb, Fateh Kadal, Barbarshah, Fateh Kadal, Habba Kadal, Gow Kadal, Shaheed Gunj, Karan Nagar, Kakasarai, Balgarden, Chattabal, Kawdara, Eidgah, Mahrajgunj, Zaina Kadal, Saidpora, Bemina, Firdous Abad, Parts of Batmaloo, Qamarwari, Zaina-Kote, Noorabad, Umerabad, and adjacent areas.

Meanwhile, an official from the Jal Shakti Department has said the current situation remains manageable, with drinking water supplies being maintained across Kashmir.

The advisory also reads, the general public is hereby notified through the medium of this notice to store a sufficient supply of water to meet the demands. Furthermore, the hospitals functioning in and around Srinagar City are requested to keep close liaison with the PHE authorities during the shutdown period. For any complaints/grievances regarding scarcity/shortage of water supply, the general public is requested to contact the PHE Provincial Control Room, which remains functional round the clock for the service of the general public.

It reads that the contact numbers of the provincial control room are: 0194-2477207, 0194-2452047 (Landline Numbers), and WhatsApp Numbers: 9419413914, 9419413915.

## DC Chairs District Level Committee Meeting Of NCORD



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** To review and strengthen ongoing measures to combat drug abuse and its peddling, a meeting of District level Committee on NCORD was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat here at Meeting Hall of DC Office Complex.

The meeting deliberated on key issues, including stricter enforcement actions against drug peddlers, intensified awareness campaigns and enhanced treatment and rehabilitation facilities for those affected by substance abuse.

At the outset, Deputy Commissioner took first hand appraisal from officers of all line departments and other stakeholders regarding the progress achieved in ongoing fight against the drug menace in order to curb the drug menace and tighten the noose against drug peddlers in Srinagar District.

Dr. Bilal stressed the importance of inter-departmental coordination and community involvement in tackling the menace of drug addiction. He emphasized the need for sustained awareness campaigns targeting vulnerable groups, particularly youth and directed the concerned officers to intensify the awareness programmes in the district.

Highlighting the need for accessible and effective treatment facilities for individuals battling addiction, the DC stressed on up to mark facilities at drug de-addiction centres like IMHAANS, JVC and SMHS. He also called for early operationalization of the Drug De-addiction & Rehabilitation Centre at Sanant Nagar.

He underlined the importance of a holistic approach involving prevention as well as education, treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration of such individuals back into the society, at the same time strict enforcement measures as a strong deterrent.

## CEO, SSCL Conducts On-Ground Review Of Major Projects

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL), Dr. Owais Ahmed, undertook a comprehensive site visit to assess the progress of various ongoing projects under the Smart City Mission.

The inspection covered critical locations, including the Amira Kadal pedestrian bridge, Goni Khan Market/Plaza, and the Jehangir Chowk Junction improvement project, highlighting the administration's commitment to timely and efficient execution of these initiatives.

Dr. Owais was accompanied by senior officials, including the Chief Engineer, Executive Engineers, and other key personnel from SSCL.

During the visit, he stressed on the importance of adhering to project timelines while maintaining the highest standards of quality and sustainability.

He urged the team to accelerate efforts to ensure the timely completion of these projects, which are pivotal to transforming Srinagar into a modern, citizen-friendly urban hub.

"Our mission is to create a sustainable and inclusive urban environment that addresses the needs of all residents. These projects are not just about infrastructure development but also about improving the quality of life for the people of Srinagar," Dr. Owais said. He further stressed the need for meticulous planning and execution to ensure that the projects deliver long-term benefits to the city.

The projects under review are part of a broader initiative to upgrade Srinagar's urban infrastruc-



ture, enhance public amenities, and improve overall living conditions. The Jehangir Chowk Junction improvement project, in particular, aims to alleviate traffic congestion and enhance pedestrian safety, addressing key challenges faced by the city's residents.

The CEO also motivated the SSCL team to remain focused and collaborative, emphasizing that their efforts will play a crucial role in shaping Srinagar's future as a vibrant and resilient urban center. "Every step

we take today will have a lasting impact on the city's development. Let us work together to ensure that Srinagar becomes a model smart city," he added.

The visit concluded with a review meeting where officials discussed strategies to address challenges and expedite project completion. SSCL remains committed to delivering transformative projects that align with the aspirations of Srinagar's residents and contribute to the city's sustainable growth.



**"OUR MISSION IS TO CREATE A SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE URBAN ENVIRONMENT that addresses the needs of all residents. These projects are not just about infrastructure development but also about improving the quality of life for the people of Srinagar,"**

## SMC To Plant 55,000 Saplings Across 35 Wards

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** In a major green initiative, the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) has set in motion a year-long project to plant 55,000 saplings across the city's 35 municipal wards.

The move, as per the officials, aims to enhance the green cover and improve air quality in the city.

A senior officer said "The tendering process for the plantation drive is already underway. This project is designed to align with seasonal planting patterns to ensure maximum survival and growth of saplings."

The top official said the initiative comes at a time when the city was grappling with pollution but that the recent readings of pollution levels have gone down due to the previous



plantation drives.

Officials believe that the large-scale plantation will help in curbing rising pollution levels and providing cleaner air to residents in the city.

The top official added that apart

from greening zones, the SMC was also focusing on the renovation of fountains across the city to enhance the urban landscape. "Fountains not only add to the aesthetic appeal but also contribute to maintaining a cooler and fresher environment in public spaces," the official added.

The official said the project was set to unfold and that they hope to make a tangible impact on the city's environment while promoting a healthier urban ecosystem.

Notably, Srinagar city has witnessed a massive revamp under the works taken under the Srinagar Smart City projects. As per the officials, majority of the work has already been completed, while there was marginal percentage of left-out work underway in the city—(KNO)

## Dry Grass Catches Fire In Brari Nambal Lagoon



**A MASSIVE FIRE BROKE OUT Tuesday in Brari-Nambal, Babademb, Srinagar, engulfing dry grass and bushes.**

KO PHOTO, ABID BHAT

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** A massive fire erupted on Tuesday in the Brari-Nambal area of Babademb, Srinagar, as a large chunk of dry grass and bushes caught fire. Winds caused the ashes to spread rapidly, creating a serious fire hazard in the

vicinity.

Firefighters rushed to the spot and controlled the blaze after putting in hard efforts.

Due to the winds in the area, the fire rapidly spread to bushes and dry trees, and the ashes were blown across the surrounding areas, causing a significant environmental

hazard.

A Fire and Emergency Services official said that the fire was controlled by firefighters while locals and police also assisted them in the operation.

Meanwhile, police have registered a case to ascertain the cause of the fire. [KNT]

- 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: 54
ZUHR	12: 45
ASR	4:38
Magrib	6:20
ISHA	7:42

## This Day In History

- 197 - Lucius Septimius Severus' army beats Clodius Albinus at Lyon
- 356 - Emperor Constantius II shuts all heathen temples
- 607 - Boniface III begins his reign as Catholic Pope
- 842 - Medieval Iconoclastic Controversy ends as a council in Constantinople formally reinstates the veneration of icons in churches
- 1512 - French troops under Gaston de Foix occupy Brescia
- 1574 - Spanish troops plunder Krommenie, Wormerveer & Jisp, Netherlands
- 1634 - Battle of Smolensk: King Wladyslaw IV of Poland beats Russians [NS=Mar 1]
- 1674 - Netherlands & England sign Peace of Westminster (NYC becomes English).
- 1797 - One third of papal domain ceded to France
- 1819 - British explorer William Smith discovers the South Shetland Islands, and claims them in the name of King George III
- 1856 - Tin-type camera patented by Hamilton Smith, Gambier, Ohio
- 1878 - Thomas Edison is granted a patent for his gramophone (phonograph)
- 1920 - Netherlands joins League of Nations
- 1936 - Manuel Azaña becomes Prime Minister of Spain for the second time
- 1942 - Japanese troops land on Timor
- 1943 - German tanks under Generalmajor Karl Buelowius attack Kasserine Pass, Tunisia
- 1944 - 823 British bombers attack Berlin
- 1944 - U-264 sinks off Ireland
- 1945 - 980 Japanese soldiers reportedly killed by crocodiles in 2 days on Ramree Island, Burma
- 1945 - Brotherhood Day-1st celebrated
- 1949 - Mass arrests of communists in India
- 1952 - French offensive at Hanoi
- 1959 - Britain, Turkey & Greece sign agreement granting Cyprus independence
- 1959 - Gabon adopts its constitution
- 1963 - USSR informs JFK it is withdrawing several thousand troops from Cuba
- 1970 - USSR launches Sputnik 52 & Molniya 1-13 communications satellite
- 1977 - Space shuttle Enterprise makes 1st Test flight atop a 747 jetliner
- 1984 - USSR performs nuclear test at Eastern Kazakh/Semipalitinsk USSR
- 1985 - 150 killed when a Spanish jetliner crashes approaching Bilbao, Spain
- 1986 - King Hussein of Jordan severs ties with PLO
- 1987 - US President Reagan lifts trade boycott against Poland
- 1990 - Soyuz TM-9 lands

From KO Archives

## Farooq Advocates 'Pro-Active' JK Policy

Observer News Service

**JAMMU** - Chief minister Dr. Farooq Abdullah today said he was never opposed to prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's peace initiative in the state which would be carried forward to its logical end.

Winding up discussions on the motion of thanks on the gov-ernor's address in the legislative assembly, Abdullah urged the comity of nations to pressurise Pakistan to stop militant violence in Jammu and Kashmir.

The chief minister launched a frontal attack on the Hurriyat Conference who, he said, accused him of scuttling the peace process saying I am for peace, am never opposed to peace. He said killing of innocent people, were continuing unabated in the state despite the cease-fire and suggested a pro-active strategy to deal with militants. According to a NAFA report, Dr. Abdullah advocated a more aggressive 'pro-active' policy for Jammu and Kashmir adding this was the only way Pakistan could be brought under pressure.

Stating he was never opposed to talks with Hurriyat leaders, Abdullah said let the Centre treats the Hurriyat the way it wants and let them go to any country. If those nearer and dearer to Pakistan come close to New Delhi, what objection I have, he said, adding the Centre was doing experiments.

(Kashmir Observer, 19 February, 2001)

## UPSC Further Extends Last Date To Apply For Civil Services Prelims Exam

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has extended the last date to apply for this year's civil services preliminary examination till February 21.

This is the second extension in the deadline to apply for the examination, conducted annually by the UPSC in three stages - preliminary, mains and interview - to select officers of the Indian Administrative Service, Indian Foreign Service and Indian Police Service, among others.

The last date for submission for Civil Services (Preliminary)-2025 and Indian Forest Service (Preliminary)-2025 "has been further extended till February 21 (6 pm)," said a notice put out by the Commission on its website.

Further, a correction window will also be open for the applicants "from February 22 to February 28", read the notice, without mentioning any reasons behind the second extension.

The Commission had recently also introduced certain changes in its online application system for the exam after aspirants

**The civil services examination's notification was issued in January and the last date to apply for it was February 11. It was earlier extended till February 18.**

complained of technical glitches while applying through it.

Candidates are required to apply online by using the website <http://upsonline.gov.in>.

The civil services examination's notification was issued in January and the last date to apply for it was February 11. It was earlier extended till February 18.

The civil services preliminary examination will be held on May 25.

The number of vacancies to be filled through the examination is expected to be 979 which includes 38 vacancies reserved for persons with the benchmark disability category.

## Row Over Replacing Urdu With Sanskrit In Govt Schools In BJP-Ruled Rajasthan

Press Trust Of India

Jaipur: Orders replacing Urdu with Sanskrit as the third language in some government schools in Rajasthan followed by a minister's remarks that many Urdu teachers secured jobs with fake degrees has created a row in the BJP-ruled state.

Rajasthan's education

studies that subject, which is why we will discontinue the posts of Urdu teachers and provide the kind of education that people want here," Bedham said during an event held in Bharatpur on Monday which circulated in the social circles.

Rajasthan's Urdu Teachers' Association termed the minister's remarks baseless



department had recently issued an order to Mahatma Gandhi Government School (RAC Battalion), Jaipur, to suspend classes of Urdu as the third language and introduce it as an option.

A few days later, a government senior secondary school in Bikaner received a similar communication for replacing the language.

Amid growing resentment against the twin orders, a fresh controversy broke out on Monday after Minister of State for Home Jawahar Singh Bedham purportedly said that many Urdu teachers in the state secured jobs with fake degrees.

"The previous (Congress) government removed Sanskrit teachers and posted Urdu teachers in their place. Now, we don't know Urdu and no one even

and irresponsible.

"It is not correct to call Urdu teachers fake without any investigation. It is also untrue that previous Congress government appointed Urdu teachers replacing Sanskrit teachers," said Urdu Teachers' Association president Amin Kayamkhani.

School Education Minister Madan Dilwar was not available for comments.

However, Board of Secondary Education Director Ashish Modi said it is not a blanket order for all schools.

"It is not a blanket order. Except one student, there is nobody who studies Urdu as the third language in a government school in Napsar, Bikaner. This is the reason why it was discontinued," he said.



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio (L) meets with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh. (Photo by Evelyn Hockstein / POOL / AFP)

## Saudi Arabia Hosts US-Russia Talks, No Seat For Ukraine

Agencies

RIYADH: Top US and Russian diplomats will meet in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday for talks on resetting their countries' fractured relations and making a tentative start on trying to end the Ukraine war.

Both sides played down the chances that the first high-level meeting between the countries since US President Donald Trump took office would result in a breakthrough.

Still, the very fact the talks were taking place has triggered concern in Ukraine and Europe following the United States' recent overtures towards the Kremlin.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Kyiv was not invited to the discussions in Riyadh, while European leaders were gathering in Paris for emergency talks on how to respond to the radical pivot by the new US administration.

Preparations for a possible summit between presidents Trump and Vladimir Putin are also expected to be on the agenda.

Trump is pushing for a swift resolution to the three-year conflict in Ukraine, while Russia sees his outreach as a chance to win concessions.

Zelensky said Kyiv "did not

know anything about" the talks in Riyadh, according to Ukrainian news agencies, and that it "cannot recognise any things or any agreements about us without us".

He said on social media that any peace deal would need to include "robust and reliable" security guarantees, which France and Britain have called for but not all European powers support.

Russia said ahead of the meeting that Putin and Trump wanted to move on from "abnormal relations" and that it saw no place for Europeans to be at any negotiating table.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and senior Putin aide Yuri Ushakov will meet with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, National Security Advisor Mike Waltz and Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff.

**Possible Trump-Putin summit**  
Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters the talks would be "primarily devoted to restoring the whole complex of Russian-American relations", alongside discussions on "possible negotiations on a Ukrainian resolution, and organising a meeting between the two presidents".

Moscow, which for years has sought to roll back NATO's presence in Europe, has made clear it

wants to hold bilateral talks with the United States on a plethora of broad security issues, not just a possible Ukraine ceasefire.

Before invading in February 2022, Putin was demanding the military alliance pull its troops, equipment and bases out of several eastern members that were under Moscow's sphere of influence during the Cold War.

The prospects of any talks leading to an agreement to halt the Ukraine fighting are unclear.

Both Russia and the United States have cast the meeting as the beginning of a potentially lengthy process.

"I don't think that people should view this as something that is about details or moving forward in some kind of a negotiation," US State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said.

Russia's Ushakov told state media the talks would discuss "how to start negotiations on Ukraine."

Both Ukraine and Russia have ruled out territorial concessions and Putin last year demanded Kyiv withdraw its troops from even more territory.

Zelensky will travel to Turkey on Tuesday to discuss the conflict with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and then Saudi Arabia a day later.

