

BUSES, BOMBS & A LONG ROAD HOME

Kashmiri Students Flee War-hit Iran



Representational Photo

Syed Mohammad Burhan

Srinagar: At the gates of Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran, Indian students, including dozens from Kashmir, boarded buses under grey skies. They had packed quickly, carrying

little more than their documents and phones. Some hugged their roommates goodbye. Others looked silently at the road ahead. Their destination was Qom, and then Gilan, a northern province thought to be safer | [More on P10](#)

Indian Pilgrims Seek Evacuation

As tensions in the Middle East intensify, Indian pilgrims stranded in Iran—particularly in the religious city of Qom—are desperately calling on the Indian government for immediate evacuation. Rafi Fatima Naqvi, a pilgrim from Allahabad, said her group was scheduled to return to India on June 13. "But there was an attack in the morning. Since then, we've been trapped in our hotel. We don't know when or how we'll return," she said over a disrupted phone | [More on P10](#)

Heatwave Eases: J&K Braces For Rainy Week Ahead

Observer News Service

Srinagar: After over a week of sweltering temperatures, residents across Jammu and Kashmir finally experienced some relief as maximum temperatures dropped below normal on Monday. The local Meteorological Department has forecast a brief spell of rain over the next few days, issuing a yellow alert till June 22.

According to the MeT office, isolated thunderstorms, lightning, and gusty winds are expected at several places in the region till June 20. On June 21 and 22, parts of the Union Territory may witness isolated

heavy rainfall accompanied by strong winds and lightning.

"There is a possibility of a brief spell of rain, thunder-shower with gusty winds at isolated to scattered places till June 20," said Dr Mukhtar Ahmad, Director of the Meteorological Department. From June 21 to 23, generally cloudy weather with intermittent rain is likely at many locations across J&K.

Despite the weather fluctuations, farmers have been advised to continue their agricultural activities as conditions remain largely favorable.

In terms of temperature, all major | [More on P10](#)

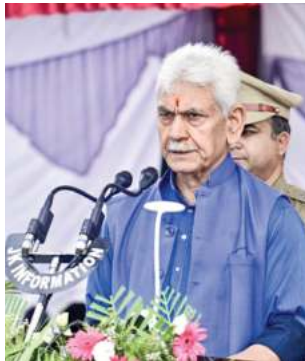
Harness AI to Defeat Terror: LG To Police Recruits

Says Free Hand to Forces Against Terror

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday said the complete eradication of terrorism remains the topmost priority of his administration, asserting that security forces have been given a "free hand" to dismantle the terror network and its support ecosystem in the Union Territory.

Addressing the passing-out parade of the 17th batch of Deputy Superintendents of Police (DySPs) and 26th batch of Probationary Sub-Inspectors (PSIs) at the Sher-e-Kashmir Police Academy in Udhampur, the Lt Governor urged the police force to adopt a multi-pronged strategy involving technology,



community engagement, and coordinated intelligence to combat terrorism effectively.

"J&K Police must harness the power of intelligence, technology, inter-agency coordination and public trust. We must bring beat | [More on P10](#)

5 August, 6 June Key Dates In J&K History: LG

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday said August 5 and June 6 will always be remembered as landmark dates in Jammu and Kashmir's history, marking the region's political and physical integration with the rest of the country.

He was speaking at the launch of Reimagining Jammu & Kashmir, a coffee table book by photojournalist Ashish Sharma, held at New Delhi.

"While the abrogation of Article 370 on 5 August 2019 paved the way for J&K's complete integration, 6 June physically connected Kashmir to Kanyakumari and its citizens' aspirations with the national mainstream," the LG said.

Lauding the book, Sinha said it captures the transformation in J&K over the past five years through a visual journey. "Ashish Sharma's watchful photographic | [More on P10](#)

J&K Has 15 Active COVID-19 Cases

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The number of active COVID-19 cases in Jammu and Kashmir has risen to 15, with a total of 18 cases reported so far this year, officials said on Monday.

According to an official from the Health Department, while 15 cases remain active, three patients have recovered. Over the last 24 hours, two patients recovered, reducing the number of active cases from 17 to 15.

"The situation is under control, and there is no immediate cause for concern," the official said. He added that the Union Territory is fully prepared to deal with any possible rise in cases. "We are strictly following the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)," he said.

The rise in cases comes amid growing concern over COVID-19 trends in some | [More on P10](#)

India Plans 113-km Canal To Divert Indus Waters

Says Pakistan Will 'Crave for Every Drop'

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: India is conducting a feasibility study for constructing a 113 km-long canal for redirecting surplus flow from the three western rivers of the Indus water system to Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan, top sources have told NDTV, a move aimed at better utilisation of its share of the Indus river waters. The Indus Water Treaty, which was signed in 1960, governs the sharing of the waters of six rivers - Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej - between India and Pakistan. India's plan to divert water from the Indus river system is centred on the three "Western Rivers" - Jhelum, Chenab and Indus which flow to Pakistan. At present, India doesn't utilize much of the water that flows into these three rivers as their natural route follows a trajectory which is of not much use for India. The plan, say sources, includes construction of new canals to divert the excess water. The work is at a preliminary stage, said sources, adding that feasibility reports are being readied. It is expected that the canal construction work, which will link the Chenab with the Ravi-Beas-Sutlej system, will be completed in the next three years. The project aims to optimise India's share under the Indus Waters Treaty by better use of both eastern and western rivers, diverting excess flows into Pakistan. "Indus waters will be taken to Rajasthan's Ganganagar through canals within three years," said Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday during a BJP training session in Madhya Pradesh, adding | [More on P10](#)

Not An Era of War: PM After Talks In Cyprus

Press Trust Of India

Nicosia: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said he and Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides "expressed concern" over the ongoing conflicts in West Asia and Europe, and they both agree that "this is not an era of war".

Modi made the remarks after wide-ranging talks with Christodoulides, covering the full range of bilateral relations. They



talked about cooperation in areas like defence, security, trade, technology,

healthcare, renewable energy and climate justice. They also discussed

regional and global issues, including the conflicts in West Asia and Europe.

During his visit, Modi and Christodoulides also viewed from atop a building the mountains near Nicosia, which are under Turkish control, signalling a message to Turkey, which had openly supported Pakistan during the recent conflict with India.

His visit to Cyprus assumes significance in the wake of the island nation's strained ties | [More on P10](#)



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Census 2027 Notified

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Sixteen years after the last population count, the Government of India has formally notified the country's 16th decennial Census, which for the first time since Independence will include caste enumeration. In

J&K's Snowbound Areas To Be Covered First In 2026

Jammu and Kashmir, the massive exercise will begin in snow-bound areas from October 1, 2026, followed by the rest of the region on March 1, 2027.

The census will be carried out with a reference date of October 1, 2026 in the snow-bound areas like Ladakh and March 1, 2027

in the rest of the country, the notification said.

