

## Efforts Pay Off?: Kashmir Stag 2025 Census Eyes Record Numbers

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Department of Wildlife Protection has kicked off its biennial census to assess the population of the endangered Kashmir Stag, locally known as Hangul, in and around the Dachigam National Park. This year's count is particularly significant, with officials hopeful the number will cross the 300 mark for the first time in decades.

In the previous census conducted in April 2023, the Hangul population stood at 289—up from 261 in 2021—marking a 10.72% rise. The increase has brought cautious optimism among conservationists who say sustained habitat recovery and anti-poaching measures are beginning to show results.

A major contributor to this upward trend is the Trees for Hanguls™ initiative, launched by the social enterprise Grow-Trees.

com near Pampore. So far, over 1.22 lakh trees have been planted as part of the project, aimed at restoring the Hangul's fragmented habitat and ensuring a reliable food source.

"Back in 2008, their numbers had dropped to just 127," says

Pradip Shah, co-founder of Grow-Trees.com. "But with focused conservation work, the population is slowly bouncing back. Of the 289 Hanguls counted in 2023, 275 were in Dachigam and 14 in Tral Wildlife Sanctuary."

The project has involved

planting native tree species like Kail and Apricot, which support the dietary and ecological needs of the Hangul. The benefits go beyond food, aiding in water retention and carbon capture, while providing a safer, more stable ecosystem.

The Wildlife Department has [More on P6](#)

**THE POPULATION IS SLOWLY BOUNCING BACK.** OF THE 289 HANGULS counted in 2023, 275 were in Dachigam and 14 in Tral Wildlife Sanctuary."



## PM's J&K Visit On April 19 Postponed

Agencies

Srinagar: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled visit to Jammu and Kashmir on April 19 for the inauguration of the much-awaited Vande Bharat Express from Katra to Srinagar has been postponed, officials said on Monday.

Officials said that the PM's visit to inaugurate the Vande Bharat Express on a stretch of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL), a 272-km-long mega railway project, has been postponed.

Preparations were already underway for the high-profile visit, with mock drills and trial runs being conducted on the USBRL section. Chief Area Manager (CAM) [More on P6](#)

Too Hot To Be Spring?

## Srinagar Hits April Peak After 80 Years

MeT Issues 'Yellow, Orange Alert' From April 18

Observer News Service

Srinagar: In an unusual weather shift, Kashmir witnessed its hottest day of the season on Tuesday, with Srinagar recording a scorching 30.4°C — a full 10.2°C above the average for this time of year.

Srinagar recorded the highest ever maximum temperature of 31.1 degrees Celsius on April 20, 1946, the officials of the meteorological department said.

Other parts of the Valley followed suit. Qazigund touched 29.8°C, Kupwara 29.5°C, Kokernag 27.5°C, and Pahalgam 25.4°C — all marking the hottest day of the season so far. Even the snow-covered slopes of Gulmarg weren't spared, where temperatures soared to 20.7°C — a startling 11.2°C above normal.

Amid the unexpected heatwave, the Meteorological Department (MeT) has issued

**SRINAGAR: 30.4°C**  
**QAZIGUND: 29.8°C**  
**KUPWARA: 29.5°C**  
**KOKERNAG: 27.5°C**  
**PAHALGAM: 25.4°C**  
**GULMARG: 20.7°C**

yellow and orange weather alerts for April 18 and 19 (Friday and Saturday), forecasting a significant shift in weather conditions.

According to the MeT forecast, a yellow alert has been sounded for some parts of Jammu & Kashmir on April 18, followed by yellow and orange alerts across several regions on April 19. A yellow alert advises the public to remain cautious, while an orange alert urges preparedness and active monitoring of weather updates.

While the next two days are expected to remain largely dry, a fresh [More on P6](#)

## J&K Assembly Can't Move Adjournment Motion On Waqf Bill: Ex-LS Secy

Says Such Actions Can Only Be Initiated By Opposition

Agencies

Srinagar: Amid growing controversy over the adjournment motion brought by the National Conference-led government regarding the Waqf (Amendment) Act—which caused disruptions in the J&K Assembly for three consecutive days—former Lok Sabha Secretary General P. D. T. Achary on Monday said that such a motion cannot be brought against actions of the central government in the J&K



Assembly. He also said that MLAs of ruling party cannot

initiate an adjournment motion in any legislature.

Achary, an authority on parliamentary affairs in India, said, "An adjournment motion against the central government can only be brought in the Lok Sabha. It cannot be brought on Waqf (amendment) bill -2025 in J&K Assembly."

The National Conference and its allies had submitted notices to adjourn the Assembly's proceedings to discuss the Waqf (Amendment) Act. However, the Speaker rejected these motions, citing [More on P6](#)

## Misplaced Action, Says Omar

Terming the adjournment motion on Waqf Act moved by the J&K legislators as "misplaced action" Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday said that the National Conference has now approached the Supreme Court (SC) in this regard. "The (assembly) speaker made everything clear on the last

day. Perhaps, the mistake made by the members was that they brought an adjournment motion. An adjournment motion is only brought to discuss the works of the Jammu and Kashmir government because the government has to respond," he said. "Tell me, had that adjournment motion been [More on P6](#)

## 'No One Listens To Me Anymore': Ruhullah On Rift With NC

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: National Conference MP Aga Ruhullah Mehdi has said that his party has virtually cut off communication with him, especially after he joined the student-led protest against the new reservation policy outside Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's residence in December last year.

"Until Assembly elections and for some period thereafter my views were taken seriously. I was told that even if the party didn't agree with my methods, it aligned with my politics and ideas," Ruhullah said in an interaction on



Twitter space. "But after the reservation (protests), the communication (between him and the party) has become almost non-existent." The NC leader said there were now no takers for his

views within the party, saying the situation changed after the Assembly elections were over. "From Parliament elections which the party persuaded me to contest, to up until Assembly polls, my opinion was valued and taken as a direction for the party," he said. "But things changed after the elections were over. Thereafter the party gradually lost interest in my opinion."

However, Ruhullah said he understood the NC's need to navigate its relationship with the centre to ensure smooth governance, so didn't protest. "At least they can't tell me that they [More on P6](#)

## 'Appropriate Time' For Statehood Has Come: CM

Says UT Status Has Hit Accountability, Efficiency

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday asserted that the "appropriate time" for restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood had come.

"We think the appropriate time has come ... Six months have passed since the assembly elections. (Union Home Minister Amit) Shah came here, I had a separate meeting with him, a good one ... I am still hopeful that Jammu and Kashmir will soon



get its statehood back," Abdullah told reporters after inaugurating a bridge in Pulwama district.

Earlier, addressing a public gathering, the chief minister said statehood was not the destination but the starting point for reclaiming [More on P6](#)

## Govt Bans School Picnics On Weekends, Holidays

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir Government has imposed a complete ban on picnics organised by schools and colleges on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, as part of enhanced safety measures

for students. The order was issued by Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, during a high-level review meeting held at the Civil Secretariat on Monday.

In a detailed directive, the Minister [More on P6](#)

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## 'Neutrino Weighs Under 0.45 Electronvolts', Study Sets Upper Limit For Universe's Lightest Particle

Press Trust Of India

A study has set a maximum value, or upper limit, that a neutrino -- the lightest sub-atomic particle -- weighs under 0.45 electronvolts, which is at least a million times lighter than an electron. Findings of the study, published in the journal Science, takes scientists closer towards understanding the fundamental laws of nature.

The Karlsruhe Tritium Neutrino, or KATRIN, experiment is an international collaboration of scientists looking to work out the "absolute mass" of a neutrino. Considered the lightest particles in the universe, neutrinos are formed during nuclear reactions -- when nucleus of two atoms merge (fusion) or a nucleus of an atom breaks apart (fission). A neutrino is not a charged particle. The researchers explained that neutrinos act as "cosmic architects" by influencing how galaxies are formed and spread in the universe.

Given their active role in shaping the visible structures in the universe, a precise measurement of a neutrino's mass is, therefore, essential for a complete understanding of the fundamental laws of nature, the team said. The newly set maximum value halves the previous one of 0.9 electronvolts, also calculated by the KATRIN team in a 2022 study published in the journal Nature.

"For this result we have analysed five measurement campaigns, totalling approximately 250 days of data collection from 2019 to 2021 -- about a quarter of the total data expected from KATRIN," author Kathrin Valerius from Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Germany, said. "With each campaign, we have gained new insights and further optimized the experimental conditions," author Susanne Mertens from the Max Planck



**“For this result we have analysed five measurement campaigns, totalling approximately 250 days of data collection from 2019 to 2021 -- about a quarter of the total data expected from KATRIN**

Institute for Nuclear Physics, Germany, said.

For assessing the mass of neutrinos, the ongoing KATRIN experiment looks at the beta decay of 'tritium'. Beta decay is a type of radioactive decay in which a nucleus gives out an electron or a positron (positively charged electron). Tritium is an isotope of a hydrogen atom, carrying the same number of protons but differing in the number of neutrons. However, owing to the excess number of neutrons, tritium is unstable and radioactive in nature. Analysing the energy of the electrons emitted from the decay of tritium allows for a direct measurement of a neutrino's mass, the researchers said.

Technical instruments required for the experiment include a 70-metre-long beamline housing an intense source of tritium, and a high-resolution spectrometer (to separate the emitted particles) with a diameter of 10 metres. "Stemming from 36 million electrons collected in 259 measurement days, a substantial reduction of the background level, and improved systematic uncertainties, this result tightens KATRIN's previous bound by a factor of almost two," the authors wrote.

"On the basis of the first five measurement campaigns, we derived a best-fit value, resulting in an upper limit of (less than) 0.45 electronvolts," the authors wrote.

### Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan..

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

The registrar birth EO MC pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Salih Bashir D/o Bashir Ahmad Dar R/o Wailoo kralpora with verified date of birth 29/08/2021 occurred at SDH pattan in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

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 EO MC pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Mahira D/o Javid Ahmad Khanday R/o Malpora Buran pattan with verified date of birth 20/07/2020 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

## CYBER CRIME INVESTIGATION CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE, CRIME BRANCH SRINAGAR

3rd Floor ERA Building, Exhibition Ground Srinagar-190001,  
Email: pscice-kmr@ikpolice.gov.in

No: CICE-S/5A/2025-1921-23

Dated:15.04.2025

### Advisory on NFT Frauds: Risks and Prevention Tips

Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) have gained immense popularity, but the market is also rife with scams, frauds, and exploitation. Investors and collectors should remain vigilant against deceptive schemes. Below are common NFT frauds and how to avoid them.

#### Common NFT Scams & Frauds

##### 1. Fake NFT Marketplaces & Phishing Sites

Scammers create fake versions of legitimate NFT platforms (e.g., OpenSea, Rarible) to steal users' wallets and funds.

##### - Red Flags:

- Slightly altered URLs (e.g., "Opensea.io" instead of "opensea.io").
- Unsolicited links in emails/DMs.
- Requests for private keys or seed phrases.

##### 2. Rug Pulls (Exit Scams)

Developers hype up an NFT project, take investors' money, then abandon it.

##### - Red Flags:

- Anonymous or unverified team.
- Overpromising unrealistic returns.
- Liquidity suddenly withdrawn after minting.

##### 3. Counterfeit NFTs

Fraudsters mint fake copies of popular NFTs and sell them as originals.