## 'Alcohol-Related Cancers A Growing Concern In India'

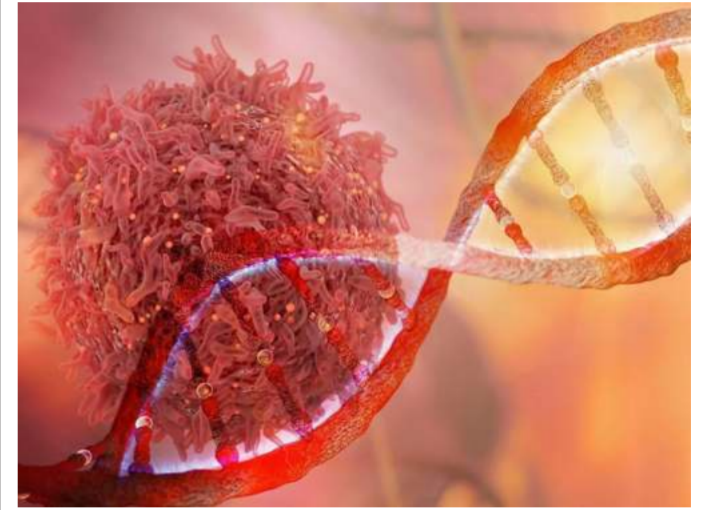
Agencies

New Delhi: Alcohol-related cancers are a growing concern in India, said health experts on Monday, even as the World Health Organisation (WHO) recently called for prominent health warning labels on alcoholic beverages.

The WHO defines alcohol as a toxic, psychoactive, and dependence-producing substance that has been, decades ago, classified as a Group 1 car-

also causes cancers of the breast in women and prostate in males.

"In India, alcohol-related cancers are a growing concern. Alcohol metabolises into acetaldehyde - a toxic compound that can damage DNA and proteins - leading to mutations that initiate cancer development. In addition, alcohol can impair the body's ability to absorb essential nutrients like folate and vitamins A, C, D, and E, which are vital for maintaining healthy cells and prevent-



cinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. Group 1 carcinogen is the highest risk group, which also includes asbestos, radiation, and tobacco.

"Alcohol consumption increases the risk of cancer, and more than 20 types of cancers can be attributed to consumption of alcohol," Dr. (Prof) Puneet Garg, Vascular Interventional Radiologist and Endovascular Surgeon, Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi, told IANS.

The most common cancers linked to alcohol are of mouth, throat, foodpipe, stomach, colon, rectum, and pancreas. It

ing cancer," Dr Taraprasad Tripathy, Assistant Professor at All India Institute of Medical Sciences Bhubaneswar, Odisha, told IANS.

Alcohol is a well-established carcinogen that is contributing significantly to the global burden of the deadly disease. Nearly 4 per cent of cancers diagnosed worldwide can be attributed to alcohol consumption, according to the WHO.

A recent study in the journal Lancet estimates that alcohol consumption was responsible for approximately 62,100 new cancer cases in the India 2020.

## SC Bails British Arms Dealer in Chopper Scam

Agencies

NEW DELHI: India's top court on Tuesday granted bail to a British arms dealer imprisoned for more than six years on charges of bribing officials over a multimillion-dollar helicopter deal.

Christian Michel has been in jail since December 2018. The Supreme Court said that while the "investigation is still ongoing", Michel must be released on conditions laid down by a lower court.

The Central Bureau of Investigation, India's top investigating agency, has filed three chargesheets in the case.

In January 2014, New Delhi cancelled a deal with Italian-British consortium AgustaWestland - agreed under a previous government in 2010 - after allegations the firm paid bribes to win the \$677 million contract for 12 helicopters.

Indian investigators charged Michel in 2017 with arranging \$52 million as kickbacks.

"Considering facts and circumstances of the case and in particular, that petitioner who was extradited in 2018 and has been in custody for more than 6 years now, and according to the Respondent CBI despite filing 3 chargesheets and 2 supplement-



tary chargesheet, the investigation is still ongoing as stated in the counteraffidavit," the court observed.

"We are inclined to grant bail on conditions as may be determined by the trial court. The CBI may appropriately request the trial court for imposing conditions before releasing him on bail," the bench further said.

**What is the chopper scam?**

The CBI, in its chargesheet, has alleged an estimated loss of 398.21 million euros (about Rs 2,666 crore) to the exchequer due to the deal that was signed on February 8, 2010 for the supply of VVIP choppers worth 556.262 million euros to the Indian government.

The ED, in its chargesheet filed against James in June 2016, has alleged that James had received 30 million euros (about Rs225 crore) from AgustaWestland. The other two alleged middlemen are Guido Haschke and Carlo Gerosa.

## Iran Mulls Moving Capital To 'Lost Paradise' On Southern Coast

Agencies

Tehran: Faced with myriad problems including gridlocked traffic and a sinking earth surface in its current capital, Iran is considering a drastic solution - moving it to an altogether different location on the Gulf of Oman.

Though the idea of moving the capital has cropped up on various occasions since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the proposals were repeatedly shelved as unrealistic due to the massive financial and logistical hurdles.

But reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian, who took office in July, has recently revived the idea, citing Tehran's

growing challenges.

These include traffic snarls, water shortages, resource mismanagement, extreme air pollution, as well as subsidence - the gradual sinking of land mass due to either natural processes or human activity.

In January, government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani said the authorities were studying the possible relocation.

"The Makran region is being seriously considered," she said, without specifying a timeline.

View of Beris port, a busy fishing dock in Makran region and home to unusual rocky beaches in Iran's southern Sistan-Baluchistan province, on October 4, 2018.

View of Beris port, a busy fishing dock in Makran region and home to unusual rocky beaches in Iran's southern Sistan-Baluchistan province, on October 4, 2018.

Makran is a largely undeveloped coastal area on the Gulf of Oman, stretching across Iran's southern, impoverished Sistan-Baluchistan province and part of neighbouring Hormozgan province. It has repeatedly been touted as a frontrunner for the move.

"The 'lost paradise' of Makran must be transformed into the future economic hub of Iran and the region," said Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in a Sunday speech.

### NEWS MAKERS

## Students Hide, Attendance Drop: Schools Around US Confront Anxiety Over Trump's Actions On Immigration

In Fresno, California, social media rumours about impending immigration raids at the city's schools left some parents panicking - even though the raids were all hoaxes.

In Denver, a real immigration raid at an apartment complex led to scores of students staying home from school, according to a lawsuit. And in Alice, Texas, a school official incorrectly told parents that Border Patrol agents might board school buses to check immigration papers.

President Donald Trump's immigration policies already are affecting schools across the country, as officials find themselves responding to rising anxiety among parents and their children, including those who are here legally. Trump's executive actions vastly expanded who is eligible for deportation and lifted a ban on immigration enforcement in schools.

While many public and school officials have been working to encourage immigrants to send their children to school, some have done the opposite.

Meanwhile, Republicans in

Oklahoma and Tennessee have put forward proposals that would make it difficult - or even impossible - for children in the country illegally and US-born children of parents without documentation to attend school at all. As they weigh the risks, many families have struggled with separating facts from rumour.

In the Alice Independent School District in Texas, school officials told parents that the district "received information" that US Border Patrol agents could ask students about their citizenship status during field trips on school buses that pass through checkpoints about 60 miles from the Texas-Mexico border. The information ended up being false.

Angelib Hernandez of Aurora, Colorado, began keeping her children home from their schools a few days a week after Trump's inauguration.

Now she doesn't send them at all. She's worried immigration agents will visit her children's schools, detain them and separate her family.

"They've told me, 'Hopefully we won't ever be detained by ourselves,'" she said. "That would terrify them." Hernandez and her children arrived about a year ago and applied for asylum. She was working through the proper legal channels to remain in the US, but changes in immigration policies have made her status tenuous.

In the past week, her fears have intensified. Now, she says, her perception is "everyone" - from Spanish-language media to social media to other students and parents - is giving the impression that immigration agents plan to enter Denver-area schools. The school tells parents that kids are safe. "But we don't trust it." Immigration and Customs



Enforcement agents are not known to have entered schools anywhere. But the possibility has alarmed families enough that some districts are pushing for a change in the policy allowing

agents to operate in schools. Denver Public Schools last week sued the Department of Homeland Security, accusing the Trump administration of interfering with

the education of young people in its care. Denver took in 43,000 migrants from the southern border last year, including children who ended up in the city's public schools. Attendance at schools where migrant kids are concentrated has fallen in recent weeks, the district said in the lawsuit, saying the immigration raid at a local apartment complex was a factor.

Around the country, conservatives have been questioning whether immigrants without legal status should even have the right to a public education.

Oklahoma's Republican state superintendent, Ryan Walters, pushed a rule that would have required parents to show proof of citizenship - a birth certificate or passport - to enrol their children in school.

The rule would have allowed parents to register their children even if they could not provide proof, but advocates say it would have strongly discouraged them from doing so. Even the state's Republican governor, Kevin Stitt, thought the rule went too far - and vetoed it.

## Worm Removed From Nostril Of Adolescent Boy At GMC Anantnag

Observer News Service

**ANANTANG:** In an unprecedented development, the department of ENT GMC Anantnag removed a large snake-like worm from the nostril of an adolescent boy at MMABM Associated Hospital GMC Anantnag. The boy reported to the department with a tail-like thing protruding through the nostril. After examination by ENT resi-

dent Dr Kishan, it was suspected that a large snake-like worm lies inside the nose of the boy, a statement issued to *Kashmir Observer* reads.

After discussing the case with HOD ENT Dr Aamir, suction was applied and a very large snake-like worm was extruded from the nose. The specimen will be sent to the forensics laboratory for confirmation of the exact nature of



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## 'No Plans To Install Water Meters In Kashmir'

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Amid growing speculation about the installation of water meters in Kashmir, the Jal Shakti Department on Tuesday clarified that no such proposal has been received for the region as of now. A senior official from the department said that while the government holds the authority to decide on the matter, there is no official directive or plan currently under consideration.

"As of now, the Jal Shakti Department has not received any proposal or order from the government regarding the installation of water meters in Kash-

mir," the official confirmed.

The official also spoke about the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), a centrally-sponsored initiative aimed at providing safe drinking water to all households. He said that over 85% of households in Kashmir now have access to drinking water, with expectations of achieving 100% coverage by March 31, 2025.

Water metering is the process of measuring water usage in residential and commercial buildings, the official said, adding that it helps in monitoring consumption, improving water management, and ensuring efficient distribution through public water supply systems—(KNO)

## 2 Kashmiri Youth Arrested Along With Rs 2 Cr Cash

Agencies

**JAMMU:** Police on Tuesday arrested two persons along with around two crores of cash on National Highway in Lakhapur area of Kathua, the state border town between Jammu-Kashmir and Punjab.

As per details available, on a tip off, police laid a surprise check post at Lakhapur and intercepted a Hyundai Creta bearing registration number HR98J-9889, heading towards Kashmir. Police searched the vehicle and found a huge quantity of cash packed in polybags and placed in the footrest area of the passenger seat.

The cash was seized and counted in the presence of the magistrate, which amounts over Rs 2 crore in denominations of Rs 500 notes.

Two Kashmir based youth were also arrested and taken to Lakhapur Police Station for further questioning.

"An investigation is underway to find out the reason behind carrying so much money. We are exploring all the angles including drugs, terror fund and tax evasion to find the sources of cash," a police officer said.

The authorities have registered a case and are proceeding with their investigation into the incident—(KNO)

## 2 IEDs Recovered, Destroyed In South Kashmir

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** The security forces on Tuesday averted major tragedies after two Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) were recovered and destroyed in South Kashmir's Pulwama and Shopian districts on Tuesday.

An official said that an IED weighing around 7 kgs was found fitted in a pressure cooker by the security forces at Kashiwa Chitragam in Zainapora Sub division.

Soon, the area was cordoned and the bomb disposal squad was called and the IED was safely defused, he said.

He said that later an IED fitted in a pressure cooker was also found at Pinglish Nagwadi following which security forces promptly cordoned off the area. He said that the bomb disposal squad was called who destroyed it. The official said that investigation in both cases has been taken up and involved persons will face action—(KNO)

## Those Playing With Career Of Students Will Face Action: Itoo

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Education Minister, Sakina Itoo Tuesday said that the government will take action against schools that are found playing the career of students.

Speaking to the reporters, Itoo said, "It is very unfortunate that some eligible students could not appear in annual regular board exams of 10th standard due to the lackadaisical approach at some levels."

The education minister said that the government had initiated an inquiry into the matter. "Enquiry committee in this regard has been con-



stituted and whosoever will be found guilty will face action. Playing with the career of students is unacceptable." "We will try to do whatever is feasible for the eligible students who couldn't appear in Class-10 exams," Itoo said.

Besides, the education minister further said, "Text-books of 70-80 percent have almost reached the district levels and before the culmination of winter break, 100 percent of books will reach the students."

Earlier, the government issued admit cards to all of the applicants following the hue and cry regarding denying of exam registration forms to 22 students of 10th standard.

Education Minister had said that the academic year of the students is very precious and the government will not waste it at any cost—(KNO)

“IT IS VERY UNFORTUNATE THAT SOME ELIGIBLE STUDENTS could not appear in annual regular board exams of 10th standard due to the lackadaisical approach at some levels.”

## Begging Menace Expected To Increase During Ramzan

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** With the holy month of Ramzan approaching, the prevalence of begging is expected to increase across Kashmir Valley, particularly in shrines, markets and other public spaces. Residents have expressed concerns over the growing number of beggars, including children, non-locals and organised groups, who flood the streets seeking charity.

While some are genuinely in need, others have reportedly turned begging into a professional and organised trade.

A recent study conducted by Rutba Gulzar, a student of Economics at the Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), highlights the organised nature of begging in Kashmir.

According to the research study, begging in Kashmir, which was traditionally a means of survival, has evolved into a profitable business controlled by organised cartels. The study also reveals that the influx of non-local beggars has altered the landscape, often pushing local beggars into obscurity.

A senior official from the



“Every year, as Ramzan nears, the number of beggars on the streets increases. Many are outsiders who come here just for charity.”

Labour Department said there is no official data on the number of beggars in the region. "Begging is not a registered activity, and beggars are not required to enroll anywhere," the official said.

He said non-locals entering Kashmir, including those turning to begging, are not documented. "Unlike labour-

ers hired by contractors, beggars—whether local or non-local—remain undocumented," he added.

Many residents have urged authorities to take action, particularly in hotspot areas like shrines, where beggars tend to congregate in large numbers.

Fazil, a resident of Srinagar, said the same faces appear every year: "Many of them come to Kashmir only during Ramzan because people are more generous during this time," he said.

Suhaib, another local, said, "Every year, as Ramzan nears, the number of beggars on the streets increases. Many are outsiders who come here just for charity." He urged authorities to address the issue before it turns into a larger racket.

The study also highlights that some beggars have been in the trade for over two decades, with many migrating to Kashmir during peak tourist seasons to capitalise on the influx of visitors.

Researchers say that begging is no longer just a social issue but has transformed into a full-fledged industry with public health and economic implications—(KNO)

## CPI(M) Conference Adopts Resolutions On Restoration Of Statehood

Press Trust Of India

**JAMMU:** The CPI(M) adopted resolutions on the immediate restoration of the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir and the return and rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits at the two-day state conference of the party, a senior leader said.

The CPI(M)'s 13th state conference ended here on Tuesday, which was attended by coordinator and polit bureau member Prakash Karat, All India Kisan Sabha president Ashok Dhawale and MLA M Y Tarigami.

The conference concluded by electing a state committee of 23 members.

