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BOOK APPOINTMENT

BNSS Rollout 70 FIRs Registered Via SMS, Emails

Agencies

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir police on Friday said to have registered 70 FIRs after receiving the complaints through SMS, emails on Citizen Service Centers and through Web Portal/ Internet under the new Criminal laws Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). A police spokesman said that under BNSS, the citizens have been provided with the facility of lodging their complaints in any of the electronic forms like, SMS, email, WhatsApp, Citizen Service Centers, Web Portal/ Internet (Eforms), in addition to verbal, telephonic or written complaints. "As on date 52 complaints have been received through SMS and Email in different police stations of UT. In addition to the above 64 complaints have been received on Citizen Service Centers and 10 complaints from Web Portal/ Internet (Eforms) and more than 70 such complaints have been converted into FIRs. As per the section 173 BNSS, any complaint (electronic) received by police shall be entered in the records; however, the complainant has to sign that complaint (electronic) within three days," police said. With regard to ZERO FIR, so far more than 100 such FIRs have been registered | [More on P6](#)

Deficit Falls, Water Levels Rise 4-Day Wet Spell Brings Relief to J&K



- » 407% above normal precipitation
- » Rainfall deficit reduced from 80% to 42%
- » 3-4 feet increase in Jehlum water levels
- » Dry weather from March 4-8.
- » Jammu-Srinagar NH closed
- » Mughal Road, Sinthan Pass blocked
- » Climate concerns remain

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The ongoing wet spell in the Kashmir Valley due to a "mega" western disturbance has brought a major relief for Jammu and Kashmir residents, bringing down the rainfall deficit from 80 per cent to 42 per cent, officials said on Friday. According to the local weather office, the Valley witnessed above-normal precipitation between February 26 and 28. "While the normal precipitation for the period would have been 15.5 mm, Jammu and Kashmir | [More on P6](#)

Roads, Rail & Air Traffic Hit

The continuous inclement weather in the Kashmir Valley on Friday morning disrupted the national highway, air travel, and rail connectivity, officials said here. The Jammu-Srinagar National Highway remains closed for traffic on Friday as authorities intensify efforts to clear the shooting stones and mud slush that have

Vacations Extended, Exams Rescheduled

The Jammu and Kashmir government has announced an extension of winter vacations for schools in the Kashmir division, with all educational institutions now set to reopen on March 7. Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare, and Education, Sakeena Itoo, stated that the decision was taken in view of the prevailing | [More on P6](#)

MeT Predicts More Snow, Rains Till Mar 3

Weatherman on Friday predicted that Jammu and Kashmir would receive more rain and snow till March 3. Director Meteorological department (MeT), Dr Mukhtar Ahmad said, "There is a forecast of light rain and snow at isolated to scattered places till March 2 while light to moderate rain and snow is expected at many places on March 3." "The weather will remain generally dry in J&K from March 4 to March 8," he added. Meanwhile, in its advisory, the MeT said that temporary disruption of surface transportation is expected mainly over Sadhna pass, Razdan Pass, | [More on P6](#)

Ramazan To Start From Tomorrow

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The holy month of Ramazan will commence in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday, March 2, as the crescent moon has not been sighted on Friday night. Grand Mufti, Nasir-ul-Islam Friday said that the crescent moon has not been sighted, thus, the first day of Ramazan will be on Sunday (March 02). The Grand Mufti said that no witnesses or evidence were received from anywhere about the sighting of Ramadan moon today. "Therefore, the first day of fasting will be on Sunday," he said. Meanwhile, as the Valley prepares for the sacred month, fruit and vegetable markets in Kashmir are already stocked with fresh arrivals, ensuring a smooth supply for the holy month. Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers Cum Dealers Association (KVFGDU) Chairman Bashir Ahmad Basheer on Thursday said the Valley has sufficient stock to meet the growing demand. "Every day, around 5,000 to 6,000 fruit boxes reach Kashmir, with 400-500 boxes per vehicle. As temperatures rise, the demand for fruits like watermelons and melons, especially during Ramazan, will increase, and supply from outside | [More on P6](#)

Future Without AI Cannot Be Imagined: LG

Urges J&K Universities To Set Up AI Labs

Srinagar: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday urged the universities in Jammu and Kashmir to set up artificial intelligence (AI) labs for research and innovation, saying a future without AI cannot be imagined. "It (AI) will have a profound impact on every aspect of our lives, and that's why it is critical to enable our youth to develop their AI knowledge...to keep up with AI trends and to make J&K Union Territory more competitive," he said while addressing the 'National Science Day' seminar at the University of Kashmir. He said these AI labs could become a separate entity within the Department of Science and Technology and coordinate with local industries for integration of new discoveries and innovation of AI into various sectors and businesses. The LG also asked the universities to offer short-term AI courses and stressed on the need to conduct workshops and weekly training modules so that the workforce in J-K becomes AI literate and leaders from various sectors are also better equipped to make the right decision. | [More on P6](#)

Identify & Deport Rohingyas, Bangladeshi Intruders: Shah

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah Friday directed the Delhi Police to take stringent action against the networks that help illegal Bangladeshis and Rohingyas entering India, saying it is an issue of national security and should be dealt with strictly. Chairing a meeting to review the national capital's law-and-order situation, he said strict action should also be taken against police stations and sub-divisions that consistently perform poorly. Shah said it should be the Delhi Police's priority to eliminate interstate gangs in the city ruthlessly. Action must be taken with "top to bottom and bottom to top approach" in narcotics cases and such drug networks should be dismantled, he said. "Strict action should be taken against the entire network that helps Bangladeshi and Rohingya intruders enter the country, get their documents made and facilitate their stay here. The issue of illegal intruders is also related to national security and it should be dealt with strictly. They should be identified and deported," he told the meeting. The meeting was also attended by Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, Delhi's Home Minister Ashish Sood, Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora and other senior officials. Referring to the BJP winning the Delhi assembly polls this time after a gap of over 26 years, the Union home minister asserted that the double-engine government in Delhi will work with double speed for a developed and safe capital as expected by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He made it clear that permission from Delhi Police will not be required in matters related to construction and for quick disposal | [More on P6](#)

Rohingya Children Can Approach HC If Denied Admission: SC

The Supreme Court on Friday said that Rohingya children can approach government schools for admission and in case of denial, they can move the high court. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh disposed of a plea seeking direction to the authorities of Delhi government to grant admission to Rohingya children having UNHCR (United Nations High | [More on P6](#)

PDD To 'Avoid' Power Curtailment At Sahr, Iftar Times

Agencies

Srinagar: The Power Development Department (PDD) has decided to avoid the power curtailment at Sahr and Iftar times in the feasible areas in the holy month of Ramazan. The department in this regard is likely to hold the important meeting on Saturday to discuss the mechanism and strategy to implement the new schedule for the month of Ramazan. A top official of PDD said that we have reduced the power curtailment in almost all areas but in the month of Ramazan, we will try to avoid the curtailment at Sehri and Iftar times." The official further said that in case there will be overload in any feeder, then the department will have to curtail further power. About the local power generation from the plants of Kashmir region, the official said that the production has slightly improved post fresh rain and snowfall. "In the previous weeks, the average power generation was nearly 40-45 Megawatts from the local power plants of the Kashmir region. However, as of now we are generating nearly 70 MWs of power," the official said. The official further said that power generation capacity is likely to improve further in the coming weeks. Notably, the hydel power generation from the power plants across Jammu and Kashmir has further reduced by five percent—owing to the low water level, in the past one month. Overall, the hydro power generation from the local plants in Jammu and Kashmir had reduced by 84.17 percent. In the month of January, the Power Development Department (PDD) was generating nearly 250 Megawatts of power from the local hydel projects that amounts to 20 percent of the | [More on P6](#)

