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Government of  
Jammu & Kashmir

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of

**Tulip Show 2025**

at

**Asia's Largest Tulip Garden, Srinagar**

by

**Jenab Omar Abdullah**

Hon'ble Chief Minister, J&K

in presence of

**Jenab Javid Ahmad Dar**

Hon'ble Minister

**Jenab Nasir Aslam Wani**

Hon'ble Advisor to HCM

**March 26, 2025 | 2:00 PM**





# Spring Resolutions: Why It's The Best Time Of Year To Make Healthy Changes

## The Conversation

In the middle of winter, when lack of sunlight can lead to low energy and low mood, we are expected to make new year resolutions. But why not wait till March, for spring, when the returning sunlight gives us the energy and improved mood to tackle fundamentally difficult things like starting a new diet or exercise regime? We need spring resolutions, not new year resolutions.



In winter, many animals hibernate by slowing their heart rate and metabolism to conserve energy when food and sunlight are scarce. Humans don't hibernate, but we do have a period during winter when we may slow down.

We might have slower metabolism (possibly leading to winter weight gain), feel sleepier (thanks to less melatonin from sunlight and have lower mood (also due to less sunlight) - which, in extreme cases, can lead to seasonal affective disorder, or Sad.

The slowing of our bodies during winter can be difficult because the demands on us don't change. Our work and family commitments, for example, don't slow down in those dark, cold months.

Stress is normal and our healthy biological response gives us the energy we need to deal with it. However, when stress is excessive and we feel like we don't have the resources to deal with it, we can feel "stressed out".

Feeling "stressed out" - fatigue, frustration and an inability to cope - can be heightened during winter due in part to the slowing of our bodies and the lack of energy and resources to deal with the stressful things we encounter.

January and February pass by in a blur. We attempt to get back into the swing of things and fulfil those new year resolutions, while still feeling the lethargy of winter.

New year resolutions come at a bad time. We are still feeling stressed and our bodies are in a state of mild hibernation lacking

**“The slowing of our bodies during winter can be difficult because the demands on us don't change. Our work and family commitments, for example, don't slow down in those dark, cold months.”**

the energy to tackle new workout routines or diets. Then, suddenly, March arrives. The sun emerges, flowers bloom and our bodies begin to wake up. Getting out of bed is a little easier because it's not as dark anymore. Those new year resolutions that seemed so impossible in January might seem a little more doable after finally seeing the sun. If you are starting to get some energy, looking back at those new year resolutions you really shouldn't have had to make, and feeling disappointed, don't be. Instead of focusing on what didn't happen, make spring resolutions. But don't get excited and add too much. Remember, we were under-resourced for months and it can take a while to bounce back.

**Gentle spring resolutions**  
 Think of gentle spring resolutions that might help you get some energy and improve your mood as

your body soaks up that vitamin D and finally starts moving with the spring thaw.

**Here are mine.**  
 Move for 20 minutes a day, whether it's a walk, a run, grocery shopping, or chasing after kids. Start small and get moving any way you can. Walking doesn't cost anything, is low demand and has a huge impact on your health.

Drink water. Our bodies (which are about 60 per cent water) need hydration consistently to function well. Drinking water is one of the easiest and most effective health interventions out there. Spend at least ten minutes a day in the sun (especially in the morning to help with sleep patterns). Sun is like a battery for the human body. It tells you to wake up and gives you needed energy for the day, while also helping mood levels. The golden rule for resolutions? Keep them simple and achievable.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
 I want to change my name in my aadhar card bearing no 5896 8882 0885 from Ufaira Ibrahim (old name) to Tazmeen Zehra (New name). If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the concerned office within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.  
 Tazmeen Zehra  
 R/O :- Sabdan Badgam jvd

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
 I want to change my name in my aadhar card bearing no 3118 6941 6987 from Tabeen Haleem Mangral (old name) to Tabeen Haleem (New name). If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the concerned office within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.  
 Tabeen Haleem  
 R/O :- Uri, Mohara, Baramulla jvd

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
 I Tahir Hussain Bhat want to change my daughters name in her aadhar card bearing no 4702 7906 9417 from Liba (old name) to Fatima (new name). If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the concerned office within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.  
 Tahir Hussain Bhat  
 F/o :- Fatima  
 R/O :- Zoonimar, Nowshera Srinagar jvd

**From Office of the Advocate Muneer Ahmad Dar And Associates**  
 In the case of Mubeena Nabi D/o Late Ghulam Nabi Hajam W/o Feroz Ahmad Hajam R/o Andergam, Tehsil Pattan (Caveator)  
 V/s Public at large  
 In the Petition in terms of Section 148-A

The caveators have reason to believe that Non-Caveator may file any Application, Petition, Ap- peal, Suit or any other type of proceeding before the Hon'ble Court and on the ground of distorted facts/misrepresentation and cooked story and may seed in obtaining some relief/order at their back/in exparte against the caveators and in such eventuality the caveators will be put in irrepa- rable loss and inconvenience. It would be proper that caveators be given an opportunity of being heard by the Hon'ble court before passing any order.  
 fko Sd/advocate

**Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan**  
 Sub.. issuance of registration order in respect of delayed birth..  
**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
 The registrar birth EO MC pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Nadeem Ahmad Bhat s/o Khurshheed Ahmad Bhat R/o Kastoori Mohalla Pattan with verified date of birth 25/08/2008 occurred at home in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained..  
 SD Naib Tehsildar Pattan fko

**Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan**  
 Sub.. issuance of registration order in respect of delayed birth..  
 The registrar birth EO MC pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Kameez Fatima D/o Mohammad Ibrahim Mir R/o Hygam Sopore with verified date of birth 06/03/2020 occurred at SDH pattan in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained..  
 SD Naib Tehsildar Pattan fko

**Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan**  
 Sub.. issuance of registration order in respect of delayed birth..  
**Public Notice..**  
 The registrar birth BDO Sherabad khore has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Fahmeeda Begum w/o Ali Mohd Sofi R/o Hanjiwera Tehsil Pattan distt baramulla with verified date of birth 24/03/1969 occurred at home in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.  
 SD Naib Tehsildar Pattan fko

**Public Notice..**  
 my name in Aadhaar card bearing Number: 2211-4756-3163 has been recorded as Waseem Khan, which is incorrect, and my correct name is Wasim Ahmad Khan. Which needs to be corrected. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in concerned office within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.  
 Wasim Ahmad Khan S/o Mohamad Sultan Khan R/o Palhallan Tehsil Pattan District Baramulla fko

**FOUNDATION WORLD SCHOOL**

**TENDER NOTICE**

**TENDERS FOR OUTSOURCING SUPPORT SERVICES**

Foundation World School, Mamath Budgam- 191111 invites tenders (Sealed Envelope or via email by attaching the scanned application) from reputed agencies for hiring of the following services.

1.	Transportation of students and staff ( managing the existing fleet and adding new ).
2.	Security Services.
3.	Cleaning and housekeeping services.
4.	Catering & Canteen Services.

Parties applying must have prior experience in providing / running the services to educational institutions, comply with all statutory requirements, and demonstrate reliability and quality service delivery.

**Deadline for submissions: 15/04/2025**

**CONTACT DETAILS:**  
 Foundation World School, Mamath, Budgam - 191111  
 E-mail: info@foundationworldschool.com  
 Contact: 9797778185

Sd/- Principal

Foundation World School reserves the right to select service providers based on suitability and quality standards.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
 I have changed my name from (old name) GHULAM MOHI UD DIN KHAWAJA S/O GHULAM HASSAN KHAWAJA R/O MAGAM-193401 to (New name) GHULAM MOHI UD DIN KHAWAJA S/O GHULAM HASSAN KHAWAJA R/O ASTANPORA MAGAM, BEERWAH-193401 In future, I will be known as (New name) GHULAM MOHI UD DIN KHAWAJA S/O GHULAM HASSAN KHAWAJA R/O ASTANPORA MAGAM, BEERWAH-193401 If anybody has any objection, he/she may contact the passport office, Srinagar, within 7 days.  
 bmg

**اطلاع عام**  
 ہم ہاشدگان موضع حیات پورہ تحصیل ضلع بڈگام کی طرف سے بذریعہ اشتہار مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ جو لائن HT 11000 زر سبلی ازرقہ جات مشتاق احمد سے وسم راجتک رواں ہے کو ہم ان رقبہ جات سے ٹرانسفر کر کے سڑک کنارے سے نصب کرنا چاہتے ہیں۔ اس ضمن میں اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کسی قسم کا کوئی عذر اعتراض ہو تو وہ سات دنوں کے اندر اپنا اعتراض محکمہ PDD بڈگام کے دفتر میں پیش کریں۔ میعاد گزرنے کے بعد کوئی بھی اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔  
 اہلشہر۔ ہاشدگان حیات پورہ بذریعہ صیب اللہ گنائی ولد کریم گنائی مشتاق احمد گنائی ولد عزیز گنائی۔ وسم راجتک موضع حیات ساکن حیات پورہ بڈگام۔ فون۔ 8825042085- 7780999285  
 mcb

**نمبر پلیٹ کی گمشدگی**  
 ہر خاص و عام کو بذریعہ اشتہار مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ میرے (load Carrier) زیر رجسٹریشن نمبر JK04F 7669 کی گمشدگی کیس گم ہو گیا ہے۔ بہت ڈھونڈنے پر بھی نہ ملا۔ اب اسکی ڈپلیکیٹ کا پی کٹائی مطلوب ہے۔ لہذا اس بارے میں اگر کسی شخص کو کوئی اعتراض ہو تو وہ سات دن کے اندر اندر ARTO بڈگام کے دفتر میں پیش کریں۔ میعاد گزرنے کے بعد کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔  
 اہلشہر۔ شوکت احمد راجتک و لد غلام حسین راجتک ساکن رانی پورہ اولد بڈگام۔ فون۔ 9055588890  
 mcb

**اطلاع عام**  
 ہر خاص و عام کو بذریعہ اشتہار مطلع کیا جاتا ہے کہ مجھے اپنے بھئی ایگریمنٹ زیر کٹز یومر نمبر 0206010010238 جو کہ محمد صدیق چو پان کے پر ہے۔ اب اسکو میرے نام یعنی محمد صدیق چو پان کے نام پر کروانا مطلوب ہے۔ اس بارے میں اگر کسی شخص کو کوئی اعتراض ہو تو وہ سات دن کے اندر اندر ایگریمنٹ چو پان بڈگام کے دفتر میں پیش کریں۔ میعاد گزرنے کے بعد کوئی بھی اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔  
 محمد صدیق چو پان ولد عبدالرزاق چو پان ساکن چک رائتھن خان صاحب بڈگام۔  
 فون۔ 9596004382 MBC

**OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR KALANTRA**

Subject: Application of Reyaz Ahmad Bhat S/o Ghulam Rasool Bhat R/o Burzawachan for issuance of RBA (Rural and Backward Classes) in favour of his children namely Mahroo Reyaz, Subiya Reyaz, Uzma Reyaz.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Regarding the subject cited above, the applicant has submitted the file in the office of the undersigned for the issuance of RBA. In this connection, a report of patwari halqa concerned has been sought, which reveals that the applicant is currently residing in village Burzawachan and belongs to the Bhat Community, having an annual income of Rs 280000/- (Two Lakh and Eighty Thousand). The details of the family of the applicant are as follows:

S.No	NAME OF INDIVIDUAL	RELATION WITH APPLICANT	AGE	OCCUPATION	ANNUAL INCOME
1	REYAZ AHMAD BHAT	SELF	40	LABOUR	280000/=
2	SHAMEENA BEGUM	WIFE	37	HOUSEWIFE	
3	MAHROO REYAZ	DAUGHTER	17	STUDENT	
4	SUBIYA REYAZ	DAUGHTER	13	STUDENT	
5	UZMA REYAZ	DAUGHTER	11	STUDENT	

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

Naib Tehsildar Kalantra fko

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
 I, Ghulam Khan S/O Mohd Qasim Khan R/O Diveriyakhmanpora Tehsil Singhpora Distt Baramulla do hereby state as under that my ward namely Sakeena Khan was born on 15/12/2007 at Diveriyakhmanpora and now I want to obtain DOB in favour of my ward from BDO office Singhpora if any body have objection he she may contact to tehsil office singhpora within seven days and after seven days no objection will be accepted  
 fko

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
 In Service Book Record, my name is wrongly entered as Ghulam Hussan Saraf instead of Ghulam Hession Saraf. Now correction is required. If any body has any objection, they may contact Executive Engineer, R&B Division, Shopian within 7 days. Ghulam Hassan Saraf S/O Ghulam Mohammad Saraf R/O Charamgari Mohala, Shah Kadal, Srinagar  
 fko

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
 I, Mohammad Sharief Chachi, father of Shahbaz Ahmad Chachi, R/O Mastpora, Tehsil Keller, District Shopian, want to correct the name, parentage, and D.O.B of my ward in Aadhaar records, which has been wrongly entered as Shahbaz Shareef S/O Mohd Shareef Chachi and D.O.B 15-03-2010 instead of Shahbaz Ahmad Chachi S/O Mohammad Sharief Chachi and D.O.B 15-03-2010. Now correction is required. If any body has any objection, they may contact the concerned Aadhaar center Jammu/Srinagar or concerned authorities within 7 days.  
 fko

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
 I have changed my name from (old name) RAFIQA KHAJA W/O KHAJA GULAM MOHI UL DIN R/O MAGAM-193401 to (New name) RAFIQA MOHI UD DIN W/O GHULAM MOHI UD DIN KHAWAJA R/O ASTAN PORA, MAGAM BEERWAH-193401 In future, I will be known as (New name) RAFIQA MOHI UD DIN W/O GHULAM MOHI UD DIN KHAWAJA R/O ASTAN PORA, MAGAM BEERWAH-193401 If anybody has any objection, he/she may contact the passport office, Srinagar, within 7 days. After 7 days, no objection will be accepted.  
 bmg

**Public Notice..**  
 My Name has been inadvertently recorded as Mohammad Iqbal Yatu in Aadhaar card bearing number: 7413-0100-3644, which is incorrect, whereas my correct name is Mohd Iqbal Yattoo. Which needs to be corrected. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in concerned office within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.  
 Mohd Iqbal Yattoo S/o Mohd Maqbool Yattoo R/o Nehalpora Tehsil Pattan District Baramulla  
 fko

**OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN/PRESIDENT M.C (MY CHOTA) SCHOOL CHANDOOSA, 193101 SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE LIST**

S.No	Name & Parentage	Residence	Qualification	Designation/Status
01	Mohammad Iqbal Zarger (S/O Abdul Rashid Zarger)	Chandoosa	M.Sc, B.Ed	Chairman
02	Muzamil Rashid (S/O Abdul Rashid Zargar)	Chandoosa	MBA	Secretary
03	Ishfaq Ahmad Zargar (S/O Abdul Maajeed Zargar)	Chandoosa	MA, B.Ed, NET	Member/Teacher
04	Shaheena Bano (W/O Mansoor Ahmad Mir)	Sultanpora Kandi	BA, B.Ed	Member/Parent
05	Jagdeep Singh (S/O Taniyet Singh)	Chandoosa	10th	Member
06	Rafi Ahmad Baigh (S/O Late Abdul Hamid Baigh)	Chandoosa	12th	Member
07	Raiinder Singh (S/O Chabil Singh)	Chandoosa	B.Sc	Member

jvd



## Iran Preparing Response To Trump's Letter: FM

Agencies

Tehran: Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi says Iran has yet to respond to a letter from President Donald Trump of the United States regarding a replacement for the 2015 nuclear deal.