"Several resolutions were adopted at the conference, which among other things demanded the immediate restoration of statehood, democratic and civil liberties, rehabilitation of Kashmiri migrants, land laws, trade union rights and necessary steps for boosting agriculture and hor-

iculture produce," Tarigami said.

The resolution with regard to the restoration of statehood urged all secular parties within and outside J-K to raise their voice for the fulfilment of the promise Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah made to the people of J&K.

"The dual nature of the governance system is a fraud with the mandate of the people. We want full restoration of the statehood to allow the elected government to run the state in accordance with the aspirations of the people," he said.

Tarigami said opposition parties have a bigger responsibility in the country and they should raise their voice in support of J-K within and outside the parliament.

He also demanded a review of the cases of all those jailed in the aftermath of the 2019 bifurcation of the erstwhile state into two Union territories and revocation of its spe-

cial status.

"Those who are jailed outside should be shifted back to J-K. We want those who do not face any serious charges to be released as a confidence-building measure," he said, also demanding an end to alleged harassment of people on the pretext of fighting militancy.

"Anyone allegedly involved in militancy should be dealt with as per the law but no innocent person should be harmed," he said, referring to the suicide of a man in Kathua after alleged harassment by police and the killing of a truck driver in Baramulla district early this month.

Efforts should be intensified to ensure the return and rehabilitation of Kashmiri migrants who have been living in exile for the last over three decades, he added.

Tarigami said the conference concluded by electing a state committee of 23 members headed by Secretary Mohd Abass Rather.

## MLA Pattan Promises Development: Healthcare, Roads & Jobs

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** In a significant development, the Jammu and Kashmir government has chosen Pattan, along with Awan-tipora in the Kashmir Division, to be developed as a satellite town. This decision, according to locals marks a turning point for Pattan, which according to them has long struggled with developmental neglect.

People of Pattan have applauded the efforts of MLA Pattan, Jawed Riyaz Bedar, for what they called his 'relentless dedication' to bringing the Pattan Sub-Division back on the path of development.

To discuss the implications of this major initiative, a public meeting was convened in Pattan town on Tuesday.

The meeting was attended by several high-ranking officials, including the Divisional Commissioner of Kashmir, the Deputy Commissioner of Baramulla, and other key administrative officers. The event was presided over by MLA Pattan, Jawed Riyaz Bedar.

A large gathering of intellectuals, civil society members, and traders from Pattan town participated in the meeting, highlighting the keen interest of the public in the developmental trajectory of the constituency.

Addressing the gathering, MLA Bedar emphasized the long-standing developmental stagnation in Pattan. "Pattan has been ignored for the last so many years on the developmental front. No major project was initiated in the area, leaving the town lagging behind," he stated.

Speaking on the significance of the satellite town status, MLA Bedar remarked, "Getting the status of a satellite town is the beginning of a



new era for Pattan, a town of historical importance. Under this project, better healthcare facilities will be provided to the people of the area by upgrading the existing Community Health Centre (CHC) hospital to a Sub-District Hospital. This hospital will be equipped with the latest healthcare machinery, and new posts will be created and filled on a priority basis," Bedar said.

On the educational front, Bedar assured that advancements would be made to cater to the growing academic demands.

"All the latest streams will be introduced in Degree College Pattan and Higher Secondary School Pattan. Additionally, a new Girls' Higher Secondary School will be established in the town at the earliest," he added.

Highlighting infrastructural improvements, MLA Bedar stressed that road connectivity would be enhanced as a priority.

"Under this plan, new road projects will be launched to improve connectivity. Furthermore, a fruit market will be established in Pattan town, which will create employment opportunities for hundreds of youth in the area," he stated.

The people of Pattan have expressed their gratitude to MLA Bedar for his proactive approach and tireless efforts in addressing the region's developmental needs. Many participants in the meeting voiced their optimism, hoping that the long-overdue transformation of Pattan will now become a reality.

## Traffic Police Intensifies Crackdown On Violations In Rural Kashmir

Agencies

**BUDGAM:** In a bid to curb traffic violations and enhance road safety, the Rural Kashmir Traffic Police launched a special enforcement drive on Wednesday in Magam, Budgam under the supervision of SSP Traffic Rural Kashmir, Ravinder Pal Singh, along with DSP Traffic Nazir Mujahez and other traffic police officials.

During the drive, on-the-spot fines were imposed on several offenders, including motorcyclists without helmets, triple riders, overloaded passenger vehicles, and vehicles lacking fitness certificates. Strict action was taken against reckless driving, speeding,

and violations of safety norms.

Addressing the public, SSP Ravinder Pal Singh emphasized the importance of road safety, urging motorists to wear helmets and seat belts and warning of strict action against those flouting traffic rules. He also underscored the legal consequences for parents who allow minors to drive without valid licenses.

Traffic violators were also sensitized about the Motor Vehicles Act and road safety regulations to minimize the risk of accidents.

Authorities have assured that such drives will continue across rural Kashmir to ensure better compliance with traffic laws and safeguard commuters on the roads. [KNT]

## IGP Birdi Reviews Joint Security Preparedness In Anantnag



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir Zone, V.K. Birdi, visited Anantnag Tuesday to assess the joint security preparedness and operational capabilities of the Jammu and Kashmir Police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

During his visit, IGP Birdi chaired a high-level joint security review meeting at DPO Anantnag, focusing on enhanced coordination, joint resource utilization, and operational efficiency.

The meeting was attended by senior officers from the Police and CRPF, who deliberated on joint deployment strategies, operational preparedness, and emerging security challenges. He commended the efforts of both forces in maintaining law and order and stressed the need for continued collaboration to strengthen the region's security framework, a police spokesman said in a statement issued to *Kashmir Observer*.

IGP Birdi also inspected the Special Operations Group

(SOG), reviewing their operational readiness and capabilities. He expressed satisfaction with their high level of training and professionalism, acknowledging their critical role in counter-terror operations. Discussions also included the summer operation strategy, outlining key security tactics and contingency plans for the upcoming season.

Later, IGP Birdi visited the 90th Battalion CRPF camp, where a joint demonstration of operational tactics was conducted by SOG and CRPF personnel. The demonstration showcased advanced operational skills, coordination, and response strategies, reaffirming the commitment of both forces to maintaining peace and security in the region.

Speaking on the occasion, IGP Birdi praised the dedication and professionalism of the personnel, emphasizing the importance of sustained collaboration and proactive measures to counter evolving security challenges.

## Police Secure Conviction In NDPS Case Against 4 Accused In Kulgam

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Police in Kulgam on Tuesday said to have secured conviction of four accused persons.

The conviction was secured against four accused persons namely Mohd Aslam War son of Ghulam Hassan War resident of Arwani Bijebhara, Mehraj-ud-Din Wani son of Ghulam Mohammad Wani resident of Mo-

hamed Wani resident of Mohamad Dar son of Mohammad Yaseen Dar resident of Padshahi Bagh Srinagar and Bilal Ahmad Hanji son of Mohammad Maqbool Hanji resident of Kharpora by virtue of judgement from Court of the Principal Sessions Judge Kulgam dated 23/01/2025 followed by Quantum of punishment dated 08/02/2025, a police spokesman said in a statement issued to *Kashmir Observer*.

The above-mentioned accused persons were convicted for the offences under section 8/20, 8/22 read with sec 29 NDPS act in case FIR No 21/2021 of Police Station Yaripora, police said.

"The accused were arrested on 26/04/2021, during naka checking by the police party of Police Post Frisal at Kharpora near playground and contra-

band recovery consists of 100 ML of 36 bottles without la-

bel and six bottles with label Cocax-Dx and two polythene bags, containing 130 grams of Charas was recovered from their possession. The prosecution presented multiple witnesses and multiple documents to prove the charges against the accused," police said.

The court, after careful consideration of the evidence, found the accused guilty under Section 8/20, 8/22 of the NDPS

Act and sentenced them to 12 years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 1,00,000 each, police said.

This successfully conviction demonstrates the commitment of J&K Police to combat drug trafficking and ensure public safety and serves as a strong message against drug peddling and its propagators and reinforces the resolve to maintain a drug-free society, police said.

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# Are NEP Fit Schools Pioneering a New Era in Education?



Dr. Mehnaz Rehman

## Lingering Dry Winter

The water bodies in Kashmir Valley are witnessing historic declines in levels due to an ongoing dry spell and minimal snowfall - January alone saw a 91% shortfall in rainfall. The decline is conspicuously visible in Jhelum, the Valley's primary water source, crucial for irrigation, drinking water, and hydroelectric power. The current data from the Irrigation and Flood Control Department reveals that water levels in the river have fallen below the Reduced Level (RL) of zero at Sangam, with similar declines recorded at Ram Munshi Bagh and Asham. Tributaries such as Lidder, Pohru, and Ferozpora are also flowing at unprecedented lows.

For now, this has affected the Valley's hydropower generation the most. It has plummeted by a whopping 84 percent, forcing the administration to rely on external sources to meet the shortfall. Power plants generated only 250 MW in January, a fraction of the 1200 MW capacity, with February seeing a further 5% decline. Unless water levels improve, the situation is expected to deteriorate.

The snowfall, however, is important not merely for tourism but as a lifeline for the glaciers which keep our rivers and streams flowing and agriculture fields irrigated. High-altitude areas retain their sub-zero temperatures, enabling the snow to endure throughout the year. Kashmir witnesses its heaviest snow during chilai kalan and the snowfall progressively reduces in February and March when spring sets in. This keeps glaciers replenished. Alarming, the experts fear a drastic reduction in snowfall by the century's end, and this can have horrific consequences not just for Kashmir but the region.

Going forward, agriculture and horticulture are also going to be hit hard if the current dry spell lingers. With glaciers failing to replenish due to growing snow-deficit, and also melting prematurely due to an unusually warm winter, farmers are worried about the upcoming agriculture season. The likelihood of an impending drought could devastate apple orchards, paddy fields, and vegetable farms.

Needless to say, the tourism sector could be another casualty. Inadequate snowfall, even in the upper reaches, has already led to a sharp decline in visitors to the popular winter destinations like Gulmarg and Pahalgam, with hoteliers reporting a 20-50% drop in bookings. Already, the government has been forced to postpone the 2025 Khelo India Winter Games.

Over the last three years, the growing tourism has gone a long way to shore up the Kashmir economy and brought back employment lost to the successive security and Covid-19 lockdown. The boom in tourism, which forms 6.8 percent of Kashmir's GDP and employs over two million people, has also had a positive spillover effect on other sectors.

Here's hoping that snow does bless the hills and plains in the remaining period of winter. Snowfall is a boon for tourism and the Valley's economy. There's still time for snow as we are still in February. The Meteorological department has forecast light to heavy rainfall and snowfall as a fresh western disturbance is approaching. We are all waiting.

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) represents a paradigm shift in the country's education policy, aimed at bringing about changes in the teaching and learning process. NEP Fit Schools are envisaged to nurture and groom ready-for-the-future citizens with all-around development. How do the schools propose to achieve this end? The whole focus and emphasis of these schools will be on hon-ouring all about holistic education with due significance to the all-productive elements of physical, mental, and emotional well-being. This could be ensured by integrating sports, arts, and experiential learning into traditional delivery.

One of the characteristics of NEP Fit Schools is its focus on developing skills. Providing students with the skills of critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving in a rapidly changing world is of the highest importance. NEP Fit Schools encourage digital literacy and vocational training from childhood, preparing learners to be future-proof. Project-based learning, business ventures, and teamwork allow students to acquire applied skills that extend beyond the classroom.

The National Education Policy 2020 underlines the importance of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education. The focus on STEM is pivotal in preparing students for a technology-driven world and fostering innovation, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. CBSE as part of its regular activities, designates an annual training theme. Specific training courses are designed and delivered around the chosen theme, in addition to the other CBPs. This year, the designated theme is "STEM Education." The specific CBPs in this theme shall commence with the launch of the 3030 Eklavya STEM Education Online Series. It is one of several steps that the Board has contemplated for the year for promoting STEM Education.

The response to the 3030 Eklavya STEM Education Online Series initiated in collaboration with the IIT Gandhinagar has been encouraging. This program is open for all. Subject teachers complet-

ing all 10 sessions may accumulate a maximum of 30 hours of continuous professional development (CPD) training as per the scheme already circulated.

It is inclusivity and equity which form the backbone owing to NEP Fit Schools. Providing access to education, particularly between rural and urban children, NEP Fit Schools pledge to drive fairness by equal chances for children, irrespective of their socio-economic status. Educational scholarships, sharing material activities, and community-centered programs are facts in realization of education for every child. Such undertakings serve essentially not only to equalize the situation but also inculcate the concept of community among students in a society.

This goes from lifeless memorization to learning that allows one to interact with the child; that is another significant hallmark of NEP Fit Schools. The whole educational structure in NEP Fit Schools concentrates on learning that rests with concepts while, at the same time, implies that learners should travel deeper in their exploration and questioning with the study material. The pedagogy conforms with the specific needs and pursuits of varied learners through an arena that appreciates individuality yet supports cooperation. With the inculcation of curiosity and self-interest, such institutions enable children to fall in love with lifelong learning.

Physical and mental fitness are integral to the NEP Fit School ethos. Yoga, mindfulness practices, and physical education are incorporated into the daily routine to ensure students develop healthy habits from a young age. Regular health check-ups, fitness programs, and awareness campaigns further enhance students' overall well-being. This focus on health complements academic learning, enabling students to perform better in all aspects of life.

Teachers are the driving force behind the success of NEP Fit Schools. By investing in continuous professional development and innovative training programs, these schools empower educators to adopt modern teaching methodologies. A collaborative culture among teachers fosters creativity and ensures that educators remain

motivated and well-equipped to guide students effectively.

Technology becomes the agent of profound change in NEP Fit Schools, revolutionizing the provision of education. Smart classrooms, interactive digital learning resources, and e-learning websites add value to the learning experience by increasing its impact and its accessibility. Virtual labs and AI-based technologies offer students a chance to deepen certain fields of study and help technology bridge the gap between the digital and the non-digital as it relates to marginalized communities.

Parental and community involvement is a cornerstone of the NEP Fit School approach. Each of these schools highlights a consideration of shared accountability in learning as a means of encouraging parents, educators, and members of the community to work together. Ongoing workshops, parent-evening meetings, and community-based projects build a platform that supports whole-person child development.

Along with these basic tenets, NEP Fit Schools promote multilingual education, that is, linguistic diversity and cognitive growth. They also embed sustainability education in order to enable students to learn about the need for environmental protection and eco-friendly actions. Through teaching in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics), NEP Fit Schools approach technical mastery in addition to creative ingenuity and thus prepare students for diversified career paths.

The NEP Fit School model is not only an academic model but a revolution that leads the way to the development of responsible, creative, and kind global citizens. By combining inclusivity, skill development, technological integration, and holistic growth, these schools set the foundation for a brighter and more equitable future for all learners.

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. The author is principal at Birla Open Minds International School Pampore

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Did You Know?

## Mastering Wealth: Consistent Investment Over Market Timing

Irshad Mushtaq

Timing the market is notoriously difficult. Rather than attempting to predict peaks and troughs, invest strategically in quality companies, mutual funds, and ETFs, where consistent engagement in the market fosters wealth.

### Regular Investment: The Key to Financial Growth

Market timing is elusive, but regular investment in quality shares, ETFs, and mutual funds harnesses the power of compounding. The essence isn't in predicting the right time to buy or sell but maintaining a steady course.

### India's Entrepreneurial Potential: The Future of Growth

With a vibrant entrepreneurial scene, India is poised for immense growth in the coming decades. Historical market lows like 1990, 2004, 2008, and 2020 showcase profitable opportunities amidst downturns, underlining the importance of investing in quality assets.