##### Prevention:

- Verify NFT authenticity on blockchain explorers (Etherscan, Solscan).
- Check the official collection link on the creator's verified social media.

##### 4. Pump-and-Dump Schemes

Groups artificially inflate NFT prices before dumping them on unsuspecting buyers.

##### - Red Flags:

- Sudden, unexplained price surges.

• Heavy promotion in shady Discord/Telegram groups.

##### 5. Fake Giveaways & Airdrop Scams

- Scammers impersonate celebrities or projects, offering "free NFTs" in exchange for wallet access.
- Rule: Never share your private key or connect your wallet to untrusted sites.

##### 6. Social Engineering & Impersonation

- Fake Twitter/Discord accounts of influencers or brands trick users into buying fraudulent NFTs.
- Prevention: Always verify official links from the project's website.

#### How to Protect Yourself

- Use Reputable Marketplaces
- Verify Smart Contracts before minting.
- Enable 2FA on wallets and accounts.
- Never Share Seed Phrases/Private Keys.
- Research Projects Thoroughly (team, roadmap, community trust).
- Beware of Too-Good-To-Be-True Offers.

#### Reporting NFT Fraud

If you encounter a scam:

- Report to the platform (OpenSea, Twitter, Discord).
- File complaints with:

- Local Cybercrime Authorities (Do Your Own Research) before investing in NFTs!

DIPK-369/25

dated: 15-04-2025

Station House Officer,  
P/S Cyber Crime Investigation Centre for Excellence,  
Crime Branch Srinagar

### Public NOTICE

My name has been wrongly written in my service book as Abdul Hamid Parray S/o Gh Mohd Parray while my correct name as per 9th School certificate is Ab Hameed Paray S/o Gh Mohd Paray R/o Bandgam Magam wwhich needs to be corrected. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned office within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Ab Hameed Paray  
S/o Gh Mohd Paray  
R/o Bandgam Magam

bmg\_r

### FROM THE OFFICE OF THE M/S NASIR AHMAD ADVOCATE AT BUDGAM

IN THE CASE:

1. Shah Sameed
2. Safoora
3. Aalia

Son and Daughters of Mohammad Yaseen Shah

4. Masooma Akther

W/O Mohammad Yaseen Shah Residents of Charisharief

Budgam A/P Sanatnagar Srinagar

Vs

Public at lagre

In the matter of;

Be it known to the public at lagre/interested persons that the caveators have reason (s) aapprehensions (s) to believe that the Non-Caveators may file any suit/petition/ proceedings before the Honble court of jurisdiction against caveator on the grounds of distorted facts/misrepresentation and cooked up story and may succeed in obtaining some order xparte against the caveator and in such eventuality the caveator will be put to be an irreparable loss and inconvenience.

It is prayed before the honble court that in the event of any petition or other case being filed by any manner of public at large /interested person, no interim order or any protective order be passed without granting the caveator an opportunity of hearing.

M/S Nasir Ahmad  
Advocate at Budgam  
Dated 15-04-2025

mcb

### OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER BUDGAM

Subject:- Necessary Correction/change in address in data to the License No.JK-0420100009940 issued in favour of AIJAZ AHMAD MIR Parentage ALI MIR Whereas an application has been recieved by one AIJAZ AHMAD MIR Parentage ALI MIR wherein he claimed that the Name has been wrongly recorded in the records of Driving Licenses as AJAZ AHMAD MIR Parentage ALI MOHD MIR Which needs to be changed as AIJAZ AHMAD MIR Parentage ALI MIR.

Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any in this regard shall reach in written in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office Budgam within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper.After expiry of stipulated time no objection will be entertained.

Assistant Regional Transport officer  
Budgam Kashmir

mcb

## PUBLIC NOTICE

I Farooq Ahmad Ganai S/o: Gh Mohd Ganai R/o: Palpora. Teh: Khag Budgam. Intend to correct my caste spelling from Ganie TO GANAI which is wrongly recorded in my official records as Ganie. The correct spelling of my caste is "GANAI". If anybody have any objection in this regard may report to SSP Railway Srinagar within seven days. Inspector Farooq Ahmad Ganai. PID No. ARP-984121 Phone No. 7006630651

fko

## PUBLIC NOTICE

I FAROOQ Ahmad SHEIKH S/o Mohammad ABDULLAH SHEIKH, father of UMAISA FAROOQ R/o HARIPORA SHOPIAN want to correct my daughter's name in Aadhaar Record bearing Aadhaar No. 6821 9014 0754 which has been wrongly entered as UMISA FAROOQ instead of UMAISA FAROOQ. Now correction required.

If anybody has any objection, may contact Concerned Aadhaar Centre Jammu/Srinagar or Concerned Authorities within 7 days.

fko

### PUBLIC NOTICE

I Nisar Ahmad Nandpuri F/o Imad Nisar R/o Channa Mohalla Chattabal,Srinagar want to correct my name my wife's name, in our Son's School Record Studying 1st class in Al- Noor Model School, Danamazar Safa Kadal, Srinagar From Nisar Ahmad Nandpuri & Arifat Nissar to Nisar Ahmad Nandpuri & Arifat Jan which needs to be corrected. In this regard, If anybody has any objection he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the Al- Noor Model School, Danamazar Safa Kadal Srinagar within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Media Line

### NOTICE FOR GENERAL PUBLIC THE JAMMU & KASHMIR STATE BOARD OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

CERTIFICATES-KD, NEW CAMPUS BEMINA SRINAGAR

#### ATTENTION PLEASE

I have passed /appeared in SSE/HSE-I/HSE-II (Class 10th,) under Roll No. 117007075 Session Annual Regular Year 2023. Through the Jammu & Kashmir Board of School Education. The error has been committed by the Oxfort School of Education Budgam records against my mothers Name as TABASUM BANO instead of TABASUM KHAN.



Now I have applied for correction / rectification of error in the Jammu & Kashmir board of School Education, New campus Bemina, Srinagar. If any person has any objection in this regard may file the same in the office of the Deputy Secretary, Certificates-KD within seven days from the date of publication of this notice, after the expiry of said period, no objection will be entertained.

This is published for the information of the general public. The Correct particulars be recorded as under:

Name: SADIYA NISAR,  
Fathers Name: NISAR ALI MIR,  
Mothers Name, TABASUM KHAN  
Date of Birth: 19-06-2008,  
Residence:- SEBDAN BUDGAM.  
CELL: 7006325163.

mcb

### NOTICE FOR GENERAL PUBLIC

This is information for the general public that in Birth Certificate of my son the name is entered as ADNAN ALI while his actual name is ADNAN ALI BHAT. Now I want its correction, in this regard if anybody having any objection may contact EXECUTIVE OFFICER MUNICIPAL COUNCIL BUDGAM with in a period of seven days. No objection shall be entertained after that.

ALTAF HUSSAIN BHAT  
F/o ADNAN ALI BHAT  
R/o MEHDI COLONY BUDGAM

mcb

### THE JAMMU & KASHMIR BOARD OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

NEW CAMPUS, BEMINA, SRINAGAR

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

I have passed in Class 10th, 11th & 12th under Roll No. 321003000 Session: Regular 2025 Year: 2025 through the Jammu & Kashmir Board of School Education. The error has been committed by the GOVT. Higher Secondary School Gund khawaja Qasim in my Name and Mother's name as Aaqib Nisar & Haleema Begum instead of Aaqib Nisar Mir & Haseena Begum.



I have now applied for correction in The Jammu & Kashmir Board of School Education, New Campus, Bemina, Srinagar. If any person has any objection in this regard may file the same in the office of the Assistant Secretary Certificates New Campus, Bemina, Srinagar within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice; after the expiry of said period, no objection will be entertained.

This is published for the information of the general public. The correct particulars be recorded as under:

Name: AAQIB NISAR MIR  
Father's Name: NISAR AHMAD MIR  
Mother's Name: HASEENA BEGUM  
Date of Birth: 25-10-2007  
Residence: KANTER BUGH  
Mobile No.: 6005124557

fko\_r

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

## Office of the Executive Engineer Construction Division Kashmir J&K Sports Council

### DASTI QUOTATIONS.

In view of poor response received by this office. Dasti quotation are invited from registered firms /Laboratories for conducting of requisite tests as per WRF Certified fields for Rugby field at Pologround Srinagar by or before 18/04/2025 upto 12.30 P.M. the quotations shall reach in the office of undersigned through mail or by registered post.

The dasti quotations is published on two daily Local Newspaper.

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer  
Construction Division Kashmir  
J&K Sports Council  
Bakhshi Stadium

SC/CDK/01/127-31  
DIPK-NB-215/25

Dated:15.04.2025

## PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA Government of Jammu & Kashmir

### Office Of The Executive ENGINEER PMGSY (JKRRDA) Division Bandipora

No.EE/PMGSY/Bpr/45

Dated:-15-04-2025

#### CORRIGENDUM

Subject:- Extension of Last Date for Fresh E.NIT No. 14/EE/PMGSY/Bpr/ e-Tendering of 2024-25 Dated:- 29-03-2025 The last date for submission of Bid for above cited Fresh E.NIT No.14/EE/PMGSY/Bpr/e-Tendering of 2024-25 Dated:- 29-03-2025 is hereby further extended to 18-04-2025 upto 4:00 PM and the technical bid shall be opened on 19-04-2025 at 11:00 AM.

Sd/= Executive Engineer  
PMGSY Division Bandipora

DIPK-402/25

dated: 15-04-2025



## City Residents Fume Over ‘Frequent Call Drops’

Agencies

Srinagar: Residents across several parts of Srinagar are anguished over mobile network issues, saying they are unable to receive phone calls on time and only find out through delayed missed call alerts.

The problem, which has been worsening in recent weeks, is affecting daily communication and even posing challenges in emergencies.

The locals from Srinagar areas like from downtown and upper town said that they receive a “missed call” message several minutes later—sometimes as late as 10 minutes.

The affected areas include Nowhatta, Hawal, Habba Kadal to uptown localities like Rajbagh, Bemina, Sonwar and Hyderpora, etc..

Owais Ahmad, a local from Habba Kadal, said it is extremely frustrating. “My phone is in full network, but I don’t receive any calls. Ten minutes later, a message pops up: ‘You have a missed call.’ What’s the use then?” he said.

Wahid, a college student from Shivpora, said this is

not just a technical glitch, it’s a communication blackout. “I missed an urgent call from my college about a presentation. I only found out much later. These delays are costing us opportunities,” he said.

Similarly, residents said the situation is worse during the evenings when the network appears to vanish altogether.

“I had to call my doctor urgently last night,” said another resident, adding none of his calls went through. “The doctor later told me he tried calling me too, but couldn’t connect. This is unacceptable,” he said.

Meanwhile, the reporter tried to contact the Jio complaint helpline. They said the issue might be because of a setting in the mobile device and advised to turn off the “WiFi Calling” option in network settings and then switch off the mobile device and then try.

Meanwhile, the local residents argue the issue is different, and if the issue was not with mobile settings, how come it just began some weeks ago, they asked—(KNO)

## Meeting Of IIPA J&K Regional Branch Members Held

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), Jammu & Kashmir Regional Branch convened a meeting in Srinagar to plan upcoming programs over the next 4-6 months across Srinagar and other districts of the Kashmir Division.