"The reference date for the said census shall be 00.00 hours of the 1st day of March, 2027, except for the Union territory of Ladakh and snow-bound non-synchronous areas of the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir and the States

of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand," it said.

In respect of Ladakh and snow-bound non-synchronous areas of the Union Territory (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir and the states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the reference date shall be 00:00 hours of the first | [More on P10](#)

First Headcount Of Newly Added STs In J&K

The upcoming 2027 national census is expected to have far-reaching implications for Jammu and Kashmir's political landscape, with the

first-ever headcount of Paharis, Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and newly added Scheduled Tribes set to take place. As per a notification issued by the Union

Home Ministry on Monday, the massive exercise will not only provide demographic data but also form the basis for the next delimitation of | [More on P10](#)



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2

‘Over 272 Million Children Out-Of-School Across The Globe’



Press Trust Of India

New Delhi, Jun 15 (PTI) The global out-of-school population is now estimated to be 272 million, over 21 million more than the last estimate, according to UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Team (GEM).

The team, in its latest report, has pointed out that by 2025, countries will be off-track by 75 million relative to their national targets.

"Two reasons explain this upward adjustment. First, new enrolment and attendance data account for eight million, or 38 pc, of the increase. The ban on girls attending secondary school age in Afghanistan in 2021 also contributes to this increase," the report said.

"Second, updated UN population estimates account for 13 million, or the remaining 62 pc, of the increase. Compared to the estimates last used in the out-of-school model, the 2024 World Population Prospects estimate that the number of 6- to 17-year-olds in 2025 (a proxy of the school-age population) is higher by 49 million (or by 3.1 pc)," it added.

The report also noted that the impact of conflicts on out-of-school populations which can be underestimated as conflicts hamper data collection.

The change in the global population estimates impacts out-of-school rate and population estimates, but the magnitude of that

impact depends on the source of data on enrolment and attendance.

"If the source is administrative data, then the full increase of the population is passed on to the out-of-school population because there is no fresh information on enrolment.

"But if the source is survey data, then the increase of population is passed on to the in-school and out-of-school populations proportionately. As the model relies on survey data for many countries with large out-of-school populations, only part of the increased school-age population is estimated to be out of school," it said.

In total, around 11 pc of primary school-age children (78 million), 15 pc of lower secondary school-age adolescents (64 million) and 31 pc of upper secondary school-age youths (130 million) are out of school. The model used multiple data sources (administrative, survey and census) to generate internally consistent trends of regional and global averages.

"The model at the country level reconciles different sources, imputes values on years when there are no data, and involves short-term projections.

"Therefore, they are not the same as countries' official out-of-school values, which are based on a single source on a given year. It is these latter values, which are the basis for countries' out-of-

school rate targets to be achieved by 2025 and 2030," the report said.

"Collectively, as the SDG 4 Scorecard shows, countries will reduce their out-of-school population by 165 million by 2030 if they meet their targets.

"However, it is projected that by 2025 countries will be off track by four percentage points among those of primary and lower secondary school age and by six percentage points among those of upper secondary school age. In total, this means that, already by 2025, countries will be off-track by 75 million relative to their national targets," it added.

The report noted that the impact of conflict on out-of-school populations is being underestimated. "The out-of-school model estimates assume stable patterns of school-age population progression through the education system. However, this methodological strength becomes a weakness in the case of emergencies and crises when school attendance changes suddenly.

"Not only can it not be assumed that long-term trends will continue, but there is usually no information or insufficient information to understand crises' short- and medium-term impacts. Conflict hampers data collection on school participation and therefore is likely to lead to an underestimation of the out-of-school populations," it said.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Tender Notice No. 05/2025-2026 Date: 16.06.2025
Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system
Dy. Chief Materials Manager, N.Rly. Store Depot Mech. Workshop, Amritsar for and on behalf of President of India, invited tenders through e-procurement system for the supply of the following items:-

S. No.	Tender No.	Description	Qty.	Due date
1	62255140	Set of Carline & Angles for BVCM wagons as per Annexure-I	480 Sets	14.07.2025

NOTE- Above tenders with detailed description are uploaded on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in. The firm, who desires to participate against e-tenders, is advised to electronically register themselves on the above website for which they would require to have a class III digital certificate form certifying Agencies authorized under IT Act 2000 by Govt. of India. Manual offers against e-tenders will not be accepted.
1788/2025

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OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR KREERI

Sub: Application of Farzi Begum W/o Late Ab. Ahad War R/o Sheikhpura 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 Ab. Ahad War, S/o, D/o, W/o, F/o Ab. Karim War, passed away on 21-05-2025. 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
1	Farzi Begum	W/o	73	Old Age
2	Mohd Yousuf	S/o	57	Govt. Employee
3	Khursheed Ahmad	S/o	46	Employee
4	Raja Begum	D/o	48	H.H.W.
5	Mysara	D/o	46	H.H. Maker

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

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan

Sub: issuance of registration order in respect of delayed birth...
PUBLIC NOTICE

The registrar birth EO MC pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Naveen Rouf baba s/o Abdul Rouf baba R/o Jalal Abad sopore with verified date of birth 17/06/2020 occurred at SDH pattan in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

SD
fko
Naib Tehsildar Pattan

PUBLIC NOTICE

My name has been wrongly writte in my DOB certificate as Yasir Arafat Lone S/o Mohammad Akhbar Lone whiel my correct name as per adhaar card is Yasir Arafat Lone S/o Mohmad Akbar Lone . Now I have applied for the correct of my name in DOB certificate. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the BDO Office Wagoora o Tehsil Office Wagoora within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.
Yasir Arafat Lone
S/o Mohmad Akbar Lone
fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is information for the general public that i have lost my Character cum Provisional certificate of class 10th bearing roll number 117007031, session Annual Regular 2025. Now i want to apply for its duplicate, if anybody having any objection in this regard may contact Principal Oxford School of Education Budgam, within a period of 7 days. No objection shall be entertained after that.

HAWRA FAYAZ
D/O FAYAZ AHMAD MIR
R/O CHANDPORA BUDGAM.
mcb

PUBLIC NOTICE

The mother's name of my daughter has been mentioned in her school records as Nusrat whereas her correct name is Nusrat Amin. I have now applied for the correction of the same in her school records.
In this regard, anybody having any objection may contact the office of the Principal, G D Goenka, Lalbazar (Srinagar) within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. After that, no objection shall be entertained.