### Psychology of the Stock Market: Trading vs. Investing

Understanding stock market psychology is critical. Many retail investors confuse trading with investing, leading to losses. SEBI reports reveal that 90% of aggressive F&O traders incur losses, often due to a trading mindset lacking the discipline of investing.

### Patience and Education: Core to Successful Investing

Patience and understanding are the backbones of successful investing. Educate younger generations by gifting shares or mutual funds, teaching them the value of investing in quality companies. Investing transcends mere profit-making—it's about comprehending the asset class. Nifty potentially reaching 50,000 is a realistic aspiration aligned with India's growth trajectory, its matter of time and patience.

Read the full article on our website: <https://kashmirobserver.net>

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## The Importance of Encouraging Reading Habits in Children

I am writing to emphasize the critical importance of nurturing reading habits in children, an issue that, though often discussed, still requires our urgent attention. In an era where digital distractions dominate, the importance of reading cannot be overstated.

Books provide an opportunity for children to explore worlds beyond their immediate surroundings,

broaden their vocabulary, improve cognitive skills, and enhance their ability to focus. More than just entertainment, reading encourages creativity, critical thinking, and empathy, qualities essential for their holistic development.

Unfortunately, many children today prefer gadgets over books, driven by the instant gratification that technology offers. This shift threatens

their intellectual growth and stunts their imagination. Parents, teachers, and society must therefore make concerted efforts to promote reading.

Libraries should be made more accessible, and schools can integrate fun reading challenges and activities to make books more appealing. Parents must set aside time for family reading sessions, reinforcing the idea that reading is a pleasurable and

valuable activity.

We need to ensure that our future generations grow up not only proficient in technology but also rich in imagination, knowledge, and empathy. By instilling a love for reading in children, we are preparing them for a brighter, more thoughtful future.

Raneem Beg

## The Changing Job Market in Kashmir: Breaking the Cult Mentality

Fawzan Thakur

For decades, Kashmiris have held onto the belief that passing the 10th standard was a defining academic milestone, a gateway to success and stability. Even as late as 2012, families and relatives would gather to congratulate students with a heartfelt "Mubarak!"—as if this achievement alone would secure their future. This mindset, shaped by past realities, continues to persist even as the job market has undergone a complete transformation.

In the 1980s and 1990s, passing the 10th standard or earning a basic college degree was often enough to land a government job. At that time, there were fewer graduates, and opportunities were relatively abundant. However, as access to education expanded, so did the number of job seekers—while the number of available jobs stagnated.

Today, even highly educated individuals, including PhD holders, struggle with unemployment. This is not just a crisis in Kashmir but a global phenomenon. Government jobs, once considered the ultimate aspiration, have become extremely scarce, with thousands of applicants competing for just a handful of positions. Meanwhile, professional degrees in engineering, medicine, and other fields no longer guarantee employment, as industries evolve faster than ever before.

Despite clear signs of change, many Kashmiri families still hold onto outdated career expectations. Parents continue pushing their children toward conventional career paths—engineering, medicine, or government jobs—without realizing that these fields no longer provide the security they once did.

Even with rising unemployment among engineering and medical graduates, coaching centers remain packed with students chasing the same traditional paths, unaware that the job market has already shifted. The harsh reality is that thousands have earned degrees, yet many remain jobless and directionless. This disconnect between expectations and reality creates



a cycle of frustration, where young people invest years into careers that may never materialize.

Further complicating the situation is the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) and automation. AI is replacing jobs at an unprecedented rate, making many traditional professions obsolete. White-collar jobs, once considered secure, are now at risk of being taken over by technology.

This raises a critical question: What's next? If AI continues to reshape industries, what will the next generation of job seekers do? What is the backup plan for those who find their skills outdated overnight? Instead of waiting for solutions from an unpredictable job market, Kashmir's youth must proactively explore alternative career paths.

Perhaps the answer lies in revisiting the industries that have sustained humanity for centuries—traditional businesses, agriculture, construction, and other hands-on trades. Unlike digital jobs, these sectors are far less vulnerable to automation. By modernizing and adapting them to current market demands, they can provide stable and lucrative career options such as

Farming and Agriculture, Reviving Traditional Businesses, Construction and Skilled Trades or Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment.

As the job market becomes increasingly competitive, a well-crafted resume is more important than ever. A strong resume not only highlights skills and experience but also aligns with modern industry requirements. Over the period of time various online and offline platforms have been created for prospective applicants to shape their curriculum vitae that would align to the evolving and competitive job market around the world. As of today, the applicants are taking help and rightly so, from various such platforms such as [Resume.io], [canva.com] and [CV Resume Nest] (<https://cvresumeneest.com>).

Prospective job seekers in Kashmir can build professional resumes that stand out with the help of above platforms. The same would increase their chances of securing employment in today's dynamic job landscape.

*The author is a Masters graduate from Birmingham City University with a specialization in Business Management*

## Unheard Wisdom: The Injustice to Grandparents

Ayaan Saroori

In the era of smart gadgets, which are used for entertainment, humor, and knowledge, we have lost touch with the true gems of our families—our grandparents. Our region has a strong history of family values, where discussions led by family elders were highly valued. However, this culture is fading. From the very beginning, grandparents were seen as the apple of the eye of their families. They played a vital role in preserving cultural, religious, and decision-making traditions. Unfortunately, with time, due to our busy schedules and digital distractions, many grandparents are left unheard and their wisdom remains silent. While many young people feel bored listening to their tales, they enjoy scrolling instead. Why don't we dedicate an hour to celebrate time with our grandparents?

Due to the acute stage of mobile addiction, where entertainment is easily available and knowledge is free of cost, many employed people are busy handling their work. This leads us to a gradual loss of family connection. Once, during breakfast or dinner, we would hear tales and stories recited by the grandparents of our parents. These tales also signified their moral and emotional values. Many of their habits were transferred to our parents. Hence, a popular saying about a person's surroundings fits distinctly. In the region of J&K, many of our parents recall their youth and their attachment to their grandparents. They often share memories of their nature and golden words. While time remains the same, we have become seekers of smart gadgets and lost those precious moments. The fading of family discussions and the decrease in communication at homes have worsened the situation. We must hold social media and smartphones responsible for this change.

### Parental Influence: The Root of the Communication Gap

Young people and teenagers feel excited to talk to their friends but not to their parents or grandparents. This is harsh to bear, but it is currently happening in our society. School-going students do not want to be held accountable by their parents regarding pocket money or academic matters. How can a grandparent be a third wheel if a



parent is not valued? As mentioned above, screen addiction is responsible for the problem, but this trend has only emerged in recent years. Many of us have grandparents, yet they are lonely, and none of us is willing to listen to them or discuss our matters with them. The whole trend begins with the parents and reaches the children. If parents do not prefer talking with their elderly parents, how can their children engage with their grandparents? Gradually, this will cut off communication with both grandparents and parents. Thus, a chain started by the parents will end with them.

A couple of weeks ago, senior doctors and lawyers from the valley openly discussed the cons of rising digital addiction. While many individuals use screens for productive purposes, many others use them to overcome stress, relax, or for entertainment. Meanwhile, family discussions with grandparents and parents remain untouched. For both users, a family discussion should be a priority. Conversations with grandparents inspire a person and foster better ways of speaking, managing stress, and dealing with other matters logically. Though many grandparents may be uneducated, they know the struggles of life and respond patiently to emergencies. This is the pearl we need to uncover, but finding it requires discussion and open communication.

In these tough times, where screens have become our source of pleasure and we have signed off from society, open communication is necessary to revive it. These discussions remind us of the struggles of our grandparents, their moral values, and the challenges they faced in terms of education and economic hardships. They need our love through humble conversation. For how long will screens make us happy?

*The author is a freelance writer and columnist*

## Get Over the Funk

Jolanta Burke

Are you feeling worn out? Struggling with lingering sadness, anxiety or feelings of indifference? If so, you might be stuck in a funk.

There are many reasons you might find yourself in a funk – including returning home after a holiday, not being sure what your goals in life are and a lack of meaning and purpose driving you forward. Sometimes, there's no clear reason why we find ourselves in a funk.

Whatever the cause, don't lose hope. There are many things you can do to turn the way you're feeling around.

### 1. Express yourself

As obvious as it sounds, one of the best ways to get out of a funk is exploring the reasons you're feeling this way.

Try writing down your deepest thoughts and feelings without judgement – no matter how disjointed they are. Or, grab a paintbrush, spray paint, pencil or chalk and express your emotions through art. You might even choose to dance, letting your movements convey what you're feeling and help you get to the root of your funk.

Whatever form of self-expression works for you, all that matters is getting your feelings out. This will help you make sense of what's causing your funk, and may make it easier to overcome.

### 2. Remember the good times

When we're in a funk, we're often overwhelmed by feelings of sadness or indifference. It can be hard to reduce these negative emotions – especially since negative feelings serve a purpose, by helping us understand what's going on inside.

Instead of trying to banish bad feelings, try instead to layer positive emotions on top of them. This may help balance your emotions out.

You can do this by closing your eyes and savouring a happy moment from the past when you felt alive, vibrant and fulfilled. Use every sense as you relive those joyful memories.

### 3. Connect with someone



Research shows the most fulfilled people don't bury themselves in their thoughts when feeling down. Instead, they look outward – engaging with others and their surroundings.

So when you're in a funk, try finding ways of connecting, even briefly, with the people around you. Even a simple conversation with a stranger might lift your spirits.

Or take it a step further if you can and do something kind for someone – or try volunteering. This may help break you out of your low mood by giving you a sense of fulfilment?

### 4. Heal in nature

Nature is shown to improve wellbeing in many ways – such as lowering blood pressure, refreshing your mind and reminding you that you're part of something larger than yourself.

If you've been feeling down, try going for a walk in the park or find a quiet place to stop on a hike. Lift your head to the sky, listen for the birds singing, immerse yourself in the foliage and let the sound of water wash over you. All of these things are linked with better mental health.

### Preventing a funk

Doing any of these activities even just

once can make a difference to the way you're feeling. The more often you do them, the better.

And once you've broken out of your funk, there are things you can do to avoid slipping into one in the future.

### 1. Build resilience

Resilience isn't just about bouncing back. It's more about finding the right resources to help you get out of a funk – and knowing how to use these resources effectively.

For example, if connecting with your friends helps boost your wellbeing, this would be considered one of your "resource-

es" that can help break you out of a funk. Of course, schedules can get in the way, so you'll need to find a time that works best for everyone.

This is what resilience is all about. Identifying your go-to resources for preventing those low feelings can help you create a ready-made toolkit to draw from whenever you feel a funk coming on. To build your tool-kit, think about the things that made the biggest difference in pulling you out of a funk the last time.

### 2. Cultivate hope

Hope isn't just wishful thinking. It's about cultivating the will to keep moving forward and finding a way to get there. It's a pathway to a better life, keeping us focused on growth.

But one of the challenges in building hope is the lack of a clear vision of where we want to be. To overcome this, take some time to imagine your best-case scenario – what your life would look like ten years from now if everything you've ever hoped for came true.

Spend 20 minutes writing it down. Don't stop to worry about spelling or grammar (this is just for you). Repeat this exercise as often as needed to create your ideal future.

When you're finished, write down how you can achieve what you hope for. Having a well-defined vision of your best possible self can help keep you motivated and prevent you from feeling stuck – and will also give you a reserve of hope to draw upon when facing hard times.

### 3. Practise self-acceptance

Most importantly, focus on practising self-acceptance. Everyone experiences rough patches, so don't be hard on yourself for being in a funk – it's just a temporary state.

Embrace where you are and accept yourself fully, regardless of your current situation. And remember that self-acceptance doesn't mean resignation. It's about acknowledging, "It's okay to be me," while also envisioning how you want "me" to evolve in the future. With this mindset, you can work towards becoming the person you aspire to be.

Unlike trees, which are rooted in place, we have the flexibility to grow and change. Remember this the next time you start feeling stuck.

# 5 Bn People Lack Medical Oxygen Access, Poorest Nations Worst Hit: Lancet

Press Trust Of India

**F**ive billion people or nearly two-third of the world's population lack access to medical oxygen, with highest inequities in low- and middle-income countries, estimated a new Lancet Commission report.

The report by the Lancet Global Health Commission on Medical Oxygen Security is the world's first estimate of how unequally medical oxygen is distributed, gaps in coverage of patients in need, along with costs required to bridge these gaps.

Medical oxygen is essential in a healthcare system for treating patients, including those of surgery, asthma, trauma and maternal and child care.

It is also critical to a country's pandemic preparedness by helping prevent a repeat of the COVID-19 oxygen shortages and the mass fatalities that resulted, said an international team of researchers, including those from the

University of Melbourne, Australia.

In this study, the researchers said that 82 per cent of patients worldwide requiring medical oxygen live in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), and nearly 70 per cent concentrated in south and east Asia, the Pacific and sub-Saharan Africa.

The patients include those with acute medical and surgical conditions, and long-term oxygen needs due to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

However, less than one in three people needing oxygen for medical or surgical conditions receive the life-saving gas due to gaps in service contact, readiness, provision and quality, leaving almost 70 per cent of the patients without coverage.

The gaps are even higher in regions, including Sub-Saharan Africa (91 per cent) and South Asia (78 per cent), the authors said.

In a case study accompanying the report, the authors described the scenario of medical oxygen in India,



especially as observed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The pandemic had a catastrophic effect not just because of the rates of contagion and the virulence of the dis-

ease but also because of the drastic scarcity in life-saving resources such as medical oxygen," the team from One Health Trust, India, wrote.

They added that with hospitals

largely relying on third-party vendors for meeting their oxygen demand pre-COVID-19, the surge in demand during the pandemic led to black-marketing and hoarding.

Desperate requests for medical oxygen were also raised on social media and in exceptional cases, the court intervened by issuing orders against supplying agencies and the government for replenishing oxygen supplies, the authors said.

The commission report also suggested recommendations for how governments, industry, global health agencies, academic institutions and civil society can work together to strengthen health systems in providing access to medical oxygen.

The authors added that medical oxygen is a highly cost-effective investment to advance global public health that will accelerate the world's progress towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals for health by 2030, but also help countries prepare for the next pandemic.

## 'Green Cover In India Absorbed More Carbon Than It Emitted Annually'

Press Trust Of India

**T**he green cover in India has absorbed more carbon than it emitted annually in the last decade, but the rate of sequestration declines during extreme climate events such as drought, a study has revealed.

The study by researchers at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Bhopal, also stressed the critical role of vegetation in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Green vegetation absorbs carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from the atmosphere through photosynthesis and releases it back into the air through respiration.

"The overall balance between this uptake and release of CO<sub>2</sub> is known as the net ecosystem exchange (NEE). When the NEE is positive, it means vegetation is releasing more carbon than it absorbs, and when it's negative, it indicates that the vegetation is effectively storing carbon," said Dhanyalekshmi Pillai, associate professor, head of the Max Planck Partner Group Germany, and of the Earth and Environmental Sciences, IISER, Bhopal.

"For the last decade, India's (green) ecosystem absorbed more carbon than they emitted annually, with annual NEE estimates ranging from 380 to 530 million tonnes



of carbon per year," she said.

Researcher and co-author of the paper, Aparna Ravi, said this level of carbon sequestration is impressive but tends to decline in response to climate extremes, emphasising the critical role of vegetation in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Scientists also studied how different types of vegetation across India help absorb CO<sub>2</sub> each year.

Pillai said evergreen forests in India are highly efficient in capturing CO<sub>2</sub> through photosynthesis. However, the deciduous forests in central India released more carbon into the atmosphere as plant respi-

ration surpassed primary productivity.