The meeting was attended by Dr. G.N. Qasba (Hon. Vice Chairman, Kashmir), Mr. A.M. Watali (IPS Rtd., Executive Committee Member), Mr. Kh. Bashir Ahmad (IAS Rtd.), Prof. Gul Mohammad, Mr. Mir Showkat Ahmad, Mr. Bashir Ahmad (Executive Committee Member), Mr. G.M. Andrabi (Hon. Joint Secretary), and Mr. Shahinawaz Bukhari, JKAS, Joint Director Information (Special Invitee).

The members resolved to revitalize IIPA’s activities in Kashmir, focusing on key issues related to good governance and public administration. They acknowledged with gratitude the support and encouragement from Patron Dr. Ashok Bhan and Chairman Mr. B.R. Sharma.

Key discussions included pursuing accommodation for

IIPA activities in Srinagar, as highlighted in a DO letter by the Chairman to the Chief Secretary. Pending arrangements, the use of the Conference Hall at the Directorate of Information, Residency Road, was proposed, subject to approvals from the Director Estates and Secretary Information.

Plans were made to organize the Annual Debating Contest by August, with members to propose or confirm the event theme. The suggestion by Mr. Khurshid Ahmad Ganai, former Advisor to the Governor, to host a lecture on a theme of public interest was welcomed. Additionally, it was resolved to invite the Transport Commissioner to speak on the role of Information Technology in enhancing service delivery in the Transport Department. The critical issue of traffic management in Srinagar was also discussed, with a proposal to engage all relevant stakeholders, including Traffic Police authorities.

The meeting concluded with a commitment to hold smaller, focused discussions on key governance-related themes in the coming months.

## Meet Held To Discuss Cases Of Under Trial Prisoners

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Srinagar, under the aegis of the Jammu & Kashmir Legal Services Authority, convened its 2nd quarterly Under Trial Review Committee (UTRC) meeting on Tuesday at District Court, Srinagar.

The meeting was attended by Sajad Ur Rehman, Sub-Judge/Secretary, DLSA Srinagar; Mir Imtiyaz-ul-Aziz, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Srinagar; Umer Shah, SP Headquarter Srinagar; Dysp Central Jail Srinagar, Sr. Public Prosecutor, District Court Srinagar; Senior Medical Officer, Central Jail Srinagar; Deputy Chief Legal Aid Defense Counsel and Assistant Legal Aid Defence Counsel, Srinagar.

The meeting was chaired by Tasleem Arief, Principal District & Sessions Judge

(Chairman, DLSA) Srinagar, and brought together key stakeholders from the judiciary, police, administration, and medical fraternity to address the significant issue of ensuring fair and expedited trials for under trial prisoners.

This collaborative forum underscores the importance of a collective approach in safeguarding the rights of individuals awaiting trial.

During the meeting, the committee meticulously reviewed 09 cases involving under trial prisoners. Each case was examined thoroughly through detailed discussions and deliberations, with the objective of understanding the specific circumstances of the individuals concerned. The committee subsequently formulated the recommendations aimed at expediting the judicial process, thereby upholding the principles of equity and justice.

### Public NOTICE

My name has been wrongly written in my aadhaar card as Rubeena Begum while my correct name is Rubee Bano which needs to be corrected. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned office within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Rubea Bano

fko



## In A First, Over 6.7 Lakh Visitors Throng Tulip Garden

Agencies

Srinagar: The Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden in Srinagar has witnessed an unprecedented tourist surge this spring, welcoming a record-breaking 6,71,926 visitors in just 20 days since it opened on March 26, 2025. This remarkable number marks the highest-ever footfall in the garden’s history, firmly establishing it as one of India’s most sought-after spring attractions.

Located on the foothills of the Zabarwan Range and overlooking the tranquil Dal Lake, the garden is currently home to a breathtaking 1.7 million tulips in full bloom, transforming the landscape into a vibrant mosaic of red, yellow, pink, purple and white.

The ongoing Tulip Show has drawn an eclectic crowd this year, including 27,810 locals, 3,91,918 domestic tourists and 2,198 international visitors.

The surge in footfall is historic when compared to previous years. In both 2022 and 2023, the garden saw 3.65 lakh visitors, and in 2024, the number rose to 4.45 lakh. However, this year’s figure has already soared past 6.71 lakh, and with several days of the season still remain-

“The Tulip Bloom has become one of the leading springtime attractions in the country. This record-breaking response shows the growing confidence of tourists in Kashmir as a safe and scenic destination

ing, the final tally is expected to climb even higher.

A senior official from the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department described the record turnout as a major success for the region’s tourism sector. “The tulip bloom has become one of the leading springtime attractions in the country. This record-breaking response shows the growing confidence

of tourists in Kashmir as a safe and scenic destination,” he said.

Visitors have been effusive in their praise of the garden’s beauty. Sandeep, a tourist from Gujarat, said, “This is my first visit to Kashmir, and I am simply mesmerised. I have never seen such a colourful display of flowers in my life. The experience is beyond words.”

A traveller from the United Kingdom said. “The natural beauty of the Tulip Garden, combined with the warm hospitality of Kashmir, makes this a must-visit place for any traveller.”

The record visitor turnout has brought economic cheer to the local community.

Ilyas Ahad, who runs an ice cream stall outside the garden, said business has been booming. “This has been the best season in years. On some days, I sold out all my stock before evening. The rush has given us all a new hope,” he said.

As the tulip season continues, there is optimism in the air—not just among tourists marvelling at the bloom, but among local businesses and officials who see this as a sign of Kashmir’s growing popularity as a peaceful and picturesque tourist destination—(KNO)

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

### AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311




### RAILWAYS

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

### HIGHWAY STATUS



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

| <br>HIJRI<br>CALENDAR<br>17 Shawwal<br>1446 | PRAYERS |       |
|--|---------|-------|
|  | FAJR    | 4: 32 |
|  | ZUHR    | 12:32 |
|  | ASR     | 5:10  |
|  | Magrib  | 7:05  |
|  | ISHA    | 8: 31 |

## This Day In History

- 1457 BC- Battle of Megiddo: Egyptian forces of Thutmose III defeat a large Canaanite coalition under King of Kadesh. First battle recorded with a reliable account.
- 556- Pelagius I begins his reign as Catholic Pope
- 1071- Bari falls to Robert Guiscard’s Norman forces, ending Byzantine rule in Italy
- 1346- The Serbian Empire is proclaimed in Skopje at an Easter assembly and Stephen Uroš IV Dušan crowned Emperor over much of the Balkans
- 1395- Azzo X d’Este is defeated at the Battle of Portomaggiore by Venetian-Ferrarese troops
- 1509- French army under Louis XII enters the Alps
- 1799 -- Napoleonic Wars: The Battle of Mount Tabor - Napoleon drives Ottoman Turks across the River Jordan near Acre.
- 1865 - Battle of Columbus & West Point, GA (Ft Tyler)
- 1913 - The Bulgarians and the Turks agree to an armistice that will be accepted by the other nations involved
- 1917 - Lenin arrives back from exile in Russia at Finland Station, Petrograd to join the Russian Revolution
- 1921 - Liberal Freedom League forms in The Hague
- 1922 - German-Russian treaty signed in Italy, Soviet Union recognized
- 1922 - Rapallo Agreement, between Germany and Russia, is signed
- 1939 - Stalin requests British, French & Russian anti-nazi pact
- 1943- 40 NZ bombers attack Haarlem, Netherlands (85 killed)
- 1945 - Red Army begins Battle of Berlin
- 1945 - US troops enter Nuremberg, Germany
- 1946 - 1st US launch of captured V-2 rocket, White Sands, NM; 8 km alt
- 1953 - British royal yacht Britannia launched by Queen Elizabeth II
- 1957 - USSR performs atmospheric nuclear test
- 1972 - Two giant pandas arrive in US from China
- 1972 - Apollo 16 launched; 5th manned lunar landing (Decartes Highlands)
- 1974 - USSR performs nuclear test at Eastern Kazakh/Semipalitinsk USSR
- 1980- US performs nuclear test at Nevada Test Site
- 1982- Queen Elizabeth proclaims Canada’s new constitution
- 1984- Pulitzer prize awarded to Mary Oliver for "American Primitive"
- 1986- To dispel rumors he’s dead, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi appears on TV
- 1986- West Indies complete 5-0 demolition of England
- 1989- Berendrechtsluis opens in Antwerp, biggest flood lock in world
- 1992- Afghan president Najibullah resigns
- 2003 - Treaty of Accession is signed in Athens admitting 10 new member states to the European Union
- 2007 - Virginia Tech massacre: The deadliest mass shooting in modern American history. The gunman, Seung-Hui Cho, kills 32 people and injures 23 others before committing suicide.
- 2012 - At least 55 people are killed in the Syrian uprising despite UN presence to oversee ceasefire
- 2012 - For the first time since 1977 no Pulitzer Prize is awarded for fiction
- 2013 - 37 people are killed by a 7.8 magnitude earthquake in Khash country, Iran
- 2014 - South Korean ferry MV Sewol sinks on route Incheon to Jeju, 304 drown, mostly students. National controversy erupts over rescue efforts and actions of crew and owner.
- 2017 - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdo an wins referendum on 18-article constitutional reform package
- 2019- Seattle Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson becomes the highest-paid player in NFL history with a 4-year \$140m extension including record \$65m signing bonus
- 2020- 22 million Americans have filed for unemployment in 4 weeks (5.2 million in the last week), wiping out 9 1/2 years of job gains



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KO VIEW

Shrinking Farmlands

New data shows that all is not well with agriculture in Kashmir. In just the last four years, the area left fallow - land once tilled - has grown from 120,000 to 135,000 hectares. The net sown area hovers around 30% of our total land, refusing to recover, as per the Financial Commissioner (Revenue) of J&K. It was recorded at 736,000 hectares in 2020-21, dropped slightly to 733,000 hectares in 2022-23, and saw a modest uptick to 738,000 hectares in 2023-24. And every year, more and more farmland is swallowed by roads, colonies, shopping plazas, and brick kilns.

Another reason is the vanishing of streams. As a report in this paper points out, Bandipora and Baramulla, paddy fields lie dry and untended. These are not isolated stories. They are part of a larger state of affairs across the Valley.

Urban sprawl is part of the problem. The rapid urbanization aggravated by the prevailing political conflict in the region has triggered massive internal migration from the rural to urban centres. This has led to a horizontal expansion of the capital Srinagar and the major and small towns. The urban population which in 2001 was 24.81 percent shot up to 27.37 percent in 2011. Srinagar has witnessed the most influx of the internal migrants.

According to the 2014-15 J&K economic survey, Srinagar district ranks first in the state with 98.6 percent urban population followed by Jammu district with 50 percent. This is because Srinagar has been the principal destination for the people fleeing the hinterland through the nineties. The city is now one of the fastest growing in the world.

In 2011, a London based-based Think Tank on urban affairs City Mayors Foundation put Srinagar at 92nd place in the global ranking of the 300 fastest growing cities. And among the 37 Indian cities which figure in the list, Srinagar was at 23rd position.

The frenetic growth of the city is exemplified by a chaotic spectacle of the work in progress on hundreds of private housing colonies across the region. This is also happening in the countryside, with agricultural land being used to build housing colonies. What's at stake is not just agriculture - it's food, freedom, and identity.

We must act while there is still land to protect. Strictly curb the conversion of farmland. Regulate development activities, which scar the countryside. Promote green alternatives. Most importantly, give farmers the support they need. Help them irrigate, market, and adapt to the changing economy.