Raies Ahmad Kozgar
F/O Qubaisa Kozgar (Class 8th)
Mother's Name: Nusrat Amin
36 Friends Colony Habbak, Firdouss Educational Institute, Habbak Crossing, Hazratbal, Srinagar
J&K – 190006
jks

From Office of the Advocate Ishfaq Rasool & Associates

In the case of
Ghulam Rasool sheikh
S/o : Abdul Ganie sheikh
R/O: Tantraypora Palhallan pattan Baramulla

(Caveator)

V/s
Public at large

In the Petition in terms of Section 148-A

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

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have lost my passport bearing no co235599. Now I have applied for the duplicate of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the office of the Regional Passport Office Srinagar within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.
Asifa Bano
D/O Ghulam Mohammad Bhat
R/O Tantripora Palhallan Pattan
fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

My name has been wrongly written in my adhaar card as Owaid Nazir , DOB 01-03-2008 while my correct name is Shahid Nazir , Correct DOB: 01-01-2008. Now I have applied for the correction of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concern aadhar centre Jammu Srinagar within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.
Shahid Nazir
S/o Nazir Ahmad Para
R/O Homehuna Tehsil Hitragam Shopian
fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

My name has been wrongly written in my driving licence bearing dl no; JK0420110013452 as Feroz Ahmad Parry S/o Gh Mohammad Parry while my correct name as per my adhaar card is Feroz Ahmed Parry S/o Ghulam Mohamad Parry . Now I have applied for the duplicate of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned office within seven days . After that no objection shall be entertained.

Feroz Ahmed Parry
S/o Ghulam Mohamad Parry
R/o Bon Makhama Magam budgam
bmg

از نیابت پهلان
عنوان :- درخواست منجاب سائل فیاض احمد بت ولد محمد سلطان بت ساکن ہمارے تحصیل پٹن نسبت اجرائی EWS سرٹیفکیٹ بحق خود
اشتہار ہرخاص و عام
معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدمیں سائل نے ایک درخواست بغرض حصول EWS سرٹیفکیٹ پیش کی ہے جو کہ زیر کاروائی ہے اس بارے میں پٹواری حلقے سے رپورٹ طلب کی گئی ہے جس سے عیاں ہے کہ سائل واقعی ہمارے تحصیل پٹن کا سکونت دار ہے سائل کی مہورا آمدنی 17000 روپیہ تک ہے بمطابق پٹواری رپورٹ والد سائل کا حصہ 1/2 1758=37x47 بنتا ہے رقبہ میں سائل کے والد کا ایک یک مندر مکان رہائشی موجود ہے جاکے پیمائش 29x27 فٹ 763 مربفٹ میں بنتا ہے اور ایک علیحدہ ہاتھ روم بھی موجود ہے جاکے پیمائش 9x11 99= فٹ بنتا ہے اس طرح سائل کا رہائش 1758 فٹ ہے جس میں رہائشی ڈھانچہ 783 99+= 882 فٹ موجود ہے سرٹیفکیٹ زیر بحث اجراء کرنے میں اگر کراگر کسی شخص کو کوئی عراض ہو تو وہ بعد مشہور اخبار سات دن کے اندر اندر آئے عذر یا اعتراض و دالست حد اکوفتقری اوقات کے دوران پیش کریں۔ بعد گزرے عید اکو بی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔
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Akshay Labroo Assumes Charge As DC Srinagar



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Akshay Labroo on Monday assumed charge as new Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Srinagar district. Akshay Labroo took over the charge from Dr Bilal

Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat, who has been posted as new Deputy Commissioner of Budgam. Additional District Development Commissioner, Rifat Aftab Qureshi; Additional Deputy Commissioners, Mir Imtiyaz Ul Aziz and Aadil Fareed; Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad; SDM East, Zubair Ahmad and other Officers were present in the joining ceremony. Before joining as DC Srinagar, Akshay Labroo was serving as DC Budgam. The Officers accorded a warm welcome to Akshay Labroo on assuming the charge.

Dr. Owais Takes Charge As Director FCS&CA Kashmir

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Dr. Owais Ahmed, assumed charge as the new Director of Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA) Kashmir in a ceremony held at the Directorate Office, New Secretariat Road, Srinagar. On his arrival, Dr. Owais Ahmed was greeted with a warm welcome by the staff of the Directorate, who expressed their enthusiasm and full support for his leadership. His appointment is seen as a positive step towards strengthening the department's efforts in ensuring food security, equitable civil supplies, and consumer rights across Kashmir. The newly posted Director conveyed his commitment to work diligently for the welfare of the public and to further improve the efficiency of the department's services. Staff members and senior officials extended their best wishes for his successful tenure. The department looks forward to a collaborative and progressive phase under Dr. Owais Ahmed's guidance, aiming to serve the community with dedication and transparency.



Faz Lul Haseeb Assumes Charge As Commissioner SMC & CEO SSCL

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Faz Lul Haseeb, IAS, formally assumed charge as the Commissioner of Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) and Chief Executive Officer of Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL), ushering in a new chapter in the city's urban governance and infrastructure development. He takes over from Dr.

Owais Ahmad, IAS, who has been transferred as Director, Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Kashmir. A brief ceremony held at the SMC headquarters witnessed a warm welcome for Faz Lul Haseeb by senior officials and staff. They pledged full support in furthering the mission of sustainable, inclusive, and responsive urban development.

REPORT OF MISSING PERSONS

MRS FARHANA MANZOOR
D/O Mr. Manzoor Hussain Mir
106, Baroda House, Plot 40 A, Sector 10,
Dwarka, New Delhi

MISS IZDEHAR ZEHRA
D/O Syed Mashhood Abbas
106, Baroda House, Plot 40 A, Sector 10,
Dwarka, New Delhi

MISSING FROM 8/4/2025

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8447269727 9711887856

SAD DEMISE

اِنَّ لِلّٰهِ وَمَا اِلَيْهِ رُجُوعًا

With deep sorrow, we inform the sad demise of the **Wife of Mohammad Ashraf Shair**, resident of **Old Residence Hawal, opposite Firdous Cinema, near Gousia Masjid**. She left for heavenly abode on **15th June 2025** after a prolonged illness. **Taziyat** will continue till **Wednesday, 18th June 2025**. **Fateha Khwani** will be offered at 10:30 AM, at the ancestral graveyard **Bahuddin Gunj Bakash** graveyard, **Makhdoom Sahib Road**

BEREAVED FAMILY, Mobile: +91-9596442259



A POTTERY SHOP SELLS TUMBAKH NAER, a clay instrument that echoes through Kashmiri weddings with rhythm, heritage and heart.