"They (green vegetation) released 210 million tonnes of carbon annually, acting as carbon sources. Although croplands are less effective at absorbing carbon per unit area than forests, their extensive coverage across the country benefits significant CO<sub>2</sub> removal from the atmosphere," she said.

Pillai said the sequestration rate is not constant but shows a decreasing trend, especially in response to drought.

She said drought is an example of climate extremes, and these conditions are increasing due to cli-

mate change.

"Green vegetation is favouring us (reducing global warming), but the sequestration potential cannot be limitless... under climate extremes, it shows decreasing sequestration. This is concerning," Pillai said.

She said the study reflects on creating and implementing effective climate policies and ecosystem management in consonance with nationally prioritised action plans.

IISER scientists, in collaboration with international experts, led and established an innovative technology-driven approach using highly resolved observations of plants' fluorescence ("glow") and advanced physics-based computer models to quantify vegetation's carbon sequestration potential across India for the first time.

In this novel approach, IISER-Bhopal researchers led long-term analyses across India by tracking several thousands of observational records of the last 10 years (2012-22), together with research experts from the Max Planck Institute for Biogeochemistry (Germany), University of Exeter (United Kingdom) and National Remote Sensing Centre (India).

Pillai said this newly demonstrated system also benefits from the recently available radiance observations from multiple satellite instruments, including the TROPOMI instrument onboard the Sentinel-2 satellite.

## Air Pollution May Be Higher Inside Your Home Than Outdoors: Study

ANI

**A** new study reveals that people may be exposed to unhealthy levels of airborne pollutants inside their homes, even if the outdoor air quality is good.

Researchers at the University of Birmingham used low-cost sensors and innovative techniques over a two-week period to compare particulate matter (PM) in three homes. They discovered that pollution levels in each house were higher and more variable than outdoor levels. The researchers found significant differences in PM levels between the three houses, with one home exceeding the World Health Organisation (WHO) 24-hour PM<sub>2.5</sub> limit on nine days.

This highlights the importance of monitoring indoor air quality at a household-specific level.

Published in Scientific Reports, this is the second paper published by McCall MacBain Clean Air Fellows studying the philanthropically funded Master's degree in Air Pollution Management and Control at the University of Birmingham.

Co-author and Clean Air Fellow Catrin Rathbone commented: "Our study shows the need to monitor indoor air pollution, as people can have unhealthy air at home even if outdoor air is good.

PM levels varied significantly between homes, indicating that monitoring just one location isn't enough."

The team note that factors such as household location, ventilation, and occupancy patterns influenced particle levels - demonstrating the complexity of indoor air quality.

Co-author and Clean Air Fellow Owain Rose commented: "With more time spent working from home, understanding the factors that affect air quality within households is increasingly important. The methods we used accurately modelled indoor PM levels, helping to improve exposure estimates at a low cost."

Researchers identified five different factors contributing to PM in indoor spaces - two relating to indoor activities, such as increased movement by residents and three linked to external factors such as a nearby restaurant's kitchen vent. They found that larger particles (PM<sub>10</sub>) tended to settle faster compared to smaller particles (PM<sub>1</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub>).

Researchers used Non-negative Matrix Factorization (NMF) - a powerful tool for uncovering latent patterns in data - to more accurately model indoor PM levels. Using low-cost sensors enabled them to build a more detailed picture of pollutant levels within the properties. (ANI)

Email ID: xenbemina@gmail.com  
Government of Jammu & Kashmir UT

### OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PW(R&B) DIVISION BEMINA SRINAGAR.

Subject:- Upgradation / Remodeling of Washrooms on Ground Floor. 1st Floor and 2nd Floor with Septic Tanks with allied works at FSL Bemina Srinagar .

Reference:- This Office NIT No. 70/EE/R&B/BM/CS/of 2024-25 DATED:04.02.2025 issued under endorsement No.: 10028-35 dated: 04.02.2025.

#### EXTENSION NOTICE

The above noted work floated for tenders vide this office NIT No. 70/EE/R&B/BM/CS/of 2024-25 DATED:04.02.2025 issued under endorsement No.: 10028-35 dated: 04.02.2025 is hereby extended, details whereof given as under:

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	04.02.2025.
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	05.02.2025 from 10.00 AM
3	Bid submission Start Date	05.02.2025 from 10.00 AM
4	Bid Submission End Date	24.02.2025 upto 4.00 PM.
5	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	25.02.2025 at 12:00 PM in the office of Executive Engineer R&B Division Bemina Srinagar.

No: EE/R&B/Divn/BM/10358-65  
DIPK-12136/24  
Dated:18.02.2025

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer R&B Division Bemina Srinagar.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU &amp; KASHMIR

### OFFICE OF THE WARDEN GUJJAR AND BAKERWAL BOYS HOSTEL BARAMULLA

#### ADMISSION NOTICE FOR THE YEAR 2025-2026

All the Student belonging to the Gujjar and Bakerwal community of District Baramulla who have passed 5th class examination and are interested to seek admission in class 6th in Gujjar and Bakerwal Boys Hostel Baramulla are informed to fill up the admission form available free of cost in the office of the Warden Gujjar and Bakerwal Boys Hostel Rangwar Baramulla.

The details/dales for the issuance and submissions of admission forms and date of entrance/written examination are as under

• Issuance of admission forms	25-02-2025 to 10-03-2025.
• Last date of Submission of forms:-	17-03-2025.
• Date of written / entrance test	24-03-2025
• Venue / centre for the written test shall be communicated separately	

#### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- 1 The applicant should not be more than 14 years of age.
- 2 The applicant must have passed 5th class examination from any recognized institute/school
- 3 The applicant should belong to Gujjar and Bakerwal (ST) Community
- 4 The monthly income of the family of the applicant should not be more than Rs:- 7000/= (Rupees Seven thousand only) from all the sources.
- 5 The selection will be made strictly on merit bases in the written test.

**For any query / details contact - 7006767952. 7006609340**

NO:-GBBH/B LA/2025/223-29  
DIPK-12146/24 Dated:- 18.02.2025

Sd/= Warden  
Gujjar and Bakerwal Boys Hostel Baramulla



## Investors Lose 850 CR in Ponzi Scheme, 2 Arrested

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI-** Two persons were arrested in connection with a Rs 850 crore Ponzi scheme involving Falcon Invoice Discounting Platform, which allegedly duped over 6,000 depositors across the country, police said here on Sunday.

The accused allegedly deceived the public by persuading them to make short-term deposits with the promise of high returns, they said.

According to the police, the primary accused, Amardeep Kumar (Managing Director, Falcon Capital Ventures Pvt Ltd), along with Aryan Singh (Chief Operating Officer) and Yogender Singh (Chief Executive Officer), who are still at large, lured depositors by promising high returns on short-term deposits under the guise of invoice discounting.

So far, 19 people have been named as accused in the case and out of them two were arrested, and others are absconding, a police official said.

During the investigation, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Cyberabad on February 15 arrested--Pavan Kumar - Vice President of Capital Protection Force Pvt Ltd and Business Head of Falcon Invoice Discounting Platform, along with Kavya N, Director of Capital Protection Force Pvt Ltd and Falcon Capital Ventures Pvt Ltd.

On the modus operandi, a release from Cyberabad Police Commissionerate said the ac-



cused launched a mobile application and website, falsely presenting Falcon Invoice Discounting Platform as a legitimate peer-to-peer invoice discounting service.

They claimed to connect depositors with reputed companies while in reality, they fabricated vendor profiles and fake deals to create an illusion of authenticity, police said.

Total deposits to the tune of Rs 1,700 crore were collected and out of which Rs 850 crore was repaid to the investors, while the rest (outstanding fraudulent amount Rs 850 crore) was to be paid to as many as 6,979 depositors, police said.

The accused promised returns of 11-22 per cent per annum and the deposit range was between Rs 25,000 to Rs 9 lakh. The maturity period was of 45 to 180 days.

"The accused were involved in a large-scale financial fraud amounting to Rs 850 crore, orchestrated through Falcon Invoice Discounting Platform under Capital Protection Force Pvt Ltd and its associated entities," Deputy Commissioner of Police (EOW) K Prasad said.

**“The accused promised returns of 11-22 per cent per annum and the deposit range was between Rs 25,000 to Rs 9 lakh. The maturity period was of 45 to 180 days.”**

## India, Qatar Explore Possibility Of Bilateral FTA; PM Modi, Qatar Amir Discuss

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI-** India and Qatar are "exploring" the possibility of signing a bilateral free trade agreement in future, and this was discussed during the talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani on Tuesday, officials said.

Responding to a query during a briefing on the two-day State visit of the Amir to India, Arun Kumar Chatterjee, Secretary (CPV & OIA) in the Ministry of External Affairs, also said India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) at this moment are "negotiating about having an FTA".

The GCC is an influential grouping comprising the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait.

"India and the Gulf Cooperation Council, we are at this moment, negotiating about having an FTA, a free trade agreement. As far as Qatar is concerned, both sides are exploring the possibility of signing a free



trade agreement in future. And, that was one of the discussions that took place in this round of talks," Chatterjee said when asked about the status of the India-GCC FTA negotiations.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Modi held wide-ranging talks with the Amir at the Hyderabad House as the two leaders decided to elevate India-Qatar relations to a "strategic partnership" with focus on trade, investments, technology, energy and people-to-people ties, further cementing the "deep and traditional relationship" between the two countries.

Briefing reporters, Chat-

terjee also said Modi and the Qatari Amir decided to set a target to double bilateral trade from the current USD 14 billion to USD 28 billion over the next five years.

The GCC, a six-nation grouping is headquartered in Riyadh.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in September 2024 had visited Riyadh to attend the first India-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) foreign ministers' meeting.

Ahead of EAM's visit, the MEA had said that India and the GCC enjoy a deep and multifaceted relationship, including in areas of trade and investment, energy, cultural and people-to-people ties.

**"INDIA AND THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL, WE ARE AT THIS MOMENT, NEGOTIATING about having an FTA, a free trade agreement. As far as Qatar is concerned, both sides are exploring the possibility of signing a free trade agreement in future. And, that was one of the discussions that took place in this round of talks,"**

## Markets End Marginally Lower After A Day's Breather Amid Foreign Fund Outflows

Press Trust Of India

**MUMBAI-** Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended marginally lower on Tuesday as uninterrupted foreign fund outflows and lower-than-expected corporate earnings continued to hit investors' sentiment.

After a day's breather, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex ended 29.47 points or 0.04 per cent lower at 75,967.39. Intra-day, it dropped 465.85 points or 0.61 per cent to 75,531.01. The NSE Nifty dipped 14.20 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at 22,945.30.

"On Tuesday, the Indian blue-chip equity indices, Sensex and Nifty-50, closed with a slight decline, primarily due to a slowdown in earnings and concerns over ongoing foreign selling, which affected market sentiment," Ameya Ranadive, Chartered Market Technician, CFIe, Sr Technical Analyst, StoxBox, said.

From the Sensex pack, IndusInd Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Hindustan Unilever, Sun Pharma, Tata Consultancy Services, ITC and Asian Paints were among the biggest laggards.

NTPC, Zomato, Tech Mahindra, Power Grid, Kotak Mahindra Bank and HCL Tech were among the gainers.

The BSE smallcap gauge dropped 1.71 per cent and mid-cap index declined 0.19 per cent.



Among BSE sectoral indices, industrials dropped 1.51 per cent, consumer durables (1.19 per cent), telecommunication (1.06 per cent), capital goods (0.91 per cent), auto (0.65 per cent) and consumer discretionary (0.55 per cent).

BSE utilities climbed 1.03 per cent, BSE Focused IT (0.86 per cent), oil & gas (0.70 per cent) and energy (0.38 per cent).

As many as 2,918 stocks declined while 1,032 advanced and 114 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"The domestic market has experienced both profit-booking and bottom-fishing amid persistent concerns over FII outflows and pressure on the INR. Small and midcap stocks continue to lag due to apprehensions about premium valuations. Meanwhile, India's trade deficit has widened beyond expectations, driven by rising imports due to depreciating domestic currency and surging commodity prices," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

## Tesla Starts Recruitment In India, Sends Signal Of Entering EV Market

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI-** American electric carmaker Tesla has opened recruitments for various roles in India, including business operations analyst and customer support specialist, in what could be a precursor for the company's entry into the country.

As per the job postings on the company's website, the posts are for the 'Mumbai Suburban' area.

These roles include service advisor, parts advisor, service technician, service manager, sales & customer support, store manager, sales & customer support, business operations analyst, customer support supervisor, customer support specialist, delivery operations specialist, order operations specialist, inside sales advisor, and consumer engagement manager.

A mailed query to confirm if the recruitments are part of the company's plans to enter the Indian market and the possible timeline for starting sales in India remained unanswered.

The hiring by Tesla in India comes close after the recent meeting of company founder and American tech billionaire Elon Musk with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the latter's recent US visit. Tesla's possible entry into



dia at the earliest. His planned visit to India came weeks after the government announced a new electric vehicle policy under which import duty concessions will be given to companies setting up manufacturing units in the country with a minimum investment of USD 500 million, a move aimed at attracting major global players like Tesla.

An advisor representing Tesla -- The Asia Group (TAG) had even attended a stakeholders' meeting on the new EV policy along with those from Vietnam's EV maker VinFast and all the major manufacturers in India, including Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai, Tata, Mahindra, Kia, Skoda Auto Volkswagen India, Renault, Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Audi.

Musk had said in 2022 that Tesla, which was earlier seeking a reduction in import duties to sell its vehicles in India, would not manufacture its products unless it is allowed to first sell and service its cars in the country.

In August 2021, Musk had said that Tesla may set up a manufacturing unit in India if it first succeeds with imported vehicles in the country. He had said Tesla wanted to launch its vehicles in India "but import duties are the highest in the world by far of any large country!"

## Director JKEDI Asks Officers To Strengthen Loan Recovery Process

Observer News Service

**JAMMU-** Director Jammu & Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI), Rajinder Sharma on Tuesday chaired a review meeting of all district centres of the institute here at Bari Brahmana.

During the review meeting, the Director reviewed the overall functioning of the district centres and different program verticals of the institute, especially the progress made regarding recovery of loans under different self-employment schemes and the Entrepreneurship Awareness Programmes (EAPs) conducted in various districts of for the months of December 2024 and January 2025 across the Union Territory.

The meeting was attended by the concerned Range Officers, District Nodal Officers of JKEDI, In-charges of the concerned sections and program verticals.

The Director gave a thorough analysis of the recovery of loans granted to beneficiaries under different self-employment schemes and highlighted the progress achieved in all the districts of J&K. He said the overall review of the recovery and repayment status underscores the institute's dedication to transparency, accountability and sustainable growth.

## DC Kulgam Flags-Off Group Of Farmers On Exposure Tour

Observer News Service

**KULGAM-** The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan Tuesday flagged-off a group of 50 progressive farmer entrepreneurs on exposure cum training programme for a period of six days under Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP).

During the tour, farmers will visit Punjab Agriculture University Ludhiana for upgradation of skill & technical know-how regarding cultivation of year round mushroom and floriculture on commercial scale to generate employment opportunities among the unemployed youth. Chief Agriculture Officer Ravinder Kumar, District Agriculture Officer, Agriculture Extension Officers and other concerned officers and officials were present on the occasion.

While interacting with the farmers, DC said that the objective of the tour is to make the farmers aware about the latest technical advancements & knowledge and besides progressive farming practices being adopted in mushroom and Floriculture sectors.

District Agriculture Officer, on the occasion advised the progressive farmers to share and disseminate the knowledge gained during the tour among the farmers back home, so that they can also adopt the latest agriculture techniques to improve their farm yields and income in the said sectors.