Slumps Don't Last, Smart Gains Do

Irshad Mushtaq

History has shown us time and again that recovery follows every major economic downturn. From the market crashes of 1992 and 2000, to the 2008 recession, and even the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19, resilience has been a constant. One needs to embark on this journey of recovery and growth with optimism and foresight.

As the world continues to expand and evolve, so does the potential for your wealth to grow. By investing wisely and diversifying your portfolio, you can embrace the natural ebb and flow of the market with confidence. Seize the opportunities that both ups and downs present, and watch your wealth flourish over time.

Market downturns are not to be feared; they are opportunities in disguise. Increasing your Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) contributions during market dips can yield remarkable results. This strategy allows you to acquire more assets at lower costs, setting the stage for significant gains when the market rebounds.

Focusing on long-term goals is key to achieving substantial returns. With smart asset allocation and a patient approach, you can anticipate annual returns in the range of 12-15%. Patience is more than a virtue in the investing world; it is your most trusted ally in achieving success.

In the grand scheme of things, returns are bound to materialize if you trust in the process. Rather than succumbing to constant worry, allow the market to weave its magic. Maintaining a calm and composed demeanor will keep you on track towards your financial goals.

Market dips should be viewed as golden opportunities. Embrace the principles of smart investing and understand that your future self will be grateful for the decisions you make today. By believing in the process and maintaining a strategic approach, you set the stage for a prosperous financial future.

- The author is a reputed financial advisor based out of Srinagar

Kashmir's Dead Horse Theory

This theory is painfully relevant to the region, where systemic issues continue to be met with superficial solutions rather than genuine reforms.

Dr. Ashraf Zainabi

With an overwhelming mandate, the elected government has an opportunity to fix crisis-ridden higher education. If the government misses this chance, they'll be just flogging the dead horse in the name of reforming system.

The first positive sign however came when a recent high-level education meet passed some comforting instructions. Things look promising, but will they translate into action? That's a big question on Kashmir's Dead Horse Theory.

It's a satirical metaphor that illustrates how individuals, institutions, and governments often refuse to acknowledge problems. Instead of abandoning failed strategies, they double down on them - wasting time, resources, and effort in the process. This theory is painfully relevant to the state of higher education in Jammu and Kashmir, where systemic issues continue to be met with superficial solutions rather than genuine reforms.

J&K's higher education system faces a range of deep-rooted challenges, like lack of proper research infrastructure, uncertain career prospects for contractual faculty (which constitutes about 50% of teaching force), outdated curricula (shuffling the syllabi units in between semesters won't make it updated), poor industry-academia linkages, and the unpreparedness of Government Degree Colleges (GDCs) to implement the ambitious Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP) under NEP 2020.

Yet, rather than addressing these core issues, decision-makers often resort to bureaucratic patchwork solutions—committees, reports, marginal policy adjustments—that do little to change the ground reality. Instead of dismantling the dead horse (accepting that the current system needs an overhaul), they persist in finding ways to justify and sustain it, even when it is clear that these efforts are futile.

One of the most pressing concerns in J&K's higher education sector is the lack of research infrastructure in colleges. With the introduction of FYUGP, students are expected to undertake research projects, yet most GDCs, barring few, lack proper laboratories and funding. Instead of acknowledging this and providing concrete financial and infrastructural support, the response has been predictable: more committees, more assessments, and more task forces to "review" the situation.

The reality is that, GDCs are ill-equipped to support research at this level. Yet, instead of addressing these gaps, policymakers insist on pushing forward with implementation of FYUGP. This is akin to holding meetings to discuss how to make the dead horse run faster.

A more pragmatic approach would be to gradually develop infrastructure, train faculty, and establish research-industry linkages before enforcing the FYUGP program at full scale. If not, we will be continuing the mass production of graduates that lack skills, training and required qualifications to become industry ready.

Instead of building real partnerships with industries and startups, authorities opt for superficial measures like conducting "entrepreneurship awareness programs." These seminars may look good on paper, but without functional incubation centers, funding support, and mentorship, they do little to foster real entrepreneurship. This is the equivalent of improving the diet of the dead horse, an illusion of progress that does not change the core issue.

Another glaring issue is the plight of contractual faculty members, who form a significant portion of the teaching workforce in GDCs of J&K. Despite their years (some with above 15 years) of service, they remain in precarious positions, with no clear path to job security.

A practical approach would be to formulate a long-term policy ensuring their career progression. When asking about reforms and a policy, concerned ministers satisfy everyone with a statement, "examining the issue", which is followed by a prolonged silence.

Thing is, when 50% of teaching force is not stable, hired and fired every eight months,



in J&K will continue to suffer from instability and brain drain.

The government should learn from Himachal Pradesh and Haryana, the twin northern states that have regularized thousands of higher education contractual teachers in past few years.

At this moment, the faculty recruitment process remains another area where Dead Horse Theory logic prevails. It's time to abandon API matrix to hire and promote teaching staff. The system should focus on developing a real-time-all-time evaluation model, with a major focus on quality not quantity.

Notably, the crisis in J&K's higher education cannot be resolved by renaming policies, forming committees, or making symbolic gestures. It requires bold and structural reforms that must translate into action on ground. Colleges need well-equipped labs, funding for student projects, and faculty training in research methodologies. A massive investment is need of the hour.

A structured, merit-based system for regularization and career progression of contractual teaching staff is also necessary. About 90% of the non-permanent teaching force is well qualified (Ph.Ds., Post.docs., and beyond) and fit to engage students in interesting and applied research. They need hand-holding, support, encouragement, and job security in terms of better salaries and equal treatment and respect. Without them, it's hard to imagine a result-oriented research progression in degree colleges.

Colleges should be upgraded in phases before forcing them to accommodate research-intensive programs (4 year UG NEP). An actionable timeline in this direction with full emphasis on above two recommendations is essential. Instead of just awareness programs, there should be direct industry partnerships, internships, and startup incubations programs. The system should prioritize real qualitative teaching and research contributions over bureaucratic paperwork (API framework).

If a survey is conducted in GDCs today, I am sure that non-permanent teachers will figure above in all indexes. Therefore, count them as an important part of the system, not just a patchwork lot or internees as claimed by ministry concerned.

Until these fundamental changes happen, the Dead Horse of J&K's higher education system will remain firmly in place—decorated with new policies, but ultimately going nowhere. It's time to dismount and move forward with real solutions.

- The author is a Kashmiri teacher-researcher. Views expressed in this article are author's own and don't necessarily reflect KO's editorial policy.

“Instead of building real partnerships with industries and startups, authorities opt for superficial measures like conducting "entrepreneurship awareness programs." These seminars may look good on paper, but without functional incubation centers, funding support, and mentorship, they do little to foster real entrepreneurship.

have no job security, what efforts they will put in realizing the vibrant higher education sphere? Therefore, without a structured policy for contractual faculty, higher education



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Srinagar–Pahalgam Route Can Transform South Kashmir

This is to highlight the immense potential of the proposed Srinagar–Pahalgam road via Khrew and Tral. It's a transformative infrastructure project that promises to significantly benefit South Kashmir's connectivity, economy, and tourism sector. Spanning approximately 70 km, this route would reduce the travel distance between Srinagar and Pahalgam by nearly 30 km compared to the traditional path via Anantnag and Bijbehara.

The road is planned in two key segments: Wahab Sahib Khrew to Pastuna (27 crore) and Bathnoor Karmula to Lehndajan Pahalgam (44.10 crore). The Detailed Project

Reports (DPRs) for both have been prepared and are currently awaiting environmental clearances and funding. Specifically, 108 kanals (approx. 13.5 acres) of forest land and the felling of 845 trees are involved.

While environmental groups such as the Environmental Policy Group (EPG) have voiced valid concerns regarding deforestation and ecological impact, it is crucial to contextualize these fears. Forests across the world have been moderately altered for national development and this is not unprecedented. Kashmir's fertile terrain allows for effective afforestation; for every tree cut, ten can be planted and sustained with proper policy. What matters most is the gov-

ernment's sincerity in balancing development with conservation.

Some local resistance, particularly from Khrew, stems from past industrial mismanagement, such as pollution from cement factories. However, this road construction is not a polluting industry, it is an enabler of growth. It will catalyze tourism, allow locals to establish small businesses, and open avenues in hospitality, transport, and recreation.

Roads are the lifelines of development. Beyond tourism, this road can uplift socio-economic standards by improving access to healthcare, education, and employment. Villages en route—long isolated—will find new relevance and prosperity. It will

also spotlight local heritage and cultural richness, further encouraging responsible, eco-conscious tourism if implemented with sustainability in mind.

In conclusion, while environmental diligence is necessary, it must not become a tool to halt progress. The Srinagar–Pahalgam road via Tral–Khrew represents a golden opportunity to reimagine growth in South Kashmir. We urge the authorities to expedite approvals and adopt mitigation strategies that honor both nature and development.

Er Ishfaq Khaliq



# The Brothers Who Brought Kashmir's Looms Back to Life

As global markets turn to handmade and sustainable luxury, two Kashmiri brothers are leading an artisan revival—bringing jobs back to the Valley, restoring cultural pride, and putting their homeland's traditional crafts on the international map.

Ansar Hussain

When Mir Nawaz and Mir Waseem were growing up in the Kashmir Valley in the late 1980s, the rhythmic clatter of looms was a familiar sound in the neighborhood—a song of craftsmanship passed down for centuries. It is a sound they would later chase across states and decades, long after it fell silent in their homeland.

Today, the two brothers stand at the helm of Miras Carpet Industries, a thriving enterprise that has quietly become one of India's leading names in hand-knotted carpets and pashmina shawls. Their journey, however, began far from the design studios and export ledgers of modern business.

Raised in a middle-class family—sons of a junior engineer in the power department—Mir Nawaz and Mir Waseem were instilled with values of integrity and discipline. But they were also witnesses to a slow unraveling. In the 1990s, as political strife gripped the region, Kashmir's famed artisan sector—renowned for its intricate carpets and heritage shawls—began to collapse. Master weavers laid down their tools. The looms went quiet.

"It was heartbreaking," recalls Nawaz. "These were craftsmen who once wove art that could hang on museum walls. And they were being forgotten."

In 2005, the brothers took a leap of faith. With a loan of just Rs 50,000, they opened a small carpet store in the ruins of Hampi, a town in Karnataka known more for its ancient temples than its textiles. The decision was both improbable and symbolic: resurrect a dying tradition from the soil of a distant land.

They called it Miras, an Urdu word meaning "legacy."

From the outset, Miras was more than a commercial venture. The brothers sought out Kashmiri artisans who had left the trade, offering them fair wages and respect. They prioritized quality over scale, tradition over trend. Each carpet, each shawl, they insisted, had to tell a story.

The gamble worked. Today, Miras operates over 20 production units and 36 active pashmina looms. Its team includes 250 artisans, and its products—



**THESE WERE CRAFTSMEN WHO ONCE WOVE ART THAT COULD HANG ON MUSEUM WALLS. AND THEY WERE BEING FORGOTTEN."**

delicate silk-on-silk rugs, handwoven Sozni shawls—are exported to markets in Europe, the Middle East, and the United States. The company now derives 80 percent of its revenue from international sales.