KO PHOTO, FAISAL KHAN

Tech Key to Youth Jobs, Walnut Industry Growth:VC SKUAST

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Vice Chancellor of Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST), Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganie, on Monday said that the university is committed to promote technology-driven solutions for value addition in the walnut sector and creating employment opportunities for local youth. Speaking to reporters during his visit to Walnut research centre Kulangam Handwara, he said that there is need to reform the current marketing system for walnuts in the region. "When we go to the market to sell one crop, there are almost ten different varieties sold together. There is no proper grading system," he said. The Vice Chancellor said that SKUAST, with support from the concerned station, is setting up a comprehensive walnut processing value chain that will include facilities for de-hulling, grading, drying, breaking, and packaging. "This value addition facility will



SKUAST IS SETTING UP A COMPREHENSIVE WALNUT processing value chain that will include facilities for de-hulling, grading, drying, breaking, and packaging.

help streamline walnut marketing," he said, adding, "Our aim is to ensure that the youth of this region adopt this technology to create self-employment and generate jobs for others as well." Prof. Ganie further said that due to logistical limitations, the full setup might not be possible in all locations. "We are planning to establish one centre at the university. We hope it becomes a model for others to replicate," he said. Speaking about the protected multiplication system for walnuts, he said that the area has now been fully fenced. "Earlier, the area was open and unprotected. Now, within a year, we've secured it from all sides," he said. Addressing concerns related to infrastructure development, he said that the issue of road connectivity outside the station would be taken up with the district authorities. "We will discuss road expansion with the District Commissioner to ensure better access," he added.

Rural Sanitation Deptt. Holds Division Level Workshop

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Directorate of Rural Sanitation, Jammu & Kashmir organised a workshop on Swachh Survekshan Gramin-2025 (SSG-2025) at the meeting hall of Directorate of Rural Development, Kashmir. The workshop witnessed active participation from Assistant Commissioners Development (ACDs), Assistant Commissioners Panchayat (ACPs), Block Development Officers (BDOs), and other Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G) officials from across all districts of the Kashmir division. The workshop aimed to sensitize field functionaries on the framework, methodology, and key deliverables of the upcoming SSG 2025 survey. The survey marks a crucial step toward strengthening J&K's preparedness and accelerating efforts under the SBM-G. Director General, Rural Sanitation, J&K, Anoo Malhotra, underscored the significance of community participation, visible cleanliness, and strong data validation for achieving result oriented rankings in the national survey. The event featured interactive sessions and technical presentations on survey parameters, IEC

(Information, Education & Communication) strategies, and protocols for evidence uploading. Launched by the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2025, is a nationwide rural sanitation survey aimed at evaluating the impact of SBM-G, promoting hygiene, and sustaining the achievements of Open Defecation Free (ODF) status. In Jammu & Kashmir, the survey will be conducted in a phased manner by the Academy of Management Studies (AMS), covering all districts of the Union Territory. SSG 2025 is a comprehensive survey that evaluates ODF sustainability, solid and liquid waste management, citizen feedback on cleanliness and sanitation infrastructure. Importantly, SSG 2025 will generate a national ranking of states and districts based on these sanitation parameters, encouraging healthy competition and fostering innovation in rural sanitation practices. Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2025 is a vital step in India's journey towards a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable rural environment, ensuring consistent monitoring, identification of gaps, and implementation of best practices across the

PAC Holds Maiden Meeting At Srinagar

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Jammu and Kashmir Assembly held its maiden meeting at the Assembly complex. The meeting was presided over by the Chairman of Committee, Sham Lal Sharma and attended by MLAs Tariq Hamid Kara, Nazir Ahmad Khan, Altaf Ahmad Wani, Javid Hassan Beig, Muzaffar Iqbal Khan and Qaysar Jamshaid Lone; members of the Committee. During the meeting, the Chairman briefed the members about the roles and responsibilities of PAC. He underlined the vital role of the Committee in ensuring transparency and efficiency in public expenditure. He elaborated on the responsibilities of the Committee like examining audit reports from the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), scrutinising government expenditures and recommending corrective measures to improve the fiscal discipline. The Chairman urged the members to approach their responsibilities with diligence, impartiality and commitment to public interest, underlining that the committee serves as a watchdog over public funds and government operations. He expressed confidence in the members ability to work in coordination and contribute effectively to the Committee's performance. The members actively participated in the discussions, sharing their suggestions and feedback on various issues.

FYUG 2025: Amar Singh College Invites Online Applications

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: All aspirants (CUET and Non-CUET) seeking admission to four-year undergraduate programs (FYUGP) at Amar Singh College, Srinagar are hereby informed to

register online on the JK Admission Samarth Portal: <https://jkadmission.samarth.ac.in> from June 16, 2025 (5:00 PM) to July 07, 2025 (7:00 PM) For complete details, they can refer to the official Admission Notification No. DC-HE/2025/1152 dated 15-

06-2025, available on the Directorate of Colleges J&K website: <http://directorcollegesjk.in> Meanwhile, for assistance, candidates may also visit the College Facilitation Centre during working hours (11:00am to 3:00pm).

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

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311

RAILWAYS

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

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

HIJRI
CALENDAR

20 Zil-Hajj
1446

PRAYERS

FAJR	3:34
ZUHR	12: 31
ASR	5:31
Magrib	7:46
ISHA	9:28

This Day In History

- 656 Ali ibn Abu Talib (RA) elected the 4th Caliph of the Rashidun Caliphate
- 1631 - Mumtaz Mahal dies during childbirth. Her husband, Mughal emperor Shah Jahan I, then spends more than 20 years building her tomb, the Taj Mahal
- 1861 - Battle of Boonville, MI-Brigadier General Lyon defeats Confederate forces
- 1863 - Battle at Middleburg, Virginia
- 1863 - Battle of Aldie, Confederates fail to drive back Union in Virginia
- 1877 - Indian Wars: Battle of White Bird Canyon - the Nez Perce defeat the US Cavalry at White Bird Canyon in the Idaho Territory
- 1885 - Statue of Liberty arrives in NYC aboard French ship 'Isere'
- 1896 - Polar explorers Fridtjof Nansen and Frederick Jackson meet by chance in Franz Josef Land, the Arctic
- 1916 - US troops under General Pershing march into Mexico
- 1938 - Japan declares war on China.
- 1940 - USSR occupies Estonia
- 1940 - World War II: sinking of the RMS Lancastria by the Luftwaffe near Saint-Nazaire, France
- 1947 - 1st round-the-world civil air service leaves NYC
- 1950 - Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia & Syria sign security pact
- 1953 - Riots in East Germany for reunification
- 1970 - Edwin Land patents the Polaroid camera
- 1976 - Indonesia annexes Portuguese East-Timor
- 1982 - President Galtieri resigns after leading Argentina to defeat in the Falkland Islands
- 1984 - John Turner succeeds Pierre Trudeau as Prime Minister of Canada
- 1988 - Microsoft releases MS DOS 4.0
- 1988 - Soyuz TM-5 launches
- 1991 - The body of the 12th US President, Zachary Taylor, is exhumed to test how he died; rumors had persisted since his death in 1850 of arsenic poisoning - no evidence of this was found
- 2018 - Ivan Duque is elected President of Columbia
- 2018 - Historic deal signed between Greece and Macedonia to end dispute over Macedonia's name - changing to North Macedonia
- 2019- Activist Joshua Wong calls on Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam to resign after leaving prison amid street protests the day before of over 2 million people.