J&K Budget Session MLAs Asked To Maintain Decorum During LG's Address

Observer News Service

Jammu: The Lieutenant Governor (LG) of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha will address the Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) at the Assembly complex in Jammu on March 3, 2025, at 10:00 AM. As such, the MLAs have been directed to maintain dignity and decorum during the LG's address. They are also directed to take their seats five minutes before the



LG's arrival and remain seated until the LG leaves after the speech. Further, they have been reminded to listen attentively with respect and uphold the solemnity of | [More on P6](#)

BJP Holds 2-day Training For Party MLAs

As the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly is scheduled to meet here for the budget session on March 3, the BJP on Friday started a two-day training workshop for its 28 legislators, majority of whom are

first-timers, with focus on ensuring their effective participation in the proceedings. The two-day 'Vidhayaak Prashishan Shivir' was jointly inaugurated by BJP national general secretary B L Santosh | [More on P6](#)

14 In Race for Posts of JKBOSE Chairman, SCERT Head

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir Education Department has shortlisted 14 candidates for the posts of Chairman JKBOSE and Director SCERT, calling them for an interaction on March 5. As per an official notification issued by the School Education Department (SED), a copy of which lies with JKNS, a meeting of the Search Committee, headed by the Financial Commissioner/Additional Chief Secretary of the Higher Education Department, was held on February 17, 2025. The shortlisted candidates include Munshi Tehmina Yousuf, Principal, Islamia College of Science and Commerce, Srinagar; Dr. Sunil Gupta, Principal, GDC Basohli;

Properties Of 5 PoK-based Terrorists Seized

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir Police has seized nearly 2.9 acres of land belonging to five operatives of the proscribed terrorist group Hizbul Mujahideen under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in the Gool area of Ramban district, an official spokesman said on Friday. The five -- Saraj Din (48) of Sangaldan, Reyaz Ahmed (45) of Dalwah, Farooq Ahmed (46) of Banj Bhimdassa, and Mohd Ashraf (50) and Mushtaq Ahmed (47) of Moila -- have crossed over to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and are operating from there, he said. They were trying to sell these assets to fund militant activities, the spokesman added. "The seizure of immovable properties belonging to these

J&K Bank Opens New Branch At Umerabad

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Deepening its footprint further to extend latest banking services to the people, J&K Bank today commissioned a new branch at Umerabad near HMT on the outskirts of Srinagar.

MD & CEO Amitava Chatterjee formally inaugurated the state-of-the-art branch in presence of Zonal Head (Srinagar) Raja Zafar Khan, Cluster Heads Shabir Ahmad Bulla and Asmat Ara, and Branch Head amid a gathering of valuable customers, senior citizens, local residents and other officials of the Bank.

Speaking on the occasion, MD & CEO Amitava Chatterjee said, "Our business expansion is solely guided by our strategic focus on providing convenient and affordable financial solutions to the people, especially in the upcoming business and residential centres across our areas of operation."

"And given the rapid commercial and residential growth in and around this area, bringing world-class banking services was the need of the hour. With this new branch, we are committed to serve the evolving financial needs of businesses and residents by ensuring seamless access to our banking solutions," he added.

Reiterating the Bank's customer-centric ethos, the MD & CEO added, "At J&K Bank, our customers are at the core of our operations. And we are determined to empower our customers with financial tools that drive individual prosperity along with the economic growth of the country."

He urged the branch staff to deliver best customer service, emphasizing that trust is built through continued care and commitment. "Make customer service the currency of your success. In the end, it's the quality of our service that truly sets us apart, as our growth relies on the goodwill and support of our customers," he added.

Zonal Head Raja Zafar Khan encouraged local traders and residents to utilize the full suite of financial services available at the new branch. He said, "I urge everyone to explore the entire range of our banking services and support us by making us partners in your growth journey."

The inauguration ceremony witnessed enthusiastic participation from residents, who welcomed the Bank's initiative to enhance access to the latest banking services in the area. They expressed gratitude and assured full cooperation for the growth of the branch.



LG Attends Heritage Festival At Kashmir Haat

'Welfare Of Artisan Community & Folk-Artists One Of My Prime Objectives'

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha attended the Srinagar Heritage Festival 'Soan Meer-aas' at Kashmir Haat on Saturday.

In his address, the Lieutenant Governor extended his felicitations to all the participating artisans & artists, and appreciated the collaborative initiative by the District Administration Srinagar and Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA), Regional Centre J&K. He said, the Srinagar Heritage Festival commemorates the achievements and contribution of our great artisans, folk artists, writers and honours our unique and diverse cultural heritage which will inspire the future growth.

The Lieutenant Governor reiterated his resolve to revive the cultural and artistic heritage of Jammu Kashmir and drive positive changes in the lives of the citizens, especially those associated with the world of art, crafts and culture.

"Welfare of artisan community and folk-artists is one of my prime objectives. I also wish to see that every child is connected to the roots

with better resources and opportunity to prosper and flourish.

The Lieutenant Governor also spoke on the emergence of Srinagar city as the cultural nerve centre of Jammu Kashmir. He shared the dedicated measures taken by the government to transform the cities of the Union Territory into the confluence of ancient traditions and modern facilities.

He further emphasised the important role of youth, artists community and enlightened citizens in preserving the cultural heritage, and also spreading awareness on environmental protection.

"Preservation and promotion of heritage is crucial for sustainable development of the cities and to improve urban quality of life. I believe culture is a way of life and we must involve young generations, inheritors of our rich legacy, to protect cultural and natural heritage

and every youth carrying the rich legacy of artisan community is empowered to contribute in J&K's economic growth," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted that, in the last four and a half years, under the guidance of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, well-planned policies and their time-bound implementation has ensured that our craftspeople, artisans and artists are provided

ACS Education Inspects Exam Centres In City

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Education, Shantmanu visited different schools in Srinagar district and inspected several examination centres of class XI and reviewed the facilities being provided to the students there.

During the inspection, the Additional Chief Secretary was accompanied by Director School

Education, Kashmir, Dr. G N Itoo, who briefed him about the arrangements made by the department in connection with the ongoing examinations for class XI.

While inspecting the examination centre at Girls Higher Secondary School Kothibagh, the ACS interacted with the students and enquired about the examination papers and other facilities being provided to them.

SMC Seals Commercial Structure At Nawab Bazar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In a proactive measure to uphold building regulations in Srinagar, the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) has sealed a commercial structure located at Shah Mohalla Nawab Bazar.

This decisive action follows directives from Commissioner SMC, Dr. Owais Ahmed, in response to significant violations of approved building permission.