But the revival hasn't stopped at commerce. Miras has quietly become an ecosystem for skills, employment, and cultural preservation. In an in-

dustrial increasingly threatened by machine-made replicas, Miras carpets are known for achieving 40 knots per square inch—a technical feat few global manufacturers can replicate.

In 2019, the company launched Miras Crafts, an e-commerce platform with separate portals for Indian and global buyers. The move brought centuries-old artistry into the homes of

urban consumers—with just a click.

Next, the brothers are returning home in a way they never have before. Construction is underway for a 65,000-square-meter headquarters in Gulmarg, Kashmir. It will serve as both a production hub and cultural center, complete with live loom demonstrations for visitors. "We want people to see the magic happen," says Waseem. "To understand what it takes to weave history into every inch."

The company is also expanding its retail footprint, with ten new stores planned in major Indian cities, including Delhi, Mumbai, and Chennai.

And yet, despite its success, the core of Miras remains deeply personal.

For Nawaz and Waseem, the business is not just about selling textiles—it's about reclaiming a narrative. A region known globally for conflict is, through their work, being remembered again for craftsmanship.

In Kashmir, where many youth still struggle with unemployment and limited opportunity, Miras is quietly altering futures—one artisan, one loom, one legacy at a time.

"Reviving this industry was never just about carpets," says Nawaz. "It was about restoring dignity—to the art, and to the artist."

*- The author is a staffer at Kashmir Observer.*

# One Professor's Mission to Rethink Kashmir's Education

Prof Anunaya Chaubey leads a pioneering design thinking initiative in Kashmir, inspiring students and challenging outdated educational norms across the Valley.

Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat

There was a time, not too long ago, when asking questions in a classroom in Kashmir felt almost sinful. I remember my own school days clearly: critical thinking was unwelcome, curiosity was met with reprimand. Today, thankfully, the landscape is shifting. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 puts critical thinking at the heart of learning. But policies are only words unless they find meaning in the classroom — and that's where design thinking comes in.

My own understanding of this began in 2020, when I joined the Anant Fellowship for Climate Action. It was a transformative experience. I had long been working on environmental activism, but this fellowship added a rich academic layer to my work. It made me realise how deeply intertwined design thinking is with activism, education, and public policy.

Since then, I've been fortunate to witness something remarkable. Prof Anunaya Chaubey, Provost of Anant National University in Ahmedabad, has made it a mission to reach out to Kashmiri students, engaging them in conversations about sustainability, innovation, and design.

When Prof Chaubey visited National Innovations Public School (NIPS) in Shopian last year, I watched the students react in disbelief as he spoke about the hazards of pesticides. In a region known for apple production, the use of chemical fertilisers has long been normalised. But for these students, it was a moment of awakening. They wanted to

know: What are the alternatives? What can we do?

A similar energy filled the room during his session at Birla Open Minds School in Pampore. Design thinking, as a concept, was new to them — but it resonated deeply. It wasn't abstract theory. It was a tool to understand, analyse, and solve the problems they live with every day.

In January this year, Anant University hosted 35 students from three Kashmiri schools at their Ahmedabad campus in a programme charmingly titled Winter Is Cool. It was more than an academic trip. It was an immersion into a way of thinking that encourages empathy and solutions rooted in lived experience. Artists like Rayees Wathori helped anchor the programme, making it interactive and inspiring.

Prof Chaubey returned to Kashmir this April, and I joined him in workshops from Pampore to Bijbehara. At NIPS Shopian, students discussed ways to reduce pesticide use and pollution in Dal Lake. At Whizkids School in Anantnag and Government Boys Higher Secondary School Bijbehara, the conversations deepened. We weren't lecturing — we were listening. That's what design thinking demands: listen, empathise, act.

But such efforts face barriers — especially in government schools. In the last five years, these institutions have grown increasingly reluctant to open their doors to external academic programmes. I believe this is rooted in fear and a lack of exposure. Unfortunately, the ones who suffer are the students, especially those from less privileged backgrounds.



**Prof Chaubey returned to Kashmir this April, and I joined him in workshops from Pampore to Bijbehara. At NIPS Shopian, students discussed ways to reduce pesticide use and pollution in Dal Lake. At Whizkids School in Anantnag and Government Boys Higher Secondary School Bijbehara, the conversations deepened.**

We also visited Islamia College in Srinagar. Despite limited time, Prof Chaubey addressed students of English literature, sparking interest in

applying design thinking to their disciplines. Dr Tehmina Yousuf, the principal, was so moved she proposed an exposure trip for her staff and stu-

dents to Anant University.

Design thinking, after all, isn't just a buzzword. It has real-world implications. Take, for example, the 2013 Right to Fair Compensation Act. It aims to compensate landowners fairly for acquisitions. But in a diverse country like India, fairness can't be one-size-fits-all. Farmers in Rajasthan with 5-acre plots are compensated at four times the market value. What about farmers in Kashmir or Himachal, whose average landholding is just half an acre? They receive the same — which is hardly equitable. This is a classic policy flaw — made without design thinking, without empathy.

And then there's the shocking example of the new auditorium at Bijbehara Higher Secondary School. Beautiful space, big stage — but no ramp. A wheelchair-using student recited a prayer during our workshop. Afterwards, he remained stranded on stage for two hours. It broke my heart. This isn't just poor design — it's a violation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act. And yet, no one questioned it during construction. No engineer. No principal. No one saw the need. This is what happens when design thinking is absent — we create podiums without ramps and policies that deepen inequalities.

When I raised the issue with the local MLA, Dr Bashir Veeri, he promised to act. But promises are not enough. We need a culture where such things are unthinkable to begin with.

Critical thinking and design thinking are not luxuries — they are life skills. They empower our students to analyse the world they live in, question injustice, and build better solutions. I am grateful to Anant National University, and especially to Prof Chaubey, for continuing to nurture this change in Kashmir.

As his tenure comes to a close, I hope the work doesn't stop. Because our classrooms — and our society — need design thinking now more than ever.

*- Dr Raja Muzaffar Bhat is an Acumen Fellow, Chair of the J&K RTI Movement, head of the Climate Action Group, and an Anant Fellow for Climate Action.*



Visa cancellations sow panic for international students, with hundreds fearing deportation

Washington, Apr 15 (AP) At first, the bar association for immigration attorneys began receiving inquiries from a couple students a day. These were foreigners studying in the US, and they'd discovered in early April their legal status had been terminated with little notice. To their knowledge, none of the students had committed a deportable offense.

In recent days, the calls have begun flooding in. Hundreds of students have been calling to say they have lost legal status, seeking advice on what to do next.

"We thought it was going to be something that was unusual," said Matthew Maiona, a Boston-based immigration attorney who is getting about six calls a day from panicked international students. "But it seems now like it's coming pretty fast and furious."

The speed and scope of the federal government's efforts to terminate the legal status of international students have stunned colleges across the country. Few corners of higher education have been untouched, as schools ranging from prestigious private universities, large public research institutions and tiny liberal arts colleges discover status terminations one after another among their students.

At least 600 students at more than 90 colleges and universities have had their visas revoked or their legal status terminated in recent weeks, according to an Associated Press review of university statements and correspondence with school officials. Advocacy groups collecting reports from colleges say hundreds more students could be caught up in the crackdown.

Students apparently targeted over minor infractions

Around 1.1 million international students were in the United States last year — a source of essential revenue for tuition-driven colleges. International students are not eligible for federal financial aid, and their ability to pay tuition often factors into whether they will be admitted to American schools. Often, they pay full price.

Many of the students losing their legal status are from India and China, which together account for more than half the international students at American colleges. But the terminations have not been limited to those from any one part of the world, lawyers said.

Four students from two Michigan universities are suing Trump administration officials after their F-1 student status

was terminated last week. Their attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union, Ramis Wadood, said the students never received a clear reason why.

"We don't know, and that's the scary part," he said.

The students were informed of the terminations by their universities via email, which came as a shock, Wadood said. The reason given was that there was a "criminal records check and/or that their visa was revoked," Wadood said, but none of them were charged or convicted of crimes. Some had either speeding or parking tickets, but one didn't have any, he said. Only one of the students had known their entry visa was revoked, Wadood said.

Students have filed similar lawsuits in several other states, arguing they were denied due process.

In New Hampshire, a federal judge last week granted a temporary restraining order to restore the status of a Ph.D. student at Dartmouth College, Xiaotian Liu, while he challenges the revocation of his visa.

In a break from past, feds cancel students' status directly

At many colleges, officials learned the legal immigration status of some

international students had been terminated when staff checked a database managed by the Department of Homeland Security. In the past, college officials say, legal statuses typically were updated after colleges told the government the students were no longer studying at the school.

The system to track enrollment and movements of international students came under the control of Immigration and Customs Enforcement after 9/11, said Fanta Aw, CEO of NAFSA, an association of international educators. She said recent developments have left students fearful of how quickly they can be on the wrong side of enforcement.

"You don't need more than a small number to create fear," Aw said. "There's no clarity of what are the reasons and how far the reach of this is."

Her group says as many as 1,300 students have lost visas or had their status terminated, based on reports from colleges.

The Department of Homeland Security and State Department did not respond to messages seeking comment.

Foreigners who are subject to removal proceedings are usually sent a notice to

appear in immigration court on a certain date, but lawyers say affected students have not received any notices, leaving them unsure of next steps to take.

Some schools have told students to leave the country to avoid the risk of being detained or deported. But some students have appealed the terminations and stayed in the United States while those are processed.

Still others caught in legal limbo aren't students at all. They had remained in the U.S. post-graduation on "optional practical training," a one-year period — or up to three for science and technology graduates — that allows employment in the U.S. after completing an academic degree. During that time, a graduate works in their field and waits to receive their H-1B or other employment visas if they wish to keep working in the U.S.

Around 242,000 foreigners in the U.S. are employed through this "optional practical training." About 500,000 are pursuing graduate degrees, and another 342,000 are undergraduate students.

Among the students who have filed lawsuits is a Georgia Tech Ph.D. student who is supposed to graduate on May 5,

with a job offer to join the faculty. His attorney Charles Kuck said the student was likely targeted for termination because of an unpaid traffic fine from when the student lent his car to a friend. Ultimately, the violation was dismissed.

"We have case after case after case exactly like that, where there is no underlying crime," said Kuck, who is representing 17 students in the federal lawsuit. He said his law firm has heard from hundreds of students.

"These are kids who now, under the Trump administration, realize their position is fragile," he said. "They've preyed on a very vulnerable population. These kids aren't hiding. They're in school."

Some international students have been adapting their daily routines.

A Ph.D. student from China at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill said she has begun carrying around her passport and immigration paperwork at the advice of the university's international student office. The student, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of being targeted by authorities, said she has been distressed to see the terminations even for students like her without criminal records.

CONTD. FROM PAGE 1

Efforts Pay Off?:

played a central role by offering technical guidance and ensuring legal protections are enforced. Officials say the 2025 census will provide a clearer picture of whether these efforts have translated into sustainable gains.

While around 400 Hinguls are believed to exist across the region based on genetic data, the census remains the key benchmark. "The real test lies in the upcoming numbers," says Shah. "We hope the growth continues and paves the way for long-term survival of this iconic species."

PM's J&K Visit

Kashmir, Saqib Yousuf Yatoo (IRTS), confirmed the postponement of the PM's visit, stating that no fresh date has been announced yet.

