

## As Kashmir Heats Up, Paddy Dreams Begin To Wilt

A brutal heat wave has dried up Kashmir’s water bodies and left paddy farmers stranded. As fields lie empty and borewells fail, officials scramble for answers, and some ask: is it time to rethink rice?

Mohammad Amin Mir

Srinagar: Abdul Gani stands on the edge of his paddy field in Qazigund’s Kurigam village, holding a bundle of green seedlings in his hands. The earth beneath his feet is cracked like old paint, dry and dusty where water once flowed.



He looks out at irrigation canal his the empty kul—the family has relied on for

generations—and says, quietly, “We cleaned it ourselves. Waited for days. Nothing came.”

This was supposed to be a season of transplantation. Instead, farmers across south and central Kashmir are facing an unfamiliar enemy: heat. The Kashmir Valley, long known | [More on P10](#)

### School Timings Changed Amid Heatwave

Authorities in Kashmir Thursday announced a change in timings of schools across the valley from next week in view of the prevailing | [More on P10](#)

### Srinagar Sizzles: 3rd-Hottest May Day In Over A Century

Srinagar surpassed the previous records on Thursday as the station recorded the third highest-ever temperature in the month of May at 34.4 degree Celsius. An Independent Weather Forecaster, Faizan Arif | [More on P10](#)

### Experts Warn Of Heat Illnesses

As temperatures continue to rise across Jammu and Kashmir, health professionals have issued urgent advisories to the public, urging them to remain vigilant and adopt essential | [More on P10](#)

## Fast-track Recruitment: CM To JKSSB

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday directed the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) to fast-track its recruitment process, stressing the need to eliminate delays and ensure a time-bound and transparent system.

Chairing a high-level meeting to review JKSSB’s functioning, Omar Abdullah emphasized that removing bottlenecks and improving efficiency must be the top priority to restore public trust and provide timely employment opportunities to the youth of Jammu and Kashmir.

JKSSB Chairperson Indu Kanwal Chib presented a detailed report on recruitment activities undertaken since 2019, highlighting the progress made as well as pending challenges. She informed the meeting that delays in indent submissions by various departments and outdated recruitment rules have slowed down the process, with several posts yet to be advertised.

To promote transparency, the Board has proposed conducting all future | [More on P10](#)

# If There Is Attack, There Will Be Response: EAM Jaishankar

## Rebuffs Trump’s Claim, Reiterates Bilateral Talks With Pakistan

Press Trust of India

New Delhi: The India-Pakistan understanding on cessation of hostilities was arrived at following direct negotiations between the two sides, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said against the backdrop of US President Donald Trump’s claim that Washington played a role in brokering the truce.

Jaishankar also said that India will again hit terrorists in Pakistan in response to any future terror strikes like the one in Pahalgam, suggesting that it was the reason why Operation Sindoor has not been concluded.

In an interview to Dutch broadcaster NOS, he said that the government was very clear that “if there is such an attack, there will be a response”.

Jaishankar was in The



Hague as part of his three-nation tour of the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany.

“The operation continues because there is a clear message in that operation - that if there are acts of the kind we saw on April 22, there will be a response, that we will hit the terrorists,” he said.

“If the terrorists are in Pakistan, we will hit them where they are. So, there is a message in continuing the operation but continuing the operation is not the same as firing on each other,” he said.

Under Operation Sindoor, India carried out precision strikes on nine terror infrastructures early on May 7 in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack.

Following the Indian action, Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9 and 10. The Pakistani attempts were strongly responded to by the Indian side.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on May 10 announced that India and Pakistan reached an understanding to stop all firings and military actions on land, air and sea, with immediate effect.

In his | [More on P10](#)

## Neither Trade Nor Talks With Pak: PM

### Says Pakistan Can Never Win A Direct Fight Against India

Observer News Service

Rajasthan: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday ruled out any talks or trade with Pakistan, declaring that if dialogue were to happen at all, it would be about Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). Addressing a rally in Deshnok, Bikaner, he said, “There will be neither trade nor talks with Pakistan. If there are talks,



they will be on PoK.” Referring to the recent terror attack in Pahalgam, in which gunmen reportedly targeted tourists | [More on P10](#)

## Soldier Killed In Kishtwar Encounter

Observer News Service

Jammu: A soldier was killed in an encounter with terrorists during a cordon and search operation launched by security forces in Jammu and Kashmir’s Kishtwar district on Thursday, officials said.

The gunfight took place when the security forces were conducting a search operation following a tip-off about the presence of terrorists in the Shingpora area of Chhatru, they said.

Four terrorists are said to be trapped in the area.

“Contact has been established with terrorists during a joint operation with police at Chhatru in Kishtwar this morning,” the Indian Army’s White Knight Corps said in a post on X.

Additional troops have been deployed and the operation is ongoing to neutralise the terrorists, it said.

“During the ongoing operation, fierce gunfight is continuing. One of our bravehearts sustained grievous injuries in the exchange of fire and has succumbed despite best medical efforts,” the | [More on P10](#)

Delhi-Srinagar Indigo Plane Turbulence

## Pak Rejected Pilot’s Request To Use Its Airspace

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: An IndiGo pilot operating the Delhi-Srinagar flight, which encountered a sudden hailstorm on Wednesday, initially sought Lahore Air Traffic Control’s permission to briefly use the Pakistan airspace to avoid the turbulence, but the request was rejected, sources said on Thursday.

The incident of flight 6E 2142 encountering severe turbulence is being probed by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the sources said.

The flight, carrying more than 220 people, including Trinamool Congress MPs encountered a sudden hailstorm, and the pilot



reported the “emergency” to air traffic control at Srinagar airport. The flight had landed safely on Wednesday.

When the aircraft was overflying Amritsar, the pilot noticed turbulence and sought Lahore Air Traffic Control’s (ATC) permission to | [More on P10](#)

## TMC Leader Recounts 'Near Death Experience'

TMC leader and former journalist Sagarika Ghose, who was on the turbulence-hit Indigo flight bound for Srinagar Wednesday, termed it a “near death experience.” A five-member delegation of Trinamool Congress comprising Derek O’Brien, Nadimul Haque, Sagarika Ghose, Manas Bhunia, and Mamata Thakur, was on the Srinagar-bound flight that experienced turbulence due to | [More on P10](#)

## ECI Introduces 18 New Initiatives To Enhance Electoral Process

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: The Election Commission of India (ECI) Thursday announced a comprehensive set of 18 new initiatives aimed at strengthening the electoral process, improving voter experience, and fostering greater transparency and efficiency. These reforms span across key areas including electors, political parties, procedural reforms, legal frameworks, and election staff development.

Enhancing Electors’ Experience:  
• Voter Limit per Polling Station: To ensure a smoother voting experience and manage crowds effectively, the maximum number of voters at a polling station has been restricted to 1200.  
• Increased Polling Access: Additional polling booths will be set up in high-rises and large colonies to enhance accessibility for voters.  
• Streamlined Electoral Roll Update: | [More on P10](#)

## Terror Attack Fallout: Livelihood Crisis Grip Pahalgam Locals

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A month after a deadly terror attack shook the picturesque town of Pahalgam, residents are reeling from a tourism collapse that has left their livelihoods in tatters. Despite a sweeping security crackdown, the attackers remain at large.

On April 22, terrorists stormed the Baisaran meadows, gunning down 25 tourists and a local man who tried to shield them.

Since the massacre, security forces have launched an extensive manhunt across the Valley. Top militants have been neutralized in separate encounters, but the group responsible for the Pahalgam killings has so far managed to evade capture.

“They’ve slipped through the net for now, but we are



closing in,” said a senior police officer. Over the past month, thousands have been summoned for questioning and hundreds detained. Nearly 100 people have been booked under the Public Safety Act, including several youths with prior militant links.

But as security operations intensify, local businesses continue to suffer. The

usually bustling resort town now wears a deserted look.

“The place feels abandoned,” said Nasir Ahmad, a local tour operator. “Even at the peak of the 1990s insurgency, we had visitors—if not from outside, then from within Kashmir. This time, even Kashmiris are not coming.”

Mohammad Irshad, a shopkeeper, | [More on P10](#)

Facilitating Sim Cards To Terrorists

## CIK Produces Chargesheet Against Terrorist Aid

Agencies

Srinagar:The Counter Intelligence Kashmir (CIK) on Thursday said to have produced a charge-sheet against a terrorist associate (Airtel Franchise) for issuing ‘SIM Card Connection’ to active terrorists.

“Police Station CIK produced charge sheet against one Mudasir Ahmad Sheikh S/O Bashir Ahmad Sheikh R/O Hanand Chawalgam Kulgam vendor of Airtel company, before the Hon’ble Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate Kulgam in case FIR No. 18/2020 U/S 420, 468, 471 IPC of Police Station

CIK Srinagar for issuing ‘SIM Card Connection’ against a non existing person which was actually used by a terrorist,” a spokesman said in a statement.

Police Station CIK had received an information through reliable sources that the procurement of SIM card connections from various Telecom Service Providers by terrorists / members of proscribed organizations / Over Ground Workers (OGWs), is made in a pre-planned criminal conspiracy, with the active connivance of their sympathizers and, in several instances, with the complicity of ‘Franchise/ Point of Sale | [More on P10](#)



## HC Bars Encroachments On ‘Nambal Narkara’

M Ahmad

Srinagar:The High Court of J&K and Ladakh has directed authorities to ensure “Nambal Narkara” water body is preserved and maintained properly.

Closing a Public Interest Litigation, a Division Bench of Chief Justice Arun Palli and Justice Rajnesh Oswal directed authorities to ensure no encroachment of the same takes place.

The PIL was filed last year by Residents of Peerbagh and Hyderpora , seeking directions to the authorities to address the problem of connectivity in the areas i.e. Nadirgund-Gulshanabad-Laloosheeshgarhi Bagh-Gangbug by constructing the proposed link road, walkway and cycle track under one



project after taking into consideration the actual dimensions of the land and technical feasibility. Besides, the petitioner sought directions to the authorities to take steps for the preservation and conservation of the large water body – Nambal Narkara—by removing encroachments from its edges and constructing a ring road, green patch along its sides.

“The main grievance projected by the petitioners in this petition is that there is a proposal for construction of a “Cycle Track/Walkway”

on the top of the Bund which is only 6 ½ ft. in width and simultaneously, the Public Works Department has also announced the construction of the link road from Peerbagh to Gangbugun the top of the Bund, which is only 6 ½ ft. wide, to relieve the pressure of traffic on the Airport Road,” the court said. Precisely the grievance of the petitioners is that it is not possible to have both link road from the Peerbagh to Gangbugh and “Cycle Track/Walkway” on the top of the Bund which is only 6 ½ ft. Wide, the court observed.

“The Joint Commissioner (Works), Srinagar Municipal Corporation has filed the affidavit, stating therein that the work for construction of “Cycle Track/Walk-Way” was allotted to M/s Al-Mairaj Construction vide | [More on P10](#)







- 334 BC - The Macedonian army of Alexander the Great defeats Darius III of Persia in the Battle of the Granicus
- s1040- Battle of Dandanaqan: Tughril's Seljuk army defeats Ghaznavid force, near Merv (present-day Turkmenistan), brings about the fall of the Ghaznavid Empire
- 1059- Henri I crowns his son King Philip I (called the Amorous) of France
- 1493- King of France Charles VIII, King of the Romans Maximilian I and Archduke of Austria Philip I sign the Treaty of Senlis, ending hostilities between France and the Seventeen Provinces
- 1568- Battle of Heiligerlee, Groningen: Dutch rebels beat Spanish, thousands killed
- 1568- The Netherlands declares independence from Spain
- 1659 - France, England & Netherlands sign "Hedges Concerto" treaty
- 1746 - Russia and Austria sign treaty of cooperation
- 1762 - Sweden and Prussia sign the Treaty of Hamburg, reaffirming the status quo that existed before the Seven Years War
- 1799 - Napoleon makes statement in support of re-establishing Jerusalem for Jews
- 1892 - Dr Washington Sheffield invents the toothpaste tube
- 1902 - US President Theodore Roosevelt signs a treaty with Mexico under which both countries agree to submit a long-standing dispute over interest payments to the Court of Arbitration at The Hague
- 1926 - Chiang Kai-shek replaces communists in Guomindang China
- 1939 - Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini sign "Pact of Steel" in Berlin, Germany
- 1941 - British troops attack Baghdad
- 1942 - Mexico declares war on Nazi-Germany & Japan
- 1947 - "Truman Doctrine" goes into effect, aiding Turkey and Greece
- 1947 - 1st US ballistic missile fired
- 1957 - South Africa's government approves race separation in universities
- 1967 - Egyptian president Nassar closes Straits of Tiran to Israel
- 1970 - France performs nuclear test at Mururoa atoll
- 1972 - Ceylon becomes Republic of Sri Lanka as its constitution is ratified
- 1973 - President Nixon confesses his role in Watergate cover-up
- 1976 - NASA launches space vehicle S-179
- 1979 - Canadians elect conservatives, Joseph Clark replaces Pierre Trudeau as the 16th Prime Minister of Canada
- 1981- Soyuz 40 returns to Earth
- 1990 - Microsoft releases Windows 3.0
- 1990 - North & South Yemen merge to form Republic of Yemen
- 2004 - Manmohan Singh becomes the 13th Prime Minister of India.
- 2006 - Results from the Montenegrin independence referendum, 2006 are announced. 55.4% of voters vote to become independent from the Serbia and Montenegro Union.
- 2012 - 14 people die and 30 are injured in train collision in India
- Daniel Johns
- 2015 - Ireland becomes 1st country in the world to legalise same-sex marriage by popular vote
- 2015 -- Pakistan begin the first test-playing nation cricket tour of Zimbabwe since 2009
- 2016- Chinese archaeologists announce findings of earliest use of barley in China to make beer, Shaanxi province 3400-2900 BC
- 2017- Library of Al-Qarawiyyin, the world's oldest continually operating library, reopens after a major restoration by King Mohammed VI in Fez, Morocco
- 2018- Hamburg, Germany, becomes the first city to ban diesel cars on some roads
- 2019- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) wins re-election in a landslide over the opposition Congress Party, world's largest-ever democratic election with over 600 million voters
- 2019- More than 170 tornadoes reported in a week in US states of Missouri, Oklahoma and Iowa, killing seven and causing widespread damage
- 2019- Prototype of new high-speed train that will float above the track, capable of travelling 600km an hour (370 mph), unveiled by Chinese Railway Rolling Stock Corporation in Qingdao



## CBI Charges Ex-J&K Governor Malik in Corruption Case

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The CBI has filed a chargesheet against former Jammu and Kashmir governor Satyapal Malik and five others in connection with alleged corruption in the award of Rs 2,200-crore civil works for Kiru hydropower project, officials said Thursday.



The agency has submitted its findings after three years of probe before a special court naming Malik and five others as accused.

In a message on 'X' on Thursday, Malik said he was admitted in the hospital and not in a condition to talk to anyone.

The former governor said he was getting calls from many well-wishers which he was unable to take.

The CBI had conducted searches at the premises of Malik and others in connection with the case in February last year.

In a statement after the registration of the FIR in 2022, the CBI had said the case pertains to the alleged malpractices in the award of the contract worth about Rs 2,200 crore of civil works of

the Kiru Hydro Electric Power (HEP) Project to a private company in 2019.

Malik, who was the governor of Jammu and Kashmir from August 23, 2018 to October 30, 2019, had claimed that he was offered a Rs 300-crore bribe for clearing two files, including the one pertaining to the project.

He had denied allegations of corruption against him after the agency conducted search operation last year.

Malik said his residence was raided by the CBI instead of investigating the people he had complained about and who were involved in corruption.

"They will not get anything except 4-5 kurtas and pyjamas. The dictator is trying to scare me by misusing government agencies. I am a farmer's son, I will neither be afraid nor bow down," he had posted online.

The central agency has booked Navin Kumar Choudhary, the then chairman of the Chenab Valley Power Projects Private Limited (CVPPPL), and other officials including M S Babu, M K Mittal and Arun Kumar Mishra, besides construction firm Patel Engineering Limited.

"Though a decision was taken in the 47th board meeting of CVPPPL for re-tender through e-tendering with a reverse auction after the cancellation of the ongoing tendering process, the same was not implemented (according to the decision taken in the



Screengrab from AFPTV footage shows members of EU diplomatic delegation reacting after shots fired as they gathered in eastern entrance of Jenin camp during visit to city of Jenin, May 21. (AFP)

## Israeli 'Warning' Fire At Diplomats In West Bank Sparks Outcry

Agencies

RAMALLAH: Israeli troops fired "warning shots" during a visit by foreign diplomats to the occupied West Bank on Wednesday, the military said, drawing condemnation.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas urged Israel to hold to account those responsible for the shooting near Jenin.

The Palestinian foreign ministry accused Israel of having "deliberately targeted by live fire an accredited diplomatic delegation." A European diplomat said the group had gone to the area "to see the destruction" caused by months of Israeli operations.

The Israeli military said "the delegation deviated from the approved route," prompting troops to fire "warning shots" to keep them away from "an area where they were not authorized to be."

It said it "regrets the inconvenience caused" by the shooting, which resulted in no injuries.

The incident came as international pressure intensified

over the war in Gaza, where Palestinians were desperate for supplies after a two-month aid blockade was eased.

After the warning shots were fired at diplomats, Belgium demanded a "convincing explanation" from Israel, while Spain said it was "in contact with other affected countries to jointly coordinate a response to what happened, which we strongly condemn."