The enforcement operation was executed under the stringent supervision of the Enforcement Wing of SMC, ensuring compliance with established protocols. The sealed structure was found to be in violation of the guidelines set forth by the competent authority, underscoring the urgent need for adherence

to legal building practices. Commissioner SMC reiterated the corporation's zero-tolerance policy towards building violations. He urged the residents of Srinagar to strictly comply with approved permissions and regulations, stating, "This action serves as a clear message that the SMC is dedicated to enforce compliance and safeguard the interests of the community."

EXTENSION OF PERIODICITY OF SPECIAL TRAIN

It is notified for the information of rail passengers that Northern Railway has decided to extend the periodicity of the run of Train No. 04688/04687 Budgam-Banihal-Budgam Vistadome Special Train as per details given below:-

Train No.	From	To	Days of Run	Notified up to	Period of Extension
04688	Budgam	Banihal	Except Friday	28.02.25	01.03.25 to 31.03.25
04687	Banihal	Budgam	Except Friday	28.02.25	01.03.25 to 31.03.25

Note :- Rest of the instructions will hold good.

For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table of other stations enroute and composition etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

Visit RailMadad Website:- www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in
Download RailMadad app.

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NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Deputy Chief Engineer/Bridge Line/Jammu Tawi for and on behalf of the President of India invites Open-tender under Single Packet System for the under noted work:-

S. No	Tender Notice No.	Name of work	Approx Cost (Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs)
1	OT-05-JAT-2025	Painting of various bridges in BAHIL-BRML section under SSE/BR/M/BDGM over FZR Division in jurisdiction of SEN/BL/JAT	1,49,09,803.69	2,24,600.00

Date of opening: 21.03.2025
Bidding start date on IREPS: 07.03.2025 to 21.03.2025
Cost of tender form Rs: 0
Completion period of work: 10 Months

Date & Time for submission of Tender and opening of tender: Up to 15:00 hrs on dates shown against each and opening of tender there after at 15:00 hrs on same date; Website Particulars where complete details of Tender can be seen & downloaded: The detailed e-tender notice is available on Northern Railway web site i.e. www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in and tender document is available on www.ireps.gov.in. No.80-W/30/Bridges/Invitation. Dated: 28.02.2025

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 658/25

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-AUCTION NOTICE

The Senior Divisional commercial Manager/F.S., Northern Railway, Firozpur for and on behalf of President of India, invites E-Auction from eligible and registered bidders for the following works over Firozpur Division:

Catalogue No.	Auction Start	Name of work
EAFZR-SLR 25-31	13.03.2025 at 11:00 hrs.	Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 14624/F1, 14028/F2, 14630/F1, 14730/R1, 14630/R1, 14028/R1, 14730/F2, 14028/F1 & 20434/F1
EAFZR-SLR 25-32	14.03.2025 at 11:00 hrs.	Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 12242/F1, 14634/F2, 14505/F1, 14634/R1, 14633/F2, 14633/R1, 14634/F1, 14616/F1, 14633/F1 & 19614/F1
EAFZR-SLR 25-33	17.03.2025 at 11:00 hrs.	Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 22424/F1, 14674/F1, 19108/F1, 14604/F1, 22432/F1, 20986/F1, 22402/F1, 22942/F1, 14650/F1 & 14618/F1
EAFZR-SLR 25-34	18.03.2025 at 11:00 hrs.	Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 12460/F1, 22462/F1, 12238/F2, 19804/F1, 12014/F1, 14036/R1, 12030/F1, 16788/F1, 14036/F2 & 14036/F1
EAFZR-SLR 25-35	19.03.2025 at 11:00 hrs.	Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 15098/F1, 22552/F1, 11450/F1, 15532/F1, 12238/R1, 14632/F1, 14632/R1, 16318/F1, 12498/F1 & 12478/F1
EAFZR-SLR 25-36	20.03.2025 at 11:00 hrs.	Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 12266/F1, 12446/F1, 12752/F1, 14612/F1, 12422/F1, 22446/F1, 19028/F1, 22430/F1, 12476/F1 & 12470/F1

For other details and registration, please visit Railway website www.ireps.gov.in

SERVING CUSTOMER WITH A SMILE 644/2025

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr. DSTE/FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders on <https://www.ireps.gov.in> against Tender Notice no. 433-Sig-T-49-24-25 Closing Date/Time 24.03.2025 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like Net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

NIT HEADER

Contract Type	Works
Name of Work	Comprehensive Annual Maintenance contract of Hitachi Rail S7S India Private Ltd. make Electronic Interlocking System installed at 6 stations on FZR-BTI section & 1 station on FZR-JUC section for three years.
Tender Closing Date Time	24.03.2025 15:00
Advertised Value (Rs.)	10509461.13
Earnest Money (Rs.)	202600.00
Date Time of Uploading Tender	27.02.2025 11:02
Bidding Start Date as per IREPS	10.03.2025
Period of Completion	36 Months

Tender Notice No: 433-Sig-T-49-24-25 Date:- 27.02.2025 Closing Date/Time : 24.03.2025/15:00 639/2025

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

GOVERNMENT OF (U.T) JAMMU & KASHMIR
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER JAL SHAKTI (PHE) DEPTT.
GROUND WATER DIVISION SRINAGAR
Baghi-Ali-Mardan, Nowshara Srinagar.

E-mail:-phegwd@yahoo.com, Tel./Fax/No:-0194-2411285

EXTENSION NOTICE 3RD

Subject: Construction of 200mm dia Production Well by ODEX Method at Kasnard Pannard Sangnard Well No. 2 District Anantnag.

Reference: This office e-NIT No.51-JS-PHE/GWDS/Mech. of 2024-25, issued vide endorsement No: JS-PHE/GWDS/24-25/Corrs./10291-303, dated: 08-01-2025. Bearing Tender ID No. 2025_PHE_269914_2.

Due to "No Response" for the above mentioned works advertised vide-e-NIT No. and Tender ID No's under reference. Which was scheduled to be downloaded till 25-02-2025 Up-to 11:00 AM are extended as per the details given below:-

S.No.	Item	Fresh Date
1.	Period of submission of bids	05-03-2025 Up-to 11:00 AM
2.	Date of opening of tenders	06-03-2025 11.00 AM

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

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

DIPK-12522/24
dated: 28-02-2025

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
SHIEK 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 - (Closed)
- Mughal Road - (Closed)
- Srinagar-Leh- (Closed)