The Vande Bharat Express, specially designed to operate in sub-zero temperatures of the Kashmir Valley, is already stationed at Katra. The train consists of eight fully air-conditioned coaches equipped with cab heating, HVAC systems with 9kW heating capacity, sealed gangways, infotainment displays, CCTV surveillance, LED lighting, mobile charging ports, automatic plug doors, and electro-pneumatic brakes.

Although the train is capable of running at speeds up to 160 km/h, it will operate at a limited speed of 85 km/h between Katra and Srinagar, as per the Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS) approval.

Officials said the journey will reduce travel time between the two cities to just three hours, compared to the current 6–7 hours by road.

The USBRL project spans 272 km and includes 119 km of tunnels. It connects major areas including Udhampur, Reasi, Ramban, Anantnag, Pulwama, Budgam, Srinagar, and Baramulla. Two iconic engineering marvels—the Chenab Bridge, the world's highest railway bridge, and the Anji Khad Bridge, India's first cable-stayed railway bridge—are part of this ambitious project.

The Chenab Bridge stands at 467 meters, making it 35 meters taller than the Eiffel Tower. Officials revealed that around 29,000 tonnes of steel were used in its construction. Designed to withstand earthquakes up to magnitude 8, the bridge posed significant engineering challenges due to its location in a high-seismic zone.

Approved in 1994–95 and declared a National Project in 2002, the USBRL has been completed in phases. Key sections such as Qazigund–Baramulla (2009), Banihal–Qazigund (2013), Udhampur–Katra (2014), and Banihal–Sangaldan (2020) have already been commissioned. A trial run of MEMU trains was also successfully conducted last year on the electrified Reasi–Sangaldan section.

Currently, train services in the Valley are operational only on the Sangaldan–Baramulla section, while long-distance trains terminate at Katra. (KNO)

Srinagar Hits

western disturbance is likely to bring light to moderate rainfall and snow (in higher reaches) across the region from April 18 to April 20. Some areas could see moderate to heavy precipitation, accompanied by gusty winds and thunderstorms, particularly from the evening of April 18.

On April 21, the weather is predicted to remain cloudy, with chances of light rain and thunder at scattered locations. A dry spell is expected to return between April 22 and 25. However, MeT has indicated another cloudy phase from April 26 to 27.

In view of the evolving forecast, the department has advised travellers, tourists, and transporters to plan their movements accordingly and adhere to traffic and administrative advisories.

Farmers have been urged to wrap up essential fieldwork by April 17, as the approaching weather system could trigger landslides, mudslides, and shooting stones in vulnerable areas.

Mughal Road

29 following heavy snowfall in high-altitude areas.

"Following the clearance of snow and landslides from Buffliaz to Peer Ki Gali on this highway, single-lane traffic is hereby allowed from 10 am to 3 pm (daily)," Deputy Commissioner (Poonch) Vikas Kundal said in an order.

To ensure smooth vehicular movement and strict enforcement of the directive, the Poonch senior superintendent of police, Surankote sub-divisional magistrate, and the Rajouri-Poonch

deputy superintendent of police (traffic) have been directed to deploy adequate personnel at the Behramgalla, Buffliaz and the Poshana checkpoints, the officials said.

J&K Assembly Can't

that matter is sub-judice.

Achary described the ruling party's attempt to bring adjournment motions in the J&K Assembly as "strange," stating that such motions are censure motions against the government and can only be initiated by the opposition.

"In the J&K Assembly, only opposition can bring an adjournment motion against the elected government," he said.

A censure motion is an expression of disapproval of a specific policy, action, or conduct of the government, a minister, or a group of ministers. It is used to highlight government's failures.

The adjournment motion has its origin in the House of Commons in the United Kingdom.

In India, the Rules of the pre-independent bicameral legislature established under the Government of India Act of 1919 provided for the adjournment. In 1952, the adjournment motion was placed in the Lok Sabha Rule Book. As per Rule 56 of The Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in J&K Legislative Assembly, a motion for an adjournment of the business of the House for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance may be made with the consent of the Speaker.

It is pertinent to mention that three MLAs of the ruling alliance in J&K had withdraw their cut motions after they were told that they cannot use the parliamentary device as it amounts to showing disagreement with government's budgetary proposals. (KNO)

Misplaced Action

accepted, how would we have responded as the Waqf bill was not brought by us? It was passed by the Centre in Parliament," he added.

Abdullah also said a resolution under different rules might have been admitted in the assembly.

"However, that has passed now. Many parties, including the National Conference, have moved to the Supreme Court and put forth their views. Now, we will see what the Supreme Court says," the chief minister said.

Govt Bans School

instructed that all Higher Secondary and High Schools must seek prior permission for picnics from the concerned Chief Education Officer (CEO), who shall maintain records and grant approvals accordingly. Middle Schools and institutions below that level are required to obtain permission from the respective Zonal Education Officers (ZEOs), with prior intimation to the CEO.

For school picnics outside district limits, approvals must be sought from the Director of School Education. Colleges intending to organise excursions or picnics must follow a similar mechanism through the office of the Director Colleges.

The directive follows the assessment of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) regarding outdoor student activities, and comes amid rising concerns over student safety.

During the meeting, the Minister assessed several aspects of traffic regulations like validity of driving licenses, fitness certificates and documents of college and school buses, curbing overloading and installation of CCTVs and Fire safety tools in college and school buses besides other measures to enhance safety protocols for the students.

Speaking during the meeting, Sakeena Itoo passed on strict directions for installation of CCTVs in all school buses including private buses transporting school children. She emphasized on the need for stricter enforcement of traffic laws, enhanced coordination among schools, transport and police departments for effective implementation of road safety regulations.

"It is our collective responsibility to create a safe and secure environment for the school and college going students", Sakeena stated.

Expressing displeasure over rising road accidents, the Minister called upon transport and police departments to launch effective drives against over speeding, drunken driving as well as licence violations with special focus on college and school going students. She further asked them to keep through check on stunt biking and rash driving among youngsters and juveniles and make their parents fully

responsible for such incidents.

The Minister also called upon both the departments for strict implementation of 'no helmet no fuel rule'. She asked them to constitute joint checking squads to ascertain its on ground implementation.

While reviewing other safety regulations, Sakeena Itoo emphasized on routine checking of all college and school buses in terms of fitness and other aspects to maintain safety protocols for students.

The Minister also directed the ACS Education to conduct an in-depth departmental enquiry regarding the recent Handwara College Bus accident. She further asked the Director Colleges to conduct fresh driving test of all college bus drivers.

Sakeena Itoo further called upon all the stakeholders like health, education, transport and police departments to work in tandem and organise regular safety drills and awareness programmes regarding road safety protocols.

No One Listens

would have got the statehood in two-three months if I had not spoiled it for them. So, I didn't impose my views."

Reservation protests, the Srinagar MP reiterated, changed everything. "I was accused of calling the protests. I didn't call the protests. In fact, that was not the protest. That was an assembly of students who gathered outside the house of the Chief Minister who they had elected. I went to take part in that. If my speaking for them helped them convey their message, it is good that I went. Now whether you call it a protest or call it by any other name, it doesn't matter to me. If they (NC) tell me I have become their enemy, it also doesn't matter to me. My commitment is towards my people."

Ruhullah said that the ongoing lack of communication with his party was frustrating for him. "I have a moral commitment towards my people. And in this moral commitment, I am also being consumed. I want to speak and make efforts for my people within and outside the party but this is not happening. And this

shouldn't happen."

The estranged leader said that his position on various issues was "natural and organic." and didn't stem from any political motivation.

"Many people say that what I say is part of a fixed match or a drama. But I don't think I need to prove anything. I am answerable to my conscience. I have to account for my deeds before God. So, God is my judge, not the people who doubt me," he said.

On December 23 last year, Ruhullah Mehdi led a peaceful student protest outside the residence of the Chief Minister in Srinagar. The protest was in response to amendments to the reservation policy in the Union Territory, which have reduced the open merit category to approximately 30%, allocating the remaining 70% to various reserved categories. This has sparked concerns among open merit students and job aspirants, who argue that it undermines career prospects.

In response, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah acknowledged the protesters' concerns and emphasized that a Cabinet sub-committee had been formed to review the reservation policy. He assured that the government is engaging with all stakeholders to reach a fair resolution.

Appropriate Time

what the people of Jammu and Kashmir lost in 2019.

"Statehood is not our destination but a prerequisite to start the process of reclaiming what the people have lost in the last six to seven years," he said.

Abdullah, the National Conference vice-president, said the people's mandate was for "restoring their dignity and protecting their identity".

Reaffirming his government's commitment, the chief minister said, "We will leave no stone unturned in fulfilling the promises and commitments made to the people during the elections."

He further said that downgrading Jammu and Kashmir from a State to a Union Territory has significantly hit the administrative

accountability and efficiency.

He highlighted the stark contrast between functioning as a Chief Minister of a State and that of a Union Territory.

Reflecting on his tenure as the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir when it was a state, he said, "Back then, if I directed officials to execute a task, they would come up with ten different ways to get it done. But now, under the Union Territory setup, the same officials find ten different excuses to avoid doing that very task."

Assuring people of his commitment to local rights, Omar promised that his party would introduce legislation ensuring that jobs are reserved exclusively for the local youth.

The Chief Minister referred to Himachal Pradesh, where a law mandates that 70% of jobs in private industries be reserved for local residents.

He questioned why a similar provision cannot be implemented in Jammu and Kashmir. "If our neighboring state can safeguard employment opportunities for its people, why should Jammu and Kashmir be any different?" he asked.

He also asserted that only the people of Jammu and Kashmir should have ownership and control over their natural resources, including minerals.

Speaking about the promises made during the election campaign, Omar claimed that several of them have already been fulfilled. These include the provision of free electricity and ration for the economically weaker sections and the introduction of free bus travel for women. "People will not have to wait for five years to see our promises materialize. We are determined to fulfill each one of them in a short span," he assured.

Commenting on the bridge, Abdullah said it was unfortunate that the bridge connecting Charar-e-Sharif to south Kashmir took 11 years to rebuild after being washed away in the floods of 2014.

"I think this bridge was destined to be thrown open by us," he said. (inputs from agencies)

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## Lone Accuses CM Omar Of Orchestrating Disruption Over Waqf Bill

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Peoples Conference (PC) President and Handwara MLA Sajad Gani Lone on Monday accused Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and National Conference (NC) legislators of deliberately derailing the Assembly's discussion on the Waqf Bill.

Lone said the disruption was scripted to prevent the passage of a resolution that would have held political significance for Muslims in India.

In a detailed post on X, Lone referred to the recent remarks made by the Chief Minister, who had said the Assembly members committed a mistake by filing the Waqf Bill discussion under an adjournment motion instead of a government resolution.

"The Speaker may have allowed the discussion on the Waqf Bill, but unfortunately our members committed a mistake by filing it as an adjournment motion," Omar Abdullah had said during a public address in Pulwama.

Responding to this, Lone wrote that he had already pointed out the same procedural error on April 7, the day the National Conference members began their protest in the Assembly. "What CM sahib has said today, I had already tweeted on April 7. And for saying the same, the NC members used all possible political pejoratives against me," he wrote.

Lone accused the ruling party of showing political non-chalance toward the Waqf Bill and called it a "criminal" act. He questioned the conduct of over 50 NC legislators who, he said, disrupted the Assembly proceedings for three consecu-



tive days.