From KO Archives

KU Relents, Shelves Naseem Bagh Construction To Save Chinar

SRINAGAR- Kashmir University Wednesday suspended construction of a guesthouse inside the campus to save a dozen chinar trees from the axe following student protests. Vice Chancellor, Abdul Wahid Qureshi halted the construction inside the chinar-studded Naseem Bagh campus here. Hundreds of students had launched an aggressive campaign to draw public attention to the possibility of chinar trees being felled to make way for the construction. 'I have passed orders so that no law is violated in this regard,' Qureshi told IANS. The lofty chinar tree, which is an icon of the rich Kashmiri heritage, is protected under the law and its felling without the explicit magisterial permission is illegal. While many historians credit the Mughal rule for bringing the majestic chinar tree to Kashmir from Iran. Others argue the chinars in the Valley owe their origin to Greece. The broad, thick leaves of the Chinar are famous for their changing colours during the autumn season. From green to crimson, red and finally yellow, the leaves of the chinar present an autumnal spectacle of colour, which fascinates tourists so much, that they time their next Kashmir vacation with the changing colours of the chinar leaves. Besides its grandeur and beauty, this tree has economic significance for the locals. Its dry fallen leaves are burnt and converted into charcoal to fill the traditional Kashmiri fire pots. 'Kangris', used inside the loose, tweed over-garments called the Pheren' to keep warm during winters.

(Kashmir Observer, 17 June, 2007)

Global Watchdog Condemns Pahalgam Attack

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Condemning the brutal Pahalgam terror attack in April, global watchdog Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on Monday said it has enhanced its focus on the steps that the countries have taken to combat terror financing, and will soon release a report on terror financing cases, including state-sponsored terrorism.

The rare condemnation by FATF shows that the "international community has felt the severity of the attack", which killed 26 persons in Pahalgam, on April 22, and spotlights that such attacks will not go unpunished, sources said, adding the terror attack was done by Pakistan-trained terrorists.

"Terrorist attacks kill, maim and inspire fear around the world. FATF notes with grave concern and condemns the brutal terrorist attack in Pahalgam on April 22. This, and other recent attacks, could not occur without money and the means to move funds between terrorist supporters," FATF said in a statement.

Sources said FATF rarely issues condemnation of terrorist acts. It is only the third time in last decade that they have issued condemnation of a terrorist attack.

It had earlier issued condemnations once in 2015 and then in 2019 in severe cases of terrorist attacks.

The FATF statement comes in the backdrop of Indian authorities highlighting Pakistan's persistent support for terrorism and its funneling of multilateral funds for arms procurement.

According to sources, such action by Pakistan warrants that the country be put in the "grey list" of FATF.

India has consistently held that Pakistan has given safe haven to designated terrorists and the same was evident when senior military officials were present at the funeral of the terrorists killed in Indian military attacks of May 7.

Ahead of the next meeting of the Asia Pacific Group (APG) of FATF on August 25 and the next FATF plenary and working group meeting on October 20, India is preparing a dossier on the omissions and commissions by Pakistan with respect to FATF anti-money laundering and terror financing norms.

India will be submitting to the FATF for grey listing of Pakistan.

FATF, which is a global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog and sets international standards that aim to prevent these illegal activities, also said that it will soon release a "comprehensive analysis of terrorist financing", compiling cases provided by its global network consisting 200 jurisdictions.

"It will also host a webinar to help public and private sectors understand the risks and stay alert to emerging threats," it added.

Sources said the report on terror financing risks would be released in a month's time. This is the first time the concept of "state sponsored terrorism" is being acknowledged by FATF as a funding source.

"Only India's National Risk Assessment (NRA) recognises state-sponsored terrorism from Pakistan as a key TF risk. The inclusion of 'state sponsored terrorism' as a concept in the report demonstrates international recognition of state-sponsored terrorism by Pakistan," sources added.

Cockpit Voice Recorder Recovered From Plane Crash Site

Press Trust Of India

Ahmedabad: Officials investigating the Air India plane crash here have confirmed the Cockpit Voice Recorder has been found, a crucial discovery to help ascertain the possible cause of the accident that killed 270 persons, including 241 on board.

Earlier, the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) had confirmed that only the Flight Data Recorder (FDR) of the ill-fated plane was found.

The officials confirmed the recovery of black boxes to P K Mishra, the Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who on Sunday inspected the site where the Air India plane crashed in Ahmedabad on June 12 and also visited the civil hospital where the injured persons are undergoing treatment.

Mishra chaired a high-level review meeting at the Circuit House here and discussed the ongoing relief, rescue and investigation efforts with senior officials from the central

and state governments, AAIB and the Airports Authority of India, an official release on Sunday said.

The AAIB has launched a detailed investigation, and the US National Transportation Safety Board is conducting a parallel probe under international protocols, as the aircraft was American-made, the release stated.

"Officials confirmed to Dr Mishra that the Flight Data Recorder (FDR) and Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) have been located and secured," it said.

With the finding of both black boxes of the plane, it would be easy for investigators to ascertain the cause of the crash.

All but one of the 242 passengers and crew on board the Boeing 787-8(AI 171) and another 29 persons, including five MBBS students, on the ground were killed when the London-bound aircraft crashed into the nearby campus of a medical college in Meghaninagar area and burst into flames, moments after it took off from the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport.



IRIB studio on fire after Israeli attack.

Israel Strikes Iran's State TV During Live Broadcast

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: In a dramatic escalation of the ongoing Israel-Iran conflict, the Israeli military launched a targeted strike on the headquarters of Iran's state broadcaster, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), in Tehran on Monday, June 16, 2025.

The attack, which briefly disrupted live broadcasts, underscores the intensifying hostilities between the two nations.

The strike hit IRIB's headquarters in Tehran's District 3, a densely populated area, during a live broadcast on the Khabar News Network.

Footage captured a popular female presenter, Sahar Emami, continuing her report as a loud explosion rocked the studio, causing debris to fall and filling it with dust. The presenter could be seen chanting: "the sound of aggression against

Footage captured a popular female presenter, Sahar Emami, continuing her report as a loud explosion rocked the studio, causing debris to fall and filling it with dust

the homeland will be met with the sound of truth and reality". Her last words "The studios dust laden atmosphere..." were cut after the blast.

The broadcast was halted for several minutes but resumed shortly after, according to Iran's Mehr News Agency.

Iran's state-run media

Iran Plans to Leave NPT Amid Ongoing Conflict

Trans Asia News

Tehran: Iranian parliamentarians are preparing a bill that could push Tehran toward exiting the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the foreign ministry said on Monday, while reiterating Tehran's official stance against developing nuclear weapons.