"We have not yet responded to the US president's letter, and this response is being prepared and will be presented soon through the appropriate channels and in the appropriate form," he said at a joint news conference with his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan in Yerevan on Tuesday.



The minister clarified that Iran would not engage in direct talks with the Trump administration under the reinstated maximum pressure campaign.

"We do not negotiate directly with the United States under maximum pressure where we are witnessing military threats and increased economic sanctions from Washington," he said. However, Iran has always been eager to discuss its nuclear program to "create greater transparency" and is already holding talks and consultations with three European countries and other interested nations, he added.

"We have never left the negotiation table on our peaceful nuclear program and will not do so," Araghchi said, suggesting that the country is willing to engage in indirect talks with Washington.

The minister reiterated Iran's belief that regional problems should be resolved through diplomacy and dialogue, opposing any attacks or military conflicts in the region.

The Trump administration recently restored the so-called maximum pressure policy, first introduced during Trump's initial term in office in 2016.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi says Iran acts based on its own interests in disregard of the expectations held by US President Donald Trump, stressing Tehran's commitment to diplomacy.

Under this policy, Trump withdrew the United States from a landmark agreement on Iran's nuclear program in 2018 and reimposed crippling sanctions on Tehran.

The 2015 deal, signed between Tehran and world powers, saw Iran commit to temporary confidence-building restrictions on its nuclear activities in exchange for the removal of Western-imposed economic sanctions.

On March 7, Trump announced he had written to Iran to call for nuclear negotiations and threaten military action.

The letter was delivered to Tehran on March 12 by UAE presidential adviser Anwar Gargash.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei responded on March 21, stating that US threats "will get them nowhere" and warning of reciprocal measures "if they do anything malign" against Iran.

He also dismissed Trump's outreach for talks, accusing him of attempting to deceive global public opinion by portraying the United States as willing to negotiate while framing Iran as unwilling to engage.



## Trump's Crackdown: Will Green Card Holders Lose Digital Privacy?

KO Webdesk

Srinagar: The Trump administration is considering a controversial new policy that would require Green Card holders and asylum seekers to disclose their social media accounts to the U.S. government.

The move, seen as an extension of the existing visa scrutiny policy, would impact millions of legal residents, including many Indians and other immigrants who have built lives in the United States. Critics argue that this could stifle free speech, discourage political activism, and even be used to bar government critics from securing permanent residency.

The proposal, announced in a notice released on March 5, is currently open for public comment. The administration justifies the policy as necessary for "national security screening," but opponents warn it could be a tool for ideological policing.

Social Media Monitoring: From Visa Applicants to Green Card Holders

Under a 2019 policy introduced by Trump during his first term, visa applicants from abroad were required to disclose their social media handles to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as part of their background checks. The

new plan aims to expand that requirement to those already living in the U.S. legally—including Green Card holders applying for permanent residency and asylum seekers.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and USCIS claim that tracking social media activity will help in "identity verification, vetting, and national security screening." However, immigrant rights advocates argue that such a policy could have dangerous implications, including:

- Chilling effect on free speech: Legal residents may hesitate to express political opinions online for fear of government scrutiny.
- Selective enforcement: The rule could disproportionately target immigrants from specific countries or backgrounds.
- Privacy concerns: The government could gain unprecedented access to personal interactions, opinions, and associations of legal residents.

How Green Card Holders Could Be Affected

The proposal raises new fears among Green Card holders and applicants, many of whom already face heightened scrutiny under Trump's immigration policies. Those applying for perma-

nent residency or asylum may have to hand over their social media handles, allowing officials to review their posts, interactions, and political views before approving their applications.

Many Indian immigrants, professionals, and students who actively engage in political discussions on both U.S. and Indian affairs could be among those affected. The new policy might deter them from expressing opinions online—especially if they are critical of government policies.

Trump's Broader Immigration Crackdown

The proposal is part of Trump's renewed hardline stance on immigration since returning to office. On January 20, his first day back, he signed an executive order directing federal agencies to work together to combat "an invasion" of illegal immigrants.

Since then, raids and deportations have increased, with federal agents conducting high-profile crackdowns on undocumented immigrants. Social media posts by federal law enforcement agencies have showcased heavily armed agents from the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) conducting mass arrests.

## Army Rejects Social Media Post's Claim That Its Aircraft Was Hacked

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Army has rejected claims made by a social media post that one of its Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) was "hacked" by the Chinese side, and urged media houses and social media users to refrain from carrying "unverified" and "misleading" content, sources said. The Army remains fully committed to the security and operational integrity of all its assets, they said. A recent social media post alleged that an RPA of the Indian Army had "veered" into the Chinese territory in eastern theatre. The article also claimed that the RPA was "hacked" by the Chinese side. It is clarified that the article is "completely baseless and factually incorrect" and "no such incident" has taken place, an Army source said.

A recent social media post alleged that an RPA of the Indian Army had "veered" into the Chinese territory in eastern theatre. The article also claimed that the RPA was "hacked" by the Chinese side

The force has urged media houses and social media users to "refrain from carrying unverified and misleading content", which could create "unnecessary alarm and misinformation" in the public domain, the source said.

## Delhi Government To Relocate Tihar Jail, Allocates Rs 10 Crore For Survey



Press Trust of India

New Delhi: Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday announced plans to relocate Tihar Jail to the city's outskirts while setting aside Rs 10 crore in the 2025-26 budget for survey and consultancy services related to the shifting of the jail. Established in 1958, Tihar Jail is one of India's largest prison complexes comprising nine prisons spread over more than 400 acres - one prison in Rohini and six prisons in Mandoli.

"In order to decongest the existing Tihar Jail Complex for the welfare of prisoners, a new scheme for development of a new Jail Complex by shifting the existing Tihar Jail Complex to some other location has been formulated," the Delhi chief minister said while presenting the budget in the assembly. Located in West Delhi, Tihar is close to Tilak Nagar and Hari Nagar areas of the city. Originally designed to house approximately 10,025 inmates, it currently accommodates over 19,000, leading to overcrowding and security challenges. The Delhi government has initiated the development of new prison complexes in Narela to alleviate congestion.

Meanwhile, a Tihar Jail source said, "We had also asked for space in Baprola, but due to encroachment, we couldn't get that. However, we have written to the Delhi government to provide 100 acres of land somewhere else." The source said that Jail Numbers 1 to 9 are designed to house approximately

5,000 inmates, but these accommodate over 12,000 prisoners at present.

"Jail Number 10 to 16 are designed to house approximately 3,700 inmates, but currently accommodate over 3,900 inmates. Jail Number 4 in Tihar and 12 in Mandoli Jail are known as 'Mulaia Jail' which means first-time offenders. We have a large number of inmates in these two jails," said the source.

The source also said that a short-term proposal has been made for retrofitting the jail and vertically extending it up to two floors, making the capacity three times. "This will make the space sufficient for accommodation for up to five to ten years," the source said.

The chief minister in her budget also announced the formation of a society under the aegis of the Delhi Jail. The society will focus on the reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners. It will achieve this by developing their overall skills through various skill-imparting programs. Additionally, the society will professionalise the functioning of different factories and manufacturing units within the jails.

Delhi government offices, ministries and departments will also give preference in procurement to products manufactured in the jail complexes of Tihar, Rohini and Mandoli. An official who requested anonymity said products made by the inmates are usually consumed in Tihar Jail and also sold through some shops, known as 'Tihar Haat'. Earnings from these shops are very less, but with this decision, the inmates will earn more.

## Will Not Apologise, Poking Fun At Leaders Not Against Law: Kunal Kamra

Press Trust Of India

Mumbai: I will not apologise or hide under the bed waiting for the controversy to die down, a defiant Kunal Kamra said in a late night statement as the row over his comedy act spilled over with Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde saying there should be limits to freedom of speech.

While Shinde said his comments - a parody targeting him - were like "taking supari" to speak against someone, many others weighed in too and the Mumbai Police issued notice to the stand-up comedian. The 36-year-old, who has often courted controversy for his anti-establishment views, has been asked to appear before the Khar police in Mumbai in connection with the case, officials said on Tuesday.

Kamra on Tuesday doubled down on his stand by sharing an edited video of his stand-up act where he juxtaposed videos of Shiv Sainiks demolishing the venue and burning his pictures and effigies with the parody song 'Hum honge kangal, hum honge kangal ek din... Mann me andh-



vishwas, desh ka satyanash..." playing in the background.

The comedian, who is in Pucherry according to his Instagram bio, has also updated his X header photo with a disclaimer that reads: "This programme contains coarse language, offensive content & is unfit for consumption by those whose feelings and sentiments can be hurt. No one but you are liable for any outrage or hurt that you claim is caused by your voluntary viewership."

In his response, Shinde told BBC Marathi on Monday, "There is freedom of speech. We understand satire. But there should be a limit. This is like taking a 'supari' (contract) to speak against someone."

## India Faces Power Demand Surge Amid Rising Temperatures

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: India should prepare for a nine to 10 per cent growth in peak electricity demand this summer with the country expected to experience more heatwaves, experts have warned.

Last year, the all-India peak electricity demand crossed 250 gigawatts (GW) on May 30, which was 6.3 per cent higher than projections. Climate change-induced heat stress is one of the key factors driving electricity demand.

Currently, industries, households and agriculture account for 33 per cent, 28 per cent and 19 per cent of India's total electricity consumption, respectively. Household electricity demand has grown the fastest over the past decade, according to Disha Agarwal, Senior Programme Lead - Renewables at the

Delhi-based think-tank Council on Energy, Environment and Water. The share of household electricity consumption increased from 22 per cent in 2012-13 to 25 per cent in 2022-23. Much of this

rise can be attributed to economic growth and the increasing need for cooling due to rising temperatures, experts say.

In the summer of 2024, room air-conditioner sales surged by 40 to 50 per cent year-on-year amid record-breaking temperatures, Agarwal said.

"India must now brace for extended heatwaves and a peak electricity demand growth of 9-10 per cent. However, our analysis shows that this peak demand will only last for a short period

Agarwal said India's electricity consumption has been growing at about 9 per cent annually since 2020-21, compared to 5 per cent per year in the previous decade. The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) had estimated that electricity demand would grow at a rate of 6 per cent per year from 2022 to 2030.

## Assam Assembly Passes Bill To Regulate Coaching Centres

Press Trust of India

In case of violation of proposed law, the government can cancel or suspend their registration (File)Guwahati:

The Assam assembly on Tuesday passed a bill to regulate private coaching centres, making it mandatory for registration of all such institutes and strict compliance with laid-down guidelines.

During discussion on the proposed legislation, MLA Sherman Ali Ahmed was suspended from the House by Deputy Speaker Numol Momin for disrupting a minister's reply.

Mr Ahmed, who had been earlier suspended from the Congress, tried to intervene when Education Minister Ranuj Pegu was speaking, prompting the deputy speaker to suspend him for 10 minutes.

Mr Pegu, who had moved the proposed new law, said the



objective behind it is to control commercialisation of coaching centres and ensure that guardians get justice.

"The guardians and students had no one to approach if they are duped or misled by the coaching institutes. Hence, we have brought this bill," he said.

Mr Pegu said the provisions of the bill, including the period of 30 days given to apply

for registration for existing centres once the law is notified, have been carefully evaluated and enshrined.

He maintained that coaching centres are primarily to prepare students seeking admission to higher education institutions, like engineering and medicine, and hence, provisions of the bill cater to students aged 16 years and above.

"The Assam Coaching Institutes (Control and Regulation) Bill, 2025", which was passed by voice vote, provides for the control and regulation of private coaching centres and institutes, for providing better academic support in preparation for different competitive examinations.

It also specifies that no coaching institute will engage in any affairs relating to religious conversion, and shall strictly adhere to the secular principles as enshrined in the Constitution.

The institutes seeking registration have to provide information on its curriculum, duration of classes, co-curricular activities for the students, academic qualification of teachers, tuition fees, physical infrastructure and other facilities.

The tenure of a registration certificate will be two years, after which the institute has to re-apply for renewal, according to the provisions of the bill.

## Israel releases Oscar-winning Palestinian director

Agencies

HEBRON: Israeli authorities released an Oscar-winning Palestinian director who was illegally detained by the army after being attacked by Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank. He said they beat him in front of his home while they filmed the assault.

Hamdan Ballal and the other directors of "No Other Land," which looks at the struggles of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, had mounted the stage at the 97th Academy Awards in Los Angeles earlier this month when it won the award for best documentary film.

On Tuesday, with bruises on his face and blood on his clothes, he was released from an Israeli police station in the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Arba. He and two other Palestinians who had been attacked and detained were taken to a nearby hospital. Ballal said he was held at an army base, blindfolded for 24 hours and forced to sleep under a freezing air conditioner.

"All my body is pain," he told The



Associated Press. "I heard the voices of the soldiers, they were laughing about me ... I heard 'Oscar' but I didn't speak Hebrew." Lea Tsemel, the attorney representing the three men, said they received only minimal care for their injuries from the attack and that she had no access to them for several hours after their arrest.

Palestinian residents say around two dozen settlers—some masked, some carrying guns and some in military uniforms—attacked the West Bank village of Susiya on Monday evening as residents were breaking their fast during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

## Rs 27.07 Cr Released For Street Lights Installation: CM

Observer News Service

Jammu: Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah Tuesday said that an amount of Rs. 27.07 Cr. has been released to the Srinagar Municipal Committee for installation of street lights.

The Chief Minister was replying to a question raised by Shamim Firdous in the Legislative Assembly.

He informed the House that as per the tripartite agreement between HUDD, JKPD & EESL, M/s. EESL is maintaining installation along with warranty replacement during the project period of 07 years ending 2027.

He further said that the restoration of defunct street lights is carried by the concerned.