"Are you telling us that collectively the Speaker, the Chief Minister, and all NC legislators and lawyers could not notice for three days that they were making a mistake?" Lone wrote. "Are you telling us that the collective IQ of your legislators is such that a glaring mistake staring at their faces for three days was unnoticeable by them?"

He alleged that the Assembly protest was not a mistake but a deliberate move by the ruling party to block a resolution. "This was your script. The whole song and dance performance was orchestrated by you. You did not want a resolution from the J&K Assembly," he said.

Lone said a resolution from Jammu and Kashmir would have carried weight and sent a strong message, but the government ensured that no such opportunity was allowed. "You were not interested in passing the resolution and did not allow the tiny opposition to even make a statement," he said.

He also questioned the Chief Minister's absence during the days of disruption. "Where were you for three days? I know for some time you were in the Tulip Garden," he wrote.

Lone demanded an apology from the Chief Minister and called for an emergency one-day session of the Assembly.

### Waqf Amendment Act

## Govt Singling Out Muslims: Tanvir

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** National Conference (NC) Chief Spokesperson and MLA Tanvir Sadiq on Monday alleged that the ongoing reforms in Waqf properties are a targeted attempt to undermine the Muslim community, questioning why similar regulations are not applied to other religious groups.

Speaking to the media, Sadiq claimed the reforms are part of a broader strategy that began during the tenure of former Chief Minister Mufti Muhammad Sayeed and have since facilitated greater government control over religious endowments.

According to him, the systematic transformation of the Waqf Board into a government-dominated body started as early as 2003. "Traditionally, the management of Waqf affairs was in the hands of local communities. Now, due to lack of proper documentation, state officials can decide the fate of shrines, mosques, and graveyards," he said.

Emphasizing that Waqf properties are built on community trust through voluntary contributions, Sadiq as-

serted that they must remain free from government interference. "Only Muslims have the right to manage Waqf. No government can claim ownership over assets donated for the welfare of the community," he added.

He said the party has already approached the Supreme Court over the issue and expects a just outcome. Criticizing the selective nature of the reforms, he pointed to the lack of similar oversight on over eight lakh acres of temple land, arguing that "in a secular country, reforms must be uniform across all communities."

Responding to BJP leader Sunil Sharma's recent remarks about the NC, Sadiq dismissed them as ineffective and accused the BJP of policy inconsistency, citing their contradictory position on the Jal Shakti scam during legislative sessions.

Sadiq further blamed the BJP-PDP alliance for exacerbating the crisis in Jammu and Kashmir. "The damage began in 2003 and worsened in 2014 when Mufti Sayeed partnered with the BJP. Both parties are equally responsible for the region's decline since then," he said.

## Mystery Deepens Over 17 Deaths In Budhal

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** More than four months (125 days) after the tragic deaths of 17 individuals in Budhal village, Rajouri, investigative agencies across the country remain unable to unravel the mystery. While normalcy has returned to the village, the grief of losing loved ones lingers, and pressing questions about the incident remain unanswered.

The victims, mostly innocent children, are believed to have been poisoned, but key details—such as the source of the toxin and where the children were brought from—continue to evade authorities. The people of Budhal and the wider state are demanding answers, waiting for clarity on these suspicious deaths.

Health Minister Sakina Itoo informed the Assembly that hundreds of samples from Budhal were sent to reputed laboratories across the country, revealing traces of different pesticides. However, the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) in Chandigarh detected chlorfenapyr, a toxic

pesticide, in the viscera of all 17 deceased, confirming poisoning as the cause of death.

Despite this critical finding, the case remains unresolved. The Assembly saw demands for a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe, but the Health Minister argued that some reports were still pending and that the investigation was progressing in the "right direction."

With no concrete results even after four months, frustration is mounting among locals and officials alike. A police officer connected to the case stated, "The investigation is still ongoing," but provided no further updates.

The deaths were reported between Dec 7 last year and Jan 19. Villagers linked the deaths to a wedding feast on Dec 2, last year. Since then, Budhal faced a row of funerals. The deceased belonged to the families of Fazal Hussain, Mohammad Aslam and Mohammad Rafiq.

The government also had to ban social gatherings in the hamlet which is located 57km from main Rajouri town—(KNO)

# ‘Power Sector Second Highest Revenue Contributor For JK’

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** In the past four years, Jammu and Kashmir Power Development Department has become the second highest revenue contributor for the government.

The department in this period has witnessed a 67 percent increase in revenue generation.

According to the official figures available, since Financial Year 2022, amongst the major revenue contributors, the power development department has become the second highest revenue contributor with 67 percent increase in power revenue generation.

The official documents further reveal that till November 2024, transmission and distribution capacity of 32,762.49 MVA with electric line length of 1,66,633.44 Circuit Kilometer (Ckm) has been established by the Government. Transmission and Distribution capacity has increased by more than 35% during the last five years.

"Over the span from 2020-21 to 2023-24, Jammu and Kashmir saw a steady increase in electricity consumption per capita, rising from 1,322 KWHr

to 1,532 KWHr," it reads.

It further said that this trend was reflecting a growing demand for power amidst a pop-

MW SHP Bultikulan and 3.75 MW SHP Khari," it reads.

The documents further said that infrastructure develop-

“Over the span from 2020-21 to 2023-24, Jammu and Kashmir saw a steady increase in electricity consumption per capita, rising from 1,322 KWHr to 1,532 KWHr,”



ulation increase from 13.41 million to 13.70 million, with units purchased/consumed escalating from 17,721.76 million to 20,985.70 million units over the period.

The documents further reveal that the renewable energy sector in J&K is advancing significantly with a focus on solar and small hydro power projects.

"JaKEDA has allocated 35 Mini Hydel Projects (MHPs) with a capacity of 103.05 MW under Independent Power Producer (IPP) mode, already commissioning projects like 5

ment has been a key focus, with significant progress in power generation, connectivity, and urban development. "The doubling of hydel-power generation capacity and on-going road and rail projects are expected to further bolster the region's infrastructure and connectivity."

"4,635 Government buildings and 4,000 households covered under Rooftop solar energy plants with capacity of 19.35 MW. Rooftop Solar Power Plants with a capacity of 8.5 MW have been installed for 300 beneficiaries," it reads—(KNO)

## LG Attends 'Himachal Diwas' Celebrations At Raj Bhawan



Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha on Tuesday attended the celebration of 'Himachal Diwas', hosted by Jammu Kashmir Raj Bhawan at Jammu.

Security personnel, students and the people of Himachal Pradesh living in J&K UT were the special invitees for the evening.

The Lieutenant Governor extended his felicitations and best wishes to the people of Himachal Pradesh on the occasion.

"This Devbhoomi is blessed by nature, rich spiritual and cultural heritage and vibrant traditions. It has also emerged as a major hub for hydropower, and this sector is significantly

contributing to its local economy. I pray that the aspirations of the people of this state are fulfilled and Himachal keeps strengthening the nation's growth," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasised the need to increase the Cultural exchanges between the States and Union Territories. He said, the cross-cultural engagement programmes can strengthen India by fostering mutual understanding, breaking down barriers, and building social cohesion.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted that when people from different states and regions share traditions, food and art, they reduce the division and bridge the gaps.



**CULTURAL EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE STATES AND UTS CAN ALSO SPUR ECONOMIC BENEFITS.** The local festivals will attract tourists and cross-state collaborations will help in curating mega festivals and also boost community pride and local economies,"

## Orchardists Advised To Spray Fungicide Before Rains

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** With weather forecasts predicting rainfall across Kashmir from April 18, horticulture experts have strongly advised orchardists to spray fungicides ahead of the rains to prevent scab and other fungal infections that threaten apple crops during wet conditions.

Experts said rainfall plays a key role in the spread of foliar diseases. "Moisture from rain wets leaf surfaces and creates an ideal environment for fungal infections to thrive. Rain also helps spores travel from one part of the tree to another and from plant to plant," they said.

To minimise this risk, applying fungicides before rain can significantly reduce the chances of infection, they said, adding that if the plant is already coated with fungicide, it forms a protective barrier, reducing the likelihood of disease development.

Dr Tariq Rasool, a senior scientist at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST), said, "Had there been no further rains forecast, there would be little need to spray fungicides

at this stage. Since the weather department has predicted more rains from Friday, it is crucial for growers to act quickly and spray fungicide before the showers begin."

He said that in areas where there is currently full bloom, people need to go for a mist spray, adding that there is nothing wrong with spraying during bloom if they had sprayed 10 days earlier.

Dr Tariq said that only recommended fungicides must be sprayed. "However, if they (farmers) had sprayed just five or six days ago, then they don't need to spray again as of now," he added.

He said that last year a few farmers complained about some fungicide; in that case, they can avoid that particular one and use any other recommended fungicide. Any fungicide can create problems in some areas due to location and other issues, he said.

Dr Majid, another horticulture expert, said that orchardists who last sprayed their apple trees in the first week of April—and whose trees are now in full bloom—can safely

go ahead with another round of fungicide spraying, but they must spray mistily.

"New research confirms that applying fungicides during bloom does not adversely affect the fruit. The notion that scab won't strike during flowering is a myth—scab can attack at any time. So, if it's been over 10 days since your last spray, you should definitely spray before the rain begins," he advised.

Dr Majid recommended using mist sprays rather than forceful sprays to protect delicate flower petals and young fruits. "Avoid the practice of soaking or 'bathing' the entire tree. A gentle mist spray is more effective and safer for the crop. Also, the morning hours are the best time for spraying," he said.

He warned farmers against mixing fungicides with other chemicals like pesticides and insecticides at this stage. "This is a critical period for scab prevention, and growers should focus solely on fungicide applications. Even if light rain occurs a few hours after spraying, the fungicide will still provide protection and reduce the risk of disease," he said.—(KNO)

### Training For Precision

## J&K Police Officers Begin Intensive Course On Fingerprint Science



Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** The "12-Week Proficiency Course in Fingerprint Science" for J&K Police commenced at the Conference Hall, DPL Jammu, in collaboration with the Central Fingerprint Bureau, National Crime Records Bureau. The course aims to familiarize participants with fingerprint knowledge and the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS), a real-time and comprehensive fingerprint identification system that assists law enforcement agencies. ADGP Headquarters/Coordination PHQ, Shri M.K Sinha was the chief guest at the inaugural session.

Speaking on the occasion, the ADGP Headquarters stressed the importance of active participation and dedication to the course, highlighting that applying the gained knowledge would contribute significantly to achieving organizational objectives. He added that once the participants are trained proficiently, they would be capable of handling fingerprint related work more efficiently.

Shri Sinha emphasized the need for participants to engage fully with the course and utilize the knowledge acquired to support the organization's goals.

He underlined that the successful completion of the training would equip the participants to act as a force multiplier in fingerprint analysis.

Dr. Sunil Gupta, IGP, Crime, J&K gave a brief overview of trainees and the course overview was presented by Dr. Sudha, Director, CFPB. Shri Manoj Kumar Pandith presented vote of thanks.

A total of 40 officers, comprising 3 Inspectors, 6 Sub-Inspectors, 8 Head Constables, 22 Constables, and 1 lady official, have been selected for this pioneering course organized by J&K Police. The course will be conducted in two parts. 10 weeks course will be held at Jammu, covering topics such as Biological basis of fingerprints, History of fingerprints, Pioneers in fingerprint science, Fingerprint collection and analysis, Classification and identification of fingerprints.