## IICT Holds Draw Of Lots, Selects 100 Weavers For Free Modern Carpet Looms

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR-** The Indian Institute of Carpet Technology (IICT), Srinagar, Tuesday organised 'Draw of Lots' for selection of 100 active registered carpet weavers for distribution of free Modified Modern Steel Carpet Looms.

A large number of applicant weavers from various districts assembled in IICT premises at Bagh-e-Ali Mardan Khan, here, for participation in the Draw of Lots, after which 100 beneficiaries were selected by the Designated Committee in a fair and transparent manner.

Sharing details, Director IICT Zubair Ahmad, stated that these looms, which have been sanctioned by the Ministry of Textiles, Govt, at a cost of 43.70 lakh under its 'Wool Processing Scheme' for the current financial year, shall be distributed amongst the selected beneficiaries at a function to be notified separately.

Highlighting the salient features, Director IICT stated that the prototype of the modern carpet looms was developed after intense research of 02 years, followed by mandatory testing. "The new loom has inbuilt detachable seating arrangement with back support, with working width of 6 ft. suitable for carpet weavers, who generally have small workplaces," he explained.

## Unemployment Rate Dips Marginally To 6.4% In December Quarter: Survey

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI-** The rate of unemployment among people aged 15 years and above in urban areas dropped marginally to 6.4 per cent in the October-December quarter of the current fiscal, according to the National Sample Survey Survey (NSSO).

Joblessness, or unemployment rate, is defined as the percentage of unemployed people in the labour force.

The unemployment rate in the December quarter of FY24 was 6.5 per cent. However, the rate stayed flat when compared sequentially.

In the preceding July-September quarter of FY25, the rate of unemployment for people aged 15 years and above in urban areas was at the same level of 6.4 per cent, the 25th Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) showed.

The unemployment rate among females (aged 15 years and above) in urban areas declined to 8.1 per cent in October-December 2024 from 8.6 per cent in the same quarter a year ago. The rate was 8.4 per cent in July-September, 2024.

Among males, the unemployment rate in urban areas remained flat at 5.8 per cent in October-December 2024 as compared to the rate of the same quarter a year ago. The rate was 5.7 per cent in July-September, 2024.

Labour force participation rate in Current Weekly Status



(CWS) in urban areas for people aged 15 years and above increased to 50.4 per cent in October-December from 49.9 per cent in the same quarter a year ago. The rate was 50.4 per cent in the July-September 2024.

Labour force refers to the part of the population, which supplies or offers to supply labour for pursuing economic activities for the production of goods and services and, therefore, includes both employed and unemployed persons.

The NSSO had launched PLFS in April 2017.

On the basis of PLFS, a quarterly bulletin is brought out giving estimates of labour force indicators namely unemployment rate, worker population ratio (WPR), labour force participation rate (LFPR), distribution of workers by broad status in employment and industry of work in CWS.

WPR for male aged 15 years and above for urban areas increased from 69.8 per cent in October-December, 2023 to 70.9 per cent during October-December, 2024.

The estimates of unemployed persons in CWS give an average picture of unemployment in a short span of seven days during the survey period.

## Gold Rises ₹300 To ₹88,500 Per 10 Gm, Silver Climbs ₹800

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI-** Gold prices rose Rs 300 to Rs 88,500 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday amid firm global trends, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had ended at Rs 88,200 per 10 grams on Monday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity advanced Rs 300 to Rs 88,100 per 10 grams.

Silver prices also jumped Rs 800 to Rs 99,000 per kg from the previous close of Rs 98,200 per kg.

In futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for April delivery jumped Rs 435 to Rs 85,490 per 10 grams.

"Gold continued its positive trend, driven by persistent global uncertainty over tariffs. With banks and funds maintaining high allocations to the safe-haven asset, gold remains well-supported," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst -- Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said.

Key events like Trump's speech on Wednesday, along with the Federal Reserve and RBI meeting minutes, will add to the market's volatility in the coming sessions, Trivedi said.

Silver futures for March delivery also appreciated Rs 439 to Rs 96,019 per kg on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

In the international markets, Comex gold futures for April delivery climbed USD 24.94 per ounce, or 0.86 per cent, to USD 2,925.64 per ounce in the



global markets.

"Comex is trading above USD 2,925 as investors continue to monitor tensions between the US and European Union, as well as developments in Ukraine peace talks," Kaynat Chainwala, AVP-Commodity Research at Kotak Securities, said.

Meanwhile, spot gold in the overseas markets rose nearly USD 16 to USD 2,912.50 per ounce.

"Gold gained modestly on Tuesday, maintaining its position as the primary safe-haven asset and an appealing inflation hedge.

"However, further gains were capped due to hawkish remarks from Fed member Patrick Harker, who advocated on Monday night for the central bank to keep interest rates unchanged," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Comex silver futures for March delivery in the Asian market hours quoted 0.47 per cent higher at USD 33 per ounce.

On Monday, the commerce ministry said its gold imports in January rose 40.79 per cent to USD 2.68 billion on account of increasing domestic demands.

## STD Intensifies Inspections Against Sale Suppression, Fake Invoicing, GST Violations

Observer News Service

**JAMMU-** State Taxes Department (STD), Jammu and Kashmir has intensified its drive against sale suppression and launched massive inspection drive across Jammu division to check GST violations.

Based on inputs generated by various AI tools including Business Intelligence And Fraud Analytics (BIFA), E-way Bills Portal and other components of enforcement wings, the inspections were carried under the guidance of Commissioner State Taxes J&K, P K Bhat and under the supervision of Additional Commissioner (Enforcement and Administration) Jammu, Namrita Dogra.

Led by State Tax Officers, specially constituted teams visited various business units in Rajouri, Kishtwar and Kathua simultaneously to investigate violations under GST Law by verifying documents, physical stock position, bill books etc.

While giving details on these drives, Additional Commissioner (Enforcement and Administration) Jammu, Namrita Dogra said, "The inspections are part of enforcement activity. 13 teams have been constituted to carry out inspections across the division". She added that teams specifically targeted dealers who were found engaged in sale suppression and fake invoicing. The State Taxes Department urged the dealers to follow the fair-trade practices and avoid indulging in tax evasion activities or fraudulent practices involving fake ITC.

## Domestic Violence Act

## SC Slams States, UTs For Not Filing Status Reports

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday pulled up several states and union territories for not filing status reports over the implementation of the domestic violence law while allowing them four more weeks subject to the payment of Rs 5,000 as costs.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Prasanna B Varale took note when the petitioner's counsel said several states and UTs did not file their status reports despite the top court's direction.

"The counsel for the respective states have sought for some more time to file status reports. Hence, four more weeks are granted to file status reports subject to payment of cost of Rs 5,000 to the Supreme Court mediation centre," the bench said.

The bench noted Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Odisha, Telangana, West Bengal and Assam were among the defaulters.

UTs of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and Lakshadweep also did not file the status reports, it was further informed.

"Pay cost of Rs 5,000 and file it. If you

don't file it, next time it will double," said Justice Nagarathna.

The bench posted the matter on March 25. In its December 2 2024 order, the apex court said the status report had to be filed with regard to implementation of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

On January 17, the top court extended the time for filing of the status reports by the states and UTs till February 14.

While hearing the matter in November last year, the apex court said the prayers in the petition were essentially for the implementation of the 2005 law.

While issuing notices, the top court said the obligation for the implementation of the law not only rested with the Centre but also with the respective state governments.

The plea sought directions to the authorities for the proper enforcement and implementation of the provisions of the 2005 Act aside from directions for adequate appointments, notification and establishment of protection officers, service providers and shelter homes as directed under the Act.

The plea also sought initiation and strict implementation of awareness campaigns related to crime against women.

## Pending Criminal Case Not Obstacle For Appointment: DB

KO WEB DESK

Srinagar: In a landmark judgment, the Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court has ruled that the pendency of a criminal case does not bar an individual from being appointed to a Government position or performing their duties.

The Division Bench, comprising Chief Justice Tashi Rabstan and Justice MA Chowdhary, passed this ruling while dismissing an appeal filed by the Union Territory (UT) of Jammu & Kashmir.

The case involved a respondent who had been appointed under SRO 43 due to the death of his father.

The petitioners, the Jammu & Kashmir PWD (R&B), Division Bhandarwah, had issued the appointment on November 22, 2023, following approval from the administrative department.

After joining the position on December 6, 2023, the respondent disclosed that he was facing a criminal trial, though he had not been convicted.

Despite this, the respondent was allowed to start his duties, with a character verification report from CID showing no adverse remarks.



However, on January 3, 2024, the petitioners withdrew the respondent's appointment, citing the pendency of a criminal case under the NDPS Act.

The petitioners argued that the ongoing trial constituted grounds for cancelling the appointment.

This led to the respondent filing an appeal before the Central Administrative Tribunal, which ruled in his favour, directing that the withdrawal of the appointment was unjustified.

The Division Bench of the High Court, while hearing the appeal filed by the UT, held that the

"mere pendency of a criminal case should not be construed as a reason for denying a person their appointed role."

The Court emphasized the principle of "presumption of innocence" until proven guilty in a court of law, asserting that unless a person is convicted, their character cannot be judged based on the pending trial alone.

The Bench further referred to the J&K Civil Services (Verification of Character and Antecedents) Instructions, 1997, which mandate periodic verification of government employees' character.

In this case, the respondent had disclosed his criminal charges, and the verification report from CID was clear of any adverse comments.

Hence, the Court found no legal basis for withdrawing the appointment on the grounds of an ongoing trial.

With this ruling, the High Court dismissed the UT's appeal, upholding the Tribunal's decision and clarifying that the pendency of a criminal case should not obstruct an individual's right to employment and performance of duties.

## CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

## MeT Warns Of

while some springs in south Kashmir have dried up completely due to the receding water table, they said.

"There has been 79 per cent deficient precipitation in the month of January and the situation in February so far is worse. If the dry weather continues, it is going to cause problems for the residents of the valley as there won't be enough water for drinking or irrigating the fields," a MET department official said.

An official of the Irrigation and Flood Control Department said the water level in River Jhelum and several other water bodies was more than a metre below the usual water level for this time of the year.

"If it does not rain or snow in the next fortnight, there is a possibility of a crisis with regards to water for drinking and irrigation purposes," he added.

Social media is flooded with videos and images of dried up water bodies with Achabal springs in south Kashmir having dried up completely.

The river bed of Jhelum is visible at many places, especially upstream in south Kashmir areas while the water level downstream in north Kashmir is alarmingly low. The situation is similar in other major streams of the valley.

The lack of enough snowfall has forced authorities to postpone the fifth edition of Khelo India Winter Games which were scheduled to begin from February 22.

While most of the Gulmarg bowl is bereft of snow, the higher reaches of the famous skiing destination does not have enough snow for safe conduct of sports activities.

## 'Declining Snow

significant decline in snowfall over the past five years, particularly during the peak winter season. This has led to the current alarming situation. "Snowfall is a major source of water for Kashmir's population. With the pervasive lack of snow, rivers, tributaries, and streams are drying up. This could severely impact the tourism sector, horticulture, and food security systems in Kashmir, with far-reaching economic implications," Prof. Romshoo said.

Asked about the drying up of the Achabal water stream, Prof. Romshoo explained that geological factors could be at play. The mountains from which these streams originate are shallow, and their flow is sustained by snow accumulation. "Over the past several years, we have witnessed dry winters with little to no snowfall. This is the primary reason why streams are drying up," he said.

Meanwhile, the Jammu and Kashmir government has taken up the issue of the drying Achabal stream with the Geological Survey of India (GSI).

The sources said that the Chief Secretary has directed the General Administration Department to request the GSI to dispatch a team of experts to the region. The team will investigate the causes of the crisis and recommend remedial measures.

The famous Achabal waterfall, a key water source in the region, has completely dried up, leaving many communities struggling for water. Reports indicate that 65% of water sources in the area are severely depleted, creating drought-like conditions.

Environmental experts attribute the crisis to climate change and global warming, which has significantly impacted the lower Himalayan region.

The Jhelum River, Kashmir's primary water source, has recorded its lowest water levels in decades. Groundwater reserves and other water bodies are also depleting rapidly. While temporary conservation measures have improved some wetlands, such as Hokarsar, experts warn that the crisis will worsen without a comprehensive water management policy.

"We need a holistic approach to managing water resources, especially for rivers like the Jhelum and Chenab. A structured policy will help regulate water release and conservation," said Javid Khurshid, a research scholar in environmental sciences.

The effects of global warming are being felt worldwide, with extreme weather patterns causing both floods and droughts. Experts emphasize that preserving wetlands, lakes, and rivers is crucial to mitigating the impacts of climate change. Khurshid urged both the government and citizens to take immediate action

to prevent further environmental degradation. "Pollution in our riverbeds must be addressed at every level. Sustained conservation efforts are vital for the survival of our water bodies," he added. (KNO)

## 'Declining Snow

to culminate on (Wednesday February 19), the weatherman has predicted light to moderate rain and snow at many places on its last day.

The fresh rains and snow in Jammu and Kashmir will likely end the prolonged dry spell tomorrow as a two-day wet spell is expected to bring rains and snow in J&K till Thursday.

Notably, after a 20-day long Chillai-Khurd that occurs between January 31 and February 19, a 10-day long Chillai-Bachha will commence from February 20 to March 2.

Director Meteorological (MeT), Dr Mukhtar Ahmad told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) there is a possibility of light to moderate rain and snow at many places during 19th evening to 20th late afternoon. "The fresh Western Disturbance is all set to hit the Union Territory," he added.

Dr Ahmad said that the plains of Kashmir & Jammu may receive light to moderate rain and thunder with gusty winds at few places, adding that the higher reaches of Chenab Valley & South Kashmir may receive moderate snowfall up to around 10 inches while the higher reaches of north & Central Kashmir may receive snowfall up to 8 inches.

Meanwhile, an Independent Weather Forecaster, Faizan Arif Keng said that a fresh Western Disturbance is set to develop over Afghanistan on February 19 and quickly move towards Jammu and Kashmir by February 20, bringing widespread rain and snow across the Union Territory.

"The first signs of the disturbance will be felt in the higher reaches from late night on February 19, with precipitation gradually intensifying as it spreads across the region. Most parts of Jammu and Kashmir are likely to witness a moderate spell of rain/snow, along with the possibility of a heavy spell in some parts," he said.

"Overall, on average, Jammu region may record higher precipitation than Kashmir Valley. The Chenab Valley districts - Ramban, Kishtwar, and Doda - are also expected to receive moderate to heavy precipitation. In Kashmir Valley plains, rains may dominate on that day, but a sharp drop in temperature could trigger a transition to snowfall, especially under prolonged heavy precipitation," Keng added.

Temperatures, which will remain in the range of 15 - 18°C on February 19, are expected to drop below 7°C on February 20. The Pir Panjal range is expected to receive heavy snowfall, affecting areas such as Gulmarg, Sinthan Top, Peer Ki Gali, and other parts of Mughal Road, Keng added.

Due to higher temperatures, lightning and thundershowers may remain a common feature on that day, especially in Jammu region. There is a risk of shooting stones/landslides on Jammu-Srinagar National Highway on 20th February. Weather is expected to improve from 21st February onward," he said.(KNO)

## Shah Outlines

of the new laws, it is imperative to change the attitude of police personnel and the administration and create awareness about the new laws among citizens. "He said that optimum use of technology should be made to ensure speedy justice under the three new criminal laws," reads an official handout issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) after the meeting.

Shah added that there is an urgent need to use the provision of Trial in Absentia in the Union Territory. The Union Home Minister stressed the need to fix the responsibility of police officers to expedite the process of filing chargesheets. He said that every police station in Jammu and Kashmir should maximize the use of the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS). He also emphasized that 100% training of investigating officers regarding the provisions of the new laws should be ensured at the earliest.