Italy's Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani summoned the Israeli ambassador to Rome and said that "threats against diplomats are unacceptable."

France also said it would summon Israel's ambassador, and Germany said Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl would also raise the "unprovoked shooting" with his Israeli counterpart.

Egypt said the incident "violates all diplomatic norms," while Türkiye stated that an employee from its consulate in Jerusalem was among the diplomats, demanding an immediate investigation and holding "perpetrators... accountable."

Ahmad Al-Deek, political adviser for the Palestinian foreign ministry who accompanied the delegation, condemned "this reckless act by the Israeli army."

"It had given the diplomatic delegation an impression of the life the Palestinian people are living," he said.

Palestinian news agency Wafa reported the delegation included diplomats from more than 20 countries including Britain, China, Egypt, France, Jordan, Türkiye and Russia.

The Palestinian Authority released a video of two soldiers aiming rifles at a group of people, condemning the attack.

It said "the heinous crime committed by the Israeli occupation forces, which deliberately targeted by live fire an accredited diplomatic delegation to the State of Palestine during a field visit to Jenin Governorate."

A diplomat present during the visit confirmed to AFP he had heard "repeated shots" coming from inside Jenin refugee camp.

## Trump Again Claims He 'Settled' India-Pakistan Conflict Through 'Trade'

Press Trust Of India

Washington : US President Donald Trump on Wednesday repeated his claim that he "settled" the recent conflict between India and Pakistan through "trade".

"If you take a look at what we just did with Pakistan and India. We settled that whole, and I think I settled it through trade," Trump said in remarks in the Oval Office during a meeting with visiting South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.

He said the US is doing a "big deal" with both India and Pakistan.

"And I said, 'What are you guys doing?', Trump said.

"Somebody had to be the last one to shoot. But the shooting was getting worse and worse, bigger and bigger, deeper and deeper into the countries. And we spoke to them, and I think we, you know, I hate to say we got it settled, and then two days later, something happens, and they say it's Trump's fault."

"But... Pakistan has got some excellent people and some really good, great leader. And India is my friend, Modi," Trump said to which the South African president replied "Modi, mutual friend".



"He's a Great guy and I called them both. It's something good," Trump said.

The US President has been repeatedly claiming that he "helped settle" the tensions between India and Pakistan.

India carried out precision strikes under 'Operation Sindoor' on terror infrastructure early on May 7 in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people.

Following the Indian action, Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9 and 10. The Indian forces launched a fierce counter-attack on several Pakistani military installations.

India and Pakistan reached an understanding on May 10 to end the military confrontation after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.

On May 10, Trump had announced that India and Pakistan agreed to a "full and immediate" ceasefire after a "long night" of talks mediated by Washington.

## All-Party Delegations Brief UAE, Japan About Operation Sindoor, Pak-Backed Terror

Press Trust Of India

India on Thursday launched its global outreach against terrorism emanating from Pakistan as multi-party delegations reached Japan and United Arab Emirates to assert the right to self-defence following Operation Sindoor.

The delegation to Japan is led by JD(U) MP Sanjay Jha, while Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Shinde is leading the delegation to the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The delegation led by Shinde met Ahmed Mir Khori, member of the UAE Federal National Council at Abu Dhabi and conveyed India's strong resolve to counter state-sponsored terrorism originating from Pakistan soil.

"We proudly shared India's decisive success with 'Operation Sindoor' and highlighted the ongoing terrorism threats emanating from Pakistan," Shinde said in a post on X.

Besides Shinde, the delegation comprises Manan Kumar Mishra (BJP), Sasmit Patra (BJD), E T Mohammed Basheer (IUML), S S Ahluwalia (BJP), Atul Garg



An all-party delegation of MPs comprising JD(U) leader Sanjay Kumar Jha, BJP leader Aparajita Sarangi, TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee and others before leaving for 5-nation visit, including Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea and Singapore, to convey India's stand post Operation Sindoor. (@MEAIndia on X via PTI)

(BJP), Bansuri Swaraj (BJP), former diplomat Sujan R Chinoy, and India's ambassador to the UAE Sanjay Sudhir.

"We are taking a firm stand for global security and respect for international peace," Shinde said.

The Indian embassy in the UAE said that the UAE was the first country to receive the multi-party delegation in the context of Operation Sindoor, this underlining the deep bonds of friendship between the two nations. The delegation led by Jha to Japan includes BJP MPs Aparajita Sarangi, Brijlal,

Pradhan Barua and Hemang Joshi, Congress leader and former external affairs minister Salman Khurshid, TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee, CPI(M)'s John Brittas, and former ambassador Mohan Kumar.

"All-Party Parliamentary Delegation led by Hon'ble MP Shri Sanjay Kumar Jha arrives in Tokyo, welcomed by Ambassador @AmbSibiGeorge. India's unwavering stand against cross-border terrorism, as seen in Op. Sindoor, will be highlighted in all engagements," said a post on X by India's Embassy in Japan.

## China, Pakistan, Afghanistan Meet In Beijing, Decide To Expand CPEC

Press Trust Of India

Beijing: The three sides should deepen cooperation in jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative, promote the extension of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan, and strengthen the construction of regional interconnection networks,

critical of the CPEC as it passes through Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir. New Delhi is also opposed to China's Belt and Road initiative as the project includes the CPEC.

The trilateral meeting took place days after the interim Taliban Government recently warmed up to India. The meeting between the foreign ministers of the three countries was also held against



it said. File

The three sides should deepen cooperation in jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative, promote the extension of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan, and strengthen the construction of regional interconnection networks, it said. File | Photo Credit: Reuters

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is set to be expanded to Afghanistan with the foreign ministers of the three countries agreeing on it as part of broader efforts to boost "trilateral" cooperation.

The announcement on expansion of CPEC was made following a meeting among Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Afghanistan's acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Beijing, according to a Pakistani readout. India has been severely

the backdrop of Islamabad's persistent criticism of the interim Taliban Government for failing to crackdown on militant groups operating from Afghan soil waging a war against Pakistan.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning in her media briefing in Beijing termed as "unofficial" the meeting between Mr. Wang, Mr. Dar, and Mr. Muttaqi.

The three countries had a trilateral foreign ministers' mechanism for a long time, which has not been convened for some time amid growing differences between Islamabad and Kabul over the forcible repatriation of thousands of Afghan refugees by Pakistan.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry press release on the trilateral meeting quoted Mr. Wang as saying that China supports Afghanistan and Pakistan in safeguarding their sovereignty, security and national dignity.

## Border Talks With India And Bhutan Advancing, Says China's White Paper On Security

Press Trust of India

Beijing: Talks to resolve border issue with India and Bhutan "continue to advance", a new white paper on China's national security has said, identifying a host of internal and external threats faced by the country and its one-party political system.

The 23-page security paper released recently in Mandarin has outlined a host of threats and challenges faced by China.

China has settled boundary issues with 12 of its 14 land neighbours and the negotiations with India and Bhutan continue to advance to resolve the border disputes, said the white paper titled 'China's National Security in the New Era'.

Beijing has completed the demarcation of the Beibu Gulf waters between China and Vietnam, signed border de-

fence cooperation agreements with nine neighbouring countries, established border defence talks and meetings mechanisms with 12 countries, and regularly carried out friendly visits, working talks, joint patrols, and joint cross-border crime drills, the paper said.

China's border disputes with India and Bhutan remain to be resolved, the country has a maritime dispute with several countries, including Japan in the East China Sea, and the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan in the South China Sea.

India and China have held 23 rounds of Special Representatives-level talks to resolve the border disputes spanning 3,488 km along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

China and Bhutan held 25 rounds of talks to resolve about 400 km of the boundary issue.

## Hindu, Muslim Couples Share Wedding Hall As Rain Disrupts Ceremony

In a remarkable display of interfaith harmony, a Muslim family came to the rescue of a Hindu family after heavy rain disrupted their wedding rituals.

As 'walima' of a Muslim family was underway in a hall in Wanworie area on Tuesday evening, rain threatened to play spoilsport for a Hindu couple set to tie the knot at the adjacent ground.

Sanskriti Kawade Patil and Narendra Galande Patil were to get married at Alankaran Lawns at 6.56 pm, but suddenly it started pouring.

"There was chaos around the

venue. Nearby, in the hall, the walima ceremony was going on. We requested the Kazi family to allow us to use the hall for some time to perform the 'saptapadi' ritual," said a member of the family.

They agreed immediately and vacated the stage. "Even their guests helped us make arrangements for our rituals. The rituals were performed with full respect for each other's traditions," he said.

Later, people from both communities enjoyed a joint feast. Maheen and Mohsin Kazi, the newly-wed Muslim couple, shared the stage with Narendra and Sankruti for photographs.

**There was chaos around the** venue. Nearby, in the hall, the walima ceremony was going on. We requested the Kazi family to allow us to use the hall for some time to perform the 'saptapadi' ritual

## 'Spy' YouTuber Jyoti Malhotra's Police Custody Extended By 4 Days

A court here on Thursday extended the police remand of content creator and social media influencer Jyoti Malhotra by four days, a police spokesperson said.

The 33-year-old YouTuber -- arrested on suspicion of espionage -- was produced before the court at the end of her five-day police remand.

Malhotra was among the 12 people arrested from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh over the past two weeks on suspicion of espionage, with investigators suspecting the presence of a Pakistan-linked spy network operating in north India.

The Hissar native ran a YouTube channel "Travel with JO". She was arrested at the New Aggarsain Extension last week



and booked under provisions of the Official Secrets Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Hissar police said on Wednesday that no evidence had emerged to indicate Malhotra had access

to any military- or defence-related information.

But she was definitely in contact with some people, knowing that they were Pakistani intelligence operatives, they had said.

Police sources had said she was in touch with Ehsan-ur-Rahim alias Danish, a staffer at the Pakistani High Commission, since November 2023.

India expelled Danish on May 13 for allegedly indulging in espionage.

The police have sent Malhotra's three mobile phones and a laptop for forensic examination. Malhotra's four bank accounts are also being analysed.

The National Investigation Agency, Intelligence Bureau, and military intelligence officials have also questioned Malhotra.

Investigations have revealed that she visited Pakistan, China, Bangladesh, and some other countries.

The police had said Pakistani intelligence operatives were developing Malhotra as an asset.

NEWS MAKERS



# Amid Heatwave, SED Issues SOP's For Students, Staff

## Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** School Education Department (SED) Thursday issued Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for government and private schools to be followed during summer hours amidst prevailing heatwave and afternoon stormy winds.

The Director of School Education Kashmir (DSEK) in a circular said, "In light of the prevailing heatwave conditions and the increasing frequency of afternoon stormy winds across Kashmir division, it has become imperative to implement effective safety protocols to safeguard the health and well-being of students and staff."

DSEK said that the well-being of students is paramount, and proactive measures are essential to mitigate the risks associated with extreme weather conditions.

## SOPS AND GUIDELINES Guidelines for outdoor activities, particularly games

Morning assembly should be kept brief and conducted in a shaded area or indoors as far as possible. Emphasis should be on essential announcements rather than prolonged drills or speeches.

All outdoor games, sports activities, and physical education classes shall be conducted before 10:30 AM. This includes any form of recess or break period where students might be inclined to play outdoors.

If outdoor activities are absolutely necessary, they must be conducted before 10:30 AM and with the following precautions:

**Hydration Breaks:** Frequent and mandatory hydration breaks must be provided every 15-20 minutes. Schools must ensure the availability of potable drinking water at multiple accessible points.

**Shaded Areas:** Activities should be conducted in shaded areas as far as possible.

**Supervision:** Strict supervision by Physical Education Teachers and other staff is essential to monitor students for signs of heat stress (dizziness, nausea, excessive sweating, headache, fatigue). Reduced intensity: The intensity and duration of physical activity must be significantly reduced. Focus should be on less strenuous

Schools must devise alternative indoor activities for physical education and games, such as indoor board games, light stretching exercises in well-ventilated classrooms or halls, creative arts and crafts and educational games and quizzes.

## Health and safety measures during heatwave: Hydration:

Schools must ensure a continuous and adequate supply of clean, potable drinking water at all times. Water coolers must be functional and regularly cleaned.

Students should be encouraged to carry their own water bottles and refill them frequently.

Teachers should periodically remind students to drink water. Hydration breaks of 10 minutes must be mandatorily provided after every class/period.

## Ventilation and Cooling:

Classrooms must be adequately ventilated. All fans should be in working order.

School buses/vans must install multiple small fans for enhanced cooling and ventilation.

School buses/vans must be parked in shaded areas and parking sheds, wherever possible.

Curtains or blinds should be used to block direct sunlight.

Wherever possible, air coolers may be considered for common areas or sick rooms.



## First aid and medical preparedness:

The school's first aid kit must be well-stocked with necessary medicines for heat-related illnesses (e.g., ORS packets).

A designated staff member (preferably with basic first aid training) should be available to attend to any student exhibiting signs of heat stress.

Schools must have a plan for emergency evacuation to the nearest medical facility if a student's condition deteriorates. Contact numbers of parents/guardians and local medical services must be readily available.

## Awareness and education:

Teachers should sensitise students about the dangers of heatstroke and dehydration.

Information on preventive measures should be displayed on school notice boards or through posters.

Parents should be informed about the revised timings and safety measures through school

circulars/messages.

## Preparedness for afternoon stormy winds:

**Securing Outdoor Structures:** Before dispersal, schools must ensure that all outdoor structures, hoardings, temporary sheds, and lightweight objects are properly secured or removed to prevent them from becoming projectiles in strong winds.

**Window and Door Safety:** All windows and doors in classrooms and school buildings must be securely latched before students and staff leave the premises.

**Tree Hazards:** School authorities should inspect the premises for weak or overhanging tree branches that could pose a risk during strong winds and take necessary action for pruning or removal.

## Dispersal management:

Dispersal should be managed smoothly and efficiently to ensure students leave the school premises quickly and safely.

Parents and guardians should be encouraged to pick up their children promptly.

Schools must have a contingency plan for students who might be delayed in pick-up due to weather conditions. These students should be kept in a safe, indoor location under supervision.

## General Instructions:

**Monitoring weather forecasts:** School authorities shall regularly monitor local weather forecasts and advisories issued by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) and district administration.

**Flexibility and local assessment:** While these SOPs provide a general framework, school heads are empowered to make minor adjustments based on specific local conditions, in consultation with the respective Chief Education Officer, ensuring the safety of students remains the top priority.

Compliance and reporting: Chief Education Officers shall ensure strict compliance of

## Doctors Advise Public To Stay Hydrated Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** As temperatures continue to rise across Jammu and Kashmir, health professionals have issued urgent advisories to the public, urging them to remain vigilant and adopt essential precautions to prevent heat-related illnesses.

Dr Mohammad Salim Khan, Head of the Department of Community Medicine at GMC Srinagar, stressed the importance of proper hydration and dietary habits during this intense heatwave.

"Recent temperature spikes are unprecedented. To stay safe, people should increase their fluid intake—especially water, oral rehydration solutions (ORS), lassi, lemonades, and homemade fresh juices," he recommended.

Dr Khan cautioned against the consumption of aerated drinks, packaged fruit juices, and excessive tea or coffee, saying these can contribute to dehydration.

He advised avoiding outdoor activities during peak heat hours unless absolutely necessary. The doctor recommended increasing fluid intake by 1 to 3 litres based on activity levels and advised taking traditional hydrating beverages like buttermilk (chaach) and nourishing soups to replenish lost minerals.

"Tea, coffee and carbonated drinks tend to increase urination, leading to further dehydration, while sugary beverages add unnecessary calories," Dr Salim said, adding, "People should wear light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing, use scarves, caps, or umbrellas when outdoors and apply sunscreen to protect against UV damage."

He further highlighted the importance of staying hydrated when sleeping under fans by consuming extra water or fluids to compensate for evaporation losses. "Don't consume stale food, especially at food outlets, as diarrheal diseases tend to increase during this season. Wash raw fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating," he said, adding that special care must be taken of children and the elderly.

If anyone experiences symptoms such as exhaustion, weakness, nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, mental confusion or disorientation, they should seek immediate medical attention at a nearby health facility, Dr Khan advised.

Dr Murtaza Khan, a general physician working in Pulwama, called for recognising early signs of heat-related illnesses. "Symptoms like fatigue, nausea, dizziness, confusion or disorientation require prompt medical help," he advised.

He warned that climate change has contributed to rising temperatures, increasing the risks associated with extreme heat events. "Heatstroke can occur when the body's cooling mechanisms fail, leading to dangerously high body temperatures," Dr Khan said.

Both doctors called for limiting strenuous physical activity during peak hours, especially for vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly. They urged the public to stay informed about warning signs of heatstroke and dehydration and to take preventive measures seriously to stay safe during this intense heatwave—(KNO)

these SOPs by all schools under their jurisdiction. Any deviations or challenges in implementation must be reported to this Directorate

DSEK in the circular further said that the measures are temporary and will be reviewed and revised as the weather conditions improve.

## LG releases "Rubaroo" By Former MLC Late Ramesh Arora



## Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Thursday released a collection of Hindi poetry "Rubaroo" penned by Late Ramesh Arora.

The Lieutenant Governor paid homage to former MLC and senior BJP Leader Shri Ramesh Arora and recalled his contribution to the literary world.

Family members of Ramesh Arora were also present on the occasion at Raj Bhavan.