"In light of recent developments, we will take an appropriate decision. Government has to enforce parliament bills but such a proposal is just being prepared and we will coordinate in the later stages with parliament," the ministry's spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said, when asked at a press conference about Tehran potentially leaving the NPT.

The NPT, which Iran ratified in 1970, guarantees countries the right to pursue civilian nuclear power in return for requiring them to forego atomic weapons and cooperate with the U.N. nuclear watchdog, the IAEA.

Israel began bombing Iran last week, saying Tehran was on the verge of building a nuclear bomb. Iran has always said its nuclear programme is peaceful, although the IAEA declared last week that Tehran was in violation of its NPT obligations.

President Masoud Pezeshkian reiterated on Monday that nuclear weapons were against a religious edict by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Iran's state media said that no decision on quitting the NPT had yet been made

by parliament, while a parliamentarian said that the proposal was at the initial stages of the legal process.

Baghaei said that developments such as Israel's attack "naturally affect the strategic decisions of the state," noting that Israel's attack had followed the IAEA resolution, which he suggested was to blame.

"Those voting for the resolution prepared the ground for the attack," Esmail Baghaei said.

Israel, which never joined the NPT, is widely assumed by regional governments to possess nuclear weapons, although it does not confirm or deny this.

"The Zionist regime is the only possessor of weapons of mass destruction in the region," Baghaei said.

Haj Flight Causes Alarm after Smoke Detected from Wheels

Press Trust Of India

Lucknow: A Saudia Airlines plane from Jeddah carrying 242 Haj pilgrims caused an alarm at the airport here on Sunday when smoke and sparks were detected from its wheels while landing, according to sources.

The Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) team acted swiftly to contain the smoke, preventing any damage to the aircraft. All passengers were safely de-boarded and flight operations continued at the Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport.

UP's Minister of State for Minority Welfare and Chairman of the Haj Committee Danish Azad Ansari said on Monday that there was a "slight technical problem as some sparks were noticed from the wheel of the aircraft after landing".

"There was no problem during the journey. Everybody was comfortable. A minor problem was noticed after landing. All passengers have returned comfortably," he said in Ballia.

Sources told PTI, "Smoke was detected from the wheels of a Saudia aircraft that was bringing back 242 Haj Yatris from Jeddah."

"The ARFF team rushed to the spot. Working with the Saudia team, the smoke was contained and damage to the aircraft averted," they said, adding there was no impact on airport operations.

There was no problem during the journey. Everybody was comfortable. A minor problem was noticed after landing. All passengers have returned comfortably

"The aircraft, an Airbus, will return to its destination today," sources added.

In response to a question, Ansari said that it is not appropriate to link the Lucknow incident with the Ahmedabad air crash.

"After landing, the authority noticed some technical problems. The authorities resolved them. There was no problem anywhere. About 14,000 Haj pilgrims went from Uttar Pradesh. This Haj pilgrimage started 50 days ago. We are monitoring it every day. We are ensuring that there is no problem anywhere," Ansari said.

"Everything is being done efficiently. All precautions have been taken there. During the Haj pilgrimage, everything from ambulance to fire brigade and other resources are available," he said.

India Bound Lufthansa Flight Returns to Frankfurt after Bomb Scare



Press Trust Of India

Mumbai: A Frankfurt-Hyderabad flight of Lufthansa was diverted back to its origin airport on Sunday due to a "bomb threat", the airline has said.

The airline spokesperson, in a statement, said the passengers, who were provided with accommodation in Frankfurt, will be continuing their journey to Hyderabad on Monday.

"Out of an abundance of caution, Lufthansa flight LH752 from Frankfurt to Hy-

derabad returned to its point of departure after authorities were made aware of a bomb threat posted on social media," Lufthansa spokesperson said in the statement.

Flight LH 752 -- operated by a Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft -- departed from Frankfurt at 14.29 hours instead of its scheduled departure time of 13.05 hours, as per flight tracking website flight-radar24.com.

The aircraft was to land in Hyderabad at 1.20 hours, as per the website.

NEWS MAKERS

UAE-based Doctor Pledges Rs 6 Cr for AI Crash Victims

UAE-based Indian doctor and philanthropist Dr Shamsheer Vayalil has announced Rs 6 crore in financial aid for the families of medical students and doctors affected by the Air India plane crash in Ahmedabad last week.

The ill-fated aircraft struck the BJ Medical College's Atulyam hostel complex during lunch hour, reducing student residences and the dining hall to rubble.

All but one of the 242 passengers and crew on board the Boeing 787-8(AI 171) and another 29 people, including five MBBS students, on the ground were killed when the London-bound aircraft crashed, mo-

ments after it took off from the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport.

Announcing the relief from the UAE capital of Abu Dhabi, Dr Shamsheer, founder and chairman of Burjeel Holdings and managing director of VPS Health, said he was deeply shaken when he saw the aftermath of the crash.

As someone who had lived in similar hostels during his medical education at Kasturba Medical College in Mangalore and Sri Ramachandra Medical College in Chennai, the images struck a chord, he said.

Stillborn carried 90 km in carry bag on bus from Nashik after hospital 'denies' ambulance' PTI

UP Man Performs Wedding with Deceased Fiancee

In an unusual gesture, a 29-year-old man on Monday performed a symbolic wedding with his deceased fiancée just hours before her funeral in Uttar Pradesh's Maharajganj district.

Priyanka Madhesia (23) allegedly committed suicide at her house on Sunday night.

Priyanka, who allegedly hanged herself to death, had an argument with her fiancé, Sunny Madhesia. The woman's family has, however, not lodged any police complaint.

As the mourning family members and villagers gathered earlier in the day in Krishna Nagar locality of Nichlaul to prepare for the woman's last rites, Sunny stepped forward with vermillion in his hand.

Amid chanting of mantras led by a local priest, he solemnly applied sindoor on the deceased woman's forehead and walked

seven ritualistic circles around her bier in front of stunned onlookers, including women, who captured the episode on their mobile phones.

"This was my way of fulfilling her last wish...I loved her very much," said Sunny after performing the symbolic wedding.

"We were going to get married in November. Even though she is no more, I wanted to make her my wife the way we had both dreamt," he added.

The symbolic marriage was performed with full Hindu rituals, including an offering of 'aarti'.

Sunny later lit the funeral pyre, a role typically reserved for the spouse or a close male relative of the deceased. The local police confirmed the rare sequence of events.

Nichlaul police station SHO Akhilesh Kumar Verma said the symbolic marriage was carried out with the consent of both families.

"It was a mutual decision.

Sunny also expressed his wish to organise her 13th-day death ritual (terahvin), which traditionally concludes the mourning period," Verma told PTI.

Sunny and Priyanka had been in a relationship for over three years. Sunny, who had first met Priyanka when he moved in as a tenant in her home, later opened a mobile repair and accessories shop in the area and continued to live nearby.