PRAYERS

FAJR 5: 38
ZUHR 12:43
ASR 4: 45
Magrib 6:29
ISHA 7: 49

HIJRI CALENDAR
30 Shaban
1446

This Day In History

- 1504 - Christopher Columbus uses a lunar eclipse to frighten hostile Jamaican Indians
- 1644- Abel Tasman sets out on his second exploratory expedition for the VOC to the southern Pacific from Banda, in the Moluccas, with three ships (will chart northern coast of New Holland / Australia)
- 1692 - First people are accused of witchcraft in Salem, Massachusetts - Sarah Good, Sarah Osborne and Tituba, a West Indian slave
- 1696 - English ex-premier Earl Danby accused of corruption
- 1704 - French & Indians attack Deerfield, Massachusetts, kill 50, abduct 100
- 1768 - Polish nobleman Casimir Pulaski joins the Bar Confederation to defend the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth against Russian influence
- 1892 - Britain & US sign treaty on seal hunting in Bering Sea
- 1904 - Theodore Roosevelt, appoints 7-man Panama Canal Commission to proceed with completing a canal at the Isthmus
- 1936 - US President FDR signs 2nd Neutrality Act
- 1940 - Finland initiates Winter War peace negotiations
- 1944 - 5 leaders of Indonesia Communist Party sentenced to death
- 1944 - US troop land on Los Negros, Admiralty Islands
- 1952 The island of Heligoland is restored to German authority.
- 1956 - Islamic Republic forms in Pakistan
- 1956 - US President Eisenhower announces he will seek a 2nd term
- 1960 - Agadir earthquake in Morocco kills a third of the population (12,000-15,000)
- 1964 - Cincinnati's Jerry Lucas and Oscar Robertson combine for a rare 40-40 performance as the Royals beat host Philadelphia 76ers, 117-114; NBA MVP Robertson has 43 points; Rookie of the Year Lucas, 40 rebounds
- 1964 - Australian swimmer Dawn Fraser records the fastest 100m freestyle of her brilliant career; smashes her own world record 58.9s in Sydney; goes on to win her 3rd straight gold in the event at the Tokyo Olympics
- flights with nuclear bombs
- 1968 - National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Kerner Comm) reports against racism & demands aid given to blacks
- 1972 - Future Baseball Hall of Fame right fielder Hank Aaron becomes first player to earn \$200,000 average annual salary; signs 3-year deal with Atlanta Braves after one of his best seasons - .327 average, 47 HRs and 118 RBIs
- 1976 American driver Richard Petty wins the only Winston Cup race run on Leap Day, taking the Carolina 500 at Rockingham by 2 laps over Darrell Waltrip
- 1984 - Pierre Trudeau announces he is stepping down after 15 years as Canadian Prime Minister
- 1984 - Swedish center Patrik Sundström scores a goal and adds 6 assists as Vancouver Canucks beat the Penguins 9-5 in Pittsburgh; just the 3rd player in NHL history to record 6 assists in a road game
- 1988 - New Zealand cricket batsman Mark Greatbatch scores an unbeaten 107 on debut to rescue a draw in 2nd Test v England at Eden Park, Auckland
- 1988 - Nazi document implicates Waldheim in WW II deportations
- 1992 - Boston's Ray Bourque becomes just the 3rd defenseman in NHL history to score 1,000 career points with a goal and 2 assists in the Bruins' 5-5 tie with Washington Capitals at Boston Garden
- 1996 - Soyuz TM-23, lands
- 1996 - Serb forces withdraw from Sarajevo, ending the siege after 1,425 days, the longest siege of a capital city in the history of modern warfare
- 2004 - Jean-Bertrand Aristide resigns as President of Haiti following popular rebel uprising.

Rural Sanitation Distress

An Inevitable Disaster

Dr. Mushtaq Rather

“

Why are we witnessing these extreme weather patterns? The primary reason appears to be increased anthropogenic activities. Every visible sight in rural hamlets is filled with solid waste trash. What is the practical mechanism in place to mitigate this solid waste? Who has the mandate to clear this mess?

The carrying capacity of rural ecosystems, in terms of accommodating solid waste, is receding with each passing day due to the accumulation of huge piles of waste and the inefficient, non-scientific mechanisms for disposal. In a fragile ecosystem like Kashmir, even small-scale anthropogenic interference can have serious environmental ramifications, and in fact, it has already started casting shadows, as is evident from the current trend in the weather. A record 79% deficient rainfall in the peak winter months this year has sent alarm bells ringing for everyone. Due to climate change, we are witnessing extreme weather phenomena in this part of the world. Spring is almost a month ahead of schedule. The tragic tale is the drying up of prominent water bodies in the month of February. Imagine the catastrophic consequences of water scarcity in the upcoming summer months. The recent incident of the drying up of the perennial spring at Mughal Gardens, Achabal, Anantnag is trending on social media, and the octogenarian people of the area were moved to tears when they saw the pathetic condition of the spring. They recalled their ordeal, mentioning that they had never seen the drying up of this serene water body in their lifetime. This is not an isolated incident; the majority of the region's water bodies have receded to their lowest levels.

Why are we witnessing these extreme weather patterns? The primary reason appears to be increased anthropogenic activities. Every visible sight in rural hamlets is filled with solid waste trash. What is the practical mechanism in place to mitigate this solid waste? Who has the mandate to clear this mess? Every open space is littered. Our water bodies—be it rivulets, streams, springs, or rivers—are choked with non-biodegradable waste, such as diapers, sanitary pads, and single-use plastic. Look at the daily consumption of these items; they keep piling up in the environment. The problem with diapers is that they hardly decompose and cannot be reduced to ashes at normal temperatures. Incinerators can do this job, but their use



is still on a small scale.

In the Khoveripora block of district Anantnag, the rural sanitation program is invisible on the ground. For a time, garbage collection vehicles were introduced along several routes to collect household garbage on a daily basis, but the initiative was shelved midway without specifying the reasons. The mandate of rural sanitation falls under the Rural Development Department (RDD) as part of the Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0. The Government of India has infused a lot of money for rural sanitation to make rural areas open defecation-free, litter-free, and to support the de-siltation of water bodies. The entire hamlet of Akura in Khoveripora block has heaps of garbage that have unfortunately not been cleared for a couple of years. The banks of the majestic Lidder River, which flows through this hamlet, have become dumping sites for garbage collected from diverse areas of Anantnag, which is a clear violation of the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016. The majority of waste

segregation sheds constructed by the RDD have been built either on the banks of water bodies or at picturesque spots, which also goes against the guidelines of the SWM Rules 2016.

The author brought the rural sanitation issue to the notice of the Secretary of RDD, who has directed the officials at the district level to intervene. The RDD officials have acknowledged the problem and assured that they will work to mitigate the rural sanitation issue in the entire Khoveripora block. There must be a well-thought-out strategy on the part of the RDD, with the active cooperation of the public, to render our environment congenial and aesthetic.

The views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer
The author can be reached for feedback at aroshfatimamar15@gmail.com

When Your Own Sink Your Boat

Bilal Ahmad Khanday

The idiom “Es Ghar Ko Aag Lag Gai Ghar Key Chirag Sey” is one of the most famous and handy idioms in the Urdu language, used when your own people sink your boat, suppress your voice, conspire against you, or pull your leg. It refers to the inestimable loss and damage caused by your own people—when you expect that they would help you, but instead, they create hurdles. This idiom is applicable and relevant in almost every field, but to keep my article short and lucid, I would like to confine it to the administrative sphere only.

As we all know, most of the officials in every government department of the UT belong to Jammu and Kashmir. But unfortunately, they are compounding issues that are simple and need fast redressal, despite being highly paid for the services they are supposed to render. When you see their cold response time and again, you truly realize the meaning of “Es Ghar Ko Aag Lag Gai Ghar Key Chirag Sey.” Even if you visit an office with a simple application for some petty but genuine issue, you have to wait for months to get a proper response. Then, if your application is entertained, you have to wait a couple of months more to get it addressed.