## DC Anantnag Reviews Amarnath Yatra-2025 Preparations



## Observer News Service

**ANANTNAG:** Deputy Commissioner Anantnag, S. F. Hamid undertook a visit to the Nunwan and Chandanwari base camps to assess the status of ongoing developmental works and preparations for the upcoming Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the progress of critical infrastructure works being executed by departments including Jal Shakti, Public Health Engineering (PHE), R&B, and other allied agencies. Special focus was laid on the readiness of essential

facilities such as drinking water supply, sanitation, power supply, accommodation, and health care services.

The DC also inspected the ongoing track Clearance operations

All stakeholder departments were instructed to ensure strict adherence to the set timelines and maintain close coordination for seamless execution of tasks. The Deputy Commissioner emphasized the need to uphold quality standards while ensuring timely completion of all works to facilitate a smooth and safe pilgrimage experience for devotees.

## DC Gbl Directs For Timely Completion Of Preparations For SANJY 2025

## Observer News Service

**GANDERBAL:** Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore on Thursday presided over a significant preparatory meeting at the VC Room, Mini Secretariat at Ganderbal, for the upcoming Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra-2025 (SANJY).

The meeting focused on reviewing the progress of ongoing works of various departments involved in the arrangements for the Yatra via Baltal route.

The meeting commenced with a comprehensive review of department-wise action plans, covering key aspects such as sanitation, flood protection

measures, lighting arrangements, mobile network connectivity, issuance of RFID cards, registration of service providers, and infrastructure development.

Heads of Departments presented detailed updates on the progress of work and preparations underway.

The DC stressed the importance of timely completion of works well before the commencement of the yatra to ensure a seamless SANJAY-2025.

The Labour Department has been directed to accelerate the registration process of service providers involved in Yatra-related activities.

## LoP Sharma Slams NC Resolutions

## Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Leader of Opposition in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Sunil Sharma, launched an attack on the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC), accusing the party of ignoring the Pahalgam terrorist attack and the sacrifices made by Indian security forces during Operation Sindoor.

Speaking in a 5-minute video statement, Sharma said "For the first time, not only India but the entire world has seen such a response to a terrorist incident. The courage shown by our forces during Operation Vermilion is unmatched."

He added that it was surprising that the JKNC, in its Executive Committee meeting, passed seven resolutions but did not mention the army or the security forces even once.

"There is no appreciation, no recognition of the bravery of our forces. The sacrifice they made for Jammu and Kashmir, for the unity

and integrity of India, has not been acknowledged by the National Conference," Sharma said.

He questioned why the resolutions did not include any reference to terrorism or Pakistan. "Pakistan-sponsored terrorists killed 26 innocent people. Yet there is no mention of Pakistan, no mention of terrorism. What kind of sympathy is this?" he asked.

Sharma said the JKNC was more focused on demanding the restoration of Article 370 and statehood instead of standing with the nation during a time of crisis. "They are talking about special status. What special status? There is no such thing in the Indian Constitution. The Supreme Court never mentioned 'special status' in its verdict either," he said.

According to him, bringing up Article 370 again is an insult to the Constitution and the Supreme Court's decision. "370 is history. It has been buried. It's not coming back," he said.

Sharma also criticized the tim-

ing of JKNC's political demands. "Is this the right time to talk about statehood? You (JKNC) should be visiting the border areas, Arnia, Hiranagar, Akhnoor and other areas. You should be meeting people in Rajouri, Poonch, Tangdhar. If you cannot provide relief, at least ask the Indian government for help," he said.

He claimed that the JKNC, which has ruled J&K for three generations, never cared about the people. "You are concerned about protocol, not people. You want statehood, you want status. But you are silent on the suffering of the people, silent on terrorism, silent on Pakistan," Sharma said.

He said matters of foreign affairs and national security belong to the Prime Minister and the External Affairs Minister, not to a state-level party. "A constitutional state like Jammu and Kashmir should not be interfering in foreign policy. The central government has a clear and firm policy," he said—(KNO)

## CS Seeks Fortnightly Updates About Completion Of JK Highways

## Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo Thursday held a detailed meeting with NHAI, NHIDCL, Beacon and Project SAMPARK and sought reports from the executing agencies to furnish fortnightly reports about both the physical and financial progress registered in each project.

The meeting was attended by ACS, Forests; Principal Secretary, Finance and APD; Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir/Jammu; Secretary, R&B; Deputy Commissioners; Chief Engineers of PWD, representatives from NHAI, BRO, NHIDCL and other concerned officers.

The meeting took stock of progress made, so far, in completion of different National Highway projects across the length and breadth of the UT.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary maintained that these projects are being monitored at highest level for effective implementation. He asked for furnishing the weekly reports to the PWD and bi-weekly to his office for regular monitoring of these vital projects for completion on time.

He enjoined upon these agencies to ensure that those responsible for delays should



also be pointed out in these reports as the lackadaisical approach on anybody's part would be viewed seriously and action initiated against the non-performers. Dulloo asked for working in double shifts wherever necessary and assured of all possible assistance on part of the district and divisional administration.

The Chief Secretary directed the Department of Mining to ensure that short term permits for mining of material to complete these highways are used exclusively for this purpose. He asked for marking all the vehicles carrying such material with RFID tags so that their monitoring becomes easy and efficient to curb its illegal use.

The Chief Secretary had a project wise appraisal of progress made, so Shubham far. He enquired about the possible date of completion of work on each phase of these projects along with the current scenario of physical progress reg-

istered in each of them.

Principal Secretary, Finance, Shailendra Kumar, while speaking in the meeting, impressed upon the concerned Deputy Commissioners to assist the agencies in identification of blocks for regular supply of the mining material required for completion of these vital road projects.

He asked these agencies to deploy more men and machinery in these sites and add as many working hours as possible to meet the set deadlines. He made out that only regular monitoring of the projects would fructify into their completion on time.

Some of the reviewed projects of NHAI included different phases of Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway, work on the tunnel being constructed on Ring Road Jammu, Ramban-Banihal section of NH-44, Marog-Digdol and Digdol-Khuni MakeNallah tunnels, Makarkot-Sher bibi viaduct and different phases of Ring Road Srinagar.

## IUST Recognized Among India's Leading Universities

## Observer News Service

**AWANTIPORA:** The Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) has been ranked among India's top 200 universities in the 2024 edition of global university rankings by Research.com, a prestigious global university ranking platform. Specifically, IUST secured the 195th position nationally among over 1100 universities and 2,882nd globally out of more than 30000 universities, reflecting its growing prominence in research and academia.

Research.com, regarded as one of the most credible academic databases, follows a rigorous annual evaluation, which ranks leading universities and researchers worldwide across various disciplines, based on publication data, citation impact, and research performance.

This recognition is further bolstered by the inclusion of two distinguished IUST faculty

members in the list of top Earth Science scientists in India. Prof. Shakil Ahmad Romshoo, Vice Chancellor of IUST, is ranked 32nd nationally and Prof. Shakeel Ahmed, Professor at the Disaster Risk Reduction Centre, IUST is ranked 34th in India.

Under Prof. Romshoo's leadership, IUST has transformed into a research-intensive institution emphasizing research, innovation and entrepreneurship. The university has seen a significant increase in extramural research grants and has established dedicated interdisciplinary research groups, fostering collaborations both nationally and internationally.

IUST has positioned itself as a leading institute in the country where students are initiated into skilling, innovation and entrepreneurship early on and are also provided hand holding in terms of Seed grants and other support aimed at productization and commercialization of their ideas.

## U.S. Research Institute at New York Named After Dr. Achyuta Samanta

## Dr Samanta Honoured With Presidential Medal By The Varsity

## Observer News Service

**NEW YORK:** The City University of New York (CUNY) has named a newly established research institute after well-known educationist Dr. Achyuta Samanta. The institute, titled the "Achyuta Samanta India Initiative CUNY Crest Institute" (ASIICCI), was inaugurated on Tuesday in New York.

The inauguration took place in the presence of academicians and dignitaries from the United States. This is the first time a research institute in the U.S. has been named after an Indian. The institute will support research by American students on Odisha's art and heritage. It will also focus on Dr. Samanta's work in education and tribal development.

The initiative was proposed by Dr. Milton Santiago, President of Bronx Community College under

CUNY, after his recent visit to KITI and KISS in Bhubaneswar. Impressed by Dr. Samanta's work, Dr. Santiago suggested naming the institute after him. The proposal was approved by the university board. Dr. Samanta attended the inauguration on an invitation from Dr. Santiago.

At the inauguration, Dr. Santiago remarked, "The Achyuta Samanta India Initiative will help American students from diverse backgrounds understand and engage with India's tribal communities, cultural roots, and one of the world's most impactful educational models."

At the event, Dr. Samanta said it was an honour to have an institute in the U.S. named after him. He said the recognition was a matter of pride for Odisha, KITI, and KISS. He dedicated the honour to the people of Odisha and the KITI-KISS community.





KASHMIR OBSERVER®

Printed & Published by Sajjad Haider on behalf of  
Kashmir Observer LLP  
**Printed at:** K.T Press Pvt. Ltd 120-Electronic Complex,  
Industrial Estate, Rangreth-Budgam  
**Published from:** 5-Boulevard Srinagar J&K  
**Editor-in-Chief :** Sajjad Haider  
**Managing Editor:** Bilal Handoo  
**News Editor:** Farzana Nisar  
**Online Editor:** Syed Hamid  
**Head Layout & Design:** Muntazir Yaseen,  
**Digital Media Head:** Amir Ali Shah  
**Distribution & Advertising:** Firdos Ali  
**RNI Registration No:** 69503/98  
**Postal Registration No-**L/159/KO/SK/2014-16  
**Legal Counsel:** Tasaduq Khwaja  
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KO VIEW

Lingering Canine Crisis

The stray dog menace in Kashmir has become a major public safety issue, and a crisis that's now affecting how families live their daily lives.

When children walk to school clutching sticks instead of lunchboxes, when elderly citizens lie awake at night to the sound of relentless howling, then we must ask: how long before this issue is treated as an emergency?

Recent numbers from SMHS Hospital are sobering: In just one year—from April 2023 to March 2024—there were 8,652 dog bite cases. Over 30,000 such cases have been reported in the last six years. These are not faceless statistics. These are children, elders, and neighbours.

The problem is not merely the growing population of stray dogs. It's the systemic failure that allows it to spiral. Poor waste management, with open garbage dumps across the city, provides a steady food source for dogs and accelerates breeding. At the same time, sterilisation drives, though well-intentioned, remain inadequate. Less than a quarter of the stray population is sterilised annually—nowhere near enough to curb the numbers.

Authorities cannot treat this as a routine urban issue anymore. It has altered the everyday lives of thousands of people. Delivery workers avoid certain areas. Children need adult escorts for even short distances. Fear is shaping behaviour, and that fear is justified.

But there is still room to act, humanely, effectively, and with resolve. The government must scale up sterilisation efforts significantly. Animal shelters must be set up and managed professionally to house strays that pose a risk to public safety. Crucially, Srinagar's waste disposal system needs urgent overhaul. Without solving the garbage crisis, all other measures will fall short.

Equally important is community engagement. Local authorities must work with residents, not against them. Responsive helplines, awareness campaigns on how to deal with stray encounters, and designated feeding zones can help bridge the growing gap between people and animals.

What is unfolding in Srinagar is not just a municipal problem. It is a breakdown of urban planning, public health management, and civic responsiveness. The silence from the top is adding to the helplessness on the ground.

This cannot continue. The time for half-measures is over. The government must act now.



Kashmir's Costly Mix-Up

Misunderstanding insurance as investment is draining Kashmir's financial future.

Irshad Mushtaq

In Kashmir, where salaried jobs are limited and business is often seasonal, people are finally warming up to the idea of investing. But somewhere along the way, a confusion is hurting pocketbooks.

Ask around in Srinagar or Shopian, and you'll hear people say, "I've started investing in mutual funds through my LIC agent."

The catch? It's usually not a mutual fund at all. It's a life insurance policy with a bit of market exposure, wrapped in financial jargon.

Mutual funds are straightforward. They take your money, pool it with others', and invest in stocks, bonds, or a mix.

You can start small, stop anytime, and withdraw when you need the money. It's flexible and built for growth.

Insurance doesn't work that way. Term insurance gives a payout if something happens to you. Health insurance helps with hospital bills.

And then there are investment-linked plans, like ULIPs, that promise returns but lock your money in for years. You can't exit freely, and the returns are often modest after fees.

The bigger issue is awareness. In towns like Anantnag and Kupwara, agents often pitch insurance as "investment with safety." People trust them, and that trust turns costly.

A young man saving for his sister's wedding might think he's investing, only to realise later that most of his money went into premiums and charges.

What Kashmir needs now is clarity. Not all financial products are built for the same goal. Insurance protects. Mutual funds grow. Both are important, but only if used right.

Before signing anything, read the document. Ask hard questions. Don't just rely on the agent's word.

Because in a place where every rupee matters, financial mistakes stay longer than they should.

Writer is a Srinagar-based reputed financial advisor.

Danish Shafi Ahmad

“What’s needed now is not more slogans or shiny plans. It’s steady investment, collaborative policy, and public-private partnerships that don’t stall at the MoU stage. It’s the will to put people and environment at the center, not just numbers on a chart.”

Eco Over Ego

A young Kashmiri scholar argues that the valley’s future lies not in factories but in fruit, forests, and fairness.



Kashmir is often caught between labels. But underneath all that noise is a land with the potential to chart its own course.

We don't need to copy Delhi, Mumbai or Silicon Valley, but grow on our own terms.

We don't even need giant factories or glass towers to move forward.

All we need is to look at what we already have — apples, rivers, shawls, stories — and figure out how to grow them in ways that don't hollow out the land or its people.

Take horticulture. Apples alone make up 8% of Jammu and Kashmir's GDP. Nearly 3.5 lakh families — about 27 lakh people — depend on the fruit industry, directly or indirectly.

But most farmers still rely on traditional storage and selling methods. Only around 15% of apples go through modern cold chains, and barely a sliver reach global markets.

Imagine what could happen if the supply chain was fixed. If better roads and refrigerated trucks helped farmers sell beyond the state, or if Kashmiri fruit started showing up in European supermarkets under protected geographic labels.

Or take our handicrafts. The world knows our Pashmina, our carpets, our papier-mâché, but many artisans barely make ends meet.

These are not just items. They are generations of memory, technique, and labour. With the right kind of training, digital tools, and international branding, this could be a multi-million-dollar export sector. And one that doesn't pollute rivers or displace communities.

Tourism is another classic story. Everyone loves the snow and the shikaras, the meadows and the mountains.

But the way tourism is run now — seasonal, unstable, and tied to the news cycle — isn't helping much. A single incident can collapse an entire season.

Instead of chasing quantity, what if we focused on quality? Eco-resorts. Heritage stays. Trekking tours led by trained locals. Cultural experiences that don't trample over the landscape.

That's the kind of tourism that brings in money and dignity — the kind that works even when the headlines don't.

But for all this to happen, Kashmir needs infrastructure that actually works. Cold storage that doesn't fail during a power cut. Internet that doesn't go weak every time something goes wrong. Roads that don't wash away with the snow.

These things sound basic, but they're what hold entire economies together. And they're what make young people stay. Because right now, many don't.

Educated, talented Kashmiris are leaving for better jobs, more stable cities, or just a sense of peace. That's a loss you can't count in rupees. Reversing that means investing not just in jobs but in belonging, making it possible to live a good life here, not elsewhere.

That also means planning for the future, especially when it comes to climate.

Glaciers are melting. Forests are thinning. Weather is less predictable. We can't afford to chase the old model of growth, the one that eats up rivers and spits out concrete.

Instead, we should look at what countries like Denmark or Austria do. They work on clean energy, circular economies, smart regulation.

Kashmir has the rivers to generate micro-hydropower. It has sunlight for solar grids. It has herbs and biodiversity that could feed life sciences labs and herbal medicine companies.

Organic farming and agro-forestry aren't fantasies, they're already happening in parts of the valley. They just need more support, more visibility, more credit and technology.

Even high-tech sectors aren't out of reach. Precision manufacturing — making small, high-value products with minimal environmental cost — could work here if there's capital and training.

Think eco-friendly construction materials, green energy components, or even artisan-tech fusion products that blend old skills with modern tools.

It won't be mass-scale. But it might be just the scale Kashmir needs.

Finance can also play a role. A regional fintech hub or green bond market may sound like big ideas, but they aren't far-fetched. These are low-footprint, high-impact sectors that can create jobs, attract capital, and build resilience, without cutting a single tree.

But perhaps the most important sector is education. Not just schools and degrees, but research labs, craft institutes, clean energy academies, food innovation centers. A place where the next generation of Kashmiris can dream and do without leaving.

If Kashmir wants to grow without breaking itself, this is where it must begin.

What's needed now is not more slogans or shiny plans. It's steady investment, collaborative policy, and public-private partnerships that don't stall at the MoU stage. It's the will to put people and environment at the center, not just numbers on a chart.

Kashmir doesn't need to become another city, another clone, another cog. It can be something else entirely.

It can be a place where beauty, economy and ecology find a way to coexist.

The idea sounds ambitious. But it's also deeply possible.

Danish Shafi Ahmad is a Junior Research Fellow at NIT Srinagar. Views expressed in this article are author's own and don't necessarily reflect KO's editorial policy.



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In Chenab Valley, the Ground Shifts Beneath Our Feet

One rainy night not long ago, a doctor couple in Ramban were fast asleep with their two children in their rented home near the district hospital. A sudden roar in the sky woke them up. Thunder cracked. Then came hail and hard rain. What started as a normal storm quickly felt different. The hillside behind their home soaked up the downpour like a sponge, and then gave way.