The relationship was accepted by both families and the couple was formally engaged. The wedding was scheduled for November 29, 2025.

The SHO said there was a minor argument between the couple on Sunday evening.

Priyanka, who was found hanging in her room later that night, was rushed to the Community Health Centre in Nichlaul, where doctors declared her dead on arrival, he added. PTI

Noida Couple Fined Rs 55,000 for Bike Romance

A video of a man and woman performing a dangerous stunt on a motorcycle along the Noida-Greater Noida Expressway surfaced on social media on Monday, prompting the traffic police to issue a fine of Rs 55,000 for flouting traffic norms.

The 19-second video, filmed on June 15, showed the girl sitting astride on the fuel tank of the motorcycle and hugging the man who was driving it.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Lakhman Singh Yadav said that traffic police have issued a fine, stating that both riders were penalised for violating traffic regulations. He also urged the youth to follow road safety norms to prevent accidents and avoid legal consequences.

"The video came into notice through social media in which a boy and his co-rider were seen flouting traffic norms. After that a challan of Rs 55,000 was issued to them," Yadav said. PTI

Rabid Dog Attack Triggers Panic In Padgampora, Awantipora



Observer News Service

PULWAMA: Panic gripped Padgampora area of Awantipora in South Kashmir's Pulwama district after several people were injured in an attack by a rabid dog.

Locals said the stray dog went on a rampage, biting multiple residents before it was chased away. "The dog attacked people in broad daylight, and no one felt safe stepping outside. Children and elderly were particularly at risk," said Fayaz Ahmad, a resident of the area.

The incident has triggered fear and resentment among the locals, who have urged the administration to take immediate measures to control the stray dog menace in the area.

"This is not the first time. We have been raising this issue repeatedly, but no serious action has been taken so far," said another local, Javaid Ahmad. "Now that so many people have been injured, we request the authorities to wake up before it's too late."

Meanwhile, the injured have been provided anti-rabies treatment at nearby health facilities.

Locals have requested concerned authorities to look into the matter at an earliest and take action in this regard. They have also demanded sterilization and relocation of stray dogs to avoid such incidents in the future.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Awantipora Mushtaq Ahmad told KNO that following the incident, teams from the medical, municipal, and revenue departments have been rushed to the area to assess the situation and provide necessary assistance.

"We have taken note of the incident and appropriate measures will be taken to safeguard the people," he said

MLA Mir Fayaz Launches Sanitation Drive At SDH Kupwara

Observer News Service

KUPWARA: In a bid to improve healthcare services and maintain cleanliness, MLA Kupwara Mir Muhammad Fayaz Fayaz Mir Monday visited the Sub-District Hospital (SDH).

During his visit he interacted with patients, reviewed the facilities and launched a sanitation-cum-anti-encroach-

ment drive.

According to KNO, the drive aims to ensure cleaner surroundings and improved healthcare services at the hospital. The MLA emphasized the importance of maintaining a clean environment for patients and staff.

He said that significant initiatives would be taken for enhancing the overall quality of healthcare services in Kupwara.

3 Injured In Explosion During Mosque Demolition In Handwara

Observer News Service

HANDWARA: At least three people were injured after an explosion occurred during demolition of a mosque in the Kasheri area of Handwara in north Kashmir this morning.

Details available state that the incident took place while locals were razing the old structure to pave way for a new one.

The blast happened unexpectedly amid the demolition activity, injuring three individuals who were shifted to a nearby health facility, where their con-

dition is stated to be stable.

The injured have been identified as Mudasir Ahmad Mir of Nutnoosa, Ghulam Ahmad Tantray of Kachri and Owais Ahmad of Hadipora.

Soon after the explosion, security forces rushed to the spot and cordoned off the area. A team of police officials is currently investigating the nature and origin of the blast.

Superintendent of Police Handwara told KNO that the cause of the explosion is being ascertained and further investigation is underway.

Police Seize Large Quantity Of Contraband Substances In Budgam

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In continuation of its sustained efforts to combat drug trafficking, Police in Budgam on Monday said to have seized a significant quantity of contraband substances and apprehended four drug peddlers during the operation.

Acting on specific and credible information, Police Station Chadoora received a specific information regarding one individual, namely Mohammad Ashraf Parray son of Ghulam Ahmad Parray resident of Bugam, Chadoora, had allegedly concealed a large quantity of poppy straw-like substances in his cowshed, a police spokesman said in a statement issued to Kashmir Observer.

"Upon receipt of this information, a police team from PS Chadoora along with concerned Executive Magistrate 1st Class, Nagam, raided the said location. During the search, 76.540 kilograms of semi-ground poppy straw and 4.290 kilograms of

grinded poppy straw in powder form (commonly known as Fukki) were recovered," police said.

Four individuals involved in the commission of the crime were arrested on the spot. They have been identified as Muzaffar Ahmad Dar son of Jalal Uddin Dar, Mohammad Ismail Dar son of Ghulam Hassan Dar, Sajad Ahmad Guroo son of Abdul Aziz Guroo, all residents of Ghat Tokna, Awantipora and Mohammad Altaf Parray son of Ghulam Ahmad Parray resident of Bugam, Chadoora.

Accordingly, police said that a case under FIR number 108/2025 under relevant sections of law has been registered at Police Station Chadoora and investigation has been initiated.

J&K Police reiterated their firm resolve to root out the drug menace from society and urge the public to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activities related to narcotics. Together, we can build a safer, drug-free society, the statement added.

Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat Assumes Charge As DC Budgam

Observer News Service

BUDGAM: In a formal handover ceremony held Monday in the office chamber of the Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat took over the charge as DC Budgam.

He joined as the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, succeeding Akshay Labroo.

Dr. Bhat took the charge in presence of several senior officers of the district administration.

Additional District Development Commissioner Budgam, Aashiq Hussain; ADC Budgam, ACR Budgam, all SDMs, Chief Planning Officer Budgam, DIO Budgam, Tehsildars and other senior officers of the district were present on the occasion.

The incumbent DC was accorded a warm welcome by the officers present. He expressed gratitude to the gathering of officers and officials present on the occasion.

Tourists Begin Arriving In Kashmir, Applaud Warm Hospitality



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In the wake of the recent reopening of several tourist spots in Kashmir following the Pahalgam terror attack in April, a slow but hopeful return of tourists is being observed in Kashmir Valley, in Srinagar and around the iconic locations.

Recently, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha announced the reopening of 16 key tourist locations across J&K, including Betaab Valley, Verinag, Koker-nag and Achabal Gardens, as well as parks in Pahalgam

town. These sites had been temporarily closed for security reasons.

Tourists from Gujarat and other parts, visiting Srinagar for the first time, shared their experience "This is our first visit, and the people here are very friendly and hospitable."