Two months ago, I, along with one of my relatives, visited an office of the administration with an application for his need to sell a piece of his land. After properly submitting the details online, as the portal asked, he received a confirmation for his application. Within a week's time, he received a response that there was a minor problem in one of the documents he had submitted online. For its legal rectification, he submitted another application to the concerned de-

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partment, where he was told to provide a document to support his claim. The very next day, he found the document at home and rushed to the concerned department. Unfortunately, he returned home exhausted and disappointed because the concerned official was not present that day. The next day, he was hopeful to get his work done, but unfortunately, the official who would endorse the document was on leave. After many visits to the department, his document was finally endorsed, but his frequent visits somehow ‘irritated’ the officials, who, on one pretext or another, began to dodge him for some unknown reason.

After about a month, one fine day, he left his home with a resolve to get his work done. When he reached the concerned office, he dared to ask one of the officials outside his chamber if his work needed some ‘Chai’—which literally means ‘tea’ but is actually a term for ‘bribery’ in Kashmiri language—to which the official nodded. He then greased the palm of the official and got the document rectified from the concerned office in just a day or two. He then submitted the rectified document on the portal and is now waiting for a response from the concerned department.

A few days ago, when I visited him and asked about the status of his application, he said that he would wait for some more days. If his work is still not done, he will resort to the second option of ‘Chai.’

Since then, I have been wondering whether the officials serving in different departments are the ‘Ghar ke Chirag’ or if my relative is the ‘Ghar ka Chirag.’ The readers will decide for themselves...

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

The New Spring of US-Russia Ties

M. K. BHADRAKUMAR

What emerges from the dramatic happenings of the past week is that the 3-year chronicle of US-Russia rivalry and the NATO's proxy war in Ukraine was a crisis engineered with great deliberation by the Anglo-American nexus per a pernicious agenda conceived by the neocon liberals wedded to globalism enshrined in the Washington and London establishment to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia.

In less than a month since President Donald Trump returned to Oval Office, in a series of bold moves, he began dismantling the Iron Wall that descended on Central Europe. Its impact is already visible, as communication channels with Moscow have been flung open, as evident in the new US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's call to his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov on Saturday and their agreement to meet at delegation level in Saudi Arabia next week.

The Trump administration will allow the resumption of normal diplomatic work as well as discuss the early return of diplomatic properties unilaterally seized by the Obama – Biden administrations in wanton acts of motiveless malignity and hubris, in violation of Vienna accords. Trust Russia to reciprocate!

The downstream salience of the readouts in Moscow and Washington, here and there, on the Rubio-Lavrov phone conversation is the mutual agreement between the two leaderships — Trump and Russian president Vladimir Putin — for US-Russian interactive exchanges at various levels is being followed through with a view to improve bilateral relations as well as “on key international issues, including the situation in Ukraine, developments in Palestine and the broader Middle East, as well as other regional matters.”

Furthermore, a team designated by the White House comprising apart from Rubio, the US National Security Advisor Mike Waltz and the president's Middle East envoy (who also works on Ukraine-Russia issues) Steve Witkoff will meet a Russian team led by Lavrov as early as this week ahead. The inclusion of Witkoff, a ‘result-oriented’, pushy negotiator

and old friend of Trump is particularly interesting. Witkoff flew into Moscow for an unpublicised solo visit last week, which appears to have been productive.

Clearly, Trump has drawn lessons from this first term and is determined not to get emasculated again in the Washington ‘swamp’. This is where Witkoff comes in.

Trump's approach and political style is utterly fascinating. Trump began shifting gear no sooner than he managed to put together a team of like-minded people who are “loyalists” to head the Justice Department, Pentagon, the Treasury, etc. — and, importantly, to forcefully regenerate the authority of the attorney gen-

“ **The Trump administration will allow the resumption of normal diplomatic work as well as discuss the early return of diplomatic properties unilaterally seized by the Obama – Biden administrations in wanton acts of motiveless malignity and hubris, in violation of Vienna accords. Trust Russia to reciprocate!**

eral and the national intelligence agency to serve his agenda.

Thus, in the final analysis, it is immaterial that his administration is packed with pro-Israeli figures or has a sprinkling of hardliners on China. For, it is Trump who will call the shots. Surprises could be in store in policy twists and turns.

This should already give sleepless nights to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu whom Trump has sensitised apropos his intention to improve relations with Iran. To my mind, Trump may not even follow through his dramatic announcement of “taking over” Gaza, et al.

The pattern appearing with regard to relations with Russia is that Trump levels with Putin first and passes down decisions to the state department and other agencies to follow through. Equally, the mechanism of summitry is being revived as the locomotive of big power relations. There is already talk of Trump holding summit meetings with Putin in Saudi Arabia and with Xi Jinping. Trump will

likely look for a deal with Chinese President Xi Jinping at some point.

Such an approach necessitates cutting down the role and influence of the Deep State which had throttled Trump's presidency through the 2016-2020 period. The challenge facing Trump is formidable, given the nexus between the Democratic Party and the Deep State, and the mischief potential of mainstream media which is largely under their control and hostile towards Trump.

Trump has repeatedly expressed distrust of US intelligence agencies. According to CNN, all employees (approx. 22,000 people) at the CIA have received letters

whereby they are given two options: to continue his/her service without guarantees of job retention in the future or to leave under the so-called deferred dismissal program at own request, while retaining salary and additional preferences until end-September.

Interestingly, a code was sewn inside these letters that tracks the re-sending of the letter by the recipient, as a guarantee against leaks which was the practice used when dismissing employees of the former Twitter after its acquisition by billionaire Elon Musk, who is now considered one of Trump's closest advisers and heads the quasi-Department of Government Efficiency overseeing the reduction of federal government!

Again, the disbandment of USAID, which traditionally worked as the “B Team” of the CIA to promote colour revolutions and regime changes, etc. can also be seen in the light. According to Vladimir Vasiliev, chief researcher at the Institute of USA and Canada of the Russian

Academy of Sciences, who closely studies this topic, Trump has declared war on CIA, which he blames for his electoral defeat in 2020.

Vasiliev estimates that so far, the fight against the deep state in foreign and domestic intelligence is proceeding steadily, but will now “accelerate” with the confirmation of former Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard for the post of head of national intelligence, and Kash Patel for the post of FBI director.

On the other hand, the Delhi grapevine, which is dominated by fellow travellers of the defunct Biden regime is that Deep State will ultimately have the last laugh and Trump may not even be allowed to complete his 4-year term. But to my mind, that is wishful thinking.

Trump's grit should not be underestimated. Nor the seamless resources and tools at his command to queer the pitch of the disarray within the Democratic Party, which traditionally provided the requisite political cover for the Deep State.

There is, conceivably, a method in Trump's provocative moves, with some able help from Elon Musk and Steve Bannon, to stir up the pot in European politics, including Germany and Britain, who constitute the high ground of Euroatlanticism in the continent, which serves to prevent a coalescing of liberal-globalist cliques within the transatlantic system.

Patel has hinted that sufficient incriminating evidence of misuse of power is available to damn the Old Guard all the way up to Biden himself. Trump cannot be unaware of the high importance of pre-empting a Democratic backlash. The federal judges in Democrat-ruled states are openly challenging Trump's methods. Suffice to say, Trump's credibility to entrap the Old Guard in a cobweb of protracted litigation will be a game changer.