The first sign was a trickle of mud through the kitchen window. Then the glass shattered. A thick wave of mud rushed in, sweeping away furniture, clothes, and memories. They ran for their lives. Behind them, the town sank under a blanket of mud and debris. In just a couple of hours, it was all gone.

What happened wasn't just tragic. It was revealing.

Chenab Valley has always lived on edge. It's squeezed between fragile

mountains and a river now shaped by dams. It's where tunnels, highways, and hydropower projects are dug, blasted, and built, often in the name of progress.

But this progress is coming at a cost no one seems ready to pay.

Take the idea of utilitarianism—the greatest good for the greatest number. It sounds noble. But whose good are we talking about when villages are buried, and roads vanish under boulders? In Chenab, every new tunnel or dam feels like a gamble. Every storm feels like a warning. And yet, the warnings are ignored.

After the 2023 Pernote landslide, which cracked open roads and homes in Ramban, the National Green Tribunal asked the government to investigate. A panel of experts traced the damage not just to nature, but to us. They pointed to poor drainage, bad construction, and neglected sewage systems.

For a moment, it looked like action might follow. Then came silence. The news cycle moved on. Construction resumed. Hills kept getting hollowed out. The next disaster? Already penciled in.

This is a place that sacrifices for the nation, and gets very little in return.

Chenab Valley houses hydropower giants like Baglihar, Pakal Dul, and Dul Hasti. The electricity they generate lights up cities across India. But in Ramban, families still face long blackouts, patchy roads, and broken schools. According to NITI Aayog's poverty index, Ramban tops the chart in J&K with 35.26% of people living in poverty. Doda comes next at 28.92%.

It's a cruel twist. The valley that powers the grid can't power its own future.

Ramban has also turned into a testing ground. Infrastructure is

built, demolished, and rebuilt like it's all part of a trial-and-error experiment. Highways crumble. New projects stall. People lose land and homes without fair compensation.

Yet, the region remains excluded from key welfare schemes and even the long-promised Pahari status. Local leaders watch from the sidelines.

And so, the cycle goes on.

The landslide is cleaned up. Machines return. New blueprints are drawn. The next tunnel is announced.

The doctor couple went back to the hospital. They're treating the very people who live in the shadow of the same risk. But what happens when the land cracks again? Or the hillside doesn't wait for a warning?

One day, the candle might burn out. And this time, we may not be able to light it again.

Sincerely,  
Aqib Javed Katoch  
Ramban



# Heat in the Hills

Once famous for its crisp summers and snowy peaks, Kashmir is now setting heat records year after year. Scientists say the valley is warming faster than we think.

Dr. Masoon A. Beig

For most people, Kashmir conjures up images of cool summers, pine-covered slopes, and snow-laced winters. But lately, something has changed.

May 2025 brought a scorching surprise. Srinagar touched 34.4°C, the highest temperature for the month in years. Even the cooler corners like Pahalgam weren't spared. It hit 27.8°C—hot enough to send tourists scrambling for shade.

The heat didn't just show up once. It stayed. Qazigund recorded 33.4°C, Kokernag 33.2°C, and all across the Valley, people stayed indoors, especially in the towns where concrete traps heat like a closed oven.

Schools are starting early to avoid the hottest hours. Hospitals are reporting a sharp rise in cases of dehydration and heatstroke, mostly among children and the elderly.

For a region used to mild weather, this kind of heat isn't just uncomfortable. It's dangerous.

But here's the bigger concern. This isn't a one-off event.

Heatwaves have crept in over the past few years, growing stronger each time.

Back in August 2020, Srinagar reached 35.7°C, the highest for that month in nearly four decades. In July 2021, it was 35°C again. In June 2023, same story. That September, 34.2°C was recorded—nearly the hottest September day in over a century.

By May 2024, records were falling everywhere. Qazigund broke its all-time high with 34°C. Pahalgam touched 28.6°C, the second-



highest in two decades.

In July 2024, Srinagar sweltered at 36.2°C. For a city nearly 1,600 metres above sea level, that number felt unreal.

What's going on?

Climate scientists say it's part of a much bigger pattern. The Sixth Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

Change (IPCC) makes it clear that mountainous regions like Kashmir are heating up nearly twice as fast as the global average.

That's due to global warming, driven by greenhouse gas emissions. But local factors are making things worse.

Over the past two decades, Kashmir has seen a wave of construction. Roads, railways,

power lines, housing colonies—all eating into forests and wetlands. Less green cover means more heat absorbed by land.

On the hills, glacier melting is speeding up. Satellite images from ISRO and studies by the Snow and Avalanche Study Establishment show glaciers feeding rivers like the Jhelum and Lidder have shrunk by more than 15%.

With less snow cover, sunlight isn't reflected. It's absorbed, which makes the land heat up even more.

And the signs are already visible everywhere. From the Apple orchards of Sopore and Shopian, to Anantnag's paddy fields.

Field experts from SKUAST-Kashmir have already reported lower crop yields and signs of heat stress in plants.

The early snowmelt also messes with water supplies, causing rivers to swell too soon and run too dry later in summer, affecting irrigation and hydroelectric projects.

Cities and towns are turning into heat islands. Places like Baramulla, Anantnag, and Pulwama—once seen as cooler belts—are now recording extreme temperatures.

The Jammu and Kashmir State Disaster Management Authority says hospital calls related to heat stress have jumped by over 200% between 2020 and 2025.

There's another invisible culprit: black carbon. These are fine particles released from diesel engines, biomass burning, and fossil fuels. They settle on snow, darken it, and make it melt faster.

Research from the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) shows that black carbon

is speeding up warming in the region and setting off a dangerous loop—more melting, more heat, more melting.

Tourism is feeling the pinch too. Visitors once came to escape the summer heat. But now, even high-altitude places like Gulmarg and Pahalgam are heating up. Local guides talk of guests cutting their trips short, disappointed by the unusual warmth.

The public health impact is another growing worry. A report from the Directorate of Health Services shows a rise in heat-related heart problems and sunstroke, especially during May and July. Those working outdoors—labourers, farmers, vendors—are the worst hit. So are older people and children.

It's clear now: Kashmir's climate is changing fast. And it's hitting where it hurts: food, water, health, and livelihoods.

This isn't just about hotter summers. It's about a fragile ecosystem trying to keep up with a pace it didn't ask for.

And unless something changes, unless policy makers focus on sustainable planning and local communities adapt to what's coming, Kashmir could lose not just its climate charm but the very balance that has kept its people and nature in sync for centuries.

Because when snow turns to sweat in the Valley, it's not just the seasons that are shifting. It's the story of survival.

The writer is an Environmental Geographer and teaches at Altab Memorial Government Degree College, Kelam Kulgam. He can be reached at masoongeo@gmail.com.

## The Algebra of a Father's Love

What happens when fatherhood is measured not in words, but in the silent shaping of lives, the patience of a mathematician, and the soul of a poet?

Syed Eesar Mehdi

I've often thought about what it means to be a father. It's not a title you simply inherit; it's something you quietly become, moment by moment.

For me, that living truth took form in one man: my father, Syed Mehdi Mosvi.

His life wasn't about grand declarations or public praise. It was about small, steady acts that shaped the course of my family's future.

He trained as a mathematician, earning his degree from Amar Singh College, but his way of understanding the world went far beyond numbers.

For him, mathematics was a language of clarity in a life often clouded by uncertainty.

Like Pythagoras, who saw numbers as keys to universal truths, my father saw equations as metaphors for the challenges life throws at us: problems that can be solved if we're patient enough to look for patterns.

I remember dinner conversations where algebra wasn't just an academic exercise but a compelling lesson in persistence and logic.

And in the stillness of night, he would write poetry, Nohas and Naaths, that carried the weight of history and faith. These poems weren't performances; they were acts of devotion and cultural preservation.

In his verses, I heard the echoes of masters like Khwaja Husayn Mir and Mir Anees, and something deeply personal—a dialogue with his ancestors and with God.

My father's story is shaped by loss, too. Before he was born, he lost his own father, Syed Husain Mosvi, who was both a brilliant intellect and a poet of rare sensitivity.

My grandfather's elegies, filled with sorrow and spiritual insight, were a sacred inheritance, something my father grew up carrying even without knowing him.

Afterward, it was his uncle, Syed Asghar Mosvi, an esteemed scholar, who raised him, providing stability and wisdom where grief had once ruled.

My father lives a paradox that Khalil Gibran once described: children come through you but do not belong to you.

He never confused guardianship with ownership. His love wasn't about control but belief in possibility. Though he retired years ago from his government post, his influence on us only deepened.

He worked silently, like Gaudí building the Sagrada Família, knowing his masterpiece would outlast him even if unfinished.

His legacy is visible in his children. My elder brother, Syed Jaleel Hussain, now a Fulbright scholar and professor, is writing a major book on Shi'ism in Kashmir—a work rooted in the intellectual soil my father nurtured.

Freud wrote that the only person we can truly compare ourselves to is our childhood father. For us, that comparison isn't a weight but a compass, guiding our lives without shadow or strain.

As for me, I am a researcher working in policy and international affairs. The tools my father gave me are not privileges or connections but habits of mind—precision, honesty, and a hun-



ger for truth.

Plato said the direction education sets determines a man's future. My father never handed us answers. Instead, he asked questions that made us want to learn.

My sister, Sumaya, pursuing her PhD, benefits from a father who refuses to limit her because of her gender.

In a society where daughters' ambitions are often restrained, he stands firm. Simone de Beauvoir believed womanhood is constructed through freedom and education. At home, my father made no distinction between sons and daughters, only a stronger defense for her dreams.

Bhishma, from the Mahabharata, described a father as the first guru and refuge. My father never claimed divinity but embodied steady reverence, for knowledge, justice, and sacrifice.

He listens more than he speaks, acts more than he explains, teaching in a way Socrates might have admired. Not by lecturing, but by living example.

His poetry, those late-night vigils of ink and thought, are more than personal catharsis. They are blueprints of mystic resilience, prayers in rhythm.

The past is not a burden but a witness, and the future a responsibility. Tagore once said every child brings the message that God is not yet discouraged of man. That message lives in us, carried by my father's belief that courage and goodness are always renewed.

He never asked for thanks or recognition. Like Hafez's sun that never says to the earth, "You owe me," my father gave without measure, without complaint. His life is poetry itself. Not loud or showy, but alive in the people we have become.

We are not simply his children; we are his work in motion, his ideas walking, his faith living and breathing.

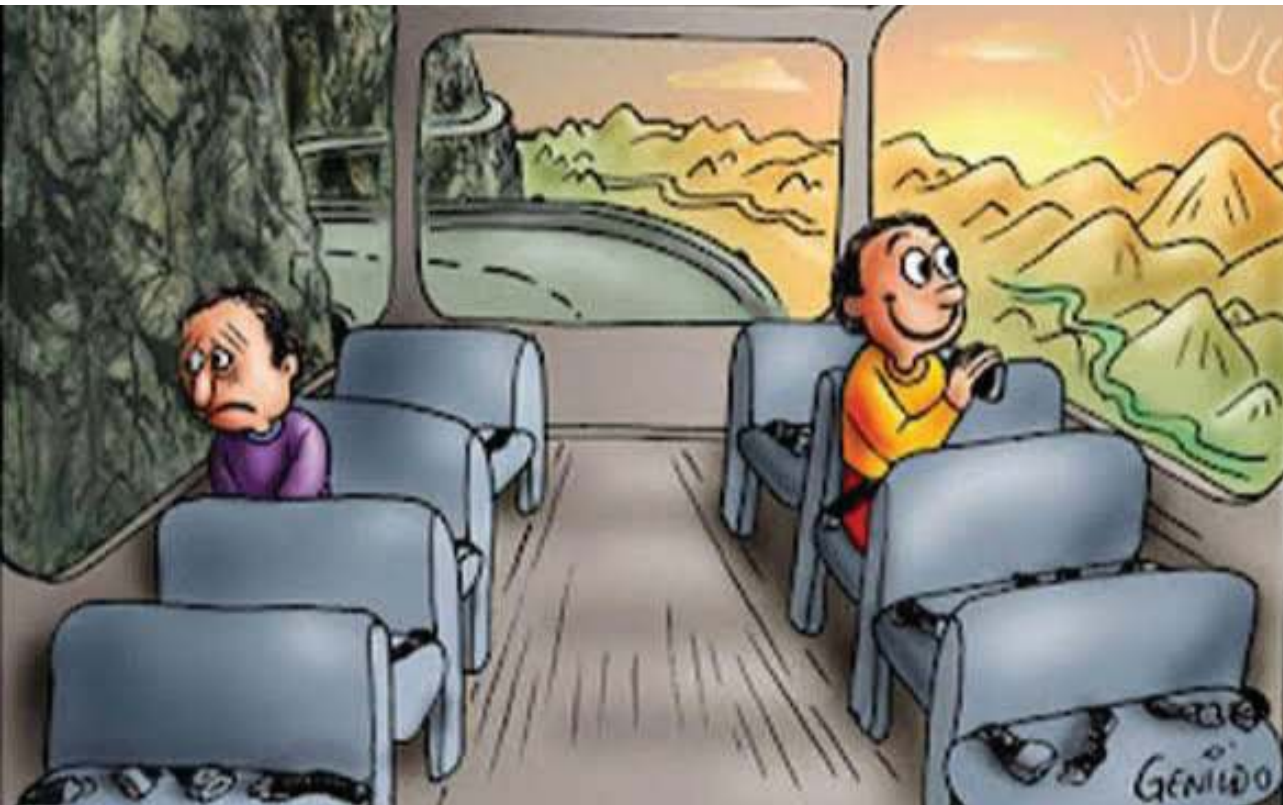
Syed Mehdi Mosvi did not add noise to the world. He lived the answer. And through him, I have come to understand what all the books miss.

That true education is lived, true leadership is humble, and true love is shown, not declared.

Dr Syed Eesar Mehdi is a Research Fellow at International Centre for Peace Studies, New Delhi, India. He can be reached at eesar.mehdi@gmail.com

## Lost in Translation

A bus ride, a new word, and a hilarious mix-up between two Kashmiri teens trying to make sense of English, identity, and growing up.



Aisha Hasnain

He said "millennial"; I heard "millionaire". So I kept repeating "millionaire" and he kept hearing "millennial".

"Arsalan, we are millennials!"

Standing in a crowded bus, Harris tried for once to sound intelligent in front of his class-topper best friend by sharing a new English word he'd picked up from a tuition classmate.

The boys had just finished their Class 10 board exams. It was late 2011, and they had been living in a rented room in Srinagar for the past two weeks, juggling their 11th-grade medical studies with one keypad phone, two kangris, some coal, and pherans they barely dared wear in the city.

Arsalan, who had once told Harris that culture was important, was the first to shed it after spotting boys flaunting leather jackets on bikes.

"I hope Barjees never comes to Srinagar," Harris whispered about his teenage crush back home.

They were heading home for the weekend after their longest stretch away so far. Harris' parents always chose for him what Arsalan decided to do with his career. They were grateful that their below-average son had a bright friend who could serve as inspiration.

Harris was glad to be with Arsalan, and Arsalan, protective as ever, treasured Harris' innocent wit and envied his easy confidence.

But Arsalan blinked blankly at the "millennial" claim, not catching the point. Harris wasn't getting the reaction he expected.

"You understand what I mean?" Harris

tried again.

"You think I don't know what a millionaire is?" Arsalan teased, narrowing his eyes to mock his friend's confusion.

"No, c'mon!" Harris insisted. He really thought Arsalan wouldn't know millennial and was ready to school him.

"I'm just saying," Harris said quietly, feeling a sting deep in his chest. He did have a too-smart friend.

"What are you trying to say?" Arsalan pressed.

"I mean... we were born... uh... when we were born. Isn't it?"

"I have no doubts about that," Arsalan smirked, making Harris more uneasy.

"So that's what makes us millennials!"

"And how?" Arsalan snapped.

"What how? You said you know! It's like you were asking why one and one are two, not eleven!"

"Oh, oh! Sorry. I guess that's too much pressure. I know you can't answer a question that sounds like math to you," Arsalan laughed. "Tell me, who told you this—that the time you're born makes you a millionaire? Did someone read your palm?"

"A guy in class. The one I sat next to today. Seemed rich. He has a computer of his own," Harris said, looking away as he described the new student. "He speaks better English than you."

That last jab hit Arsalan's insecurities, but he kept his cool.

"So he's a millionaire—son of a millionaire."

"No, Arsalan! It's nothing to do with family. His father can't be a millennial. He said only people our age are millennials."

Arsalan sighed. "By the way, it's millionaire, not millionaire."

"No way! I heard him say it crystal clear,"

Harris defended.

"Maybe he has a speech impediment," Arsalan shrugged.

"You've lost it," Harris said, offended. "I asked him to spell it, alright? There are three Ls and no R."

"Okay, get it written from him on Monday. We'll see."

Monday came, and the first thing Harris did was get the guy to write the word down for Arsalan.

M-I-L-L-E-N-N-I-A-L

"See?" Harris demanded. Arsalan stared, puzzled.

That evening, Arsalan sent Harris out for groceries by himself so that he could make a private call to his brother. He asked his brother if Google could answer any question.

Millennial: a person born between the early 1980s and the late 1990s.

At dinner, Arsalan admitted the confusion. "I thought you were saying 'millionaire'."

"What's that?" Harris asked.

"Millionaire?" Arsalan repeated.

"Yes," Harris said, inquisitive like a child.

"A million is ten lakhs. A millionaire is someone with millions of rupees," Arsalan explained with satisfaction.

Days later, the physics teacher mentioned surface tension. Harris slapped his mouth and whispered, "Is 'tension' an English word?"