The Home Minister said that decisions on provisions related to terrorism and organized crime should be taken only after thorough scrutiny at the level of Superintendent of Police. He added that strict monitoring is required to ensure that these provisions under the new laws

are not misused.

Shah commended the Jammu and Kashmir administration and government for their satisfactory work towards the implementation of the new criminal laws despite difficult circumstances. He stated that the progress of implementation should be reviewed on a monthly, fortnightly, and weekly basis at the level of the Chief Minister, Chief Secretary, and Director General of Police, respectively.

The meeting was attended by the Union Home Secretary, Chief Secretary and Director General of Police of Jammu and Kashmir, the Director General of the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD), the Director General of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), and other senior officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the UT administration.

## Meeting Focused

Laws enacted by Parliament in July, 2024 . The deliberations focused on modernization, swift justice and a victim-centric approach to law enforcement."

The meeting at the North Block was held in the presence of J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah after the meeting stated that the three newly introduced criminal laws have been "by and large" successfully implemented in the Union Territory. However, he emphasized the need for increased public awareness about the provisions of these laws.

Speaking to reporters outside the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) after attending a high-level review meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Abdullah as per news agency KINS said the discussions focused on addressing shortcomings and ensuring smooth implementation.

"The home minister mentioned that similar review exercises have been conducted for 11 states and Union Territories so far. In the case of Jammu and Kashmir, implementation has been largely smooth, barring a few issues that will be resolved," Omar said.

While acknowledging that the implementation of the laws does not fall under the elected government's purview, he stressed the importance of educating citizens about the changes. "People must be made aware of these new laws through colleges, universities, and other platforms," he added.

## 2 Army JCOs

Leh-based Fire and Fury Corps. The Fire and Fury Corps shared the pictures of the two JCOs and wrote: GOC, Fire and Fury Corps and all ranks salute Subedar Santosh Kumar and Naib Subedar Sunil Kumar, who made supreme sacrifice in the line of duty in Ladakh on February 16 and offer deep condolences to the bereaved families in this hour of grief.

## Bank Officer

division of the bank's Jammu zonal office. The complainant alleged that Saleem Yousef Bhatti, a contractual employee of the Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP), Poonch, and others got the inactive accounts of the watershed committee in the bank's Lassana branch in Surankote activated.

The accused allegedly got the nomenclature of the accounts changed, issued fake salary certificates and confirmation letters to different non-existing employees and managed to get personal loans, cash-credit loans and car loans by posing themselves as government employees, a spokesperson of the crime branch said.

He said the accused also managed to open fraudulent government accounts at the bank's branch offices at Mendhar and Mendhar Bus Stand.

They first deposited money through different banks in the accounts of the watershed committee and the fake accounts opened by them, issued fake authority letters instructing the branches to disburse and credit the salary in the individual accounts of the accused and thus, managed to fraudulently obtain loans amounting to Rs 5 crore from different branches of the Jammu and Kashmir Bank, causing a huge wrongful loss to the bank.

Taking its investigation forward, the crime branch arrested five accused -- then manager (scale-II) of the bank's Rajouri branch Jatinder Singh (now demoted) of Jammu, impersonators

Mohammad Kabir, Mohammad Zafeer Khan and Zafar Iqbal of Poonch and Mohammad Shakeel of Rajouri, the spokesperson said.

## Gyanesh Kumar

26th CEC, a day after incumbent Rajiv Kumar demits office on Tuesday evening.

He along with fellow election commissioner Sukhbir Singh Sandhu was appointed on the same day and was part of the Commission when the 2024 Lok Sabha polls were held.

Kumar is the first CEC to be appointed under a new law on the appointment of the members of the Election Commission (EC).

His term will run till January 26, 2029, days before the EC is expected to announce the schedule of the next Lok Sabha election.

According to law, CEC and ECs demit office on attaining the age of 65 years or completing six years in the poll panel, whichever is earlier. Gyanesh Kumar will turn 65 on January 27, 2029.

During his Bihar tenure as the CEC, Kumar will oversee the Bihar Assembly polls later this year, and the Kerala and Puducherry Assembly polls in 2026.

Similarly, he will oversee the assembly polls in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, which are also due in 2026.

Besides the various assembly polls, he will also oversee the elections for President and Vice-President in 2027.

Kumar played a key role in implementing decisions following the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution in Jammu and Kashmir during his stint in the Union home ministry.

During his tenure in the ministry, he had also played a key role in setting up the Ram Temple trust post the Supreme Court verdict. He is also learnt to have closely monitored the SC hearings on Ram temple on a regular basis.

His appointment on Monday had come hours after the Congress asked the government to defer its decision on the new CEC and EC till the Supreme Court concludes its hearing on a petition challenging the composition of the selection panel.

Kumar is a 1988-batch Kerala-cadre IAS officer.

After completing his B.Tech in Civil Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur, he studied Business Finance in ICFAI, India and Environmental Economics in IIID, Harvard University, US.

He has worked in the government of Kerala as the assistant collector of Ernakulam, sub-collector of Adoor, managing director of the Kerala State Development Corporation for SC/ST, municipal commissioner of the Corporation of Cochin, besides holding other posts.

As a secretary to the government of Kerala, Kumar handled diverse departments, such as finance resources, fast-track projects and the public works department.

In the government of India, he has rich experience of working as the joint secretary in the Ministry of Defence, joint secretary and additional secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs, secretary in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and secretary in the Ministry of Cooperation. He superannuated on January 31, 2024.

## SC To Hear Pleas

and election commissioners (EC) under the 2023 law.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh was informed by advocate Prashant Bhusan, appearing for an NGO, that despite the Constitution bench verdict of 2023 directing selection and appointment of the CEC and ECs through a panel including the Chief Justice of India, the government excluded the CJI and made a "mockery of democracy".

He said, "The matter is listed on February 19 but it is listed as item number 41. The government has appointed the CEC and EC as per 2023 law disregarding the view taken by a constitution bench. Kindly take up on top of the board as the matter requires urgent consideration."

Advocate Varun Thakur, appearing for petitioner Jaya Thakur, said three appointments were made by the government under the new law, which was under challenge.

The bench assured Bhusan and other parties that after some urgent listed matters, it would take up the petitions for hearing on February 19.

On February 17, the government appointed EC Gyanesh Kumar as the next CEC.

Kumar is the first CEC to be appointed under the new law and his term would run till January 26, 2029, days before the EC is expected to announce the schedule of the next Lok Sabha election.

Vivek Joshi, a 1989-batch Haryana-cadre IAS officer, was appointed as an election commissioner.

Born on May 21, 1966, Joshi (58) would serve in the poll panel till 2031.

According to the law, a CEC or an EC retires at 65 or can have a tenure in the poll panel for six years.

On February 12, the top court fixed February 19 to hear pleas against the appointment of the CEC and EC under the 2023 law saying if anything happens in the interregnum, the consequences were bound to follow.

It said the issue would be decided on merit and finally.

Bhusan had submitted that the 2023 verdict held that the election commissioners have to be selected for appointment by an independent panel comprising the prime minister, Leader of Opposition and Chief Justice of India.

"They have brought an Act by which they have removed the chief justice and brought in another minister, effectively making the commissioners appointment only at the pleasure of the government. You need to have an independent committee to appoint the election commissioners," he said.

On March 15, 2024, the top court refused to stay the appointments of the new ECs under the 2023 law which excluded the CJI from the selection panel and deferred the hearing on a batch of pleas challenging the appointments.

The apex court told the petitioners that the March 2, 2023 verdict directed for the three-member panel comprising the Prime Minister, Leader of Opposition and the CJI to operate till Parliament enacted a law.

The NGO Association for Democratic Reforms has challenged the CJI's exclusion and contended the election commission should be insulated from "political" and "executive interference" for maintaining a healthy democracy.

ADR's plea alleged the verdict was overruled by the Centre without removing its basis and the composition of the selection committee under the new law which amounted to excessive interference of the executive in the appointments and was detrimental to the independence of the poll panel.

## 'Road Project' Triggers

the presence of wild animals in residential areas during the same period. One wild animal was killed, and 22 were captured alive.

Locals allege that the problem worsened after forest clearance was granted for the 40-kilometer Handwara-Bangus road in 2017. They claim the road, which cuts through a large, dense forest, has forced wild animals out of their natural habitat and into closer proximity with human populations. The road traverses compartments 2, 3a, 3b, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 24, 25, and 26 of the Rajwar forest area.

"Before 2018, there were few, if any, such incidents," Bhat said. "The surge occurred after forest clearance was given for the road. A feasible alternate route existed via Rajwar Zachaldara-Wadder, making the current route unnecessary and environmentally damaging."

Bhat, who is also contesting the road construction in the National Green Tribunal (NGT), argues that the project has not only disrupted the ecosystem but also threatens local livelihoods.

"The increased human-animal conflict is impacting agriculture and horticulture, key sources of income for residents. Furthermore, the road bypasses the main Rajwar area, potentially hindering economic benefits for the local community," he said.

He also alleged that Rule 7C of the J&K Forest and Afforestation rules was miscounted and dishonestly applied in granting forest clearance.

Bhat called for the cancellation of the Handwara-Bangus road project and the reforestation of the affected area. He suggested declaring the disturbed forest areas, which connect to other wildlife habitats in Kupwara, as a wildlife sanctuary. "There must be a safe haven for wildlife to prevent these conflicts and protect the animals," he added. He emphasized the need for a balanced approach that considers both development and environmental protection.

# Real Kashmir Defeats Namdhari, Climbs To 2nd Spot In I-League

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Real Kashmir FC continued their unbeaten home run with a 1-0 victory over Namdhari FC in an I-League match at TRC Ground here on Tuesday.

With this win, the Snow Leopards moved to the second spot on the points table, securing 26 points from 15 matches.

Real Kashmir's resurgence, with five wins in their last seven games, has placed them firmly back in the title race after a mid-season slump.

The only goal of the match came in the seventh minute when Brazilian striker Paulo César calmly converted a penalty. The opportunity arose after Karim Samb was fouled inside the box by Namdhari's Joseph Gordon. César sent goalkeeper Jaspreet Singh the wrong way, registering his sixth goal of the season and giving the hosts an



early advantage.

The Snow Leopards nearly

doubled their lead in the 20th minute when Karim Samb, set up by Asrar Rehbar, rounded the Namdhari goalkeeper and seemed certain to score. However, former RKFC defender Lamine Moro produced a last-ditch sliding tackle, denying Samb a clear goal just a yard from the line.

The Snow Leopards continued to press forward, with Mohammad Inam looking dangerous in attack. Just before halftime, Inam dribbled past defenders and unleashed a powerful shot, but Jaspreet Singh parried it away. The rebound fell to Asrar Rehbar, who set up Samb again, but his effort was blocked by Namdhari's Harpreet Singh.

Namdhari FC, who had been ineffective in attack during the first half, relied heavily on their Brazilian forward, Cledson Carvalho da Silva, in the second period. In the 62nd minute, he

attempted a lob over Real Kashmir goalkeeper but misjudged the shot. Later, he dribbled past two defenders and took a shot from outside the box, only to be denied by RKFC captain Muhammad Hammad's crucial block.

After the match, Real Kashmir head coach Ishfaq Ahmad acknowledged the significance of the victory against a strong opponent.

"Namdhari FC was second on the table, so this was an important win for us. The support from fans is amazing. Even children come with their parents, creating a great sporting atmosphere," he said.

Club owner Arshid Shahl congratulated the team and reiterated the club's commitment to promoting local talent.

"Our goal is to nurture Kashmiri players so they can compete at top clubs in India and even abroad," he said.

## Pakistan Captain Rizwan Urges Team To Show Resilience



Press Trust of India

**KARACHI:** Pakistan captain Mohammad Rizwan on Tuesday urged his side to show the same resilience in the Champions Trophy which they had shown during the 10-year period when no international side toured the country.

No top team in international cricket had toured Pakistan following the terrorist attacks on the Sri Lankan team in March 2009 until the start of this decade when top teams such as Australia, England and New Zealand resumed visiting their Asian opponent.

In between, Pakistan hosted Zimbabwe in 2015 and a World XI side under Faf du

Plessis had toured for a three-match T20I series to quell concerns regarding security.

"I think, most importantly, we should all enjoy the Champions Trophy as it is after a long time (that) we are having such a big event in Pakistan, after 10 years (that) we spent playing our home matches elsewhere," Rizwan told the media here on Tuesday.

"If you see, even in those 10 years (that) we suffered, Pakistan cricket did well and won big matches including being the Test No 1 team and (winning the) Champions Trophy. I hope we can repeat that same thing in this tournament," he said.

Rizwan, however, said Pakistan will have to be at the top of their game to excel

in the competition starting here on Wednesday.

"It is hard to say how we will perform on a particular day because it is important for us to play to our optimum level to win matches," he said.

Rizwan said every member of the side is a "captain" in the team and added, "But yes, as seniors, we all need to lead from the front."

He also made it clear that Babar Azam will continue to open in the Champions Trophy, while adding that fast bowler Haris Rauf is fit for their tournament opener against New Zealand.

Rizwan, meanwhile, admitted that his team was not able to show consistency due not being able to perform in pressure situations.

"I think we lack that one or two per cent needed to win matches under pressure because unfortunately, we tend to crack under pressure and lose close matches as we have seen in recent games," he said.

Rizwan said Pakistan have learnt a lot from their defeats to New Zealand in the tri-series and would try not to repeat the mistakes again in the Champions Trophy opener.

## Pak Air Force To Perform Flypast

The Pakistan Air Force fighter jets will perform a flypast before the start of the opening match here on Wednesday and the Civil Aviation Authority has issued a NOTAM (notice to airmen) to commercial airlines.

According to CAA, the PAF aircrafts will perform the flypast on February 19 as part

of the celebrations. Commercial flights arriving at Karachi Airport have been advised to take necessary precautions.

A designated air corridor will remain closed and airlines have also been instructed to carry additional fuel in their aircrafts.



## Awed Fans Connect With Indian Cricketers In Dubai



Press Trust of India

**DUBAI:** Rehman Zaid and Fatima made a trip from Oman to Dubai to catch a glimpse of India's superstar cricketers, and it did not matter to them that they had to wait for hours to turn a long-cherished dream into reality.

Rarely fans from a cricketing outpost get to see Indian players up close, but once they got a chance the supporters returned home with some precious memorabilia.

There were fans from India, of course, but among the 200-plus supporters assembled at the ICC Cricket Academy were Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Oman, UK and USA citizens - mostly of Indian origin.

The Indian team members were here on Monday evening for a nearly three-hour training session ahead of their Champions Trophy opener against Bangladesh on February 20.

With little time wasted, they captured the cricketers' pictures and videos on their phones, standing a mere 5 metres away and separated only by a barricade and a few security personnel.

"We have come from Oman. We will be watching a few matches of

India. We are quite happy that we got such an opportunity to see the cricketers from so close," said Zaid, who has come along with his family of four.

The fans waited till India's net session got over, and tried to click them once more.

The cricketers, who trooped into the team bus quickly, however, found some time to sign a few autographs, much to the glee of the fans.

The 17-year-old Fatima managed to get Shreyas Iyer's sign on a T-shirt, and she was delighted.

"I am so happy. I am so grateful to ICC for allowing us to see and interact with the Indian cricketers from so close. I managed to get the autograph on the T-shirt."

"This is so unreal. I saw Virat. He came and signed this one for me and for others. He is so nice and wonderful. I just missed Shami's autograph," she said.

As one would expect, the loudest cheer was reserved for Kohli, a crowd puller wherever he goes.