## 'NCD-Infection Epidemics: A Health Challenge In India'

Observer News Service

Srinagar: On the occasion of World Tuberculosis (TB) Day, the Department of General Medicine, Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Soura, in collaboration with district TB centre (DTC) Srinagar organized World Tuberculosis (TB) Day 2025 on 24th march. The event aimed to raise awareness about the global burden

Gastroenterology who emphasized the importance of this event in raising awareness in public about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of Tuberculosis.

The session concluded with the Director's Address by Prof. (Dr.) Mohd Ashraf Ganie, Director SKIMS & EOSG. He warned of the future threat of interaction of non-communicable disease epidemic (NCD) with infec-



of TB and highlight the latest advancements in its diagnosis and prevention.

The inaugural session commenced with a Welcome Address by Prof. (Dr.) Sonauallah Shah, Head of the Department of General Medicine, SKIMS, who highlighted the theme of world TB day 2025.

It was followed by the Associate Dean's Address by Prof. (Dr.) G.M. Gulzar, HOD

tion like TB. For eliminating TB he highlighted the importance of research projects about the different aspects of tuberculosis. He also desired that 3 departments including the Department of General Medicine Department of community Medicine, Department of Microbiology and infectious disease department need to work together in order to address various issues related to TB.



## Markets Abuzz As Eid Shopping Frenzy Grips City

Observer News Service

Srinagar: With Eid-ul-Fitr just days away, markets across Srinagar are witnessing an overwhelming rush of shoppers, as the festive spirit takes over the valley. From Srinagar's bustling Lal Chowk to local markets in towns and villages, people are flocking to buy clothes, footwear, sweets, and other essentials for the grand celebration.

Shopkeepers are reporting record sales, particularly in apparel, footwear, and traditional Kashmiri delicacies. Tailors, overwhelmed with last-minute orders, are struggling to meet the soaring demand for Eid outfits.

In the heart of Srinagar—Lal Chowk, Polo View, and Residency Road—the streets are packed with shoppers. Women and young girls can be seen bargaining at clothing stores, while children eagerly pick out new outfits and toys. Meanwhile, men crowd bakeries and confectionery shops, ensuring their homes are stocked with traditional sweets.

Bashir Ahmad, a local garment shop owner, described this year's sales as exceptional. "After

years of sluggish business due to economic downturns and political uncertainty, we are finally witnessing a revival," he said.

However, not all traders share the same optimism. Fayaz Malik, who owns a footwear store in Srinagar, noted that while footfall has increased, online shopping has significantly impacted traditional businesses. "Many customers

commodities has increased significantly, making it difficult for lower-income families to shop freely.

"Every year, prices shoot up before Eid. A simple dress that cost Rs 1,500 last year is now selling for Rs 2,500. The government should regulate prices during festival seasons," said Shaista, a shopper in Srinagar.

Traders attribute the surge

**“After years of sluggish business due to economic downturns and political uncertainty, we are finally witnessing a revival**

browse products in-store but end up purchasing them online at discounted rates, making it difficult for us to compete," he said.

Street vendors selling bangles, henna, and artificial jewelry are also doing brisk business, with young girls lining up to adorn their hands with intricate mehendi designs.

However, alongside the festive cheer, shoppers are struggling with rising prices. The cost of clothes, footwear, and essential

in prices to inflation and rising transportation costs.

The heavy rush has also resulted in massive traffic congestion across several key areas. Authorities have deployed additional traffic personnel to manage the gridlock, but the sheer volume of vehicles has made movement slow.

Meanwhile, security has been tightened across Kashmir, with additional personnel stationed in sensitive areas to ensure a peaceful and safe celebration. (with KNO Inputs)

- 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

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

**HIGHWAY STATUS**

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

HIJRI CALENDAR 25 Ramazan 1446	PRAYERS	
	FAJR	5: 04
ZUHR	12:40	
ASR	5: 00	
Magrib	6:50	
ISHA	8: 09	

### This Day In History

- 1027 - Pope John XIX crowns Conrad II Holy Roman Emperor, founder of the Salian dynasty
- 1147 - Jewish community in Cologne fasts to commemorate anti-Jewish violence
- 1484 - William Caxton prints his translation of Aesop's Fables
- 1526 - King Francois I returns Spanish captivity to France
- 1534 - Lübeck accepts free Dutch ships into East Sea
- 1552 - Guru Amar Das becomes the Third Sikh Guru
- 1636 - University of Utrecht opening ceremony
- 1668 - England takes control of Bombay, India
- 1812 - Earthquake measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale destroys 90% of Caracas, Venezuela and kills an estimated 15,000–20,000 people
- 1845 - Patent awarded for adhesive medicated plaster, precursor of band-aid
- 1913 - Bulgaria captures Adrianople, ending the 1st Balkan War
- 1917 - British win a battle against Turks at Gaza
- 1931 - Iraq & Trans-Jordan sign peace treaty
- 1945 - Allies led by US Marine Corps secure island of Iwo Jima from Imperial Japanese Army, after 18,000 Japanese & 6,000 Americans killed
- 1958 - US Army launched America's third successful satellite, "Explorer III"
- 1960 - Iraq executes 30 after attack on President Kassem
- 1969 - Nuclear reactor Dodewaard Neth goes into use
- 1969 - Soviet weather satellite Meteor 1 launched
- 1971 - Bangladesh (East Pakistan) under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declares its independence from Pakistan
- 1975 - The Biological Weapons Convention enters into force.
- 1979 - Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat sign the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty in Washington, D.C.
- 1979 - OPEC makes full 14.5% oil price increase for 1979 effective on April 1
- 1981 - Police & Albanian demonstrators battle in Kosovo, Yugoslavia
- 1981 - Soyuz T-4 lands
- 1987 - NASA launches Fltsatcom-6, it fails to reach orbit
- 1996 - Last day of 1st-class cricket for Allan Border (Qld v Vic)
- 1996 - The International Monetary Fund approves a \$10.2 billion loan for Russia
- 2001 - Kazakhstan's Prime Minister opens an oil pipeline from the giant Tengiz Field to the Russian port of Novorossiysk on Monday, giving the Central Asian producer its first direct link to international markets

From KO Archives

## Omar Justifies Dad's Decision

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Omar Abdullah, only son of chief minister Farooq Abdullah and an aspirant for ministerial berth in BJP led coalition government, today justified the stand taken by his father, in extending support to the Vajpayee government.

"Is main kya haraj hain" (what is wrong in it) Omar told reporters who sought his comments on the National Conference support to BJP alliance at the centre. However the young NC MP did not make any mention of the banner of revolt by his senior colleague and former union minister Saif-Ud-Din Soze, on the issue of National Conference supporting a "communal party" like BJP

(Kashmir Observer, 26 March, 1998)

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE	
For and on behalf of President of India, Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer, Northern Railway, J&K, invites open Tender through e-tendering system from reputed contractors with adequate experience and financial capability for the under mentioned work.	
Name of Work	Design, Manufacture, Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Centralized Heating System (CHS) on turnkey basis in light repair bay at DEMU Car Shed, Budgam, (J&K).
Estimated Cost of Work (Approximate)	Rs. 4,63,36,596.92 (Rs. Four Crore, Sixty-Three Lakh, Thirty-Six Thousand, Five Hundred Ninety-Six and Ninety-Two Paise Only).
Tender Security Amount (Earnest Money Deposit)	Rs. 3,81,700/- (Rupees Three Lakh, Eighty One Thousand, Seven Hundred Only.)
Tender document available for sale on website	25.03.2025
E-Tender closing Date & Time	16.04.2025 at 15:00 Hrs.
Date and time of opening of E-Tender on IREPS website	16.04.2025 at 15:15 Hrs.
Contract Period	06 Months
Type of Tender	Open Tender (Single Packet System)
Validity of Tender	45 Days from the last date of submission of tender
Website	http://www.ireps.gov.in/
Tender No.:	01-2025-DEMU_BDGM Dated: 25.03.2025 921/2025
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-Auction Notice		
The Senior Divisional Commercial Manager 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
EAJAT-WVM-JAT25	08.04.2025 at 12.30 Hrs.	Allotment of contract for provision and operation of Water Vending Machines at Railway Station Jammu Tawi.
EAFZR-WVM-25-8	09.04.2025 at 11.00 Hrs.	Allotment of contract for provision and operation of Water Vending Machines at Railway Station Faridkot, Phailaur, Firozpur Cantt, Amritsar & Phagwara.
EAFZR-PRKG 25-7	09.04.2025 at 11.30 Hrs.	Allotment of Parking lot on contract at Kapurthala Railway Station.
EAFZR-PnU 25-6	09.04.2025 at 12.30 Hrs.	Allotment of contract for operation & maintenance of Pay & Use Toilets at Muktsar Railway Station.
For other details and registration, please visit Railway website www.ireps.gov.in No. MC/38015/Pub/E-Auction/FZR/22 Dated: 25.03.2025 922/2025		
Serving Customers With A Smile		

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE		
DEN-III/FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites open tenders (E-Tenders) against below titled tenders and available on www.ireps.gov.in with closing date 15.04.2025 up to 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 tenders, 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 only payment modes available on www.ireps.gov.in portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft Banker Cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed. For more information login to www.ireps.gov.in		
Tender Type	Tendering Section	Bidding System
Open	Works	Single Packet System
Date of Uploading Tenders	Bid Starting Date	Bid Closing Date/ Time
24.03.2025/ 17:06 Hrs	01.04.2025	15.04.2025/ 15:00 Hrs
Tender No.	Details of Tender	
332-2024-25-DEN-III-FZR	Augmentation/ Upgradation of resources, infrastructure of centre of excellence & flooring in steel yard enhancement of basic training & manufacturing capacity at Amritsar Workshop.	
Advertised Value (₹)	Earnest Money	Validity of Offer
3,38,48,728.23/-	3,19,300.00/-	60 Days
		Period of Completion
		06 Months
Similar nature of work: "Any civil work other than track work."		
Note1. Before bidding, bidders to check for any corrigendum issued against tender.		
Tender No.:	332-2024-25-DEN-III-FZR	Date: 25.03.2025 918/2025
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE		

# اظہار شکر

میں اُن تمام دوست و احباب، پڑوسیوں، اور اہم سیاسی، سماجی اور مذہبی شخصیات کا تہہ دل سے شکر گزار رہوں، جنہوں نے میرے برادرِ نبی راجہ محمد تسلیم عباس، فاضل ڈسٹرکٹ و سیشن جج کی رحلت پر ہمارے گھر تشریف لاکر یا بذریعہ فون ہم سے رابطہ کر کے غم و اندوہ کی اس گھڑی میں ہماری ڈھارس بندھائی۔

میں ذاتی طور پر بالخصوص جوڈیشری سے وابستہ فاضل شخصیات بالخصوص جناب خورشید الاسلام صاحب، اور ممتاز سیاسی، سماجی و مذہبی شخصیات بشمول میرا عطا عمر فاروق صاحب، مولانا مسرور عباس انصاری، سید محمد الطاف بخاری، مولانا شوکت حسین کینگ بھلس متھہ علمائے کشمیر، انجمن شرعی شیخان، بیروان ولایت، ایجوکیشن ٹرسٹ، انجمن اوقاف جامع مسجد سہیلنگر، انجمن نصرۃ السلام، العباس ریلیف ٹرسٹ، انجمن معین الاسلام، مجلس علما امامیہ، تنظیم الکاتب، اندرونی کاٹھی دروازہ کے باشندگان، محلہ کشمیریوں، اور اُن تمام انجمنوں اور افراد کا شکریہ ادا کرتا ہوں کہ وہ غم کی اس گھڑی میں ہمارے ساتھ یکجہتی میں کھڑے رہے۔

چونکہ فردِ افسردہ سب کا نام لینا ممکن نہیں ہے، اس لئے میں ان سطور کے ذریعے سب کا دل کی گہرائیوں سے شکریہ ادا کرتا ہوں۔ اللہ تعالیٰ سے دستِ بیدعا ہوں کہ آپ سب کو اپنی پناہ میں رکھے اور دین و دنیا کی کامیابیوں سے سرفراز کرے اور راجہ محمد تسلیم عباس کو جو ارحمت میں جگہ دے اور ہمیں اُن کی جدائی کا صدمہ برداشت کرنے کی ہمت عطا فرمائے (آمین)۔

سبط محمد حسن

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Legal Counsel: Tasaduq Khwaja  
Switchboard: (0194) 2502327 | +91 1947969705  
Editorial: (0194) 2502327  
Email: editor@kashmirobsvr.net

### KO VIEW

## Valley's Changing Course

Home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said that two Hurriyat-linked groups had renounced separatism, identifying them as J&K People's Movement and Democratic Political Movement. He urged all such groups to come forward and shed separatism once and for all while declaring separatism a history. This reflects a profound change in the ongoing situation in the Valley, something that was unthinkable a few years ago.

The home minister attributed this to the prime minister "Narendra Modi's vision of building a developed, peaceful and unified Bharat." Speaking in Rajya Sabha, the home minister backed up his claim with figures. While in 2004, 1,587 incidents of violence were reported in J&K, the number dropped to just 85. Similarly, civilian deaths, according to home ministry figures, have fallen from 733 to 26, and security personnel casualties have declined from 331 to 31 over the same period. It is also obvious that the stone-pelting is now virtually non-existent. Strikes, once a routine method of expressing dissent, have also disappeared.

However, the renunciation of separatism by the two Hurriyat constituent groups has a certain symbolic significance. It is rarely that a political outfit has severed ties to separatism. However, last year, a major politico-religious party Jamaat-i-Islami decided to contest the Assembly election, effectively distancing itself from its separatist moorings. The party failed to win a single seat but did create some buzz in its strongholds in South Kashmir. In February, the same Jamaat leaders floated a new party christened as the Justice and Development Front (JDF), which will contest the upcoming grassroots elections. It is the third new political party in Kashmir since the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. First two were the Apni Party led by Altaf Bukhari and the Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) founded by the former Congress veteran Ghulam Nabi Azad. Both of them have not been able to make any mark since their advent. However, there are no full stops in politics and the past performance is never an indicator of what might happen in future.

Taken together, these developments do highlight a sea change in the situation. Will other outfits follow suit remains to be seen. It may be premature to conclude that the Valley has turned the page on its troubled past. While separatist politics may be over, separatist violence lingers. The latest encounter in Kathua is a case in point. However, for true peace to prevail, it needs to be built on by an outreach to people and giving them a sense of empowerment in the transformed state of affairs.



### Did You Know? Investing in Shariah, Ethical, and Halal ETFs in Kashmir

—Irshad Mushtaq—

For Muslim investors in Kashmir, Shariah, Ethical, and Halal ETFs present a modern and responsible investment strategy aligned with Islamic principles. These investment options provide ethical financial growth while ensuring compliance with Shariah law.