The latest poll shows that Trump enjoys a soaring 77% support for cleaning up the swamp. The optic of this crusade is going to be hugely consequential to Trump's ability to push both his domestic and foreign policy programme.

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

Public Health in Jammu and Kashmir

An Insightful Interview with Dr. Qazi Haroon

KO Web Desk

In an exclusive interview with Dr. Qazi Haroon, a public health expert in Jammu and Kashmir, we dive into the current state of healthcare in the region. With over 15 years of experience, Dr. Qazi offers invaluable insights into the challenges, successes, and ongoing efforts to improve health outcomes in Jammu and Kashmir.

KO: How do you overview the public health scenario in Jammu and Kashmir?

Dr. Qazi: The core of public health is divided into three key areas: Preventive, Promotive, and Curative healthcare. We always strive to prevent illness before it occurs. Prevention is the pillar on which public health stands. There are various aspects to prevention, such as educating people about the factors that can cause illness. As we all know, prevention is better than cure. So, in public health, we always focus on disease prevention from the very start. Now, if, God forbid, a disease occurs, we then assess its ramifications, the economic burden it places on the society, and how the community will be impacted. This remains a primary concern for public health experts.

For example, when COVID-19 hit, it impacted the entire world. At that point, the curative aspect took precedence. However, those who were not affected by the virus benefited from the preventive measures in place.

There are various programs under the Ministry of Health and Welfare that target different diseases. For instance, if we talk about immunization, the world now understands its importance. Before immunization was widespread, many children died due to a lack of vaccines. Once vaccines were introduced, the death rate among children significantly decreased.

I personally had the privilege of being involved in the 2018 Measles Rubella Campaign. Initially, we thought it would be an easy task, but once we got into the field, we realized how different program management is compared to sitting in an office. Despite the challenges, we vaccinated 38 lakh children in just 6 weeks, making it one of the best performances in the country. We were even awarded for our efforts. My point here is that these are some of the preven-



Dr. Qazi Haroon
Public Health Expert

tive measures the UT (Union Territory) or State should implement to avoid future cases of measles. Today, the number of measles incidents has reduced drastically.

Further on immunization, there have been campaigns like Mission Indradhanush, which targets children who have missed vaccines. By focusing on these left-out or drop-out children, we've been able to achieve 100% immunization coverage in Jammu and Kashmir, making it one of the best UTs in India in terms of immunization rates. This is a significant achievement.

KO: You are currently posted in a remote area. You've worked on immunization and family planning. When you go into the field, you see a lot of disconnect. Do you think there is something like that?

Dr. Qazi: Working at the state level, district level, division level, and block level is very different. But I've seen that the health department in Jammu and Kashmir is doing exceptionally well because of the doctors, paramedics, and other people who are implementing these policies and programs on the ground. I wouldn't say there is a disconnect, but I would say that certain areas need improvement in terms of training, remuneration, and overall program management.

Jammu and Kashmir has some of the best health indicators in the country. I've traveled a lot in my 15 years and visited many states like Odisha and Rajasthan. I can tell you that our primary and secondary healthcare system is one of the best in the country. Yes, there are some challenges with human resources (HR) in certain places, but the infrastructure and facilities are well-established. However, we need to understand that doctors

and healthcare workers do not have a magic wand. In Western countries, people are more aware of what is needed in a hospital. There needs to be greater awareness in our communities about what is expected in hospitals and health centers. I'm not saying that our patients expect luxuries, but they should understand that healthcare providers also have basic human needs.

In 2009-2010, I was posted in a hospital in Srinagar, and after a very hectic night shift, I finally got a chance to eat. As I started having my meal, a patient came knocking at my door, and when they saw me eating, they were surprised. The patient then told me they had been experiencing itching in their hand. While the concern was genuine, I was surprised by the urgency, as it was not an emergency. This is why we often witness doctor-patient conflicts. People need to realize that healthcare providers are working 24/7, they too have families, and they also get tired.

KO: You were also the program manager for NHM (National Health Mission). Given your extensive experience, why do we see a high rate of cesarean sections, especially in private hospitals? Why are these cesareans unchecked?

Dr. Qazi: I was the state program manager for NHM, particularly focusing on maternal health, for at least three years. During this time, we worked hard to reduce the cesarean section rates. In my opinion, there are multiple reasons behind the high rate of cesarean sections. It's not just about the decision of the mother; the whole family is often involved in the decision-making process. In the past, women were more inclined to go

for normal delivery, but today, many view cesarean as a quicker, less painful option.

Even though we've tried very hard over the past 3-4 years to reduce the cesarean section rates, we still have one of the highest rates in the country—over 60%, compared to the WHO recommended range of 20-25%. However, there has been some decline, with Pulwama district showing the highest rate.

KO: How harmful is a cesarean section, and how beneficial is normal delivery?

Dr. Qazi: Normal delivery is always preferable. It allows for a smoother recovery and a healthier outcome for the mother and child. A cesarean section, on the other hand, leaves a permanent scar, and future deliveries are likely to require cesarean sections. There are also risks associated with cesarean sections, such as infections and other complications. Over the past 5-6 years, we have implemented a communication strategy during the first ANC (Antenatal Checkup), where we educate patients about the benefits of normal delivery and the risks of cesarean sections. It's important not only for the health department but also for the family to understand the merits and demerits of each option.

KO: There have been reports of corruption and malpractice in private hospitals regarding cesarean sections. Do you think there should be stricter checks by the government?

Dr. Qazi: It's not that the government is not checking private institutions. In fact, we've implemented a cesarean section audit system, which is done daily, weekly, and monthly. All hospitals are required to submit cesarean section formats with justifications for why they performed the surgery. This audit system is part of the Ministry of Health and Welfare's directives to ensure that every cesarean performed is medically necessary. I was also part of this program where we audited every cesarean conducted, whether in centralized hospitals or peripheral ones.

KO: Do you think there's a need to revive the concept of midwives? And what is the role of ASHA workers?

Dr. Qazi: During my time with NHM, I was involved in the Mid-

wife Initiative, where we aimed to train nurses as midwives to facilitate normal deliveries. Many Western countries still use midwives as an integral part of their healthcare systems. We need to focus on ensuring that women go into delivery with the mindset that normal delivery is the best option. In Kashmir, the rise in cesarean sections is concerning, and this mindset shift is essential.

ASHA workers play a crucial role in supporting normal deliveries at the grassroots level. We need to empower and train them to promote normal deliveries and assist women effectively.

KO: Drug addiction has reached alarming levels in Kashmir. Recently, we received data showing a large number of distress calls from families of drug addicts. Through the Genesis program, what can you say about the magnitude of this issue?

Dr. Qazi: I was part of the Tele MANAS program from the start, and it has proven to be a lifeline for people in Jammu and Kashmir. We didn't initially realize that it was just the tip of the iceberg. We have many people struggling with anxiety and depression, and through Tele MANAS, we were able to connect with them. Tele MANAS is a helpline where people can reach out anonymously, and the program uses a three-tier system of counselors, clinical psychologists, and psychiatrists to provide support.

There's still a stigma around mental health in Jammu and Kashmir. People are hesitant to seek help due to the fear of being labeled as 'insane.' Through Tele MANAS, we've received a massive response, and many young people—aged 13 to 18—have reached out with issues like career concerns, family problems, and academic stress. Last year, we received over 70,000 calls.