Now, they plan to return to see their heroes once again on February 20 and 23 for the matches against Bangladesh and Pakistan respectively

## Short TAKES

### 10th J&K Handball Championship To Start From February 21

The 10th J&K UT level Handball Championship for Men and Women will kick off on February 21 and will come to an end on February 23. The championship will be held at Playing Field Shastri Nagar in Jammu.

Organised by the J&K Handball Association, in collaboration with J&K Sports Council, the event will follow a league-cum-knockout format.

All the affiliated units of JKHA are informed to send the teams on February 20.

### World Record: USA Beat Oman To Defend Lowest ODI Total

The United States of America on Tuesday successfully defended the lowest-ever total of 122 in a non-curtailed ODI match to beat Oman by 57 runs in a their Cricket World Cup League 2 match here.

It is the lowest successfully defended totals in men's ODIs and excluding matches with a revised target or reduced overs.

In conditions heavily favouring spin, it was the metronomic work of Nosthush Kenjige that led the American charge, with the left-arm spinner claiming 5/11 from 7.3 overs to sink the hosts for just 65.

The score of 65 all-out is also Oman's lowest in the men's international format.

Not a single over of pace was bowled in the match, with Oman's five-pronged spin attack matched by USA's Milind Kumar, Harmeet Singh, Yasir Mohammad and Kenjige.

### Min 36 Cameras, 360 Degree Virtual Field Model For CT: ICC

A minimum of 36 cameras with a host of analytical tools and visual enhancements to elevate the experience for the viewers will be used to broadcast the Champions Trophy matches, the ICC said on the eve of opening game between New Zealand and Pakistan in Karachi.

"To further enrich the viewing experience, the Quidd Innovation Labs will deliver Field 360°, a virtual field model that illustrates fielding positions and strategies in real-time," the ICC said in a statement on Tuesday.

Their drone camera will offer breath-taking aerial views of venues and surrounding landscapes, while the roving buggy cam will deliver immersive ground-level visuals. The signature Spidercams will further enhance the broadcast with its aerial coverage, offering dynamic perspectives of the action.

### Gavaskar, Shastri, Bhogle, Bishop To Call Champions Trophy Matches

Former captains Sunil Gavaskar and Ravi Shastri along with Dinesh Karthik and Harsha Bhogle are the four Indian experts who will be part of the ICC commentary panel for the Champions Trophy starting on Wednesday.

From Pakistan, there will be the legendary Wasim Akram with Bazid Khan and Ramiz Raja for company. Nasser Hussain and Michael Atherton, the former England captains and respected pundits, will also be providing their expert analysis alongside former West Indies pacer Ian Bishop.

New Zealand will be represented in the commentary box by Ian Smith and Simon Doull.

Australians airing their opinions include Matthew Hayden, Mel Jones and Aaron Finch, while South African legends Dale Steyn and Shaun Pollock will also be present in the commentary box.

### ICC Approves Jamieson As Ferguson Replacement In NZ's CT Squad

Kyle Jamieson will replace injured pacer Lockie Ferguson in New Zealand's squad for the Champions Trophy after the ICC Event Technical Committee approved the change on the eve of their campaign-opener against Pakistan here on Wednesday.

Thirty-year-old Jamieson, who has played 13 ODIs, was named as a replacement after Ferguson was ruled out due to an injury to his right foot. This will be Jamieson's first ODI match since playing against Bangladesh in September 2023, and the first international appearance after the first Test against South Africa in February last year. Since that Test, the 30-year-old had to sit out of all the action because of stress fracture on the back.

# Billionaire Jim Ratcliffe's First Year At Man United Has Not Gone To Plan

Agencies

**MANCHESTER:** It's been a year since one of Britain's richest men bought into its most famous soccer team and vowed to bring the good times back.

So far, it hasn't gone to plan for Manchester United or Jim Ratcliffe.

The record 20-time English champion is languishing in the bottom half of the Premier League, losing vast sums of money every year and facing fan unrest.

Even head coach Ruben Amorim said recently that this might be the worst team in the club's storied history.

That's not all on Ratcliffe, the billionaire owner of petrochemicals giant INEOS, but it has been a rocky start since he paid \$1.3 billion for an initial 25% stake in United and assumed control of its soccer operations.

There have been high profile hirings and firings, brutal cost cutting, a hike in ticket prices and new lows on the field for a team that had been in decline for more than a decade before he became minority owner.

While there was triumph in the FA Cup last year, that success has been overshadowed by supporter

protests, job losses, unconvincing transfers and humbling defeats.

**BOLD PLANS**

Ratcliffe said his investment was "just the beginning of our journey to take Manchester United back to the top of English, European and world football."

Those ambitions feel further away now than they have in decades, with United 15th in the standings and closer to the relegation zone than the top six after a woeful campaign. Sunday's 1-0 loss to Tottenham was the 12th in the league this season and an eighth under Amorim, who only took charge in November.

Amorim said: "I have a lot of problems, my job is so hard, but I am here to continue my job to the next week with my beliefs."

**MAJOR OVERHAUL**

He was one of a number of key hires made as part of Ratcliffe's overhaul of United's soccer operations.

Omar Berrada was lured away from Manchester City to become CEO and Dan Ashworth left Newcastle to take up the role of sporting director. Jason Wilcox, formerly



director of City's academy, became technical director.

Key figures at Ratcliffe's Ineos Sport, Dave Brailsford and Jean-Claude Blanc, were appointed to the board and Amorim became the final piece of a new leadership team after former manager Erik ten Hag was fired in October.

But that restructuring has been far from a smooth process.

Ten Hag was fired three months after being handed a one-year contract extension with United having lost four of its opening nine

league games.

Ashworth left the club less than six months after taking up his role, and after months of negotiations to take him away from Newcastle.

They were expensive missteps. In total it cost United 10.4 million pounds (\$13.09 million) to pay off Ten Hag and his staff and another 11 million pounds (\$13.85 million) to trigger Amorim's release from Sporting Lisbon.

It was reported it cost between 2 and 3 million pounds (\$2.5-3.78 million) to hire Ashworth, who

spent five months on gardening leave during negotiations with Newcastle.

**COST CUTTING**

Those numbers make uncomfortable reading at a time when United has implemented cost-saving initiatives that it said included staff redundancies of around 250 roles. More could be on the way, according to reports.

In October it emerged that managerial great Alex Ferguson was not beyond the reach of those measures. He will step down from his lucrative role as club ambassador at the end of the season.

In addition to cuts, United raised its lowest-priced tickets to 66 pounds (\$81) partway through the season, up from 40 pounds (\$49).

It defied that decision by telling fans it could not sustain its current financial losses and was in danger of breaching league rules if it did not act. United reported losses last year of 113.2 million pounds (\$140 million).

"We will get back to a cash positive position as soon as possible and we will have to make some difficult choices to get there," it said in a letter to fans.

**FAN PROTESTS**

That explanation has not gone down well with supporters.

"Fans should not be paying the price for previous bad ownership & bad management," Manchester United Supporters Trust posted on X. "The supporters bring far more value than the simple collective ticket revenue."

Supporters spent years trying to drive out the American Glazer family, which is still majority owner, and there continues to be anger towards them after Ratcliffe's investment.

There have been jeers for the team while United's performances on the field have continued to slide.

**NEW LOWS**

Ratcliffe's first season as co-owner saw United endure its worst league campaign in 34 years when it finished in eighth place.

The end of his first full season could be even worse.

The last time it lost 12 of its first 25 games in a league season was in the 1973-74 campaign when it was relegated from the top flight.

**TRANSFER STRATEGY**

United has spent around \$260

million on players in the two transfer windows under Ratcliffe, but the squad still looks well short of the quality required to challenge for the title.

Forward Joshua Zirkzee has struggled to adapt to the Premier League and defender Leny Yoro missed a large part of the season through injury.

The pressure of complying with the league's financial rules has placed uncertainty on United's ability to spend big in the summer to bring in players to suit Amorim's preferred system, and there is unlikely to be a quick fix.

**STADIUM REBUILD**

Ratcliffe wants a world class stadium, either by way of redeveloping United's iconic Old Trafford or building one from new.

His plans, which include an ambitious redevelopment of the surrounding area, have been backed by the U.K. government. Financing them, however, is another issue and it is not yet clear where that money will come from.

The modernization of United's Carrington training ground is well underway after 50 million pounds (\$63 million) of investment.

## New Zealand changes 'Golden Visa' to lure wealthy foreigners

Agenceis

New Zealand is simplifying its so-called "golden visa" program, including removing an English language requirement, to attract wealthy immigrants and help spark an economic recovery.

From April 1, the Active Investor Plus visa will be narrowed to just two categories, while the scope of acceptable investments will be expanded, Immigration Minister Erica Stanford said Sunday in Auckland. As well as dropping the language test, other potential barriers to investment such as the amount of time investors must stay in the country will also be adjusted, she said.

After a sharp recession in 2024, the New Zealand government wants to capitalize on falling interest rates to lift economic performance but has acknowledged it needs lacks the necessary capital. It is reworking foreign investment regulations, created a single agency to act as a one-stop shop for overseas fund managers, and has eased rules to allow visitors to work remotely, hoping that might encourage highly skilled people to relocate permanently.

"Capital is highly mobile and in an increasing complex world, people are looking for a safe and stable country to do business," Stanford said. "We are now making our investor visa simpler and more flexible to incentivize investors to choose New Zealand as a destination."

The Active Investor Plus visa was successful at luring rich individuals to New Zealand and raked in an average NZ\$1 billion (\$570 million) a year, but has languished after rule changes in late 2022.

Just 43 applications have been fully approved since those adjustments were made, equating to NZ\$545 million of nominated investment funds, according to data from Immigration New Zealand. The actual amount of money coming across the border was significantly less, the government said today.

The new program will have two categories:

Growth, or higher risk, requiring a minimum investment

of NZ\$5 million over three years either directly into businesses or into managed funds; visa holders must spend just 21 days in the country

Balanced, or mixed risk, requiring a minimum of NZ\$10 million invested over five years into bonds, stocks, new property development including residential, or existing commercial and industrial property; holders must spend at least 105 days in the country but can reduce the period by investing above the minimum

By offering an option for low-risk investors the program will be attractive to a wider group of people, rather than just focusing on those with a high risk appetite, Stanford said, adding there is already a large amount of interest from applicants that had been generated during consultations with the industry.

New Zealand's easing of its investor visa rules comes at a time when many other nations are ending theirs. Spain will end its golden visa program on April 3, while the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Greece and Malta have either ended or tightened the rules around their golden visa or equivalent policies.

The Australian government has effectively scrapped its Significant Investor visa class — which was available for arrivals who invested more than A\$5 million (\$3 million) — over concerns that it had been abused by wealthy individuals who had used it to buy property or financial assets without contributing significantly to productive parts of the economy.

Marcus Beveridge, a business migration specialist and managing director at Queen City Law in Auckland, welcomed the changes as being well over due, and predicted they will give New Zealand's sluggish residential property market a shot in the arm.

"Over the last couple of decades every time we do something like this the property market picks up," he said. "It's not so much about huge numbers coming across the border but what happens is that the cash investment primes the pumps and our local market takes off."

## Obesity Breakthrough? Scientists Discover Neurons That Regulate Eating



Washington DC: Scientists have found specialized neurons in the brains of mice that order the animals to stop eating. Though many feeding circuits in the brain are known to play a role in monitoring food intake, scientists also believe that the neurons in those circuits do not make the final decision to cease eating a meal.

The neurons identified by the Columbia scientists, a new element of these circuits, are located in the brainstem, the oldest part of the vertebrate brain. Their discovery could lead to new treatments for obesity.

"These neurons are unlike any other neuron involved in regulating satiation," says Alexander Nectow, a physician-scientist at Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons, who led the research with Srikanta Chowdhury, an associate research scientist in the Nectow lab.

"Other neurons in the brain are usually restricted to sensing food put into our mouth, or how food fills the gut, or the nutrition obtained from food. The neurons we found are special in that they seem to integrate all these different pieces of information and more."

The decision to stop eating is a familiar phenomenon. "It happens every time we sit down to

eat a meal. At a certain point while we're eating, we start to feel full, and then we get fuller, and then we get to a point where we think, okay, that's enough," Nectow says.

How does the brain know when the body has had enough—and how does it act on that information to stop eating? Other researchers had previously tracked the decision-making cells to the brainstem, but the leads ended there in previous research.

Nectow and Chowdhury deployed new single-cell techniques that make it possible to peer into a region of the brain and discern different types of cells that until now have been difficult to distinguish from one another.

"This technique -- spatially resolved molecular profiling -- allows you to see cells where they are in the brainstem and what their molecular composition looks like," Nectow says.

During their profiling of a brainstem region known for processing complex signals, the researchers spotted previously unrecognized cells that had similar characteristics to other neurons involved in regulating appetite. "We said, 'Oh, this is interesting. What do these neurons do?'"

To see how the neurons influenced eating, the researchers engineered the neurons so they could be turned on and off, by

the researcher, with light.

When the neurons were activated by the light, the mice ate much smaller meals. The intensity of the activation determined how quickly animals stopped eating. "Interestingly, these neurons don't just signal an immediate stop; they help the mice to slow down their eating gradually," Chowdhury says.

Nectow and Chowdhury also looked at how other eating circuits and hormones affected the neurons. The researchers found that the neurons were silenced by a hormone that increases appetite and activated by a GLP-1 agonist, a class of drugs now popular for treating obesity and diabetes. These experiments found that these inputs helped the neurons track each bite the mice took.

"Essentially these neurons can smell food, see food, feel food in the mouth and in the gut, and interpret all the gut hormones that are released in response to eating," Nectow says. "And ultimately, they leverage all of this information to decide when enough is enough."

Though the specialized neurons were found in mice, Nectow says their location in the brainstem, a part of the brain that is essentially the same in all vertebrates, suggests that humans likely have the same neurons.

## India set to launch cancer vaccine for women in five to six months: Union minister

Agenceis

A vaccine to fight cancers affecting women will be available in five to six months, and those in the age group of nine to 16 years will be eligible for inoculation, Union Minister Prataprao Jadhav said on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference here, the Union Minister of State for Health, Family Welfare and Ayush (Independent Charge) said that research on a vaccine is nearly complete and trials are underway.

"The number of cancer patients has increased in the country, and the Central government has initiated steps to address this issue. Women above 30 will undergo screening at hospitals, and daycare cancer centres will be established for early detec-

tion of the disease," Jadhav said.

He said the government has also waived off customs duty for medicines used in cancer treatment. The minister said, "The research on a vaccine for cancers that affect women is nearly complete, and trials are underway. It will be available in five to six months, and girls in the age group of nine to 16 years will be eligible for inoculation." Asked about the cancers the vaccine will tackle, Jadhav said breast, oral and cervical cancers.

Asked about transforming the existing healthcare centres into Ayush facilities, Jadhav said hospitals have Ayush departments, and people can avail of these facilities.

He said the country has 12,500 such health facilities, and the government is increasing them.



## Australian Woman Loses Rs 4.3 Crore, Becomes Homeless, Trying To Find Love Online

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A woman based in Perth has been forced to live homeless after losing over Rs 4.3 crore (\$780,000) in life savings to scammers while searching for love online. According to a report in news.com.au, Annette Ford, 57, is now couch-surfing in Western Australia and hoping to secure housing at an affordable retirement village as the scammers remain free.

Ms Ford joined the dating pool after her 33-year-long marriage ended in 2018 and her ex-husband moved on quickly. Looking to seek a love life of her own, she joined a dating site called "Plenty of Fish" where she started talking to a man named 'William'.

Over the course of several months, the stranger managed to win Ms Ford's trust before asking her for money. 'William' said he needed Rs 2,75,000 (\$5000) as his wallet had been stolen in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

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