#### Diverse and Compliant Portfolios

Shariah-compliant ETFs offer a diversified portfolio of stocks listed on India's major exchanges, such as NSE and BSE. They strictly avoid businesses involving interest (riba), speculation (gharar), and haram products, ensuring investments remain ethical and permissible under Islamic law.

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Unlike traditional investments, ETFs can be traded like regular stocks, allowing investors to buy and sell at their convenience. This flexibility helps in managing investments on a weekly or monthly basis, offering greater control over financial decisions.

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# Can J&K Become an Educational Hub?



Dr. Ashraf Zainabi

“  
**Unemployment remains a critical issue in J&K, and allowing the private educational sector to flourish can be a game-changer. Several PhD scholars who study in top-notch national and international institutions ultimately end up serving outside Kashmir, thus causing a huge brain drain. A mandatory 50% local employment cap for faculty and staff will ensure that these institutions contribute directly to the region's economic upliftment and progressive education system.**

The maiden address of Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha to the assembly of UT of J&K on 3rd March 2025 highlighted that his government is committed to making J&K an educational hub. While this statement seems overrated, as always, where there is a will, there is a way is the answer.

J&K has long struggled with two major challenges: environmental degradation and the outflow of talent and capital. While private industries like brick kilns (bhatha) and dukan (shops) continue to help the economy, they also pollute the environment and harm public health; the private higher education sector has remained an untapped opportunity. If cities like Chandigarh, NCR-Delhi, Jaipur, Pune, and Chennai can become global education hubs, why can't J&K, especially Kashmir?

Instead of allowing polluting industries, which under-employ locals, to dominate, why not channel private investment into universities, medical colleges, and research institutions of international standards? Such a shift would not only preserve Kashmir's fragile ecology but also address the pressing issue of unemployment while ensuring that the enormous sums spent on education outside the region remain within J&K's economy.

Several thousands of students from J&K migrate to other states and even abroad in pursuit of quality education every year. This exodus costs families billions, enriching other states while depleting Kashmir's economy. If this capital is invested locally, J&K can build institutions rivaling the best in

the country and even abroad.

A well-planned private education sector can generate substantial revenue and create a self-sustaining ecosystem where students, faculty, and businesses will thrive together. It will also attract students from outside Kashmir and even from foreign countries, further boosting the local economy.

Unemployment remains a critical issue in J&K, and allowing the private educational sector to flourish can be a game-changer. Several PhD scholars who study in top-notch national and international institutions ultimately end up serving outside Kashmir, thus causing a huge brain drain. A mandatory 50% local employment cap for faculty and staff will ensure that these institutions contribute directly to the region's economic upliftment and progressive education system.

Beyond direct employment, these institutions can drive growth in allied sectors—hotels, transportation, bookstores, food services, and even local research and innovation hubs. A knowledge-driven economy is far more sustainable and lucrative than a makan-dukan-bhatha economy.

Despite the clear benefits, private universities remain rare in J&K. The reasons are both structural and psychological. The government must realize this without wasting time. A policy in this direction can be framed wherein the regulatory frameworks are made simple and attractive. The present complex regulatory frameworks may be discouraging private investors who face negligible hurdles elsewhere in India. Further, though the situation in Kashmir (political or otherwise)

has improved significantly, the outdated perception of "halaat kharab hai" continues to deter big investments. Tax breaks, land grants, and some funding incentives can encourage private investors to turn the tide.

Encouraging collaborations between local universities and global institutions can fast-track quality private education. In the private education sector policy, universities and other educational institutions can be encouraged or conditioned to link with industries, ensuring that students find employment instantly and locally instead of looking at the limited government sector or elsewhere.

The time has come to rethink our priorities. Do we continue with a makan-dukan-bhatha economy that degrades our environment, or do we invest in a knowledge economy that ensures prosperity without destruction?

Kashmir has all the ingredients to become a premier educational hub—natural beauty that can attract students worldwide, a rich intellectual tradition, and a desperate need for sustainable economic alternatives. What's missing is the right policy push.

If Pune can be the Oxford of the East and Chennai can do it, so can Kashmir. The question is: Are we ready to embrace a future where knowledge, not pollution, becomes our biggest asset?

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

*The author is a Teacher and Researcher*



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## Upholding Environmental Responsibility during Kashmir's Tourist Season

As Kashmir welcomes its tourist season with the onset of spring, it is imperative that we emphasize the importance of public decency, no loitering, and environmental responsibility. The influx of tourists brings economic benefits, but it also poses challenges to our social and environmental fabric.

Littering, loitering, and disregard

for public decency can mar the beauty of our scenic destinations and create an unpleasant experience for visitors. Moreover, the fragile ecosystem of our region demands careful attention to environmental conservation.

It is essential that we, as responsible citizens, take proactive measures to promote public decency and environmental responsibility. This can be achieved through awareness

campaigns, community outreach programs, and collaborative efforts with local authorities.

I urge the administration to install signboards and public awareness messages at tourist hotspots, emphasizing the importance of maintaining public decency and protecting the environment. Additionally, community groups and local organizations can play a vital role in promoting respon-

sible tourism practices.

By working together, we can ensure that Kashmir's tourist season is not only economically beneficial but also environmentally sustainable and socially responsible.

Faizan Masood  
Srinagar

# A Nostalgic Ode to Lost Spring



**THE CHILDREN OF TODAY WILL NEVER KNOW THE SIMPLE JOY OF FISHING IN THOSE STREAMS.** They will never feel the thrill of spotting a fish darting through the water, never marvel at the way light bends and dances beneath the surface. The streams, now filled with dirt, plastic, and waste, have lost their magic



Kashmir Observer

Peer Mohammad Amir Qureshi

Ah, the spring—nature's grand resurrection, a symphony of rebirth that awakens the slumbering earth from its wintry tomb. The trees, once skeletal and barren, now don emerald cloaks, their branches heavy with the promise of life. Buds, like shy maidens, unfurl into a riot of colors, painting the world in hues so vivid they seem to defy the very essence of winter's monochrome. The air, thick with the perfume of blossoms, hums with the melodies of winged wanderers—exotic birds adorned in plumage so resplendent, they seem to have flown straight out of a painter's dream. Kashmir, in its springtime splendor, transforms into a paradise, a living canvas where every stroke of nature's brush whispers tales of renewal.

Yet, amidst this spectacle of life, my heart remains unmoved, a solitary island in an ocean of vibrancy. The once-mesmerizing dance of the flowers, the hypnotic chorus of the birds, the verdant embrace of the meadows—all seem to have lost their enchantment. It is as though the world has turned its volume down, and I am left standing in a silent theater, watching a play that no longer stirs my soul. The words of *Allama Iqbal* echo in the caverns of my mind, poignant and piercing:

*"Duniya Ki Mehfilon Se Utkta Gaya Hoon Ya Rab..*

*Kya lutaf Anjuman ka, jab Dil Hi bhuj gaya ho..."*

*(The world's gatherings weary me, O Lord—what beauty remains in the garden when the heart itself has turned to ash?)*

This spring, though as glorious as those of yesteryears, feels distant, almost alien. The colors are there, the songs are there, the life is there—but the magic is gone. It is a cruel irony, to stand amidst abundance and feel barren, to witness rebirth and yet feel so irrevocably hollow. The spring of my memories, once a source of unbridled joy, now serves only as a mirror, reflecting the shadows that have crept into my heart. And so, I wander through this paradise, a ghost among the living, yearning for a time when the world's beauty was enough to set my soul alight.

Once, the spring was a sanctuary, a gentle embrace that whispered serenity to my restless heart. It was a season of renewal, not just for the earth, but for my very soul. The golden waves of mustard fields, stretching endlessly under the sun's tender gaze, used to fill me with an inexplicable joy, a childlike wonder that made the world feel infinite and kind. But now, those same fields lie before me, their brilliance dulled by the weight of a heart that no longer knows how to marvel. Life, with its unrelenting demands and ceaseless noise, has stolen the magic from my eyes, leaving behind a mind adrift in chaos and a soul yearning for a peace it can no longer find.

The arrival of spring was once heralded by thunderstorms—nature's fierce overture—followed by the soft, rhythmic patter of rain. It was a ritual, a signal that the earth

was ready to awaken. And with it came the hunt for the elusive morels which are prized mushrooms commonly called as "Kangich" with their intricate, honeycombed crowns. To find them was to uncover a treasure, a gift from the earth itself. The orchards, too, played their part in this symphony of rebirth. The peach and plum trees, adorned in blossoms so delicate and vibrant, rivaled the famed cherry blossoms of distant lands. Their petals, like whispers of pink and white, painted the air with a beauty so elegia it felt almost sacred.

But now, even the kangich eludes me, not just in the orchards but in the corridors of my memory. The peach blossoms, though as breathtaking as ever, no longer stir the same awe. The thunderstorm's roar feels less like a promise and more like a reminder—a reminder of how much time has changed, how much I have changed. The spring, once a balm for my weary spirit, now feels like a stranger, its beauty a mirror reflecting all that I have lost.

Oh, the spring of childhood—a time when the world was not just seen but felt, when every blade of grass, every budding flower, and every hidden treasure beneath the earth held the promise of adventure. The hunt for kangich, the prized morels, was not just a pastime; it was a ritual, a rite of passage that bound us children together in a shared quest for nature's hidden gems.

We would gather, a lively band of explorers, our voices buzzing with excitement like bees swarming to a blossoming garden. The air was thick with chatter, each child eager to share the latest intelligence on which orchard was rumored to be teeming with morels. "The garden near the stream has the most!" one would declare, while another would insist, "No, no, the one by the old walnut tree is the best!" And off we would flock, a merry troop of treasure hunters, our eyes scanning the earth for the telltale honeycombed crowns by yelling, "Joori'e Joori' Nati Nien Oer!"

Some of us, armed with ancient wisdom passed down through generations, would dab Kohl or kajal on our eyes, believing it to be a magical potion that sharpened our vision and granted us the power to spot morels where others saw only dirt and leaves. It was a charming superstition, one that added a touch of mystery to our already enchanted pursuit.

There was a place, hidden away from the prying eyes of the other children, where the earth seemed to conspire in my favour. It was there, in that secluded spot, that I would find the most magnificent morels—giant, majestic, and unlike any the other children had ever seen.

I remember the day I brought home my first giant morel, its honeycombed surface glistening like a jewel. My sister's eyes sparkled with wonder as she exclaimed, "Baaya, che kati loubuth yi?" (Brother, where did you find this?) Her voice was filled with awe, and at that moment, I felt like a hero, a conqueror of nature's secrets. But I was careful, oh so careful, to reveal only the barest hint of my discovery.

"It's a secret," I whispered, entrusting her with the knowledge of my hidden haven, for she was the only one I truly trusted.

Those days, though long gone, remain etched in my memory like the intricate patterns of a morel's surface. And though the spring no longer holds the same magic for me, though the kangich and the mustard fields and the peach blossoms have lost their once-unfailing charm, I carry those memories like a treasure, a reminder of a time when the world was simpler, and the heart was lighter.

Alas, the gardens of yesteryears—those enchanted realms where the earth whispered its secrets and the air hummed with the laughter of children—are no more. The orchards, once teeming with life and mystery, have been swallowed by the relentless march of progress. Where peach trees once bloomed in a riot of pink and white, where the earth yielded its hidden treasures of morels, now stand rows of concrete and steel, their cold, unyielding surfaces a stark contrast to the soft, fertile soil of memory.

The children, too, have changed. Gone are the days when they would gather, their eyes alight with curiosity, their hands eager to sift through the earth in search of nature's bounty. Now, their heads are bowed, their gazes fixed on the glowing screens of mobile devices, their world confined to the virtual allure of social media. The Morels with their honeycombed crowns, are but a forgotten relic of a bygone era, unknown to a generation that has never known the thrill of the hunt or the joy of discovery.

It is a poignant irony, is it not? The very technology that connects us to the world has severed our connection to the earth. The gardens that once nurtured our imaginations and fed our spirits have been replaced by pixels and algorithms, their magic lost in the relentless tide of modernity. The Kangich, those humble mushrooms that once symbolized the arrival of spring, now lie buried not just beneath the soil, but beneath the weight of a world that has moved on.

And yet, as I stand amidst the remnants of what once was, I cannot help but feel a pang of sorrow—not just for the lost gardens, but for the children who will never know the simple joys they held. They will never feel the thrill of uncovering a giant morel, never hear the rustle of leaves as they race through the orchards, never taste the sweetness of a peach plucked straight from the tree. Their world, though vast in its digital expanse, feels somehow smaller, devoid of the wonder that once made spring a season of magic.

But perhaps, in the quiet corners of memory, the gardens still live. Perhaps, in the stories we tell and the memories we cherish, the Morels (kangich) still grow, waiting to be found by those who remember. And though the world may change, though the gardens may fade, the spirit of those days—the laughter, the camaraderie, the unbridled joy of discovery—will always remain, a testament to a time when the earth was alive, and so were we.

Ah, the evergreen plants—those stubborn little warriors that thrived in the shadows, hidden beneath the prickly embrace of bushes. They were more than just plants; they were treasures, symbols of our determination and our fleeting yet fierce love for nature. The hunt for them was no less adventurous than the search for Morels. It required patience, grit, and a willingness to brave the thorny barricades that guarded them. We would crawl under the bushes, our hands scratched and our clothes snagged, all for the sake of uprooting those precious greens and carrying them home like trophies.

Once home, we would plant them in our lawns or kitchen gardens with great ceremony, as if we were laying the foundation of a grand botanical empire. We watered them diligently, our eyes sparkling with pride as we imagined them growing into lush, towering plants. For a few days, they

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were the center of our universe. We would check on them morning and night, marveling at their resilience and dreaming of the day they would transform our humble gardens into verdant paradises.

But childhood, as it often does, had other plans. School, with its endless assignments and rigid routines, would soon reclaim our attention. The plants, once the objects of our undying devotion, were gradually forgotten. The watering cans gathered dust, and the dreams of lush gardens faded into the background. By the time we remembered our green companions, they had often withered, their leaves dry and brittle, their once-promising vitality reduced to a memory.

It was a cycle of passion and neglect, a reflection of the whimsical nature of childhood. We were fervent in our pursuits but easily distracted, our hearts as fleeting as the seasons. Yet, in those brief moments of care and attention, we learned something profound—about nurturing, about responsibility, and about the delicate balance of life.