The 2nd part of the course will be held at Delhi Fingerprint Bureau and Central Fingerprint Bureau, focusing on practical aspects of managing crime scenes, locating and processing chance prints, and identifying criminals.

Ms. Sarah Rizvi, IPS, DIG-Trg, PHQ, J&K also attended the function.

## IGP Kashmir Chairs Security Review Meeting

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir Zone, V. K. Birdi Tuesday chaired a high-level joint security review meeting at Police Control Room, Kashmir, to assess preparedness for upcoming events and to ensure seamless coordination among various security agencies.



The meeting was attended by senior officers from multiple forces, including IG BSF, IG KOS CRPF, IG CRPF Srinagar Sector, DIG CKR, DIG ITBP, DIG CRPF North, DIG SSB, DIG RPF, DIG BSF, DIG South CRPF, as well as SSPs from Srinagar, Railways, Budgam, APCR, Traffic City, CID CIK, Security, and SDRF Kashmir. Also present were Col GoS (IS 15 Corps), DC SB, SP Cargo, SP Telecommunication Kashmir, and AD IB Srinagar. DIGs of SKR and NKR, along with all District SSPs of the Kashmir

Zone, participated virtually, a spokesman said in a statement issued to Kashmir Observer.

During the session, IGP Kashmir V K Birdi underscored the need for heightened vigilance in view of potential threats and directed officers to strengthen intelligence networks, secure vulnerable points, and maintain effective area domination.

He further emphasized intensified patrolling, enhanced visibility at key locations, and strict adherence to established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

Highlighting the importance of synergy among all security and intelligence wings, IGP Kashmir called for robust inter-agency coordination and comprehensive emergency preparedness.

Concluding the meeting, he reiterated the need for unified and proactive efforts to ensure the safe and smooth conduct of high-profile events across UT.

## Over 60 Public Libraries Functional In Kashmir

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Amid efforts to promote literacy and equitable access to educational resources, out of more than 70 public libraries across Kashmir valley, approximately 63 libraries are functional, while 9 remain closed — primarily due to non-availability of staff or lack of infrastructure, reveals an official government document.

Data accessed suggests the highest concentration of functional libraries found in Srinagar district, which boasts at least 13 operational libraries, including prestigious institutions like SPS Central Library, City Central Library, and Gani Memorial Library.

In other districts with a strong functional presence include Baramulla with 12 out of 17 libraries functional, 8 out of 9 libraries functional in Budgam, 5 out of 7 libraries functional in Kupwara, 6 in Anantnag, 5 in Bandipora, 4 in Pulwama, 2 in Kulgam and Ganderbal each and 1 in Shopian.

However, on the flip side, 9 libraries across districts like Baramulla, Kupwara, Budgam and Srinagar are marked "Closed". Baramulla leads with the highest number of closed libraries (5), followed by Kupwara (2), and with closures mostly attrib-

uted to staff shortages and accommodation issues.

Those closed include, Tehsil Library Zadibal (Srinagar), border Block Delina, Kunzar, Tujjar Sharief, Pahlipora and Wagoora in Baramulla while Tanghdar, Kandi Karnah in Kupwara and Khanshab in Budgam.

The report further mentions that proposals are underway to upgrade Tehsil Libraries of Shopian, Ganderbal, Kulgam, and Bandipora to District Library status, indicating efforts to decentralize and strengthen library infrastructure.

The government has also initiated a drafting committee for comprehensive library legislation in J&K to address issues such as funding, staffing, networking, infrastructure, and promotion of a reading culture.

Meanwhile, frequent users and locals paint a different picture. "Many of these libraries", they say, are in a state of neglect, lacking basic facilities —specifically a library in Sopore town, visitors complain of poor upkeep, low footfall, and almost no public outreach.

"The library has potential, but the collection is outdated and internet access is unreliable. It doesn't match today's academic needs," said Adil Ahmad, a post-graduate student from Sopore.



# IPL 2025: DC Seek First Win At 'First Home' Against Struggling KKR

Press Trust of India

**NEW DELHI:** Jolted by a dramatic loss at home after a dream start to the season, Delhi Capitals will look to put the setback behind them when they take on a faltering Rajasthan Royals in the IPL here on Wednesday.

Riding high on a four-match winning streak, the Axar Patel-led Capitals looked like a well-oiled machine before a stunning batting meltdown against Mumbai Indians halted their momentum here on Sunday.

What was meant to be a triumphant return to base ended in despair as the loss saw them slip to second on the points table.

In contrast, Rajasthan Royals find themselves in a precarious position with just two wins



from six matches, languishing at eighth. Their season has been marred by inconsistency.

Impact substitute Karun Nair, fresh off a prolific domestic sea-

son, led Delhi's chase against MI with a dazzling 89 in pursuit of 206 in their first game at the Feroz Shah Kotla this season.

At 119/1 in 10 overs, the match looked all but sealed. But what followed was a jaw-dropping collapse, which included three run-outs in the penultimate over. DC were eventually bowled out for 193 in a chase of 205.

Though the Capitals will undoubtedly rue the missed opportunity of collecting two points, they have little time to dwell on the defeat with another crucial clash looming.

Once again, the spinners will hold the key for Delhi. Despite the challenge of the evening dew, wrist spinners Kuldeep Yadav and 20-year-old Vipraj Nigam will look to weave their magic.

With Faf du Plessis still sidelined due to injury, Nair looks to have firmly secured his spot in the team.

The Royals, meanwhile, have

been plagued by inconsistency. Their batting unit, which is heavily reliant on Indian stars, has misfired repeatedly.

While Yashasvi Jaiswal notched a fluent fifty in the previous outing in the loss to RCB, his overall form remains patchy.

Skipper Sanju Samson is yet to produce a defining knock, while the young guns Riyan Parag and Dhruv Jurel have shown potential without lasting impact.

On the bowling front, Jofra Archer seems to have shaken off the rust after copping the most expensive spell in IPL history.

But the Royals' attack as a whole has been toothless. Apart from Sandeep Sharma, their other bowlers have struggled to control the scoring rate.

Match starts at 7:30pm.

## Short TAKES

### India's Tour Of Bangladesh: 4 Matches In Mirpur, 2 In Chattogram

India will play four games at the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium in Mirpur and the remaining two in Chattogram during their white-ball away series against Bangladesh in August, the BCB announced on Tuesday.

India will play three ODIs and as many T20s in Bangladesh. This will also be India's first T20 bilateral series in Bangladesh and first exclusive white-ball tour since 2014.

The first two ODIs and the last two T20s will be played in Mirpur while the third ODI and first T20 will be held in Chattogram.

India are set to arrive in Dhaka on August 13. They will play the first two ODIs on August 17 and 20, before heading to Chattogram to play the third ODI and first T20 on August 23 and 26. They will return to Dhaka to play the last two T20s on August 29 and 31.

### Shreyas Iyer Wins ICC Men's Player Of The Month Award

Stylish Indian batter Shreyas Iyer on Tuesday secured the ICC Men's Player of the Month award for March after playing a stellar role in India's Champions Trophy triumph.

Iyer finished as the highest run-scorer with 243 runs during the ODI event to win the honour, overcoming competition from New Zealand's Jacob Duffy and Rachin Ravindra.

India thus won the award back-to-back, with Shubman Gill winning the honour for February.

The 30-year-old scored 172 runs across three matches in March, averaging 57.33, with a modest strike rate of 77.47, which included some spectacular knocks.

Iyer scored 79 off 98 balls which included 4 fours and 2 sixes in a win against New Zealand in a Group A fixture of the Champions Trophy.

He scored 45 off 62 balls to assist in India's victorious chase over Australia in the semi-finals and finished his tournament with a clinical 48 off 62 balls as India sealed victory over New Zealand in the summit clash.

### Sunil Gavaskar To Give Vinod Kambli Rs 30,000 Monthly

Sunil Gavaskar has pledged lifelong support for Vinod Kambli, who has been grappling with serious health challenges in recent years.

Through his CHAMPS Foundation, Gavaskar will provide Kambli with Rs 30,000 monthly starting April 1, along with an additional Rs 30,000 annually for medical expenses, according to The Times of India newspaper.

Kambli, who played 17 Tests and 104 ODIs for India between 1993-2000, has faced significant health setbacks in recent years. He becomes the second cricketer after Salim Durani to receive aid from the CHAMPS Foundation, which was established in 1999.

The decision follows a heartfelt moment in January when an emotional Kambli had touched Gavaskar's feet during the Wankhede stadium's 50th anniversary celebration.

## Inter-School Zonal Level Sports Competitions Kick Off Across Budgam



Observer News Service

**BUDGAM:** Under the directions of District Youth Services and Sports Officer Budgam, Gh Hassan Lone, the inter-school

zonal level competitions have officially begun in multiple zones of the district, marking the commencement of the 2025 sports calendar.

At Chadoora, the calendar ac-

tivities began with a chess competition held at the newly established Zonal Physical Education Office. The event was inaugurated by Zonal Physical Education Officer Syed Muzammil Geelani.

Similarly, in Soibug, calendar activities took off with a chess competition hosted at the Islamic Education Institute Soibug. A total of 31 students participated – 20 in the Under-14 and 11 in the Under-17 categories. The event was jointly inaugurated by Incharge Zonal Physical Education Officer Syed Zahoor Ahmad and Principal of the host school, Mohd Saleem Wani.

## Real Kashmir Lose 12-0 In Junior League Match At TRC



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Corbett FC and Sreenidi Deccan FC secured victories in the AIFF Junior League 2024-25 matches held at TRC Ground Srinagar on Tuesday.

The matches were hosted by the Real Kashmir FC, which is providing comprehensive facilities to the visiting teams. The Under-15 Junior League 2024-25 is being organized by All India Football Federation (AIFF).

In the first match of the day, Corbett FC outplayed Real Kashmir 12-0. In the second match, Sreenidi Deccan FC dominated Delhi FC in a one-sided game, maintaining control over possession throughout the match.

Earlier on April 13, Real Kashmir drew 0-0 with Delhi FC. Overall in Group L, the young Snow Leopards

played four games, losing two and drawing two. They have been able to score only two goals, while conceding 25.

The visiting clubs praised Real Kashmir FC for its hospitality and the arrangements made for the league. The smooth conduct of the matches has highlighted Srinagar's growing role in national football.

Earlier, Real Kashmir also successfully hosted I-League matches, featuring top football clubs from across the country, including players of both national and international repute.

The Junior League continues to bring young football talent into the spotlight, drawing attention to Kashmir's emerging sports culture.

Since last year, Real Kashmir owner Arshid Shawl has been focusing more on promoting local talent in Kashmir.

## YSS Anantnag Hosts Multiple Sports Events In Various Zones

Observer News Service

**ANANTNAG:** Department of Youth Services & Sports Anantnag hosted a series of awareness programmes and sports competitions across multiple zones with the directions of the District Development Commissioner, Anantnag along with

Departmental Activity Calendar.

In Bijbehara, witnessed huge participation in Weekly Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan Awareness Programme held across various Panchayat Halqas of Zone Bijbehara. The programme saw enthusiastic participation with around 620 students.

In Doru, Inter-School Zonal Level Competitions in Chess and Badminton for U-14 and U-17 Boys was held at MS Larkipora. The competitions witnessed participation of 240 students in Chess and 290 students in Badminton along with a Unity Run participation of 710 students

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