"Yes," Arsalan said softly.

"That means even my grandmother speaks English," Harris chuckled, surprised the word wasn't just Kashmiri slang.

"Let me concentrate," Arsalan grumbled.

The author writes under the pen name Aisha Hasnain and can be reached at aishahasnain02@gmail.com.



# ‘CAR-T Therapy Can Be Safely Manufactured At Hospital’

Press Trust Of India

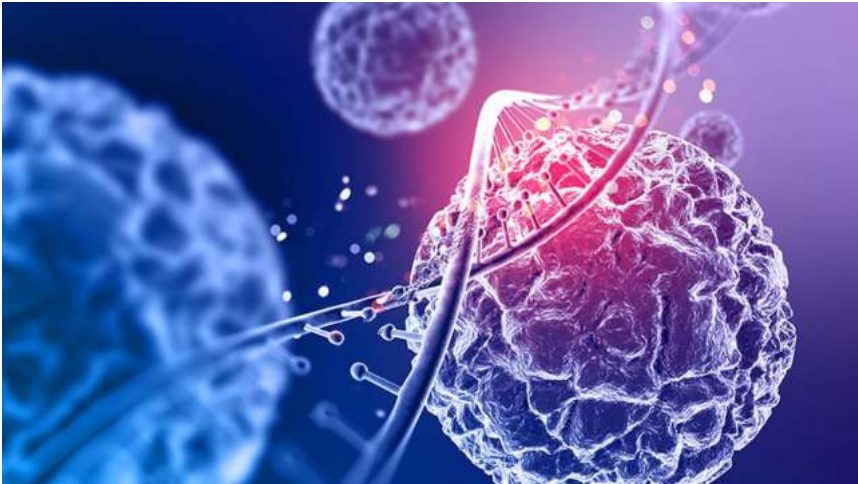
An ICMR-funded trial led by CMC Vellore demonstrated that CAR-T therapy, which uses a patient's own T cells to fight cancer, can be safely manufactured at the hospital and infused to treat patients in India at a low cost.

For the first time, these CAR-T cells were produced and infused in a hospital in India.

CMC Vellore director and principal author of the study Dr Vikram Mathews explained that Chimeric antigen receptor T cells (CAR-T cells) are normal T-cells that are part of the patient's own immune system.

In CAR-T cell therapy, these cells are engineered to recognize and target the specific cancer cell, thus using the immune system to fight the disease. CAR-T cell therapy has been proven to be very effective even in patients who have failed all other therapies, he said.

This process usually involves inserting into the normal T cells the required genetic information to produce an antibody receptor that will recognize the antigen/substance on the sur-



face of the cancer cell.

"This process is usually done in large centralized commercial corporations, which contributes to logistic challenges, increased costs, and decreased efficacy," Dr Mathews said.

One of many strategies to reduce the cost of this therapy, is to produce the CAR-T cells at the hospital site itself, this strategy is called decentralized or point-of-care manufacturing (PoC).

In this study, the authors provided

evidence that this is feasible in India.

The early data from this study establishes its safety and also shows promising results, said Dr Mathews said.

A total of 10 patients, aged 6-59 years, six of them having acute Leukemia and four having lymphoma, who had failed all earlier treatments, were treated with CAR-T cells manufactured at the CMC Vellore with this PoC strategy.

The study found that the therapy brought about 100 per cent remission

in acute lymphoblastic leukaemia patients, 50 per cent remission in large B-cell lymphoma patients. Overall, eight of the ten patients remained cancer-free at a median follow-up of 15 months since starting the therapy.

The doctors further reported that this was safe, well-tolerated, and had minimal side effects.

The study titled 'Safety, efficacy and total cost of point-of-care manufactured anti-CD19 CAR-T cell therapy in India: VELCART trial has been published in the journal Molecular Therapy.

The study also stated that when CART-T cells are manufactured in this PoC model, the cost of the therapy is nearly 90 per cent less than the global average. The production time for the CART-T cells was nine days in in-hospital settings.

Dr Mathews said that the use of a fresh, unfrozen product also contributed to better outcomes.

"This trial redefines how cancer therapy can be delivered - efficiently, affordably, and close to patients. India is leading the way in developing next-generation, in-house biotherapies with global relevance," he said.

"This model could be easily replicated in most tertiary healthcare facilities in the country," Dr Mathews said.

## Food, Car Chases And More: India On Bucket List For 'Mission: Impossible' Stars

Press Trust Of India

A car chase in Mumbai, maybe a motorcycle one or just a scooter caper through jammed streets. And a visit hopefully soon. For the "Mission: Impossible" cast, an India trip ranks high on the checklist of things to do.

So, if Isai Morales, the villain in the just released "Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning", hopes to come to India this summer itself, co-star Simon Pegg says he would love to visit them all, the cities and its beaches, and Hayley Atwell speaks of her love for Indian food.

"I was really disappointed when we did 'Ghost Protocol' in 2011 because there was a section of the movie which was set in India. And I know Tom (Cruise) went out there and he had some amazing pictures taken next to the Taj Mahal," Pegg, who plays tech whiz Benji Dunn in the spy movie series, told PTI in a virtual interview.

"Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning" is the eighth and possibly the final instalment of the franchise which started with 1996's "Mission: Impossible". The lead star in all eight has been Cruise, whose role as spy agent Ethan Hunt has worldwide fan following.

Where would Pegg like to film a future instalment of the franchise, known for its many high-octane action sequences often shot in exotic locations?

## Nearly Half Of Consumers Polled Switching To Private Labels: Survey

Press Trust Of India

Indian consumers are re-evaluating their retail choices and nearly half of them are switching to private labels, according to an EY report which highlights heightened consumer expectations of value, trust and relevance from their purchase experiences.

According to the latest EY Future Consumer Index (FCI) – India edition, the growing preference for private label products is transforming consumer perceptions, positioning store brands as the favoured alternative to traditional branded options.

The EY Future Consumer Index tracks changing consumer sentiment and behaviours across time horizons and global markets, identifying the new consumer segments that are emerging. The 15th edition of the EY Future Consumer Index surveyed over 1,000 consumers across India, between January 24, 2025, to February 20, 2025.

The report said the growing preference for private label products is transforming consumer perceptions, positioning store brands as the favoured alternative to traditional branded options.

It said 52 per cent of consumers are switching to private labels, with 70 per cent agreeing that these brands



are increasingly providing better quality products. Around 70 per cent of the consumers believe that private labels meet their needs just as effectively as branded products, it added.

"Even when brands turn to innovation and 'brand improvements' such as changing ingredients or formulas to create more value, 34 per cent of respondents perceive these efforts as cost-cutting measures rather than genuine innovation," it said.

Furthermore, 59 per cent of consumers indicated that they only purchase branded products when they are on sale, prioritizing discounts over brand loyalty.

The EY report further said that retailers also appear to be responding to this shift, with 74 per cent of consumers noticing more private label options where they shop and 70 per cent observing more private label items positioned at eye level on store shelves. Additionally, a significant 69

per cent of consumers said that store brands and private labels help them save money.

Angshuman Bhattacharya, Partner and National Leader, Consumer Products and Retail Sector, EY-Parthenon said consumer behaviour has traditionally evolved in response to changing economic situations, but the current shifts appear to be more permanent.

Retailers are confidently launching private labels and allocating prime shelf space to them, while technology is enhancing the shopping experience by providing consumers with limitless options and the ability to compare products, he said.

"The rapid growth of private labels is further evidenced by the rising popularity of fresh, new brands among Indian consumers. At the same time, this presents established brands with both the opportunity and the imperative to deepen their connection with consumers and explore innovative ways to stay relevant," Bhattacharya added.

The report also noted that 47 per cent of respondents expressed willingness to return to a branded product if it offers superior taste, quality or performance. Additionally, 44 per cent of consumers indicated they would switch back to branded products for better value for money.

### OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR KREERI

Subject: Application for Issuance of OBC (Other Backward Classes) in favour of Shakir Mohiud-din Hajam S/o GHULAM Mohi-ud-din Hajam R/o Reshipora Athoora Tehsil. Kreeri

Regarding the subject cited above, the applicant has submitted the file in the office of the undersigned for the issuance of OBC. In this connection, a report of Patwari Halqa concerned has been sought which reveals that the applicant is currently residing in the village Reshipora, Athoora of Tehsil Kreeri and belongs to the Hajam Community, having annual income of Rs. 100000/-.

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

The details of the family of the applicant are as follows:

S. No.	Name of the Family Member	Relationship with the Applicant	Age	Occupation
01	Ghulam Mohiud-din Hajam	Head	47	Labour
02	Misra Beguma	Wife	45 year	H/W
03	Bilal Ahmad	Son	25	student
04	Mohammad Shafiq		22	Student
05	Shakir Mohiuddin-Hajam		18	--

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

Naib Tehsildar  
fko Kreeri

### OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR KREERI

Sub: Application of Zena Begum S/O, D/O, W/O: Mohd Yousuf Khan R/O: Saloosa, Tehsil Kreeri for the issuance of Legal Heir certificate.

#### NOTICE

Regarding the subject cited above, in this context, a detailed report was sought from the patwari halqa concerned which reveals that Mohd Yousuf Khan S/O Gh Mohd-ud-Din Khan passed away on 24-09-24. Moreover, the Death Certificate issued by the Competent Authority also depicts the same.

Furthermore, the report of Patwari Concerned points out that the deceased has left behind the following Legal Heirs tabulated as below:

S. No.	Name of Legal Heir	Relation with Deceased	Age	Occupation	Marital Status
1	Zena Begum	W/O	50	H/W	-
2	Samiullah Khan	Son	25	Student	
3	Bisma Yousuf	D/o	18	Student	

The applicant has applied for the issuance of a Legal Heir certificate. As such the instant matter is published through the newspaper. If anyone has any kind of objection, He/She may approach this office within 7 days (Seven Days) of the publication of this notice. After passing of stipulated time of 7 days (Seven Days), No objections will be entertained.

Naib Tehsildar  
fko Naib Tehsildar Kreeri

### OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR KREERI

Subject: Application Mehraj-ud-Din Dar S/O, D/O, W/O: Ghulam-ud-Din Dar R/O: Reshipora (Athoora) for the issuance of the Income Dependent certificate.

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the subject cited above, in this connection, a detailed report was sought from the patwari concerned which reveals that the applicant's family consists of 06 members and the Annual income of the applicant family from all sources consists of Rs. 95,000/- (ninety five thousand only). Moreover, family structure of the applicant is as under:

S. No	Name of Legal Heir	Relation with Dependent	Age	Occupation	Marital Status
1	Mehraj-ud-Din Dar	Self	28 yrs	Labour	
2	Ghulam-ud-Din Dar	Father	70 yrs	Aged/Old	
3	Hafeeza Begum	Mother	60 yrs	H/W	
4	Rashid Ah Dar	Brother	32 yrs	Unemployed	
5	Heena Jan	Sister	19 yrs	Student	
6	Uzma Jan	Sister	15 yrs	Student	

It is further submitted that Mehraj-ud-Din Dar, S/O Ghulam-ud-Din Dar, is Labour by profession and is sole earning hand in the said family. The applicant needs income dependent certificate in favour of Uzma Jan for Scholarship.

The applicant has applied for issuance of Income Dependent certificate. As such the instant matter is published through newspaper, if anyone is having any kind of objection, He/She may approach this office within 7 days (Seven Days) of the publication of this notice. After passing of stipulated time of 7 days (Seven Days), No objections will be entertained.

fko Naib Tehsildar

### OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR KREERI

Subject: Application Areela Akber S/O, D/O, W/O: Mohd Akber Chopan R/O: Saloosa, Tehsil Kreeri for the issuance of OBC (Other Backward Classes) in his/her/their favor.

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the Subject cited above, the applicant has submitted the file in the office of the undersigned for the issuance of OBC. In this connection a report of patwari halqa concerned has been sought which reveals that the applicant is currently residing in the village Saloosa of Tehsil Kreeri and belongs to Chopan Community having annual income of Rs. 100000/- (one lakh only). The details of the family of the applicant are as follows:

S. No	Name of the Family Member	Relationship with the Applicant	Age	Occupation	Annual Income
01	Mohammad Akber Chopan	Father	65 yrs	Labour	100000/-
02	Zeba Begum	Mother	60 yrs	H/W	
03	Noor Mohammad	Brother	35 yrs	Labour	
04	Fahad	Brother	32 yrs	Labour	
05	Arbeela Akber	Self	30 yrs	Student	NIL

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

fko Naib Tehsildar Kreeri

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TARIQ NEWS AGENCY	M.K. CHOWK	MUZAMIL NEWS AGENCY	SOURA
GULZAR NEWS AGENCY	SOURA	SUBHAN NEWS AGENCY	SKIMS SOURA
HASAN NEWS AGENCY	SOURA	NISAR NEWS AGENCY	LAL BAZAR
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## CM Chairs Meeting Of Trader's Delegation, KTMF Highlights Issues For Redressal

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR-** Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Thursday reaffirmed his government's commitment to addressing the concerns of the trading community and facilitating economic revival in the region.

The Chief Minister made these remarks while chairing a meeting with a delegation of traders from across the Kashmir Valley, under the banner of the Kashmir Traders and Manufacturers Federation (KTMF), led by its Chairman, Mohammad Yaseen Khan.

"We will strive to make the best possible use of the resources currently available to us," the Chief Minister said. "It is true that our economy is not as strong as it should be. However, this situation has not developed overnight—it has been unfolding over the years."

Responding to the issues raised by the traders, the Chief Minister assured that all concerns—including those related to encroachments on main roads, market access, infrastructure deficiencies and allied facilities—had been duly noted and would be addressed on priority.

"I have directed the concerned departments to engage with traders respectfully and ensure they are not subjected to unnecessary inconvenience.

Issues related to development, street vendors blocking way in front of shopkeepers, and market accessibility must be resolved through mutual cooperation," he emphasized.

Highlighting the government's ongoing efforts in response to a query raised regarding healthcare in the districts, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah informed the delegation that several key infrastructure projects were underway. "We have already placed orders for critical medical equipment such as cath labs and MRIs for our hospitals. Additionally, I have instructed the Finance Department to release funds for the macadamization of roads to improve our road infrastructure," he said.

Stressing the importance of strengthening the local economy, Omar Abdullah said, "We are working to prioritize local contractors in public works so they, too, can benefit from development initiatives."

He also assured the delegation that the issues related to interest subvention and the deferment of monthly instalments of bank loans would be taken up with the Union Finance Ministry.

"We will continue to pay close attention to your issues and make every possible effort to resolve these" the Chief Minister said.

## Gold Rises Rs 200 To Rs 98,650/10 G; Silver Rallies Rs 2,040 Per Kg

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI-** Gold prices rose Rs 200 to Rs 98,650 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday due to a pick-up in local demand by jewellers and stockists, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity increased by Rs 200 to Rs 98,200 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Thursday.

In contrast, silver prices in the local markets breached the crucial Rs 1 lakh per kg level by rallying Rs 2,040 to Rs 1,01,200 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) on Thursday.

Firm global trends and escalating tensions in the Middle East also supported the local prices, the association.

"Gold prices extended their rally as the US dollar remained under pressure, following renewed concerns over economic stability," Abans Financial Services Chief Executive Officer Chintan Mehta said.

US President Donald Trump's proposed budget, which includes significant tax reductions, is projected to add over USD 3 trillion to the national debt.

This has heightened fears of financial instability and weakened



confidence in US government bonds, Mehta said.

Meanwhile, spot gold slipped 0.50 per cent to USD 3,298.69 per ounce in the international markets. "Gold prices traded positive supported by a sharp decline in the US Dollar Index and renewed concerns over US debt sustainability."

"The weaker dollar and ongoing global geopolitical uncertainties have sustained investor interest in gold as a safe-haven asset," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.

HDFC Securities' Senior Analyst of Commodities Saumil Gandhi said gold extended gains on Thursday, driven by safe-haven demand amid renewed tensions between the US and China, which dampened investors' appetite for riskier assets, leading to increased demand for the safe haven.

## DGCA Probes Indigo's Delhi-Srinagar Flight Turbulence Incident



Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI-** Aviation regulator DGCA is probing the incident of IndiGo's Delhi-Srinagar flight encountering turbulence due to a sudden hailstorm on Wednesday, according to sources.

The flight, carrying more than 220 people, including Trinamool Congress MPs encountered sudden hailstorm and the pilot reported the "emergency" to air traffic control at Srinagar airport. The flight landed safely.

The sources said the incident is being probed by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). Specific

details could not be immediately ascertained.

In a statement on Wednesday, IndiGo said its flight 6E 2142 operating from Delhi to Srinagar encountered sudden hailstorm en route.

"The flight and cabin crew followed established protocol and the aircraft landed safely in Srinagar. The airport team attended to the customers after arrival of the aircraft, prioritizing their wellbeing and comfort. The aircraft will be released post necessary inspection and maintenance," it had said.

A five-member delegation of Trinamool Congress comprising Derek O'Brien, Na-

dimul Haque, Sagarika Ghose, Manas Bhunia, and Mamata Thakur, was on the flight.

"It was a near-death experience. I thought my life was over. People were screaming, praying and panicking," Ghose said on Wednesday.

"Hats off to the pilot who brought us through that. When we landed we saw the nose of the plane had blown up," she had said and added that the delegation thanked the pilot after the landing.

Videos of the moments of turbulence emerged on social media showing panicked passengers praying for their lives as the plane swayed.