Looking back, I can't help but smile at the irony. We worked so hard to collect those plants, braving thorns and dirt, only to abandon them when life got busy. But perhaps

that's the beauty of childhood—it's not about perfection or permanence, but about the joy of the moment, the thrill of the chase, and the lessons learned along the way.

Those evergreen plants may have withered, but the memories of our efforts remain evergreen, etched in the soil of our hearts. And though we may have forgotten to water them, the seeds of those experiences have grown into something far more enduring—a love for nature, a sense of wonder, and a nostalgia for the days when even the smallest of adventures felt like the greatest of triumphs.

Oh, the summers of yesteryears—when the sun hung lazily in the sky, and the world seemed to move at the pace of a gentle breeze. Among the many joys of those golden days, fishing was a cherished ritual, a pastime that bound me, my brother, and my cousin in a shared adventure. The streams, then, were not the murky, lifeless drains they have become today. No, they were crystalline veins of liquid glass, their waters so clear you could see the pebbles shimmering beneath the surface, each one a tiny jewel catching the sunlight.

We would set out with nothing more than a stick, a knife, and our boundless enthusiasm. Tying the knife to the stick, we fashioned our makeshift spears, ready to hunt for the silvery flashes of fish darting through the water. The process was as much about patience as it was about precision. And then, there was the magic of refraction—the way the water bent the light, making the fish appear just out of reach, a trick of nature that both frustrated and fascinated us. It was a lesson in physics disguised as play, though we were too young to realize it then.

The spring season, in particular, held a special allure. The elders would say that the fish tasted better in spring than in any other season. I never quite understood the logic behind this claim—was it the freshness of the water, the abundance of food, or some mystical quality of the season itself? Whatever the reason, it added an air of reverence to our springtime fishing expeditions, as though we were partaking in a tradition as old as the hills themselves.

But now, those streams are but a shadow of what they once were. The crystal-clear waters have turned murky, choked with dirt, drainage, diapers, and polythene—a grim testament to the toll of progress and neglect. The fish, if any remain, are hidden beneath layers of filth, their once-gleaming scales dulled by the pollution. The refraction of light, once a source of wonder, is now a distant memory, obscured by the grime of a world that has forgotten the beauty of simplicity.

Yet, in my mind's eye, the streams still run clear. I can still see the fish darting through the water, their movements swift and graceful. I can still feel the thrill of the hunt, the camaraderie of my brother and cousin, and the quiet satisfaction of a day spent in harmony with nature. Those summers may be gone, but they live on in the stories we tell and the memories we hold dear.

And as for the mystery of the springtime fish—perhaps some secrets are meant to remain unsolved, their magic preserved in the realm of memory. For in the end, it is not the logic that matters, but the joy, the wonder, and the connection to a time when the world was simpler, and the streams ran clear.

Yes, everything has changed. The streams that once sang with the laughter of children and the shimmer of fish now lie silent, their waters choked with the debris of our carelessness. What was once a crystal-clear ribbon of life has become a stagnant drain, a grim mirror reflecting the neglect of our surroundings—and perhaps, the neglect of our own hearts.

The children of today will never know the simple joy of fishing in those streams. They will never feel the thrill of spotting a fish darting through the water, never marvel at the way light bends and dances beneath the surface. The streams, now filled with dirt, plastic, and waste, have lost their magic. And with it, we have lost a piece of ourselves—a connection to nature, to tradition, to the innocence of a time when the world felt pure and full of wonder.

It is not just the streams that have changed; it is us. As we have dirtied our surroundings, so too have we dirtied our hearts. The things that once allured us—the sight of a fish breaking the surface, the sound of water trickling over stones, the smell of earth and greenery—no longer stir our souls. We have become desensitized, our senses dulled by the noise and clutter of modern life. The world moves faster now, and we with it, but at what cost?

The loss of those streams is more than an environmental tragedy; it is a metaphor for what we have sacrificed in the name of progress. We have traded the simplicity of nature for the complexity of convenience, the purity of clear waters for the pollution of our own making. And in doing so, we have distanced ourselves from the very essence of what it means to be alive—to feel, to wonder, to connect.

But perhaps there is still hope. Perhaps, in remembering those streams and the joy they brought, we can find the motivation to reclaim what we have lost. To clean not just our surroundings, but our hearts as well. To teach the next generation the value of nature, not as a resource to be exploited, but as a gift to be cherished.

The streams of my childhood may be gone, but their memory remains—a reminder of a time when the world was simpler, and our hearts were lighter. And though we cannot turn back time, we can choose to move forward with greater care, with greater respect for the earth and for ourselves. For in the end, the cleanliness of our surroundings is a reflection of the cleanliness of our hearts. And only when both are pure can we truly find peace.

The author is a Ganderbal-based columnist and X's @peermohdamir

## Finance Bill 2025 Offers Unprecedented Tax Relief; Collection Target Realistic: Sitharaman

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI**-Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the Finance Bill 2025 provides unprecedented tax relief, and the 13.14 per cent projected growth in personal income tax collection is "realistic" and supported by solid data.



and they have been increasing around 20 per cent year-on-year, the minister added.

"For the year 2025-26, the personal income tax collection is projected at Rs 13.6 lakh crore. The Revised Estimates for 2024-

25 is Rs 12.2 lakh crore. So, Rs 12.2 lakh crore is going to be Rs 13.6 lakh and this is done with a certain realistic calculation," Sitharaman said.



**So, the projected collections for income tax for 2025-26 are based on solid data."**

Replies to the discussions on Finance Bill 2025 in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman also said the customs duty rationalisation announced in the Budget will support manufacturing units, domestic value addition, promote exports, facilitate trade and also provide relief to the common people.

In the 2025-26 Budget, the government has hiked income tax rebate to Rs 12 lakh per annum from Rs 7 lakh earlier. For the salaried class, this rebate will be Rs 12.75 lakh per year after taking into account the standard deduction. The hike in I-T rebate will lead to tax foregone to the tune of Rs 1 lakh crore in FY26.

Sitharaman said the Budget also provides "marginal relief" under the Income Tax law for those taxpayers whose income exceeds Rs 12 lakh per annum by a small margin.

"The Finance Bill provides unprecedented tax relief to honour taxpayer... We have recognised the contribution of the middle class," she said.

Collections in personal income tax have shown considerable buoyancy in the last few years

cent dip after factoring in the Rs 1 lakh crore revenue foregone. "So, the projected collections for income tax for 2025-26 are based on solid data," Sitharaman added.

With regard to an amendment regarding the abolition of the 6 per cent Equalisation Levy on online advertisements, Sitharaman said it was done to address "uncertainty in the international economic conditions".

Talking about Customs tariff rationalisation, she said the Budget 2025 aims to boost domestic production and enhance export competitiveness by reducing duties on raw materials and inputs, making domestic products more cost-effective.

## 'New Income Tax Bill To Be Taken Up For Discussion In Monsoon Session'



Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI**-The new Income Tax Bill will be taken up for discussion in the monsoon session of Parliament, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Tuesday.

Replying to the discussions on the Finance Bill 2025 in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman said the new income tax bill, which was introduced in the House on February 13, is currently being vetted by the Select Committee.

The Select Committee has been mandated to submit its report by the first day of the next session of Parliament.

"...we will take it (new income tax bill) up in the monsoon session," Sitharaman said. The monsoon session of Parliament is usually convened in July and runs through August. Sitharaman also said the digital record will also be taken into account for the assessment on the new Income Tax Bill is passed.

The 1961 Income Tax Act permits the examination of books of account, physically kept or every manual record, which shows income expenditure.

Since the 1961 Act does not mention the digital most often it becomes contentious and people go to the court and seek protection from not sharing passcode, she said.

"So, digital becomes an issue. What prevails now with the gap and that gap is getting filled up in the new Income Tax Bill, which is before the select committee," she said.

The new bill gives tax officers powers to override the access code of computer systems and virtual digital space, including online trading and investment accounts as well as cloud servers, in search and seizure cases.

As per the Bill, virtual digital space encompasses any digital realm that allows users to interact, communicate and perform activities using computer systems, computer networks, and communication devices, and includes email servers, social media accounts, online investment accounts, trading accounts, banking account, etc; any website used for storing details of ownership of any asset; remote server or cloud servers; and digital application platforms.

## EPFO To Enable Instant PF Withdrawals Via UPI, ATMs By June

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR**: In a game-changing move for India's workforce, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is set to introduce instant Provident Fund (PF) withdrawals through Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and ATMs. The initiative, expected to roll out by May-end or June, promises seamless and faster access to retirement savings, empowering millions of salaried employees across the country, wire service ANI reported on Tuesday.



Additionally, the reforms will expand withdrawal options, enabling members to access funds for housing, education, marriage, and medical emergencies, apart from the existing provisions for illness.

### Faster Claims Processing & Digital Integration

The EPFO has been rapidly digitizing its services, integrating over 120 databases to streamline the withdrawal process. Dawra highlighted that 95% of claims are now automated, significantly reducing the processing time to just three days, compared to the previous weeks-long delays. Further enhancements are in the pipeline to simplify the claims process even more.

### Pensioners to Benefit from Expanded Access

Pensioners, too, are set to benefit from recent policy changes. Since December, 78 lakh pensioners have gained the ability to withdraw funds from any bank branch nationwide, eliminating previous geographical restrictions that required withdrawals from specific banks.

**PENSIONERS, TOO, ARE SET TO BENEFIT FROM RECENT POLICY CHANGES. SINCE DECEMBER, 78 lakh pensioners have gained the ability to withdraw funds from any bank branch nationwide, eliminating previous geographical restrictions that required withdrawals from specific banks.**

## Indian Carriers To Operate 25,610 Flights Per Week In Summer Schedule: DGCA

Press Trust Of India

**MUMBAI**-Indian carriers will operate a total of 25,610 flights per week during the summer schedule this year compared to 24,275 weekly flights in the same period last year, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation said on Tuesday.

This translates to a 5.50 per cent year-on-year growth in the total number of departures per week.

Compared to the ongoing winter schedule, which ends on March 29, the number of departures per week is up 2.41 per cent as the Indian carriers operated a total of 25,007 departures per week from 124 airports in the country, the DGCA said.

There are 25,610 departures per week which have been finalised to/from 129 airports as per the summer schedule of 2025 compared to 25,007 departures per week from 124 airports in the winter schedule of 2024, it said.



Out of these 129 airports, Ambikapur, Datia, Bidar, Porbandar, Pakyong, Rewa and Solapur are the new airports proposed by the scheduled airlines while operations from Azamgarh and Rupsi airports were suspended in the Summer Schedule 2025, according to the DGCA.

The summer schedule of 2025 will commence from March 29 and will last up to October 25 next year.

According to the 2025 summer schedule, as many as 11 airlines will be operating domestic services, with maximum weekly flights by IndiGo at 14,158 followed by Air India

at 4,310 and its low-cost arm Air India Express at 3,375.

Also while both Air India and Air India Express have increased their weekly departures by 66.67 per cent and 19.7 per cent, respectively compared to the ongoing winter schedule, IndiGo has seen just 3.41 per cent increase sequentially.

Akasa Air has seen a growth of 10.11 per cent at 1,089 services per week in the forthcoming summer schedule vis-a-vis winter schedule while SpiceJet will be operating fewer services at 1,250 weekly departures against 1,297 operated during the winter schedule, as per DGCA data.

## Govt Discontinues Gold Monetisation Scheme; Banks May Continue

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI**-The government has decided to discontinue the Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS) starting from Wednesday in view of the evolving market conditions, the finance ministry said.

However, the banks may continue their short term gold deposit schemes (1-3 years), the ministry said in the statement on Tuesday.

Till November 2024, approximately 31,164 kilograms of gold have been mobilised under GMS.

The Gold Monetisation Scheme was announced on September 15, 2015, with the objective to reduce country's reliance on the import of gold in the long run and mobilise gold held by households and institutions in the country to facilitate its use for productive purposes.

The GMS is comprised of 3 components -- Short Term Bank Deposit (1-3 years); Medium Term Government Deposit (5-7 years), and Long-Term Government Deposit (12-15 years).

"Based on the examination of the performance of the Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS) and evolving market conditions, it has been decided to discontinue the Medium Term and Long Term Government Deposit (MLTGD) components of the GMS w.e.f. March 26, 2025," the ministry said.

The Short-Term Bank Deposits (STBD) offered by the banks under GMS shall continue at



the discretion of the individual banks based on the commercial viability as assessed by them. The detailed guidelines of Reserve Bank in this regard shall follow.

The ministry further said that any gold deposits tendered at the designated Collection and Purity Testing Centre (CPTC) or GMS Mobilisation, Collection & Testing Agent (GMCTA) or the designated bank branches under the MLTGD components of GMS shall not be accepted with effect from March 26, 2025.

However, the existing deposits under MLTGD shall continue till redemption as per extant guidelines of GMS.

Of the total 31,164 kgs of gold till November 2024, Short term Gold Deposit accounted for 7,509 kg, Medium Term Gold Deposit (9,728 kg), and Long Term Gold Deposit (13,926 kg).

There were about 5,693 depositors who participated in GMS.

Gold prices have increased by Rs 26,530 or 41.5 per cent to Rs 90,450 per 10 grams (as of March 25, 2025) from Rs 63,920 per 10 grams on January 1, 2024.

## India, US Officials To Begin Talks For Proposed Trade Agreement From Today

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI**-Senior officials of India and the US will begin three-day talks on the proposed bilateral trade agreement here on Wednesday amid threats of reciprocal tariffs from the Trump-administration, an official said.

To formally start the negotiations on the pact, Assistant US Trade Representative for South and Central Asia Brendan Lynch, along with a team of officials, is here.

He will hold discussions with Additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce Rajesh Agrawal.

The two sides will finalise the contours, schedule of negotiations and terms of reference of the agreement during their deliberations, the official said.

The agreement would be finalised in two phases and the first phase is expected to focus on issues pertaining to goods trade.

India and the US are targeting to conclude the first phase or tranche of the agreement by fall of 2025 (September-October).

Normally in such trade pacts, two countries either significantly reduce or eliminate import duties on maximum (90-95 per cent) number of goods traded between them. Besides, they ease norms to promote trade in services and boost investments.

India has concluded such pacts with countries including



UAE, Australia and the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) bloc.

While the US has demanded greater market access in sectors like certain industrial goods, auto, wines and agriculture, India may look at duty cuts for labour intensive sectors like textiles.

The visit of the US team comes against the backdrop of President Donald Trump's plan to impose reciprocal tariffs on countries, including India, from April 2. He has on multiple forums stated that India imposes high tariffs on US goods.

Tariffs are import duties imposed and collected by the government and paid by the companies to bring foreign goods into a country.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal held talks with US Trade Representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer and US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick during his three-day visit to Washington earlier this month.