KO: Do you think raising awareness about mental health will be a game-changer?

Dr. Qazi: Absolutely! If more people avail themselves of mental health services, many cases can be reversed. They don't always need to visit a doctor. By educating people and offering anonymous support, we can address mental health issues more effectively and reduce the stigma surrounding them.

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Ekta Ka Mahakumbh – the Dawn of a New Era

Shri Narendra Modi

The Mahakumbh has successfully concluded in the holy city of Prayagraj. A grand Mahayajna of Unity has been completed. When the consciousness of a nation awakens, when it breaks free from the shackles of a centuries-old mindset of subjugation, it breathes freely in the fresh air of renewed energy. The result of this was witnessed at the Ekta Ka Mahakumbh (Mahakumbh of Unity) in Prayagraj since January 13.

On January 22, 2024, during the Pran Pratishtha of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, I spoke about Devbhakti and Deshbhakti - devotion to the divine and to the nation. During the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj, Gods and Goddesses, saints, women, children, youth, senior citizens and people from all walks of life came together. We witnessed the awakened consciousness of the nation. This was Ekta Ka Mahakumbh, where the sentiments of 140 crore Indians converged at the same place, at the same time, for this sacred occasion.

In this holy region of Prayagraj is Shringverpur, a sacred land of unity, harmony and love, where Prabhushri Ram and Nishadraj met. Their meeting symbolized the confluence of devotion and goodwill. Even today, Prayagraj inspires us with the same spirit.

For 45 days, I witnessed crores of people from every corner of the country making their way to the Sangam. The wave of emotions at the confluence kept rising. Every devotee came with one purpose - taking a dip in the Sangam. The holy confluence of Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati filled every pilgrim with enthusiasm, energy, and confidence.

This Mahakumbh in Prayagraj is a subject of study for modern management professionals, planning, and policy experts. Nowhere in the world is there any parallel or example of this scale.

The world watched in wonder how crores of people gathered at Prayagraj at the banks of the confluence of rivers. These people had no formal invitations, no prior communication on when to go. Yet crores of people left for the Mahakumbh of their own accord and felt the bliss of taking a dip in the sacred waters.

I cannot forget those faces radiating immense joy and satisfaction after the holy dip. Women, elders, our Divyang brothers and sisters - everyone found a way to reach the Sangam.

It was particularly heartening for me to see the overwhelming participation of India's youth. The presence of the younger generation at the Mahakumbh sends a profound message that the youth of India will be the torchbearers of our glorious culture and heritage. They understand their responsibility towards preserving it and are committed to carrying it forward.

The number of people who arrived in Prayagraj for this Mahakumbh has undoubtedly created new records. But beyond those physically present, crores of people who could not reach Prayagraj were also deeply connected emotionally to the occasion. The sacred water brought back by pilgrims became a source of spiritual bliss for millions. Many of those returning from the Mahakumbh were received with respect in their villages, honoured by society.

What has happened in the last few weeks is unprecedented and has laid a foundation for centu-



ries to come.

More devotees arrived in Prayagraj than anyone had imagined. The administration had estimated attendance based on past experiences of the Kumbh.

Nearly twice the population of the United States participated in this Ekta Ka Mahakumbh.

If scholars of spirituality analyse the enthusiastic participation of crores of Indians, they will find that India, proud of its heritage, is now surging ahead with a new-found energy. I believe this is the dawn of a new era, which will script the future of a new India.

For thousands of years, the Mahakumbh has strengthened India's national consciousness. Every Purnakumbh used to witness a gathering of saints, scholars and thinkers deliberating upon the state of society in their times. Their reflections used to provide a new direction to the

nation and society. Every six years, during the Ardhkumbh, these ideas were reviewed. After 12 Purnakumbh occurrences spanning 144 years, obsolete traditions were given up, newer ideas were embraced, and new traditions were created move ahead with the times.

After 144 years, in this Mahakumbh, our saints have once again given us a new message for India's development journey. That message is Developed India - Viksit Bharat.

At this Ekta Ka Mahakumbh, every pilgrim, whether rich or poor, young or old, from villages or cities, from India or abroad, from the East or the West, from the North or the South, irrespective of caste, creed and ideology, came together. This was an embodiment of the vision of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat that filled confidence in crores of people. Now, we must come together

in the same spirit for the mission of building a developed India.

I am reminded of the incident where, as a little boy, Shri Krishna revealed a snapshot of the whole universe within His mouth to His mother Yashoda. Similarly, in this Mahakumbh, the people of India and the world have witnessed the massive potential of India's collective strength. We must now move forward with this self-confidence and dedicate ourselves towards building a developed India.

Earlier, the saints of the Bhakti movement had identified and encouraged the strength of our collective resolve across India. From Swami Vivekananda to Sri Aurobindo, every great thinker reminded us of the power of our collective resolve. Even Mahatma Gandhi experienced it during the freedom movement. Post-independence, if this collective strength had been cor-

rectly recognised and harnessed towards boosting the welfare of all, it would have become a great force for a newly independent nation. Unfortunately, it was not done earlier. But now, I am gladdened to witness the way in which this collective strength of the people is coming together for a developed India.

From the Vedas to Vivekananda, from the ancient scriptures to modern satellites, India's great traditions have shaped this nation. As a citizen, I pray that we draw new inspiration from the memories of our ancestors and saints. May this Ekta Ka Mahakumbh help us move ahead with new resolutions. Let us make unity our guiding principle. Let us work with the understanding that service to the nation is service to the divine.

During my election campaign in Kashi, I had said, "Maa Ganga has called me." This was not just an emotion but also a call of responsibility, towards the cleanliness of our sacred rivers. Standing at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati in Prayagraj, my resolve became even stronger. The cleanliness of our rivers is deeply linked to our own lives. It is our responsibility to celebrate our rivers, big or small, as life-giving mothers. This Mahakumbh has inspired us to keep working towards the cleanliness of our rivers.

I know that organizing such a massive event was no easy task. I pray to Maa Ganga, Maa Yamuna, and Maa Saraswati to forgive us in case there were any shortcomings in our devotion. I see Janata Janardan, the people, as an embodiment of divinity. In case there has been any shortcoming in our efforts to serve them, I also seek the forgiveness of the people.

Crores of people came to the Mahakumbh with a feeling of devotion. Serving them was also a responsibility that was carried out with the same feeling of devotion. As a Member of Parliament from Uttar Pradesh, I can proudly say that under the leadership of Yogi Ji, the administration and the people worked together to make this Ekta Ka Mahakumbh a success. Be it the state or Centre, there were no rulers or administrators and instead, everyone was a devoted sevak. Sanitation workers, police, boatmen, drivers, people serving food - everyone worked tirelessly. The way the people of Prayagraj welcomed the pilgrims with open hearts despite facing many inconveniences was particularly inspirational. I express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to them and the people of Uttar Pradesh.

I have always had unwavering confidence in the bright future of our nation. Witnessing this Mahakumbh has strengthened my conviction manifold.