**IT WAS A NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE. I thought my life was over. People were screaming, praying and panicking,"**

## Airport Contract Termination: Turkish Firm Celebi's Subsidiary Moves Bombay HC

Press Trust Of India

**MUMBAI-** Turkey-based airport ground handling services major Celebi's subsidiary has moved the Bombay High Court against revocation of its security clearance and subsequent termination of its contract with the Mumbai International Airport Limited (MIAL).

Three petitions were filed on Wednesday by Celebi Nas Airport Services India, which operated at the Mumbai airport, challenging the Centre's decision to revoke the security clearance and contract termination.

The pleas said the decisions were arbitrary and illegal and sought that they be set aside.

Celebi holds 59 per cent capital of Celebi Nas Airport Services India Private Limited.

The petition seeks suspension and annulment of the administrative decision of security clearance cancellation granted by the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) under the Ministry of Civil Aviation of India.

It also seeks annulment of the terminations of the Bridge Mounted Equipment Service



Agreement and the Concession Agreement, and Ground Handling Services by MIAL.

By way of interim relief, Celebi has sought HC to restrain MIAL from taking any final decision on the tenders issued on May 17 for the selection of a new ground handling agency for these services.

Two other Celebi subsidiaries – Celebi Airport Services India and Celebi Delhi Cargo Terminal Management India – had earlier this month moved the Delhi High Court against the security clearance

revocation and cancellation of contracts by the Delhi airport operator.

Amid the backlash in India over Turkey's support to Pakistan amid the Indo-Pak conflict, India's aviation security regulator BCAS last week revoked the security clearance of an Indian arm—Celebi Airport Services India—of Celebi on grounds related to "national security" with immediate effect.

The revocation also applies to other associate entities of Celebi in India. This led to Indian airports, where Celebi operated, terminating their contracts with the group companies.

## Samsung Starts Manufacturing Of Its Slimmest Smartphone Galaxy S25 Edge In India

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI-** Korean smartphone major Samsung has started manufacturing its slimmest smartphone Galaxy S25 Edge in India, the company said on Thursday.

The company launched Galaxy S25 Edge in global markets, including India, on May 13.

"Galaxy S25 Edge is for users, who are looking for a slim and easy-to-carry phone that's also high on performance. It comes with all Galaxy AI features, including multimodal AI, that allow users to interact with the device in real-time through vision and voice. Galaxy S25 Edge is being manufactured at the Noida factory in India," a Samsung spokesperson told PTI.

Built on the Qualcomm AI chipset Snapdragon 8 Elite Mobile Platform, the device has been priced in the range of Rs 1.09 lakh to Rs 1.22 lakh apiece.

According to market research and analysis firm Counterpoint Research, Apple and Samsung accounted for 94 per cent of total smartphones manufactured in India in 2024.

The research firm estimated



that Samsung led the market with a 20 per cent share in smartphone production in terms of volume in 2024.

"Samsung's initiative to manufacture the Galaxy S25 Edge in India is a significant development that reflects the country's rising prominence in the global tech landscape, both as a manufacturing base and as a centre for innovation," technology and auto expert Nikhil Chawla said.

Samsung clocked 17 per cent market share in the March 2025 quarter in the Indian smartphone segment due to portfolio expansion, according to Counterpoint Research.

The company's S series smartphone helped it gain the highest-ever share within Samsung's premium portfolio, driven by the S25 ultra series.

## Sensex Tumbles 645 Pts On Global Sell-Off, Rising US Bond Yields

Press Trust Of India

**MUMBAI-** Benchmark Sensex declined by nearly 645 points while Nifty retreated to 24,600 level due to selling in IT, oil and FMCG shares amid a global equity rout triggered by surging bond yields and US debt concerns.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 644.64 points or 0.79 per cent to settle at 80,951.99 with 27 of its constituents ending lower. The index opened lower and tanked further 1,106.71 points or 1.35 per cent to hit a low of 80,489.92 during the day due to across-the-board selling.

The NSE Nifty tumbled 203.75 points or 0.82 per cent to 24,609.70.

From the Sensex firms, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, Tech Mahindra, Power Grid, ITC, Hindustan Unilever, Reliance Industries and Maruti were the biggest laggards.

IndusInd Bank, Bharti Airtel and UltraTech Cement were the gainers.

"The key benchmark indices witnessed declines amid US fiscal concerns that the proposed budget bill could significantly increase the national debt, pushing US treasury yields higher due to tepid long-term bond demand. Adding to the pressure, a major credit rating agency's downgrade of the US credit outlook sparked broad-based selloffs across Asian markets," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

US bond yields breached the 5 per cent mark while Japanese bond yields surged to 3.5 per cent which prompted sell-off in riskier assets and emerging markets like India.

"Indian equities followed their global counterparts and witnessed major sell-off after a sharp spike in US and Japanese bond yields made investors risk averse towards equi-



ties," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

The BSE midcap gauge declined 0.33 per cent while smallcap index went up by 0.17 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, energy dropped the most by 1.25 per cent, followed by FMCG (1.25 per cent), BSE Focused IT (1.19 per cent), oil & gas (1.13 per cent), IT (1.09 per cent) and auto (0.87 per cent).

Telecommunication and services were the gainers.

As many as 2,178 stocks declined while 1,741 advanced and 167 remained unchanged on the BSE.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled lower. Markets in Europe were trading in the negative territory.

US markets ended sharply lower on Wednesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.37 per cent to USD 64.02 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Wednesday after a day's breather. They bought equities worth Rs 2,201.79 crore, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark jumped 410.19 points or 0.51 per cent to settle at 81,596.63 on Wednesday. The Nifty climbed 129.55 points or 0.52 per cent to 24,813.45.

## High-Powered Panel Holds Deliberations On Long-Term Agri Sustainability

Press Trust Of India

**CHANDIGARH-** A high-powered committee on Thursday deliberating upon the best practices adopted by the Government of Kerala to make agriculture a sustainable and profitable enterprise, a release said.

"Justice Nawab Singh, former Judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court and chairperson of the Supreme Court-appointed High-Powered Committee on agrarian reforms, chaired an important meeting of the Committee in Panchkula today," a Haryana government release said.

"The meeting focused on studying and deliberating upon the best practices adopted by the Government of Kerala to make agriculture a sustainable and profitable enterprise," it said. "The High-Powered Committee was constituted by a Supreme Court Bench earlier to recommend comprehensive reforms in the agrarian sector with the aim of improving farmers' welfare," the release said.

During the meeting, a visiting delegation from Kerala, including the Minister for Agriculture, Government of Kerala, P Prasad and senior officers of the Kerala Agriculture Department elaborated on Kerala's strategic approach towards agrarian welfare. The officers of the Kerala Agriculture Department delivered a comprehensive presentation outlining these and other pioneering efforts that have transformed Kerala's agricultural landscape, the Haryana government statement said.

## Fitch Raises India's Average Growth Potential To 6.4% Till 2028

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI-** Fitch Ratings on Thursday raised India's average annual growth potential till 2028 to 6.4 per cent, from 6.2 per cent estimated in November 2023.

"The Indian economy bounced back more strongly than we expected at the time of the 2023 report, suggesting a less adverse "scarring" impact from the pandemic shock," Fitch said while updating the five-year-ahead potential GDP projections.

In its updated forecast, Fitch upped India's average growth estimate for 2023-2028 to 6.4 per cent, from 6.2 per cent.

It said Fitch Ratings has slightly lowered its medium-term potential GDP projections over the next five years for the 10 emerging market economies covered in the Global Economic Outlook (GEO).

"Our new projection sees growth at 3.9 per cent on a GDP weighted basis, down from 4 per cent in our previous assessment published in November 2023," it said, adding that "Our unweighted average EM10 potential growth projection is 3.1 per cent, just higher than the 2023 report."

## UK Assures Equal Treatment to Indian Firms Under FTA

Press Trust Of India

**NEW DELHI-** The UK for the first time has agreed to accord non-discriminatory treatment to Indian companies in its public procurement system under the free trade agreement (FTA) between the two countries, an official said.

On May 6, the two announced conclusion of negotiations for the FTA. It will be implemented next year.

"For the first time, UK agreed to take binding commitment to provide non-discriminatory treatment to our suppliers under UK's Social Value regime in their public procurement system," the official said.

Under the UK's Social Value law, the British government departments require public authorities to have regard to economic, social and environmental well-being in connection with public services contracts.

According to the UK government, the trade pact will give UK businesses "unique and unprecedented" access to India's public procurement market, comprising about 40,000 tenders with a

value of at least 38 billion pounds a year.

On the other hand, India has agreed to allow British companies to participate in public procurements only in the non-sensitive sectors. The UK firms, however, will not be allowed to participate in procurements by state government entities and local bodies.

"UK-based suppliers would be allowed to bid for domestic tenders above the agreed thresholds (above Rs 200 crore) as deemed Class II local suppliers under public procurement.

Carve out is also provided for India's 'Make in India policy' as well as medium and small enterprises.

Earlier, India opened the government procurement segment in the comprehensive trade pact with the UAE. Under that pact, UAE firms are allowed to participate in procurement tenders worth over Rs 200 crore.

In 2020, the government modified public procurement norms to give maximum preference to companies whose goods and services have 50 per cent or more local content to promote 'Make in India'.

## Dry Fruit Association Calls On Dy CM

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR-** The Dry Fruit Association Kupwara Thursday called on Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, highlighting various issues regarding declining condition and severe challenges being faced by the walnut industry in Kashmir.

The Association led by its President, Haji Bhadur Khan, raised various issues like GST on walnuts, research and innovation in producing new high quality walnuts, lack of market infrastructure and permission to construct the second story in the complex.

The Deputy Chief Minister gave a patient hearing to the delegation, assuring that all their genuine grievances and issues will be resolved in a phased manner. He assured the delegation that technical support will be provided to the farmers for developing high-yielding and disease-resistant walnut varieties.

He asserted that Omar Abdullah government is committed to safeguard the interests of walnut growers and promote the consumption of locally grown walnuts. He assured the Association that government will take every possible step to support the walnut industry as it is livelihood for thousands of farmers in Kashmir.



As Kashmir Heats

for its cool summers, is now in the grip of a severe heat wave. Temperatures in May crossed 35°C in many districts. That’s not just unusual. It’s unheard of. What’s worse, the heat has arrived without rain. Springs have dried up. Canals are silted. The mighty Jhelum has slowed to a trickle. And in dozens of villages, the story is the same: no water, no rice.

Until recently, words like “heat wave” or “water crisis” didn’t belong in everyday conversations in Kashmir. Now, they’re part of the weather forecast.

The Indian Meteorological Department has classified parts of the Valley under “severe heatwave conditions.”

Environmental scientists say this is not a freak event but part of a larger pattern. Climate change, combined with deforestation and haphazard urban growth, is pushing Kashmir into unfamiliar terrain.

Dr. Muneeb Altaf, an environmentalist in Srinagar, puts it simply: “Evaporation has overtaken supply. Even our springs and kare-was can’t keep up.”

In districts like Anantnag, Kulgam and Pulwama, once-reliable water sources have gone bone dry. Bore wells in some villages are failing weeks earlier than usual. The soft karewa soils, which once stored moisture for months, have hardened.

And in places like Qazigund and Khansahib, water meant for fields is now being used just to fill drinking pots.

Paddy isn’t just a crop in Kashmir. It’s culture. It’s what fills plates, feeds families, and supports rural incomes. But paddy needs water, lots of it. Fields have to be flooded at key stages. That flooding isn’t happening this year.

In dozens of villages, transplanting hasn’t even started. In others, seedlings have been planted but are now withering.

“We can’t gamble with drinking water,” says Fatima Jan, a mother of three from Mattan. “We’re using hand pumps to survive. Paddy has to wait.”

For many families, this isn’t just an agricultural failure. It’s a financial one.

Loans have been taken, seeds bought, labour hired. Without crops, there’s no way to repay. “If I don’t sow,” says Abdul Gani, “I lose the money I borrowed. If I do, the crop might fail. Either way, I’m stuck.”

Much of the blame, farmers say, lies with the administration. Departments responsible for irrigation, revenue, and water management were slow to respond.

Many canals haven’t been cleared of silt. There’s no clear policy on water allocation. And some officials still expect farmers to transplant paddy, even where the fields are parched.

Experts say there’s an urgent need for co-ordination. Ground-level surveys are missing. Maps that show which areas can safely grow paddy don’t exist. And without that, farmers say they’re being left to guess.

Some relief ideas are on the table. Officials have discussed using portable pump sets to lift water from low-lying rivers. There’s talk of drone surveillance to identify blockages. But these ideas remain mostly on paper.

One of the toughest questions now facing the government is whether to restrict paddy sowing in far-off fields where water can’t reach. It’s a sensitive issue. Rice is central to Kashmiri food and identity.

But continuing to grow it everywhere, experts warn, could lead to worse outcomes, like groundwater depletion, community water conflicts, and widespread crop failure.

“If we don’t act now, this isn’t just a bad season,” says Irfan Hamid, an agricultural officer in Pulwama. “This could become the new normal.”

Alternatives exist. Pulses, maize, vegetables, and fodder crops need less water. Research institutes like SKUAST are working on drought-resistant paddy varieties. Agroforestry could provide both shade and income.

But shifting an entire valley’s agricultural rhythm isn’t easy. It needs more than awareness. It needs policy. Officials say some steps are being considered: marking non-paddy zones, offering compensation to farmers who switch crops, and even issuing temporary bans under disaster laws.

Behind every policy decision are people like Gani and Fatima, who have never known a season like this.

“This heat,” Gani says, “feels like punishment.”

Mohammad Amin Mir is a researcher based in Kashmir. He writes on land governance, environmental law, and institutional reforms.

School Timings

heatwave conditions. According to an order issued by Directorate of School Education Kashmir, the new timing in schools within the municipal limits of Srinagar city will be from 8:30 am to 2:30 pm, while in the areas falling outside the municipal limits, the timing will be from 9 am to 3 pm.

The new timings will be effective from May 26, the order said, adding that it will be applicable for all government and recognized private schools.

The order said instructions shall be adhered to strictly by all schools.

At present, schools within the municipal limits of Srinagar city open at 9 am, while those in the areas falling outside the municipal limits start at 9.30 am.

Most parts of the Kashmir valley are experiencing heatwave like conditions. The maximum temperature recorded in Srinagar on Thursday was 34.4 degrees Celsius, which was nine degrees above normal.

Srinagar Sizzles:

Keng shared that Srinagar recorded the season’s highest day temperature today at 34.3 degree Celsius.

He also informed that the station has recorded the third highest-ever day temperature in the month of May in 133 years.

The previous record was 34.3 degree Celsius recorded on May 28, 1971, he said.

J&K is presently witnessing an intense heat-wave, while the administration and doctors have issued advisories, appealing people to take adequate precautions.

Meanwhile, as per the details, Qazigund recorded the third highest temperature in the month of May since 1956 at 33.5 degrees Celsius. However, in May 2024, the temperature of 34.0 degrees Celsius was recorded, which stands as the all-time record, Keng said.

According to Keng, Kokernag recorded the all-time highest day temperature in the month of May since 1978 at 33.3 degrees Celsius. The previous all-time highest temperature was recorded on 15 May 2001 at 32.6 degrees Celsius.

Moreover, Pahalgam recorded a maximum temperature of 27.8 degrees Celsius while Kupwara and Gulmarg recorded 31.6 and 25.4 degrees Celsius, respectively.

The Jammu region also witnessed a rise in the temperature. The data reveals that, except Batote, the mercury in different stations of the winter capital settled above 30 degrees Celsius.

Notably, Director Meteorological Department (MeT), Dr Mukhtar Ahmad has predicted an isolated heat wave in J&K, saying that generally hot & dry weather is expected with the possibility of a brief spell of light rain at isolated places mainly towards late afternoon till May 26.

Ahmad said that from May 27 to 31, the weather would remain generally hot & dry with the possibility of a brief spell of light rain and thundershower at scattered places.

The MeT in its advisory said that a rise in maximum temperature by 1-2 degrees Celsius is expected with the possibility of a heatwave at scattered places of Kashmir division till May 23 and fall by 2 to 3 degrees Celsius thereafter.

A rise in maximum temperature is expected by 2-3 degrees Celsius, with the possibility of a heatwave over Jammu division till May 26. “Possibility of thunder, gusty winds at isolated places towards late afternoon can’t be ruled out,” according to the advisory.

Experts Warn

precautions to prevent heat-related illnesses.

Dr Mohammad Salim Khan, Head of the Department of Community Medicine at GMC Srinagar, stressed the importance of proper hydration and dietary habits during this intense heatwave.

“Recent temperature spikes are unprecedented. To stay safe, people should increase their fluid intake—especially water, oral rehydration solutions (ORS), lassi, lemonades, and homemade fresh juices,” he recommended.

Dr Khan cautioned against the consumption of aerated drinks, packaged fruit juices, and excessive tea or coffee, saying these can contribute to dehydration.

He advised avoiding outdoor activities during peak heat hours unless absolutely necessary. The doctor recommended increasing fluid intake by 1 to 3 litres based on activity levels and advised taking traditional hydrating beverages like buttermilk (chaach) and nourishing soups to replenish lost minerals.

“Tea, coffee and carbonated drinks tend to increase urination, leading to further dehydration, while sugary beverages add unnecessary calories,” Dr Salim said, adding, “People should wear light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing, use scarves, caps, or umbrellas when outdoors and apply sunscreen to protect against UV damage.”