According to trade experts, there are uncertainties about how the Trump administration will impose the reciprocal duties.

## About 47 674 Direct Tax Defaulters With Dues Of Rs 5.91 Lakh Cr Untraceable: Govt

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI**-About 47,674 direct tax defaulters who owe over Rs 5.91 lakh crore to the government have been declared untraceable, Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

In case of indirect taxes, as of January 31, 2025, as many as 60,853 tax defaulters having dues of Rs 43,525 crore have been declared untraceable.

In a written reply to the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said, the measures taken by Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) to recover dues from the tax defaulters include making available databases like individual transaction statement and 360-degree profile generated by the department and those maintained by other agencies like FIU-IND to the field units for identification of assets for recovery.

Additionally, measures are taken to monitor the arrear demand collection/reduction in respect of top 5,000 cases of arrear demand in all the jurisdictions and giving targets to field formations for annual cash collection and reduction of the demand.

The measures taken by Central Board of Indirect taxes and Customs (CBIC) to recover dues from the tax defaulters include coordinating with Income Tax Department and various banks, attachment of bank accounts of defaulters, besides seeking information from Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU-IND).

Also, CBIC officers co-ordinate with state revenue authorities in all cases of arrears where defaulters are not traceable.

## 'Over 30k Taxpayers Declare Foreign Assets, Income Of Rs 30,300 Cr Due To Nudge Campaign'

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI**-Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said more than 30,000 taxpayers have revised their I-T returns or filed delayed returns and declared additional foreign assets and income of about Rs 30,300 crore.

"We carried out a 'nudge' campaign in which we nudged taxpayers to voluntarily disclose their Foreign Income and Assets. SMS and E-mails were sent to around 19,501 select taxpayers, asking them to review their Income Tax Returns filed for the 2024-25 based on information available to Income Tax of foreign deposits etc," she said in reply to Finance Bill 2025 in the Lok Sabha.

As a result of the campaign, she said out of 19,501 taxpayers, a total of 11,162 taxpayers revised their returns and filled out Schedule Foreign Assets Form, declaring total assets of Rs

11,259.29 crores disclosing foreign income of Rs 154.42 crore.

In addition to the above, she said 883 taxpayers revised their ITRs and corrected their status from resident to non-resident in the revised return for 2024-25.

Due to this outreach, there was a 'ripple effect', she said.

An additional 13,516 taxpayers declared foreign assets of Rs 7,564 crore and foreign income of approximately Rs 353 crore in their revised ITR for 2024-25.

"Cumulatively, this simple nudge resulted in the declaration of foreign assets worth Rs 29,208 crore and foreign income of Rs 1,089 crore (Rs 30,297 crore) in Schedule FA (foreign assets) by 30,161 taxpayers," she said.

So, the nudge campaign about property abroad has yielded good results with tax assessee disclosing their properties and also paying money due to them, she said.

## Rupee Falls 11 Paise To Settle At 85.72 Against US Dollar

Press Trust Of India

**MUMBAI**-The rupee snapped its seven-session rally and settled with a loss of 11 paise at 85.72 against the US dollar on Tuesday, as increased demand for dollars from importers, coupled with the greenback's recovery against major currencies, weighed on the rupee.

Forex traders said the Indian rupee halted its seven-day winning streak, reflecting a shift in market sentiment towards risk aversion.

However, mixed-to-positive domestic markets and foreign fund inflows cushioned the downside.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 85.59 and touched the high of 85.58 against the greenback during the day. The unit later turned volatile and hit the day's low of 85.84 before ending the session at 85.72 against the dollar, 11 paise lower from its previous closing level.

On Monday, the rupee appreciated 37 paise to close at 85.61 against the US dollar, wiping off all its losses in 2025. The domestic unit had added 154 paise in the last seven trading sessions.

"We expect the rupee to trade higher on foreign inflows and positive domestic equities. However, rising crude oil prices may cap sharp gains."

"Traders may take cues from CB consumer confidence, new home sale and Richmond manufacturing index data from the US. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 85.50 to 86," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan.

Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said the rupee halted its winning streak, reflecting a shift in market sentiment towards risk aversion.

"In the coming days, we could see some bargain buying from market participants as the financial year-end approaches. From a technical perspective, the USD/INR pair is supported at 85.40, with resistance at 86.25," he added.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading lower by 0.02 per cent at 104.24.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.68 per cent to USD 73.50 per barrel in futures trade.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose 32.81 points, or 0.04 per cent, to settle at 78,017.19, while the Nifty gained 10.30 points, or 0.04 per cent, to close at 23,668.65 points.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) purchased equities worth Rs 5,371.57 crore on a net basis on Tuesday, according to exchange data.



## 'No Reserved Admission Provision For Underprivileged In Private Schools'

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The government on Tuesday clarified that there is no provision for reservation of Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) children for admission in private schools under the Education Act 2002.

However, under Section 12 of the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, private unaided institutions and special category schools are required to provide free and compulsory education to at least 25 percent of children from disadvantaged and weaker sections.

Education Minister Sakina Itoo, responding to queries in the Legislative Assembly, stated, "There is no provision

for reservation to BPL and AAY children for admission in private schools as per the Education Act 2002 and SRO 123 of 2010, which has been amended over time."

She highlighted that the government provides free education up to the elementary level, including free textbooks, uniforms, and mid-day meals up to Class 8.

Regarding the Mid-Day Meal scheme, Itoo noted that cook-cum-helpers are engaged on an honorarium basis under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Ministry of Education, with a 90:10 (Centre:State) cost-sharing pattern. "Since the engagement of these helpers is temporary, there is no policy for their regularization," she said.

## In Seven Years, Over 5,400 Children Went Missing In J&K, Ladakh

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Data from 2016 to 2022 reveals that over 5,400 children were reported missing in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, with more than 1,500 still untraced.

In 2016, 1,070 children went missing, and 716 remained untraced. In 2017, 725 children were reported missing, with 506 still untraced. The figures for 2018 stood at 800 missing, with 384 still untraced, and in 2019,

661 children were reported missing, leaving 401 untraced.

The numbers remained concerning in subsequent years: 627 children went missing in 2020 (444 untraced), 723 in 2021 (483 untraced), and 821 in 2022, of whom 445 remain untraced. Ladakh also recorded missing children, with some still untraced.

Authorities have been urged to strengthen child protection mechanisms and intensify efforts to trace missing children.

## Lone Asks Speaker About Status Of His Resolutions

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Peoples Conference President and MLA Handwara, Sajad Gani Lone, on Tuesday sought an update from the Speaker regarding his resolutions on Article 370 and the repatriation of PSA detainees lodged outside J&K.

Lone argued that, under Rule 179 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the J&K Legislative Assembly, he was entitled to be informed about the status of both admitted and disallowed resolutions.

In response, Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather assured him that he would be informed in due course.

## Congress MLA Protests Over Gaza Killings

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Congress MLA Irfan Hafeez Lone staged a protest outside the J&K Assembly complex on Tuesday, condemning the killing of civilians in Gaza.

Carrying a placard that read, "Innocent Killings in Palestine is Murder of Humanity," Lone, who is also a human rights activist, called for solidarity with Palestinians and

urged the global community to intervene against the ongoing violence.

"The massacre of innocent civilians in Palestine must stop. We must raise our voices against this humanitarian crisis," Lone stated.

The protest drew support from fellow legislators and civil society members who echoed similar sentiments on the need for global action.

## Health Secretary Cracks Down On Private Practice During Duty Hours

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The Health and Medical Education Department has issued strict directives against doctors engaging in private practice during official working hours.

In a circular issued by the Secretary of Health and Medical Education, all Principals of Medical Colleges, Medical Superintendents of Associated Hospitals, Chief Medical Officers, and Medical Superintendents of District Hospitals have been instructed to ensure that doctors remain available at

their designated hospitals during working hours.

The circular directs institution heads to monitor attendance and investigate complaints about doctors engaging in private practice during duty hours. "Complaints or reports must be promptly investigated, and appropriate action should be taken. Surprise inspections and periodic reviews will be conducted to ensure compliance," it stated.

Any violation will be treated as "serious misconduct" and will attract strict disciplinary action under applicable service rules.

## '249-Bed Maternity Hospital In Anantnag Approved By Screening Committee'

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The Jammu and Kashmir government announced Tuesday that the proposed 249-bedded Maternity and Child Care Hospital in Anantnag has been approved by the Building Screening Committee and is currently undergoing Authentication, Authorization, and Accounting (AAA).

Responding to a question from MLA Peerzada Mohammad Syed, Health and Medical Education Minister Sakina Itoo stated that the Rehmat-e-Alam hospital building was deemed unsafe for hospital use following a safety audit by IIT Jammu.

Itoo explained that the estimated cost of strengthening the current structure exceeds that of constructing a new facility, making reinforcement economically unfeasible.

**"The proposed hospital, costing Rs 286 crore, has been cleared and is in the process of AAA,"**

she said. She further clarified that the department is committed to the safety audit report and that no further audits will be conducted.

Responding to MLA Vijay Kumar's inquiry, Itoo said that the department is focused on consolidating and strengthening existing health facilities, and currently, there are no plans to open new health facilities.

## Will Deliver On Free Electricity Promise: CM Omar

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday said the National Conference government is promise-bound to implement all its election promises including giving 200 units of free electricity to all households falling under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) category.

Abdullah said this in the legislative assembly while replying to a clubbed question by Peoples Conference's Sajad Gani Lone, BJP's Narinder Singh Raina and independent Shabir Ahmad Kullay.

The chief minister was at his witty best while informing the House that the government will provide free electricity to all AAY households, integrating the scheme with the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijlee Yojna (PMSGMBY).

"...our concern is milk and which cow gives us milk does not mean anything for us. Our aim is to give 200 units of free electricity to the people and it will be done...we will ensure that there is not much impact on the exchequer," Abdullah said.

The chief minister said he had clarified thrice on the subject in this House - during the discussion on lieutenant governor's address, budget presentation and discussion on grants.

"All the promises in our manifesto will be fulfilled. We are promise-bound to the people. We were neither playing with the truth at that time (during election campaigning) nor today (in the government)," he said.

However, Abdullah said the promises would be imple-



mented in a structured manner. "It is evident that the first preference will be given to the most deserving, the poorest of the poor. We are starting from the AAY category and its ambit will be extended subsequently. This is just the beginning."

"You are raising the apprehension that it won't run but it is yet to start. Let it commence first and then if it fails to work, we will change the scheme. Our aim is to give electricity to the people," he said.

Lone, a former minister, in his supplementary demanded a direct reply whether the government is going to provide free electricity to every household, saying the way it started, 50 years are needed to fulfil the promises of providing 200 units of free power to 25 lakh households.

"I am asking him (CM) what is your name and he is replying what is there in the name because everyone has a name. I want a one word answer, yes or no and also when (you are planning to give 200 free units)," the Peoples Conference legislator from Handwara said.

The chief minister in his response said "my english probably is not better than Sajad sahib, and that is why I do not use much English...two questions were posed, whether we are giving free electricity

and when, and so the answer cannot be in one word. How to provide 200 free units of electricity is our responsibility and we will see how to fulfill this".

Earlier, replying to the main question, Abdullah said the government shall provide 200 units of free electricity to all AAY households, integrated with the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijlee Yojna (PMSGMBY).

"The proposal aims to benefit all households falling under the AAY category by providing them with free electricity up to 200 units, thereby alleviating their financial burden and improving their quality of life," he said, adding this would be done through the RESCO, Utility-Led Aggregation model or any other financially viable model to benefit them.

Regarding electricity bills, Abdullah said the current tariff for domestic consumers ranges from Rs 2.30 per unit (for up to 200 units per month) to Rs 4.35 per unit, which is among the lowest in the country.

For the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category, the tariff is even lower at Rs 1.40 per unit for consumption up to 30 units per month.

In comparison, the average cost of power supply is around Rs 7 per unit. As such, there are no excessive bills charged to consumers, the chief minister said, adding metered consumers are billed based on actual consumption, while unmetered consumers are billed on a flat-rate basis, which is determined by their sanctioned load.

Further, any billing-related complaints are promptly examined and addressed as per the electricity supply code, he said.

**6 ALL THE PROMISES IN OUR MANIFESTO WILL BE FULFILLED.** We are promise-bound to the people. We were neither playing with the truth at that time during election campaigning nor today in the government.

## Fire Destroys 21 Houses, Leaves 33 Families Homeless in Baramulla

Observer News Service

**BARAMULLA:** A devastating fire that broke out in a congested locality of old town Baramulla on Monday night gutted over 21 houses, leaving 33 families homeless.

Officials said the blaze spread rapidly, prompting an immediate response from locals, Fire and Emergency Services personnel, J&K Police, and other volunteers who worked tirelessly to douse the flames. After hours of relentless efforts, the fire was finally brought under control. Although no casualties were reported, property worth crores was destroyed.

Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, along with the Deputy Inspector General of Police and Senior Superintendent of Police, visited the affected area and met the victims. The DC announced immediate relief of Rs 50,000 for families whose houses were fully damaged and Rs 10,000 for those with partially damaged homes,



sourced from the Red Cross. He also stated that Rs 1.30 lakh per affected family would soon be sanctioned from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) to aid rehabilitation.

"We are committed to supporting the victims of this unfortunate incident. Immediate assistance has been sanctioned, and further steps will be taken to ensure their rehabilitation," the DC assured. He also directed the Municipal Council Baramulla to enroll the affected families under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana

(PMAY) for housing assistance.

The role of local youth, civil society members, and traders in firefighting efforts and assisting in evacuation was widely appreciated. Many volunteered alongside the Fire and Emergency Services, preventing further devastation.

Civil society groups and traders have urged the government to expedite the rehabilitation process and provide comprehensive assistance, including compensation for those who lost their livelihoods in the blaze.

## Cath Lab Inaugurated In SSH Jammu

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** A new state-of-the-art Cath Laboratory was inaugurated at Super Specialty Hospital on Tuesday.

The facility was inaugurated by Sakina Itoo, Honourable for Health and Medical Education, School Education, Higher Education and Social Welfare, J&K UT, Arvind Gupta, MLA Jammu West and Dr Syed Abid Rashed Shah (IAS) Secretary to Government, H&ME Department, J&K at a cost of Rs 12.5 crore.

This cath lab enhances services in areas of diagnostic and interventional procedures like ROTA-Ablation, IVUS, pericardial Transesophageal echocardiography (TEE), Transesophageal ultrasound, ASD and PDA closure besides the routinely done cardiac procedures like coronary angiography, coronary angioplasty, Temporary Pacemakers, Permanent Pacemakers, Cardiac resynchronization Therapy Pacemaker (CRTP) and Cardiac



resynchronization Therapy with Defibrillator (CRTD) and pacing, a statement issued reads.