The way 140 crore Indians turned the Ekta Ka Mahakumbh into a global occasion is truly wonderful. Moved by the dedication, devotion and efforts of our people, I will soon visit Shri Somnath, the first among the 12 Jyotirlingas, to offer the fruits of these collective national efforts to Him and to pray for every Indian.

The physical form of the Mahakumbh may have culminated successfully on Mahashivratri, but just like the eternal flow of the Ganga, the spiritual strength, national consciousness and unity that Mahakumbh has awakened will continue to inspire us for generations to come.

The author is the Prime Minister of India

F1 Academy Picks Racer Atiqa Mir, 10, For Its Driver Program

Press Trust of India

PORTIMAO: 10-year-old karting sensation Atiqa Mir on Friday became the first Indian and Asian to be signed by Formula 1 Academy for its driver program, a testament to her rapid growth in the world of motorsport.

F1 Academy, a female only racing series owned by Formula 1, has decided to take Atiqa on board for its Discover Your Drive Program (DYD) after closely tracking her stellar performances on the karting circuit.

The racer from Srinagar, Kashmir, is only one of three drivers in the mini category (age 8-11) worldwide to be chosen for the DYD program.

Atiqa will represent Formula 1 Academy at the Champions of the Future Academy Program Championship with six rounds in Europe and Middle East,



starting this weekend.

F1 Academy is investing in Atiqa's rare talent by providing financial and techni-



cal support, covering her fitness, driving and mental preparation.

Being signed by F1 Academy is a ma-

ajor stepping stone in Atiqa's blossoming racing career and she duly realises the significance of this opportunity.

"I'm so excited to hear this amazing news. To be chosen by Formula 1 Academy is a huge honour for me and for us here in India. I will work hard and perform at my best and repay the faith out in me by Formula 1 Academy. It is massively encouraging for me and I take great pride in representing my country," said Atiqa.

Formula 1 created the F1 Academy with the sole purpose of developing and preparing female drivers to progress to higher levels of single seater racing.

With the announcement on Friday, Atiqa entered a select club of female racers who are out to break that barrier.

Last month, Atiqa became the first Indian female to sign for a full season with World Series Karting.

Short TAKES

Buttler Quits As England White-Ball Skipper After CT Exit

Jos Buttler on Friday said he will step down as England white-ball captain after their last Champions Trophy group match against South Africa on Saturday, taking responsibility for his team's exit from the eight-team tournament.

England crashed out of the eight-team Champions Trophy after losing to Afghanistan on Wednesday. They play against South Africa in their last Group B match here on Saturday. "I'm going to stand down as England captain. It's the right decision for me and the team," the 34-year-old Buttler said at a press conference here.

"It's quite clear. This tournament was important, results-wise, for my captaincy, and obviously, two losses and being out of the tournament, with a bit of a hangover from past tournaments, I think it just probably reached the end of the road for me and my captaincy, which is a shame," he said.

Islamabad United v Lahore Qalandar In PSL Opener On April 11

The PCB on Friday announced that the 10th edition of the Pakistan Super League will begin on April 11 with a clash between defending champions Islamabad United and two-time champions Lahore Qalandars at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium will host 13 matches, including two Eliminator and the final on May 18.

The confirmation of the PSL schedule means it will clash with the bigger and more lucrative Indian Premier League, which is scheduled to be held between March 22 and May 25.

The PSL will feature 11 matches at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium including Qualifier 1 on May 13. Karachi's National Bank Stadium and Multan Cricket Stadium will host five matches each.

The marquee event will also feature three double-headers, with two matches on weekends (Saturday) and one on a national holiday (Labour Day).

Peshawar Zalmi will play their five matches at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, while the winners of the fourth edition, Quetta Gladiators will play five matches at the Gaddafi Stadium.

India's Dubai Advantage In CT: 'No Point Dwelling On That'



Press Trust of India

DUBAI: New Zealand off-spinner Michael Bracewell on Friday brushed aside any talks about India getting an unfair advantage in the on-going Champions Trophy by playing all their games in Dubai, simply saying that his team was "excited to try and play in different conditions".

Rohit Sharma's team is playing all its matches in Dubai, and even the final will be held here if India goes the distance.

New Zealand will be playing

their first match of the tournament in Dubai -- against India on Sunday -- after their last two games were held in Pakistan.

Some cricketers, including South African top-order batter Rassie van der Dussen and former Australia skipper Pat Cummins, have said India are in an advantageous position as they have played all their games at one venue while other teams have had to travel to different venues in Pakistan.

"Look, it is what it is. It's been decided, and that's the way it is, and there's no point dwelling on that," said Brace-

well, when asked if India have unfair advantage in Dubai.

"It's part of what makes it exciting. I personally think it's coming to a different ground and trying to figure out those different conditions. Yeah, not much more to say on that other than we're excited to try and learn and play in different conditions," added the 34-year-old off-spinner.

The New Zealander opined that the pitches in Dubai would aid spin and it would be a good idea to train hard before the game against India.

"The wickets here have looked like they've taken a bit of a spin. So, it'll be good to try and get used to the wickets as quickly as we can. We've obviously enjoyed the pitches in Pakistan.

"And I think we've got a pretty well-balanced side to play in any condition. So hopefully, we can continue to do that and adjust to what's in front of us. I think that's been the strength of our side, adjusting to the surface. So, hopefully, we continue to do that as a side," he added.

South Africa Look To Seal CT Semis Spot Against England



Press Trust of India

KARACHI: As the battle for the semi-finals intensifies in Group B, top-ranked South Africa will aim to assert their dominance and secure a spot in the final four when they face a struggling England in a high-stakes Champions Trophy clash here on Saturday.

Unlike Group A wherein two best sides -- India and New Zealand -- have sailed through with ease into the knockouts, Australia, Afghanistan and South Africa in Group B are locked in for an intense battle over the two days for the remaining two semifinal berths.

A crushing loss by eight runs to Afghanistan not only sent England out of the contention for the semifinals but also kept the Asian team's hopes alive

of making to the final four, which has kept both South Africa and Australia on tenterhooks.

South Africa (3 points, 2.140 NRR) are likely to progress if Australia (3 points, 0.475 NRR) beat Afghanistan (2 points, -0.990 NRR), even if the Proteas lose to England because of their healthy NRR.

A favourable result should not be too difficult for South Africa who have all their bases covered and more importantly, have their key players in-form compared to a misfiring England, who are overly dependent on Joe Root.

In their only completed contest so far -- South Africa split points with Australia after a washout in Rawalpindi -- the Proteas had crushed Afghanistan by a massive 107 runs.

Mourinho Banned For 4 Games, Fined For Turkish Refs Comment

Fenerbahce manager Jose Mourinho was given a four-match ban and fined by the Turkish Football Federation following his comments about Turkish referees after a match at Galatasaray.

The Turkish federation on Thursday fined the 62-year-old Portuguese coach 1.6 million Turkish lira (\$44,000) after he criticized the match officials in a media conference following a 0-0 Super Lig draw on Monday.

Mourinho served one of his suspended four games on Thursday when he was absent from the bench for Fenerbahce's 4-1 Turkish Cup win at Gaziantep. Fenerbahce will appeal the four-game ban.

In his postgame interview on Monday, Mourinho welcomed the decision to bring in a foreign referee for the game and also praised Slavko Vincic of Slovenia for a "top performance."

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