He further highlighted the importance of staying hydrated when sleeping under fans by consuming extra water or fluids to compensate for evaporation losses. “Don’t consume stale food, especially at food outlets, as diarrheal diseases tend to increase during this season. Wash raw fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating,” he said, adding that special care must be taken of children and the elderly.

If anyone experiences symptoms such as exhaustion, weakness, nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, mental confusion or disorientation, they should seek immediate medical attention at a nearby health facility, Dr Khan advised.

Dr Murtaza Khan, a general physician working in Pulwama, called for recognising early signs of heat-related illnesses. “Symptoms like fatigue, nausea, dizziness, confusion or disorientation require prompt medical help,” he advised.

He warned that climate change has contributed to rising temperatures, increasing the risks associated with extreme heat events. “Heatstroke can occur when the body’s cooling mechanisms fail, leading to dangerously high body temperatures,” Dr Khan said.

Both doctors called for limiting strenuous physical activity during peak hours, especially for vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly. They urged the public to stay informed about warning signs of heatstroke and dehydration and to take preventive measures seriously to stay safe during this intense heat-wave. (KNO)

Soldier Killed

White Knight Corps said.

The operation is in progress, it added.

If There Is Attack

remarks, Jaishankar said the arrangement on cessation of hostilities was firmed up by the Indian and the Pakistani sides.

“When two countries are engaged in a conflict, it is natural that countries in the world call up and try to sort of indicate their concern,” he said.

Jaishankar added: “But the cessation of firing and military action was something which was negotiated directly between India and Pakistan.”

“We made one thing very clear to everybody who spoke to us, not just the US but to everybody, saying if the Pakistanis want to stop fighting, they need to tell us. We need to hear it from them. Their general has to call up our general and say this. And that is what happened.”

Following the cessation of hostilities between India and Pakistan, Trump repeatedly claimed credit for it saying that he played a role in brokering the “ceasefire” between the two sides.

In his comments, Jaishankar described the April 22 Pahalgam attack as “barbaric” and said the terrorists “murdered” the innocent civilians in front of their families after

ascertaining their “faith” with an aim to create “religious discord”.

“It was imperative that we have a response because the lack of response...was impossible in such a situation,” he said.

Jaishankar said India is willing to hold talks with Pakistan on return of the illegally occupied part of Kashmir by that country to New Delhi, and on terrorism.

Asked about security concerns emanating from frontiers along China and Pakistan on India’s economic growth, Jaishankar indicated that economic growth and security are part of the same coin.

“Our security challenges were far more threatening than yours (Europe’s). So we had to prioritise security. You don’t choose between security and economic prosperity. Today, you are realising that they are part of the same coin.”

Neither Trade

based on their religion, Modi said, “The bullets were fired in Pahalgam, but 140 crore Indians felt the pain. Our forces have avenged it with resolve.”

The Prime Minister said India is no longer deterred by nuclear threats and highlighted the military response under Operation Sindoor, which he said had three clear principles: Any terror attack on India will be met with a decisive response—on India’s terms and timing; India will not be intimidated by threats of nuclear weapons; and there will be no distinction between terrorists and the governments that support them.

“Our armed forces were given a free hand, and within 22 minutes, they destroyed nine terror hideouts. Pakistan’s Rahim Yar Khan airbase, which they tried to use, is now in the ICU,” he claimed.

In a sharp warning, Modi said, “Pakistan can never win a direct war against India. That’s why it uses terrorism as a proxy. But now, those who shed Indian blood are paying the price.”

He also said India’s share of water under the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) will not be allowed to benefit Pakistan while it continues to support terrorism. “If Pakistan continues to export terrorists, it will have to beg for every drop of water and every penny,” he said.

India recently informed Pakistan of its decision to keep the IWT in abeyance, citing sustained cross-border terrorism and Islamabad’s failure to uphold the treaty’s conditions. In a letter to Pakistan, Water Resources Secretary Debashree Mukherjee said that Pakistan’s actions have impeded India’s rights under the treaty and necessitated a reassessment.

Highlighting diplomatic outreach, Modi said multi-party delegations are being sent globally to expose Pakistan’s role in state-sponsored terrorism and assert India’s right to self-defence.

“This is not a game of vengeance but a new form of justice. Operation Sindoor reflects a capable, confident India—one that responds decisively and stands firm in the face of threats,” Modi said.

Fast-track Recruitment

examinations under CCTV surveillance.

The Chief Minister also flagged the ongoing delays in Class IV recruitment as a critical concern and urged the Board to address these issues urgently.

Omar Abdullah further called for strengthening the Board’s legal and administrative frameworks and improving its facilities to ensure a smooth and fair recruitment process.

“The government is committed to a transparent recruitment process that not only fills vacant posts swiftly but also uplifts institutional efficiency and provides qualified youth with much-needed jobs,” the Chief Minister affirmed.

The meeting was attended by senior officials, including Advisor Nasir Aslam Wani, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary Dheeraj Gupta, and other key administrators.

SC Reserves Interim

the composition of state waqf boards and the Central Waqf Council, where they contend only Muslims should operate except ex-officio members.

The third issue relates to a provision that says a waqf property will not be treated as a waqf when the collector conducts an inquiry to ascertain if the property is government land.

The Centre strongly defended the Act, saying waqf by its very nature was a “secular concept” and can’t be stayed given the “presumption of constitutionality” in its favour.

Moreover, though waqf was an Islamic concept, it was not an essential part of Islam, it added.

Sibal, leading the petitioners, described the law as a “complete departure from historical legal and constitutional principles” and a means to “capture waqf through a non-judicial process”.

“This is a case about the systematic capture of waqf properties. The government cannot dictate what issues can be raised,” he said.

On Thursday, Mehta began his submissions by urging the court not to rush into staying a duly enacted law and said, “It is not difficult to raise a proposition, and only because it can be argued does not justify staying a statute passed by a competent legislature.”

Highlighting the tribal land exclusion clause under the law, he said Scheduled Tribes in scheduled areas were a constitutionally protected class, and the amendment respected that status.

The bench asked whether a religious identity could override cultural protections especially if waqf properties were created on tribal land.

“Waqf is to Allah. It is irrevocable. If found unconstitutional later, it can be quashed. But creating irreversible waqf in the meantime has far-reaching consequences,” Mehta said.

The SG defended a provision which says only a person, who has been practicing Islam for last five years, can create waqf by saying the condition was necessary to prevent fraudulent waqfs and not to deny genuine religious expression.

“If a Hindu wants to create a charitable institution, there are existing legal routes. Why use waqf?” he asked, adding that charity can

be done by non-Muslims by creating trusts.

He said the concept of essential religious practices does not shield “waqf by user”, a concept developed under statute rather than core Islamic tenet.

He dealt with the concerns over non-Muslims creating waqf properties and said, “There is a difference between creating a waqf and donating to one. A Hindu can donate to a waqf, but cannot create one.”

Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for Rajasthan, supported the Centre and said waqf by user had no basis in Islamic law but was rather introduced through principles like adverse possession post-Independence.

Advancing rejoinder submissions, Sibal said the Act was “ex facie arbitrary, irreversible, and expropriatory”.

He said Section 3C stripped Muslims of their rights even before any determination was made on whether a property was government land or waqf.

“There is no law laid down in the statute as to how such determination will take place,” said Sibal, questioning the procedural fairness of the amendment.

Dhavan said the Centre by the law “liquidated the concept of waqf”.

He assailed the very foundation of the law, saying it violates both the individual and institutional religious freedoms guaranteed under Articles 25 and 26.

Responding to the plea that waqf by user right was given by a law and can be taken away by the subsequent one, he said the law cannot “act like a lord”.

“The law does not create waqf by user—it only recognises it,” he added.

Terror Attack Fallout

echoed the growing despair. “We haven’t earned a single rupee in a month. The government must step in. This can’t go on forever.”

In the absence of tourists, Pahalgam’s ponywallahs, cab drivers, hoteliers, and roadside vendors are counting on the upcoming Amarnath Yatra—set to begin on July 3—to breathe life back into the local economy.

“We are hopeful the pilgrims will return and help change the narrative,” said Sabzar Ahmad, a pony handler. “That tragedy does not define Kashmir. We are a hospitable people and we value our guests.”

He added that the region has always ensured smooth passage for pilgrims during the yatra, which is known for its tight security arrangements. “We’ve supported the yatra before, and we’re ready to do it again.”

As Pahalgam struggles with its grief and economic wounds, locals cling to the hope that devotion—and the annual influx of pilgrims—might succeed where even the most aggressive counterterror operations have yet to.

Pak Rejected

take a deviation through the Pakistan airspace on Wednesday. The request was made in order to avoid the turbulence, but it was rejected by the Lahore ATC, the sources told PTL.

As a result, the aircraft operated on the original flight path, where it encountered severe turbulence, they added.

In the wake of tensions between India and Pakistan following the Pahalgam terror attack that killed at least 26 people, Pakistan airspace is closed for Indian carriers. India has also shut its airspace for Pakistan airlines.

In a statement on Thursday, IndiGo said its flight 6E 2142 from Delhi to Srinagar on May 21, 2025, navigated a sudden hailstorm and landed safely at Srinagar International Airport.

“All customers were attended to upon landing and no injuries were reported. The aircraft is currently undergoing necessary inspection and maintenance in Srinagar and will resume operations once all clearances have been secured,” the airline said.

A five-member delegation of Trinamool Congress comprising Derek O’Brien, Nadimul Haque, Sagarika Ghose, Manas Bhunia, and Mamata Thakur was on the flight.

“It was a near-death experience. I thought my life was over. People were screaming, praying and panicking,” Ghose said on Wednesday.

“Hats off to the pilot who brought us through that. When we landed, we saw the nose of the plane had blown up,” she had said, adding that the delegation thanked the pilot after the landing.

Videos of the moments of turbulence emerged on social media showing panicked passengers praying for their lives as the plane swayed.

TMC Leader Recounts

inclement weather.

The jolts prompted the pilot to report an “emergency” to air traffic control at Srinagar.

“It was a near death experience. I thought my life was over. People were screaming, praying and panicking,” Ghose said.

“Hats off to the pilot who brought us through that. When we landed we saw the nose of the plane had blown up,” she said, adding, the delegation thanked the pilot after the landing.

The aircraft with 200 people onboard landed safely in Srinagar.

Videos of the moments of turbulence emerged on social media showing panicked passengers praying for their lives as the plane swayed.

The TMC delegation will be in Jammu and Kashmir till May 23 and visit Poonch and Rajouri, besides Srinagar.

The party has said the delegation is there to express solidarity with the people affected by cross-border attacks, and share the grief of the families who have lost their loved ones.

ECI Introduces 18

For more accurate and timely electoral roll update, the ECI will now directly obtain death registration data from the RGI (Registrar General of India) database, with updates following due verification.

· Voter Information Slip Revamp: Voter Information Slips will be made more elector-friendly, with the serial number and part number of the voter prominently displayed for ease of identification.

Engaging with Political Parties:

· Pan-India All-Party Meetings: The ECI has successfully conducted 4,719 pan-India

all-party meetings at the CEO, DEO, and ERO levels, with over 28,000 representatives of political parties participating, fostering dialogue and collaboration.

· High-Level Consultations: The Election Commission held direct meetings with the heads of prominent National and State political parties, including AAP, BJP, BSP, CPI(M), and NPP, to address key electoral issues.

· Capacity Building for Booth Level Agents: Capacity building programs for Booth Level Agents (BLAs) of political parties have been initiated at the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIDEM) in Bihar, Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry.

Driving Procedural Reforms:

· Integrated Dashboard – ECINET: A significant step towards digitalization, the ECI has introduced a new Integrated Dashboard – ECINET. This aims to provide all services for all stakeholders at a single point, effectively replacing over 40 separate applications and websites with a single, comprehensive platform.

· Unique EPIC Numbers: The long-standing issue of duplicate EPIC (Elector Photo Identity Card) numbers has been resolved, with a new mechanism for unique EPIC numbers now in place.

Strengthening Legal Frameworks:

· Stakeholder-Centric Training: The ECI has identified 28 key stakeholders in the electoral process, including electors, election officials, political parties, and candidates. Based on the Representation of the People Act 1950, 1951, Registration of Electors Rules 1960, Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, and ECI instructions, training presentations are being prepared for each of these stakeholders to ensure comprehensive understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Empowering Election Staff:

· Standard Photo ID for BLOs: Booth Level Officers (BLOs) will now be provided with a standard photo ID card, enhancing their official recognition.

· Extensive Capacity Building at IIDEM: IIDEM, New Delhi, is spearheading extensive capacity building programs. Over 3000 Booth Level Supervisors have already been trained, with plans to train over 1 lakh BLO Supervisors in the coming years.

· Orientation for SMNOs & MNOs: Orientation programs for Senior Management Nodal Officers (SMNOs) and Management Nodal Officers (MNOs) from CEO offices of all 36 States/UTs have been conducted at IIDEM.

· Police Training: Training has also been conducted for Police Officers from Bihar at IIDEM, ensuring better coordination and understanding of election protocols.

Enhancing ECI’s Internal Operations:

· Biometric Attendance: The ECI has implemented biometric attendance for its staff, promoting greater accountability and efficiency.

· E-Office Rollout: The operationalization and rollout of E-Office will further streamline internal processes and reduce paper usage.

· Regular Meetings with CEOs: Regular meetings with Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) will continue to foster effective communication and coordination across all states and union territories.

These 18 initiatives underscore the Election Commission of India’s unwavering commitment to conducting free, fair, and transparent elections, and continuously improving the democratic process for all citizens.

CIK Produces

(POS)’ through fraudulent and dishonest means, the statement reads.

Accordingly, police said that on 09.10.2020, a case under FIR number 18/2020 U/S 13 Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, read with section 420, 468, 471 and 120-B of the Indian Penal Code was registered at Police Station CIK Srinagar for a thorough probe.

“During the course of investigation, it has revealed that the accused was a vendor of ‘Airtel Telecom Service’, running his shop under the name and style of “MICRO WORLD” at Kulgam. It was established that the accused had manipulated and forged a genuine electoral Identity Card and used the same to issue a SIM card against a non-existent person. The accused as a vendor had also mentioned fictitious and deficient particulars/details in the Customer Application Form (CAF) with an objective to issue the SIM card against a non-existent person and pass on the SIM card to a terrorist for his use,” the statement reads.

The investigation has established that the subscriber of the SIM card shown in the Customer Application Form was not found existing on ground and the SIM card had actually been issued to a terrorist, it added.

“An appeal is made to the general public, especially youth of Kashmir valley to adhere to the advisories in this regard and take every precaution to ensure that their documents are not misused for obtaining SIM cards fraudulently. People are also advised not to share their SIM card with anyone, howsoever close the person may be,” the statement added. (KNO)

HC Bars

Encroachments

allotment order dated 24.06.2024, but during the execution of the work, the inhabitants of the area did not allow the contractor to proceed ahead with the work”.

Accordingly, in view of the objection raised by the residents of the area and recommendations of the Executive Engineer concerned, Srinagar Municipal Corporation for cancellation of contract, the contract was cancelled vide order dated 29 March this year, the Court noted.

“As the grievance of the petitioners was mainly in respect of the simultaneous construction of Walkway/Cycle Track as well as link road on the top of the Bund, which was 6 ½ ft wide only and the project for construction of “Walkway/Cycle Track” has been shelved, no cause survives to the petitioners in respect of construction of “Walkway/Cycle Track”, the court said.

Regarding direction for preservation of “Nambal Narkara” water body by removing encroachments from its edges, the court directed authorities to ensure it is preserved and maintained properly and no encroachment of the same takes place.



# IPL 2025: RCB Look To Strengthen Top Two Spot Against SRH

Press Trust of India

**LUCKNOW:** Already through to the playoffs, Royal Challengers Bengaluru will aim to secure a top-two league stage finish for the first time in nine years when they take on Sunrisers Hyderabad in their Indian Premier League clash here on Friday.

RCB haven't finished inside the top two since the 2016 season when they signed off as runners-up eventually.

However, currently second on the table with 17 points from 12 games, victories in their remaining two matches could potentially lock a top-two spot.

Friday's fixture, originally a home game for the Bengaluru outfit, was shifted due to the onset of monsoon.

RCB was in red-hot form prior to the league's disruption due to the India-Pakistan military conflict and the side had strung together four consecutive wins.

But the momentum was halted by a washout in their first game after resumption. Follow-



ing a 20-day break, it will be interesting to see whether they retain their rhythm and competitive edge.

Chasing an elusive IPL crown, RCB have managed one of their most consistent campaigns in recent memory.

The ever-reliable Virat Kohli has been in imperious form, scoring seven fifties in 11 innings and anchoring the top order with characteristic elegance.

Skipper Rajat Patidar, Tim David, and Romario Shepherd have complemented him well with



been very effective while Josh Hazlewood and Yash Dayal have bowled the difficult overs with ease in the pace department.

However, Hazlewood will not be available for the game as he recovers from his shoulder injury.

In an added boost, most of RCB's foreign recruits are available for this match and beyond.

Last year's finalists, Sunrisers Hyderabad, are coming off a convincing six-wicket win over Lucknow Super Giants and will be eager to carry that momentum and finish this forgettable season on a high.

While SRH's campaign has had flashes of brilliance, particularly from explosive openers Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head, consistency has remained elusive, leading to their eighth position on the table.

Their bowling unit, despite featuring marquee names like skipper Pat Cummins and India pacer Mohammad Shami, has struggled to deliver collectively and assert control in key moments.

Match starts 7:30pm IST.