This new facility will primarily cater to patients requiring emergency cardiac intervention. It is pertinent to mention that these advancements will transform cardiac care in J&K UT providing timely and life-saving interventions.

Principal Medical College,

Dr Ashutosh Gupta, Medical Superintendent SSH Jammu Dr Rehana Khurshid, Deputy Medical Superintendent SSH Jammu Dr Sanyogita Soodan, Head of Cardiology Department Dr Sushil Sharma, Prof. Dr Dharminder Kumar, Dr. Sanjeev Bhat and other eminent cardiologists, faculty members and administrative staff were also present on the occasion.

## Air Quality Regularly Monitored In Khrew, Pulwama, Khonmoh: Govt

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The Jammu and Kashmir government reported on Tuesday that air quality is regularly monitored across the Union Territory, with Khrew currently classified as moderately polluted.

Responding to a question from MLA Justice Hasnain Masoodi, the Minister for Forest, Environment, and Ecology stated that the J&K Pollution Control Committee is monitoring air quality in Khrew, Pulwama, and Khonmoh to mitigate risks to human life, agriculture, and livestock.

The data indicate that Khrew's air quality falls under the "Moderately Polluted" category. The committee has taken legal action against 86 default-

ing industries, imposing environmental compensation and ordering unit closures.

The minister also noted that cement plants must install On-line Continuous Emission Monitoring Systems (OCEMS), with real-time data uploaded to the Central Pollution Control Board server. Additionally, the Health Department is exploring initiatives under the National Programme on Climate Change and Human Health (NPCCCH) to strengthen preventive, diagnostic, and treatment services at PHC Khrew.

The government has also imposed a moratorium on establishing new air-polluting industries, including cement plants, stone crushers, brick kilns, hot mix plants, and mining blocks, until air quality improves.

## Over 1,800 Drug Smuggling Cases In Three Years: Centre

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR, MAR 25:** The Government of India on Tuesday informed the Parliament that Jammu & Kashmir recorded over 1,800 cases of drug smuggling between 2022 and 2024,

with cannabis being the most commonly trafficked substance.

Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai, in response to a question in the Lok Sabha, stated that J&K registered 592 cases of cannabis smuggling in 2022, which increased to 641 in 2023 before slightly declining to 617 in 2024.

The reply also revealed that 765, 865, and 813 alleged drug peddlers were arrested in 2022, 2023, and 2024, respectively, in J&K.

Meanwhile, in Ladakh, two cases of cannabis smuggling were reported in 2022, while no new cases were registered in 2023 and 2024.

The data, provided by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), does not include drug-wise conviction figures or gender-wise details of the accused. The Ministry of Home Affairs stated that drug enforcement agencies continue to take action against trafficking networks in the region.

## No Plans For Veterinary College In Chenab Valley: Health Minister

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The Jammu and Kashmir government has no plans to establish a dedicated veterinary college in Chenab Valley, Agriculture Production Minister confirmed on Tuesday.

Responding to MLA Arjun Singh Raju's query, the minister stated that during the lumpy skin disease outbreak in 2022, veterinarians and para-veterinarians successfully controlled the situation. BVSc students from SKUAST Jammu and SKUAST Kashmir were deployed to assist.

"There is no proposal for a dedicated veterinary college in Chenab Valley under consideration," he said.

The establishment of new veterinary centres involves the creation of posts, which has been restricted by the government for the current fiscal year.

However, veterinary services for remote villages in the Ramban constituency are being provided through two Mobile Veterinary Units accessed via a toll-free number.

Meanwhile, Health and Medical Education Minister Sakina Itoo stated that the freezing of drug peddlers' assets falls under the Home Department's jurisdiction. She confirmed that three government-recognized rehabilitation centres are currently functional in Rajouri, Kulgam, and Bandipora, operated by NGOs.

Additionally, three Outreach and Drop-in Centres (ODICs) are running in Jammu, Srinagar, and Kupwara. The government has submitted a proposal for establishing three more rehabilitation centres in Udhampur, Reasi, and Ramban to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

## DYSS Budgam Organizes Plantation Drive



Observer News Service

**BUDGAM:** The Department of Youth Services and Sports (DYSS), Budgam, organized a Plantation Drive under the banner "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" across educational institutions in Soibugh, Charar-e-Sharief, Magam, and Khansahib

zones. Zonal Physical Education Officers and other DYSS officials actively participated, promoting environmental awareness and afforestation. The initiative aimed to instill eco-consciousness among students and communities, reinforcing the importance of a greener future.

## Over 7.6 Lakh Soil Samples Tested In J&K, Ladakh

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** A total of 7,62,708 soil samples have been tested in Jammu & Kashmir, while 2,298 samples have been tested in Ladakh to date under the Government of India's Soil Health and Fertility Scheme (SHFS), the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare informed the Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

The scheme, aimed at improving soil health and issuing Soil Health Cards (SHCs) to farmers, follows a grid-based soil sampling approach—2.5 hectares in irrigated areas and 10 hectares in rain-fed areas. The SHCs provide farmers with detailed soil analysis, helping them use fertilizers efficiently and maintain soil fertility, a response, reads.

"Jammu & Kashmir has witnessed a significant number of soil samples tested, contributing to improved agricultural practices in the region. However, Ladakh has recorded a comparatively lower number of soil tests, indicating the need for expanded soil testing facilities in the cold desert region."

Meanwhile, the government has approved 25 new mobile soil testing laboratories across five states in 2024-25, but no such sanction has been made for J&K or Ladakh.

The Soil Health and Fertility Scheme continues to be a key initiative in promoting sustainable farming and precision agriculture across the country, with farmers benefiting from scientific soil health management strategies.

## J&K Assembly

in seven years, allocating Rs 1.12 lakh crore for 2025-26. He described it as a roadmap for economic growth and a reflection of the people's aspirations.

While introducing the bills, the chief minister said that the bill authorises the payment and appropriation of sums from the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir's consolidated fund for the services of the fiscal years 2025-26 and 2024-25.

"The Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly enacts this bill in the seventy-sixth year of the Republic of India, exercising powers vested under the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019," it stated.

The bill authorises the expenditure of Rs 1.40 lakh crore from the consolidated fund of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir for the fiscal year 2025-26.

It specifies that sums not exceeding those listed in column 3 of the schedule, amounting to a total of Rs 1.40 lakh crore will be used to cover various expenses during the fiscal year 2025-26 for services specified in column 2 of the schedule.

Furthermore, the bill states that the sums authorised by this Act to be paid and applied from the consolidated fund of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir shall be appropriated for the services and purposes detailed in the schedule for the said year.

As per the recommendation of the appropriation bill for the year 2025-26, the Lieutenant Governor under the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, recommended the introduction and consideration of the bill by the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly.

"This bill is introduced under Section 43 read with Sections 41 and 44 of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, to authorise the appropriation from the Consolidated Fund of Jammu and Kashmir of the funds needed to cover expenses charged to the consolidated fund and grants made by the Legislative Assembly for the expenditure of the Jammu and Kashmir Government for the fiscal year 2025-26, as specified in the bill," according to the bill.

While presenting the budget on March 7, Abdullah expressed that J&K stands on the brink of a new era of peace and prosperity, with a semblance of normalcy returning after over three-and-a-half decades of turmoil.

He commended Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for their support across various sectors.

The assembly also passed the Jammu and Kashmir goods and services tax (Amendment) bill, 2025, by voice vote. This bill, also introduced by the Chief Minister, aims to align the Union Territory's GST Act with recent amendments made to the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017.

This was the first bill of the budget session by the National Conference-led government, introduced on behalf of the Chief Minister.

## This Is Endorsement

As Lone agitated over the move, the Speaker told him the amendment wouldn't ratify status and was brought to align J&K's GST law with Central Goods & Services Tax Act.

"We were not consulted when Article 370 and statehood was snatched from us. Why are we being consulted now to ratify UT status?" Lone asked.

"It would be an endorsement of conversion of Jammu & Kashmir into a UT. I wouldn't be part of this sin," Lone said angrily and walked out.

PDP's Waheed-ur-Rehman Para also expressed reservation over the bill.

In the amendments proposed by NC-led government in the GST law, the words "Government of Jammu & Kashmir" has been replaced with "Government of Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir."

Responding to the opposition's objections, CM Omar Abdullah accused them of playing to galleries and said that Jammu & Kashmir would remain a UT until Parliament restores its statehood.

"It is unfortunate that we are doing everything as per WhatsApp University. This WhatsApp forward received by my colleague (Para) was also received by all of us. An impression is being created through this WhatsApp message that J&K will convert into a UT if this bill is passed," CM Omar said.

He questioned Lone why he didn't stage a walkout when he repeatedly mentioned "consolidated fund of Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir" during passage of Appropriation Bills.

"When we passed the Finance bill, I repeatedly mentioned 'Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir' regarding consolidated funds. Why didn't Sajad Lone Sahab stage a walkout then? All of us took oath under the Union Territory and fought elections under it. Would anything change if we would expunge the word 'UT' from the bill? It wouldn't change anything," CM Omar said, accusing the opposition of show off for cameras and said that it wouldn't change anything.

Omar said that he is vigorously fighting for restoration of J&K's statehood. "We passed a resolution in the first cabinet meeting and submitted it to the Prime Minister," he said, adding that he also raised the demand of statehood with the Prime Minister during a function at Sonamarg.

He added that he raises the demand for restoration of Statehood whenever he goes to Delhi.

## NC, BJP Spar

Jammu as they marched towards the assembly, the CM's residence, and the civil secretariat, demanding the release of their wages and regularisation.

The daily wagers have been on strike for the last four days.

As the Question Hour concluded in the assembly on Tuesday, Leader of Opposition and BJP leader Sunil Sharma brought up the issue, demanding that the government holds talks with the daily workers employed by the government and end the strike.

"Since yesterday, I have been raising the issue of the daily wagers' strike and the water crisis caused by it. But the government has failed to respond. The government seems to be behaving in an arrogant manner," Sharma said.

This triggered a visible angry response from

the treasury benches, prompting a counter from the opposition, most of whom stood up in reaction.

National Conference MLAs also resorted to slogans against the BJP, accusing them of failing to resolve the issue during "their 10-year rule" -- referring to the PDP-BJP coalition government and the President's rule that was imposed after the BJP withdrew support.

Central rule continued after the erstwhile state was bifurcated into two Union territories -- Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh -- in 2019. The National Conference and its allies formed the government in October 2024 after assembly polls were held again in the Union territory of J&K.

Amid noisy scenes in the assembly during Tuesday's proceedings, Bills were introduced and passed by the chief minister.

Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather tried to bring order to the House but the verbal duels continued. Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary said the Omar Abdullah government was serious about resolving the daily wagers' grievances and that a committee had been formed for this purpose.

The BJP, he said, failed to resolve the issue in the past 10 years.

Angered by this, BJP MLA Sham Lal Sharma asserted that matters concerning the Lieutenant Governor cannot be discussed in the House as per rules. The LG administration handled affairs of the UT after J&K's bifurcation.

Congress and PDP MLAs remained mostly silent during the back and forth between the BJP and the NC.

The speaker then announced that the CM would make a statement on the issue, "The House is in action today. It was peaceful until now. If we were not interested in resolving their issue, we would not have formed the committee. We are surprised that protests are taking place even after the committee's formation," he told the House.

Speaking in the House, Abdullah said he would look into the reasons behind the protests. "You are admitting that there was injustice against them, which means you accept that nothing was done for them in the last 10 years. We have taken the lead to resolve it," he said.

The CM took a dig at BJP MLA Sham Lal Sharma, telling him that as a minister in the previous government, he was aware of the steps taken to resolve the issue.

"A committee has been formed under the chief secretary. I want to request the daily wagers to call off their strike and talk to the committee. Once the recommendations come, we will implement them," Abdullah said.

Earlier on Thursday, the CM said a panel has been formed to address the issue of regularisation of daily wagers in the Union Territory, which will submit its recommendations to the government in six months.

After around 30 minutes of disruption in the proceedings, BJP MLAs staged a walkout from the House.

## 3 Hurriyat Affiliates

the separatist amalgam and announced banding of the group with immediate effect.

While the JKPM is headed by Shahid Saleem, the JKDPM is led by Shafi Reshi, an advocate.

In a statement, Saleem said he has distanced himself and his organisation from the separatist ideology, and vowed allegiance to India and the Constitution.

"I am a loyal citizen of India and both my organisation and I owe allegiance to the Constitution of India," he said in the statement to the vernacular press in Srinagar.

Welcoming Saleem and Reshi's decisions, Union Home Minister Shah said this step will strengthen Bharat's unity and asserted the unifying policies of the Modi government have "tossed" separatism out of Jammu and Kashmir.

"Two organisations associated with the Hurriyat have announced the severing of all ties with separatism. I welcome this step towards strengthening Bharat's unity and urge all such groups to come forward and shed separatism once and for all," he wrote on X.

Shah said it was a big victory for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of building a developed, peaceful and unified Bharat.

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) is an amalgam of various separatist parties in Jammu and Kashmir. Most of its constituents have been banned by the government.

Saleem said in his communication that he and his organisation have no sympathy for the ideology of APHC, which "has not been able to address the legitimate aspirations and grievances of the people of Jammu and Kashmir."

"I am a loyal citizen of India. My organisation and I are not affiliated with any organisation or association having an agenda that goes directly or indirectly against India and its interests. Both my organisation and I owe allegiance to the Constitution of India," Saleem said.

In March 2019, when IAS officer Shah Faesal quit bureaucracy and launched his own party by the identical name and style, Saleem had taken strong exception, saying his JKPM was launched on April 4, 2000, at the Press Club in Jammu, and it became a constituent member of the APHC.

Faesal later withdrew his resignation and was reinstated to the service. He was posted as deputy secretary in the tourism department in 2022.

In his media communication on Tuesday, Saleem wrote, "I, Shahid Saleem, Chairman JKPM do hereby solemnly declare... My organisation as well as I have no connection or affiliation with either APHC(G) or APHC (A) or any of their constituents or any other entity pursuing a separatist or similar such agenda.

"My organisation and I do not have any inclination or sympathy for the ideology of APHC, which has not been able to address the legitimate aspirations and grievances of people of Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

Saleem warned that any use of his name or that of his organisation with the APHC of its factions or constituents or any other entity pursuing a separatist or similar agenda will be liable to legal action.

Sartaj, who had previously worked as the Jammu coordinator of the Hurriyat Conference and was booked under the Public Safety Act on multiple occasions, came out with a public notice, almost identical to the one issued by

Saleem.