## Sajad Hussain Parray Called Up To India U-23 Football Team Camp

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Srinagar-born left back Sajad Hussain Parray was named among the probabilities for the India U-23 Men's National Team camp by newly-appointed head coach Naushad Moosa on Thursday. The team will play an exhibition match against Tajikistan in Dushanbe on June 18 before playing Kyrgyz Republic on June 21.

The 29-member squad will begin preparations June 1, with the national camp taking place in Kolkata.

Known for his rock-solid defending and commanding presence on the field, Sajad has consistently impressed with his tactical awareness, composure under pressure and ability to organize the backline. An exceptional young defender from the J&K Sports Council Football Academy, Sajad



currently plays for Mohammedan SC.

His performances at the domestic level have caught the attention of national selectors, earning him this well-deserved opportunity to train and compete at the

highest youth level in the country.

He has previously been part of top-tier Indian football clubs, including Indian Super League sides Hyderabad FC and Mohammedan SC and I-League teams like Indian Arrows and Gokulam Kerala.

"Sajad has been a stand-out performer from an early age, trained and nurtured at the J&K Sports Council Football Academy. His discipline, hard work, and consistency have made him one of the finest young defenders in the region. All credit goes to his mentors and coaches who have guided him throughout his journey," said his coach from JKSC Football Academy.

Congratulating the athlete, Nuzhat Gul, Secretary JKSC, said, "Sajad's selection to the India U-23 camp is a proud moment for the entire sports community in J&K."

## Kashmir Elegant Strikers Joins Khyber Kashmir Super League 2025

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The Khyber Cement Kashmir Super League 2025, powered by Athwas Hyundai, on Thursday announced the addition of Kashmir Elegant Strikers as its fifth franchise team. Owned by sports enthusiast and entrepreneur Nasir Ahmad Bhat, Kashmir Elegant Strikers is set to make a significant impact in the league.

Nasir Ahmad Bhat, a well-known sports lover, brings his passion and expertise to the world of football.

"I'm excited to venture into football, following the success of cricket in the region," said Mr. Bhat. "Kashmir Elegant Strikers aims to bring glory to the region and inspire young talent."

The Khyber Cement Kashmir Super League



2025 is shaping up to be an electrifying tournament, featuring top-level competition, thrilling matches and a celebration of football culture in the Valley. With Kashmir Elegant Strikers on board, the league is poised to reach new heights.

The Khyber Cement

Kashmir Super League 2025 is a professional football league in Jammu & Kashmir, powered by Athwas Hyundai. Supported by J&K Sports Council, the league aims to promote football in the region, provide a platform for local talent, and entertain fans with high-quality matches.

## 1600 Baramulla Students Participate In Inter-School Sports Fest

Observer News Service

**BARAMULLA:** Youth Services and Sports Baramulla on Thursday conducted a wide range of sports events across multiple zones. A total of 1356 students from various government and private institutions actively participated in sporting disciplines viz. Badminton, Kho-Kho and Volleyball.

The competitions were held across 11 educational zones: Fatehgarh, Nehalpora, Sopore, Pattan, Dangi-wacha, Rohama, Chandosa, Singpora Kalan, Singpora Pattan, Wagoora and Chandanwari.

At HSS Fatehgarh, 70



under-14 and under-17 girls displayed their agility in Volleyball and Kho-Kho. Zone Nehalpora saw 62 under-14 and under-17 boys compete in Badminton at HSS Nehalpora, while Subhana Stadium Sopore hosted 270 boys across both age groups.

Zone Pattan's Sports Planet Palhallan drew in 280 participants—180 boys and 100 girls—in Volleyball. Meanwhile, HSS Dangi-wacha witnessed 72 girls

compete in Badminton, followed by Zone Rohama's 38 participants in the under-17 girls category at HSS Rohama. HSS Chandosa hosted 112 girls in the under-14 Kho-Kho tournament.

Singpora Kalan and Wagoora conducted Badminton events for girls and boys respectively, with 50 and 90 participants. Zone Singpora Pattan at HS Malmooch drew an impressive crowd of 250 boys for Kho-Kho.

## YSS Budgam Holds Sports Events For Specially-Abled Youth Across Zones

Observer News Service

**BUDGAM:** To promote inclusivity and empowerment through sports, the District Youth Services and Sports Office Budgam, under the able guidance of District Youth Services and Sports Officer G.H. Hassan Lone, organised a series of sports events for physically challenged and specially-abled youth across various zones of the district.

The Zonal Physical Education Office Narbal conducted a range of athletic and recreational competitions for physically challenged students in dif-



ferent schools within the

zone. The events witnessed active participation and enthusiastic involvement from students, highlighting their potential and spirit.

In Zone Nagam, the Youth Services and Sports Office organised inclusive sports competitions at BHSS Nagam, catering to specially-abled students as well as local youth. The event began with inspiring speeches by the Zonal Physical Education Officer, Jahan Aara, and the Principal of BHSS Nagam, both of whom encouraged the participants and emphasised the importance of equal opportunities in sports.

## Short TAKES

### YSS Ganderbal Hosts District & Zonal Level Sporting Competitions

Department of Youth Services and Sports Ganderbal hosted the District-Level Inter-Zone Kabaddi Championship for Girls U-14 on Thursday at Govt. College of Physical Education Gadoora.

The tournament culminated in a gripping final between Zone Ganderbal and Zone Tullamulla, where Zone Ganderbal emerged victorious.

DYSSO Ganderbal Sheikh Shafiqat Iqbal graced the occasion, lauded the efforts of the participants and coaches alike.

While the spotlight shone on the district-level Kabaddi clash, the rest of Ganderbal vibrated with energy as Zonal Level Sports Competitions and Selection Trials continued across various venues aimed at identifying potential stars for upcoming inter-district and UT-level tournaments.

Zone Tullamulla hosted its U17 Boys Kho-Kho competition at BHSS Kurhama, featuring 102 participants. After intense gameplay, BHSS Batwina defeated BHS Dab in the final. Shortlisted players from the event will now represent their zone at the district level.

### RCB's Patidar, Salt Fit To Play Against Sunrisers: Andy Flower

Head coach Andy Flower said the extended break has not disturbed Royal Challengers Bengaluru's rhythm and it has only helped some players, including skipper Rajat Patidar, to get back to top shape ahead of playoffs.

Patidar had suffered a finger injury during the home game against Chennai Super Kings before IPL was disbanded for a week due to the India-Pakistan military conflict.

"We are not too concerned about that (break). I think the boys have worked really well over the entire season and they have played some superb cricket throughout the season. Yes, a little break now, but for a couple of our players that has actually been a healthy thing," said Flower on Thursday, on the eve of the match against Sunrisers Hyderabad in Lucknow.

Patidar was wearing a splint to protect his injured finger, but he got another few days to recover as RCB's match against Kolkata Knight Riders was abandoned due to rain in Bengaluru on May 17.

RCB will now play all their matches, including the knockouts, away from home and Flower said the team has prepared well for the challenge while leaning on its excellent away record. RCB were originally scheduled to play SRH at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium but the match was shifted to Lucknow owing to the inclement weather forecast in Bengaluru.

### One-Off Test: Duckett Slams Century As England Punish Zimbabwe

England opener Ben Duckett scored a rapid century on his home ground as he punished Zimbabwe's tame seam attack to help his side to 295/1 at tea on the opening day of the one-off four-day Test at Trent Bridge in Nottingham on Thursday.

Duckett smashed 140 from 134 balls before he was caught at cover by Ben Curran off the bowling of Wesly Madhevere, having put on an opening stand of 231 with Zak Crawley in 41.3 overs.

Crawley, who has been short of Test runs in recent times, will resume after tea on 93 from 139 balls, along with Ollie Pope, who has 49 from 46 deliveries.

Zimbabwe's military medium pace, coupled with an inability to create pressure through a consistent line and length, allowed England's batters to make hay as the sun peaked out from behind overcast clouds in the afternoon. Zimbabwe captain Craig Ervine won the toss and put England into bat, hoping the cloudy and cold morning conditions would force an early breakthrough.

### Luka Modric Leaving Real Madrid After The Club World Cup

Real Madrid and midfielder Luka Modric have agreed to part ways after the Club World Cup.

The 39-year-old Modric will leave after an "unforgettable time as a player at our club," Modric said on Thursday.

"Real Madrid wishes to express its immense gratitude and appreciation for a player who has become a true legend both of our club and world football."

Modric arrived at Madrid in 2012 and became a key player during one of the most successful periods in the club's history.

In 13 seasons, Modric helped the club win 28 titles: Six European Cups, six Club World Cups, five European Super Cups, four Spanish leagues, two Copas del Rey and five Spanish Super Cups.

He had been playing fewer minutes in recent seasons under coach Carlo Ancelotti. The Club World Cup starts mid-June in the United States.

## Man United Faces More Financial Turmoil After Europa League Final Loss

Agencies

The financial consequences of Manchester United losing in the Europa League final should be painful and affect the club for years.

It was a zero-sum game Tottenham won 1-0 on Wednesday: Winner goes into the Champions League — plus the UEFA Super Cup game in August — and loser is out of Europe next season and gets nothing.

United lost a drab match despite, as soccer finance expert Kieran Maguire noted on Thursday, having higher revenue than Tottenham and spending 64% more on wages for a more expensively acquired squad of players. Tottenham also beat United twice in the Premier League this season, and in the domestic League Cup.

"If I was teaching this at management school (I) would conclude that there is something se-

riously wrong with the culture of the organization ... which is set by senior management," Maguire wrote on X.

Beyond the loss of sporting opportunities and reputational prestige, the club owned by the Glazer family from the United States and British billionaire industrialist Jim Ratcliffe has short and longer-term financial hits ahead.

No Champions League play next season is an instant loss of at least 80 million euros (\$90 million), and approaching 150 million euros (\$169 million) for a run deep into the knockout stage.

United also misses out on the 4 million euros (\$4.5 million) Tottenham will get from UEFA for playing the Super Cup against the Champions League titleholder — either Inter Milan or Paris Saint-Germain — on Aug. 13 at Udinese's stadium in Italy. The winner gets a bonus of



1 million euros (\$1.1 million).

After failing to qualify for the 2025 Club World Cup — which has a \$1 billion prize fund from FIFA and should pay more than \$100 million to a successful European team — United is now far behind in qualifying for the 2029 edition.

European teams qualify for the FIFA event only by being in the Champions League, either winning the title or building consistent results over four seasons.

United already will miss the entire first half of the 2024-28 qualifying period, and it is hard

to project the team that last won the Premier League 12 years ago both qualifying for and then winning a Champions League title within three years.

One clear solution to growing financial issues and the ability to comply with Premier League rules is selling the club's best players, like captain Bruno Fernandes and out-of-favor forward Marcus Rashford, or its homegrown prospects. Some already earn high wages which are problematic for potential buyers.

A talent drain risks speeding a spiral of decline on and off the field if coach Ruben Amorim is left trying to rebuild with a weaker pool of players.

While United is still one of Europe's highest-earning clubs, UEFA's annual research shows its advantage is in decline, even though revenue was a club record 661.8 million pounds (\$887 million) last year.

A UEFA chart showed that over five years from 2019-24 — pre-COVID-19 through to the post-pandemic recovery in the soccer industry — United's revenue grew at a slower rate than all of its biggest English rivals except Chelsea.

Revenue now risks dropping, and another income cut is coming from falling to 16th in the Premier League standings with one round left on Sunday.

Premier League prize money based on final position in the standings means dropping from eighth a year ago to 16th is a difference of 22 million pounds (\$29.5 million) less.

It all adds up to another loss-making season after a 113.2 million pounds (\$152) deficit last season. The three previous years totaled losses of 236 million pounds (\$316 million).

The league's profit and sustainability rules (PSR) allow clubs to lose 105 million pounds

(\$140.7 million) over a three-year period or face sanctions, though United can cite some exemptions.

Ratcliffe, who has operational control despite being a minority shareholder, is already the public face of unpopular cuts to jobs and staff benefits, and rising ticket prices for fans.

"This is not sustainable," the club told fans in January, "and if we do not act now we are in danger of failing to comply with PSR/FFP (financial fair play) requirements in future years and significantly impacting our ability to compete on the pitch."

The club's share price was around \$13.30 on the New York Stock Exchange in early trading Thursday, having dropped by about \$1 during the second half of the final played in Bilbao, Spain. Shares peaked this season in December, after a 2-1 win at Manchester City, at more than \$18.40. (AP)



# Breakthrough painkiller could beat opioids without addiction risks



**Agencies**

Washington: A study shows a non-opioid pain reliever blocks pain at its source -- calming specific nerve signals that send pain messages to the brain. In mice, the compound SBI-810 eased pain from surgery, bone fractures, and nerve injury without causing sedation or constipation.

The drug, called SBI-810, is part of a new generation of compounds designed to target a receptor on the nerves and spinal cord. While opioids flood multiple cellular pathways indiscriminately, SBI-810, a non-opioid treatment, takes a more focused approach, activating only a specific pain-relief pathway that avoids the euphoric "high" linked to addiction.

In tests in mice, SBI-810 worked well on its own and, when used in combination, made opioids more effective at lower doses, according to the study published May 19 in Cell.

"What makes this compound exciting is that it is both analge-

sic and non-opioid," said senior study author Ru-Rong Ji, PhD, an anesthesiology and neurobiology researcher who directs the Duke Anesthesiology Centre for Translational Pain Medicine.

Even more encouraging: it prevented common side effects like constipation and buildup of tolerance, which often forces patients to need stronger and more frequent doses of opioids over time.

SBI-810 is in early development, but Duke researchers are aiming for human trials soon and they've locked in multiple patents for the discovery.

There's an urgent need for pain relief alternatives. Drug overdose deaths are declining, but more than 80,000 Americans still die each year, most often from opioids. Meanwhile, chronic pain affects one-third of the U.S. population.

Researchers said the drug could be a safer option for treating both short-term and chronic pain for those recovering from surgery or living with diabetic nerve pain. (ANI)

# UK net migration halves as crackdown on study and work visas reshapes immigration debate

**Agencies**

A sharp and unprecedented fall in the UK's net migration has reignited debate over the nation's identity, economy, and political direction. New data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reveals that net migration dropped to 431,000 in 2024, nearly halving from 860,000 the previous year. This 49.9% decline marks the steepest annual percentage drop since the pandemic and the largest numerical fall on record.

More than just numbers, this shift signals a country recalibrating its place in the world -- one that is struggling to strike a balance between openness and control, growth and cohesion, pragmatism and populism.

The politics of decline

The dramatic reduction in migration follows tighter visa restrictions imposed by the former Conservative government at the start of 2024. Work and study routes were narrowed in a bid to answer mounting political pressure over immigration. Ironically, the same government was ousted shortly after, punished by an electorate that had grown weary of years of broken promises and soaring arrivals.

Now under Labour leadership, Prime Minister Keir Starmer is pursuing a different path -- one aimed not just at reducing migration, but integrating those who come. He warns of Britain becoming an "island of strangers" and has proposed reforms to raise English language requirements and reassess migration routes, all while refusing to set a fixed numerical target.

A legacy of migration

Migration has long played a pivotal role in Britain's story. After the devastation of World War II, waves of newcomers arrived from across the Commonwealth to rebuild the country's infra-



structure and staff its public services. For decades, immigration was viewed through the lens of necessity, not controversy.

But political tides shifted in the early 21st century. Rising immigration figures, coupled with austerity and housing shortages, transformed the issue into a flashpoint. The 2016 Brexit vote was a defining moment -- a populist backlash against the European Union's freedom of movement provisions and a wider anxiety about national control.

Populism's political windfall

Anti-immigration sentiment continues to shape the political landscape. Reform UK, a hard-line nationalist party, made significant gains in recent local elections, campaigning on claims that high immigration is eroding public services and community cohesion. Though the facts paint a more complex picture, such narratives have found traction among a public increasingly anxious about access to housing, education, and healthcare.

While only around 37,000 people entered the UK through irregular means, such as Channel crossings, last year, this smaller figure continues to dominate headlines, fuelling fear and overshadowing the more substantial flows via legal channels.

War, crisis, and the humani-

# New smart portal launched to enrich pilgrims' Grand Mosque experience

**Agencies**

As Saudi Arabia gears up for this year's Hajj, the Presidency of Religious Affairs at the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque has launched a new smart portal to enhance the digital experience of pilgrims to the Grand Mosque.

The initiative offers well-curated Islamic content in a simplified and comprehensive manner that addresses the needs of pilgrims, visitors and Umrah performers, reported the Saudi Press Agency.

The portal offers a fully integrated digital platform dedicated to delivering religious and enrichment services.

President of Religious Affairs at the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque, Sheikh Abdulrahman Al-Sudais, said it was the first smart, faith-based portal of its kind -- innovative, globally accessible and highly regulated.

Designed in multiple languages, it serves as an enrichment reference for pilgrims based on a carefully curated and standardized database.

The interactive platform

is powered by several smart technologies and offers a range of features including prayer time displays, notifications about imams and muezzins, and schedules of religious lessons and their locations. It is distinguished by an interactive navigation feature that allows visitors to directly access service and lesson locations using smart maps within the app.

The portal also enables instant responses to visitor queries through live chat and provides guidance on how to perform prayer and ablution, along with definitions of Islamic terms. It can be accessed via <https://services.prh.gov.sa>.

The Presidency also unveiled the updated second version of its AI-powered Manarat Al-Haramain robot on Wednesday, as part of an initiative aiming to leverage advanced technologies to enhance pilgrims' spiritual experiences.

The robot will act as a reference point for religious inquiries at the Grand Mosque and can connect worshippers and other visitors to direct video calls with muftis who can answer any questions they have.



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