However, he also added that his organisation "being un-operational since decade is also bandaged with immediate effect".

## Delhi HC Rejects

strong enough to keep him in line.

"I speak for myself that I am not worried that he will not obey the law despite the division bench saying don't do this or that," Justice Anup Jairam Bhambhani said during the hearing.

After submissions by the NIA and the counsel for Rashid, a bench of Justice Chandra Dhari Singh and Justice Bhambhani said it would pass a detailed order.

The high court said the NIA's apprehensions can be dealt with by imposing appropriate conditions on Rashid in case he is allowed to attend the Parliament session, which will go on till April 4, while remaining in custody.

While Rashid's plea had sought custody parole to attend Parliament, his counsel on Tuesday said they are only urging for permission to attend the House in custody and assured the court that the MP would obey the conditions and order of the court in letter and spirit.

The bench said the courts and the Lok Sabha Speaker are not powerless and one should not undermine the position and the power of the Speaker and of the Secretary General to enforce discipline inside Parliament.

"We are not granting him bail here. He is in custody, we are sending our officers with him throughout, except where they are not allowed."

"Then he is in the confines of the highest temple of democracy, he is inside Parliament. At least don't undermine the position and the power of the Lok Sabha Speaker and of the Secretary General to enforce discipline inside Parliament. You (NIA) say no he will not be in control. How?" Justice Bhambhani said.

As the NIA counsel urged the court to see the role attributed to the accused in the case, the bench said, "We do not for a moment undermine the seriousness and the heinousness of the allegations against him. Be sure of that. National security is above everything, no question about that."

The court asked the NIA to suggest additional conditions, which it feels appropriate to be imposed on Rashid.

"Can we take special permission from the secretary general or the Speaker of the Lok Sabha that one prison official or police official in plain clothing will remain with him even inside the Parliament," it said, adding that Rashid will have to undertake that he will remain true to his oath as a parliamentarian.

The court added, "There is a single judge's order (earlier granting custody parole to Rashid to attend Parliament for two days). If you (NIA) have any further apprehension, then please tell us. We will include it as additional conditions but be confident of the court's powers and the speaker's powers. Don't come from a point of fear that he will do this or that. Nothing will happen. We are there... You are telling us to ignore the fact that he is an elected representative of the people".

The bench also told Rashid's counsel that he should not do anything that would become a cause of concern for the State to think that he did not abide by the conditions.

Rashid's counsel said he was not asking for custody parole and only urging to be allowed to attend the session. He assured the court that the MP would obey the conditions and order of the court in letter and spirit.

Facing strong opposition from the NIA, Rashid's counsel argued that there are marshals in Parliament and the moment he would switch on his mike to utter anything, his mike would be taken away and he would be thrown out of the House.

To this, Justice Singh said, "Then it will become a national issue that his mike has been taken away and he has been thrown out by the marshals".

Rashid's counsel told the high court that he would soon challenge a trial court's March 19 order dismissing his regular bail plea in the case.

Rashid, who is facing trial under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in a 2017 terror funding case, has challenged a March 10 trial court order refusing him custody parole or interim bail to attend Lok Sabha proceedings till April 4.

In the reply filed to the appeal on March 17, the NIA said Rashid couldn't be allowed to use his status as MP to "get away from rigours of imprisonment".

The NIA argued that Rashid could neither be granted interim bail nor allowed custody parole as he had no enforceable right to attend Parliament session while in lawful custody.

Rashid's counsel earlier urged the high court to permit him to attend the ongoing Parliament session on custody parole, akin to a previous two-day reprieve granted to him.

Custody parole entails a prisoner being escorted by armed police personnel to the place of visit.

The Baramulla MP, who defeated Omar Abdullah in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, is facing trial in a terror funding case with allegations that he funded separatists and terror groups in Jammu and Kashmir.

He has been lodged in Delhi's Tihar Jail since 2019 after the NIA arrested him in the 2017 terror-funding case. He was granted interim bail for one month in September last year to campaign in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly election.

According to the NIA's FIR, Rashid's name cropped up during the interrogation of businessman and co-accused Zahoore Watali.

After being chargesheeted in October 2019, a special NIA court framed charges against Rashid and others in March 2022 under Sections 120B (criminal conspiracy), 121 (waging war against the government), and 124A (sedition) of the Indian Penal Code and for offences relating to terrorist acts and terror funding under UAPA.

## BJP Launches

Jamal Siddiqui, who rolled out the initiative, said similar kits will be distributed among economically weaker members of other minority communities during their festivals under the 'Saugat-e-Modi' programme next month.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi always says that he is the guardian of 140 crore Indians and he takes part in all festivals. He participates in Christmas, Easter, Baisakhi and sends 'chadar' for offering at Nizamuddin Dargah and Ajmer Sharif," he said.

"So we decided that we will give kits with food to our brothers and sisters, who are poor. Each kit will also have a cloth for our sisters," he told PTL.

Siddiqui said as many as 32,000 BJP Minority Morcha workers, including office bearers of its state, district and mandal level units have been engaged to implement the programme.

"Our karyakartas will meet people (Muslims) in their respective areas across the country and give them kits, greeting Eid Mubarak on behalf of the prime minister," he said.

"The programme was launched in Delhi and other states in the country today. We have set a target that each of our karyakartas should reach out to at least 100 people with Saugat-e-Modi kits under the programme, greeting Eid Mubarak on behalf of the prime minister," he added.

Siddiqui said the programme will continue beyond Eid to greet members of other minority communities, including Sikhs and Christians, on their respective festivals like Baisakhi and Easter to be celebrated next month.

## 7.81 Lakh SIMs,

for immediate reporting of financial frauds and stopping siphoning off funds by fraudsters. So far, around Rs 4,386 crore have been saved in more than 13.36 lakh complaints," Kumar said in the reply.

As part of the 14C, a national cybercrime reporting portal (<https://cybercrime.gov.in>) has been launched to enable public to report incidents pertaining to all types of digital crimes, with special focus on crimes against women and children, the minister said.

He said the crimes reported on this portal, their conversion into FIRs and subsequent action are handled by law enforcement agencies in the states and Union Territories concerned.

The minister said a toll-free helpline number -- 1930 -- has been operationalised to assist in lodging complaints.

## Kathua Search

was launched by a Special Operations Group of police after they got intelligence about the presence of terrorists inside a 'dhok' -- a local term for an enclosure -- in a nursery in Sanyal village, approximately five km from the International Border with Pakistan, officials said.

The hiding terrorists launched a barrage of fire at the police party, leading to an intense gunfight that lasted for more than half an hour, they said.

Reinforcements were swiftly dispatched, as a manhunt was launched to apprehend the terrorists, believed to have infiltrated on Saturday via either the ravine route or through a newly created tunnel.

There has been no report of any casualty in the initial firing and the area was kept under a tight security cordon throughout the night before the security forces moved in at the crack of dawn, officials said.

Though there has been no fresh contact with the terrorists, the search parties on Monday found four loaded magazines of M4 carbine, two grenades, a bulletproof jacket, sleeping bags, track suits, several packets of eatables, and separate polythene bags, the contents of which will be known only when they are opened by the bomb disposal squad, they said.

The police chief, who along with Inspector General of Police, Jammu Zone, Bhim Sen Tuti is camping in Kathua, was seen leading from the front deep inside the forested area, holding an AK assault rifle and directing the operation from the ground.

One of the inputs suggested that two groups of at least five terrorists each infiltrated on Saturday. The local villagers, meanwhile, organized a community kitchen for the security personnel and the mediapersons at the outer cordon.

According to officials, some village women collecting firewood reported seeing around five terrorists who had sought refuge in the expansive nursery area.

A seven-year-old girl sustained minor injuries when a stray bullet passed close to her arm. She was shifted to a local hospital.

A 48-year-old villager, Anita Devi, said heavily armed terrorists caught hold of her husband when they were at the nursery to collect firewood.

"The terrorists held my husband at gunpoint and asked me to come near. But my husband signalled me to run and I ran. One of the terrorists tried to stop me but I started shouting, which attracted the attention of two more people who were cutting grass," Anita Devi said.

She said the incident occurred around 4.30 pm on Sunday, and they all returned home and informed police. They were wearing beards and commando dresses, Anita Devi said.

## MeT Issues

from March 28 to April 3, the MeT said.

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# IPL 2025: KKR, RR Eye Batting, Bowling Overhaul To Bounce Back

Press Trust of India

**GUWAHATI:** Outmuscled in their previous matches, title-holders Kolkata Knight Riders and Rajasthan Royals will eye a quick course correction in ever aspect when they face each other in an IPL match here on Wednesday.

The Knight Riders were beaten by seven wickets by Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the tournament-opener while the Royals were given a 44-run drubbing by Sunrisers Hyderabad.

The common theme in those defeats was how the seemingly powerful batting and bowling units of KKR and RR failed to fire.

While the Rajasthan outfit might offer the excuse of playing on a Hyderabad shirtfront



for the malfunction of their bowling unit, the Kolkata side do not have any such cover.

Apart from Sunil Narine, none of the KKR bowlers were able to contain free-flowing RCB batters, and in that the demystifi-

cation of mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy might just worry them a bit.

Even on an Eden Gardens pitch that had some grip, Chakravarthy was given a towellling by Phil Salt and Virat Kohli.

The KKR camp now hopes that the spinner will find his stride on a Guwahati pitch that generally has some bite.

They will also keep an eye on the fitness of Anrich Nortje, who is recovering from a back strain. If the South African gets a green signal from the physios, then he will walk in for Spencer Johnson.

Similarly, KKR's middle-order batting crumbled spectacularly after skipper Ajinkya Rahane and Narine gave them a blistering start, eventually settling for a sub-par score.

Their batting pivots such as Venkatesh Iyer and Andre Russell got out, playing pre-determined cross-batted shots, and KKR will hope that they will show more game awareness in Guwahati.

KKR will hope that the Rajasthan bowlers would once again struggle to find their groove here.

The likes of Jofra Archer, who bowled the most expensive spell in the history of IPL against SRH, Fazalhaq Farooqi and Maheesh Theekshana were rudderless against the onslaught of Travis Head and Ishan Kishan. Archer had leaked 76 runs from his overs at the Uppal.

But they have an opportunity in Guwahati to regain their form. It will also be a blot on stand-in skipper Riyan Parag who, at times, looked perplexed on the field about the decisions to be made.

The Rahul Dravid-coached side will eye sharper and more intuitive leadership from Parag against KKR.

Match starts at 7.30 pm.

## Short TAKES

### International Cricket Stadium Not A J&K Govt Project: CM

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday clarified that the proposed International Cricket Stadium at Bajalta in Jammu was not a project initiated by the J&K government.

"The proposal for the cricket stadium was initiated by the J&K Cricket Association but did not materialize. It was not a project of J&K government," Chief Minister said while intervening during the Question Hour in the Legislative Assembly.

Earlier, replying to the main question raised by Sham Lal Sharma, Minister for Youth Services and Sports, Satish Sharma, said that there was no such proposal by the Youth Services & Sports Department for establishment of International Cricket Stadium at Bajalta in Jammu.

The Minister informed the House that playfields are available in various schools in Jammu East Constituency wherein sports activities are being carried throughout the year by the staff of Youth Services & Sports Department.

### ICC Chairman Jay Shah Meets FIFA Chief Gianni Infantino

ICC chairman Jay Shah recently met FIFA president Gianni Infantino during the 144th IOC Session at Costa Navarino in Greece.

Infantino, who heads football's world global governing body, posted about the meeting on Instagram.

"It was my pleasure to meet ICC Chair and a fantastic administrator Jay Shah! Having visited India, including during the 2023 ICC Cricket World Cup, I am aware of the incredible passion the people there have for cricket and the outstanding work Jay Shah has done to further grow the game," Infantino wrote.

"I wish you the very best in your mission and look forward to working together and collaborating to make cricket even more global."

### Ex-FIFA Chief Sepp Blatter, Platini Cleared In Corruption Case

Former FIFA president Sepp Blatter and France soccer great Michel Platini were both cleared of corruption charges by a Swiss court on Tuesday, two and a half years after they were first acquitted of the offences.

The pair, once among the most powerful figures in global soccer, were cleared of fraud at the Extraordinary Appeals Chamber of the Swiss Criminal Court in the town of Muttens, near Basel.

The hearing came about after Swiss federal prosecutors appealed against their 2022 acquittal at a lower court.

Both men had denied the charge which related to a 2 million Swiss franc (\$2.26 million) payment Blatter authorised for Platini in 2011.

## Dhoni On Impact Player Rule: It's How T20 Has Evolved

Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** Former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni was not quite convinced about the need for the Impact Player rule when it was first introduced in the IPL but now sees it as a part of T20 cricket's evolution.

The 43-year-old, who remains a talismanic figure for the Chennai Super Kings despite relinquishing captaincy last year, said he does not consider himself an Impact Player as he remains the first-choice wicket-keeper of his side.

"When this rule was implemented, I felt it wasn't really needed at that time. In a way, it helps me, but at the same time, it doesn't. I still do my wicket-keeping,



so I am not an impact player," Dhoni told 'JioStar'.

"I have to be involved in the game. A lot of people say the rule has led to more high-scoring games. I believe it's more due to the conditions and the comfort level of players," he added.

The rule has been criticised by the likes of India's Test and

ODI skipper Rohit Sharma and star all-rounder Hardik Pandya, both of whom believe that it can affect the growth of all-rounders as teams tend to choose big-hitting batters for this role.

Dhoni said the rule does give teams the comfort of an extra batter for crunch situations.

## GoI Releases Rs 14.75 Cr For 4 Projects Under Khelo India

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Minister for Youth Services and Sports Satish Sharma on Tuesday said the Government of India has released Rs 14.75 crore for four projects sanctioned under Khelo India Scheme during the year 2018-19, against which Rs 13.67 crore have been expended, so far.

The Minister was replying to a question raised by Shiekh Khurshid Ahmed.

The Minister informed the House that out of the four projects, two have been completed and are functional while two projects are under process. He added that the sanctioned projects included construction of Rs 533.61



lakh Synthetic Hockey Turf at Polo Ground Srinagar and construction of Rs 539.78 lakh synthetic Hockey Turf at K.K Haku Stadium Jammu, besides under construction synthetic Athletic Track at Tulibal Sopore, Baramulla, and under construction Rs 294.11 lakh Indoor Sports Hall at Shalinar, Budgam.

The Minister said that Khelo India scheme is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, GoI, and is not a constituency based scheme. He said that no project has been sanctioned under Khelo India scheme in Langate constituency for development of sports infrastructure.

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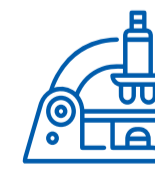
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