"People want to take photos with us; we have enjoyed delicious food. I'm excited to explore this paradise—the mountains, gardens—they have so much to offer," said Rameez, a visitor from Mumbai.

According to KNO, local residents and tourism stake-

holders have welcomed the government's move to reopen these key attractions. Both residents and visitors expressed joy and optimism about the return of tourists and the revival of economic activity.

Although tourist numbers remain modest, scenes at Dal Lake and Pahalgam reflect cautious hope. Shikaras have begun operating again, and shops are gradually picking up momentum.

"We are happy to see people coming back. Tourism is our lifeline," said a shopkeeper near Dal Lake.

6 PEOPLE WANT TO TAKE PHOTOS WITH US; we have enjoyed delicious food. I am excited to explore this paradise—the mountains, gardens—they have so much to offer,"

Dal Lake Gets 6 Lakh Fish Seed For Eco-Restoration

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Fisheries Department has released over six lakh live fish seed, primarily Common Carp, into Srinagar's iconic Dal Lake. The exercise aims to maintain the lake's ecological balance and support the local population of licensed fishermen.

Ghulam Mohi-ud-din Wani, Joint Director, Fisheries Department, said this is a routine exercise aimed at sustaining fish populations in the lake.

"Fish numbers tend to decline due to both licensed fishing and illegal poaching. To counter this, we stock commercially viable fish like Common Carp, which not only survive but multiply, becoming a reliable source



of income for licensed fishermen," he said.

The stocking took place in the middle of Dal Lake, at Nehru Park—an area that sustains a sizable population of fishermen.

Wani said such efforts are vital as pollution caused by modern lifestyles has severely impacted natural water bodies and aquatic ecosystems.

"If fish thrive in a water body, it means the water is biogenically alive. Our concern is to maintain that vitality through regular stocking, especially when natural regeneration alone cannot meet the demand," the officer said.

Wani appealed to the public to refrain from illegal fishing practices. "This fish is the sole source of livelihood for licensed fishermen. It is not just about fishing; it is about survival for hundreds of families. We urge people to respect that," he said.

According to KNO, in addition to stocking, Dal Lake supports self-regenerating fish populations, creating a sustainable cycle, but only if protected from exploitation, the Joint Director Fisheries said.

DC Pulwama Reviews Muharram Arrangements

Observer News Service

PULWAMA: In view of the forthcoming holy month of Muharram, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Pulwama, Dr. Basharat Qayoom on Monday undertook a detailed visit of various Shia-populated areas of the district to review arrangements being made for the smooth and peaceful conduct of Muharram processions and related religious observances.

DC visited the prominent Imambaras at Gangoo, Wakherwan, and Panner Tal, where he held detailed interactions with members of the respective committees, community elders, and local residents.

During the visit, several issues concerning the area were brought to the notice of the administration, including the need for uninterrupted power and water supply, cleanliness of procession routes, medical facilities, street lighting, and repairs to roads and public utilities.

Responding to the concerns raised, DC assured that all possible measures shall be taken to address concerns in a time-bound manner. He reiterated the

commitment of the district administration to ensure that all arrangements are in place well before the commencement of Muharram.

"All departments have been directed to work in close coordination to provide necessary facilities to the public and ensure a peaceful atmosphere and smooth observance of Muharram," DC stated.

He also directed officers of concerned departments to ensure cleanliness in and around Imambaras, maintain sanitation along the procession routes, and mobilise resources for timely repairs and lighting arrangements. He laid special emphasis on strengthening health services during the period, including deployment of medical teams and ambulances at key congregation points.

On the occasion, DC also inaugurated a public park at Gangoo, developed as a recreational space for local residents. While interacting with the gathering there, Dr. Qayoom underlined the district administration's ongoing efforts to improve basic amenities and community infrastructure.

Kakapora Residents Elated Over Launch Of Smart Bus Service

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The launch of the smart bus service from Kakapora to Srinagar has brought a wave of joy among residents, who have hailed the initiative as a long-awaited development.

The move is being seen as a positive step toward improving affordable transport connectivity in South Kashmir.

The locals said that it's a huge relief for daily commuters as the e-bus service is not only comfortable but also affordable. "We are thankful to the administration for finally listening to our pleas," they said.

The residents expressed hope that the service will continue uninterrupted and will help reduce travel time and costs for people commuting to Srinagar for work, studies, or medical needs frequently.

Meanwhile, the residents from other parts of South Kashmir, particularly from Pulwama and Shopian districts have demanded similar facilities.

Zakir Ahmad, a resident of Pulwama town, expressed dismay over the exclusion of their area from the smart bus service rollout. "It is unfortunate that while smart bus services have been introduced in areas like Pampore and Khrew, Pulwama town continues to be neglected. A large number of people travel daily to Srinagar, and we are forced to rely on expensive passenger vehicle services," he said.

Ahmad further added that students and employees suffer the most due to the lack of cheaper transportation options. "Every day hundreds of students and government employees travel to Srinagar from

Pulwama. In the absence of an economical option like the e-bus, they are forced to pay high fares for private vehicles."

The residents of Shopian also echoed similar concerns. Ab Hamid, a local from the district, highlighted the financial burden on low-income families. "There are sumo services available, but many people, especially the poor, cannot afford the fare. E-buses will provide a cheaper and eco-friendly alternative," he said.

Hamid also stressed the need for inclusive development. "If this facility can be extended to smaller areas like Kakapora, then why not to a district headquarters like Shopian? We hope the government treats all areas equally."

Locals from both districts revealed that they have approached the concerned authorities several times and were assured that the service would be extended, but so far, no progress has been made.

"We urge the Deputy Commissioners of Pulwama and Shopian and the concerned MLAs to personally look into this issue. Our repeated appeals have gone unanswered. It is high time the government ensures equitable transport services across all regions," said Shabir Ahmad, a civil society member in Pulwama.

According to KNO, residents said that better public transport is not just a matter of convenience but a basic necessity. They demanded immediate inclusion of their districts in the smart bus network so that common people, especially students, patients, and the elderly, are not forced to suffer anymore.

Javid Dar Distributes Appointment Letters To Junior Assistants



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Javid Ahmad Dar distributed appointment letters among the newly recruited Junior Assistants of the Rural Development Department (RDD) during a ceremony held at the Civil Secretariat, Srinagar.

Addressing a longstanding shortage of clerical staff that had affected the field offices since 2021, the Minister handed over appointment orders to 35 candidates from the Kashmir division.

The appointment ceremony was held in presence of Secretary, RDD & Panchayati Raj, Mohammad Aijaz Asad, Director RDD Kashmir, Shabir Hussain Bhat and Director Panchayati Raj, Sham Lal.

A total of 122 Junior Assistants have been appointed across Jammu and Kashmir through the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB).

Of these, 62 have been posted in the Kashmir division, 55 in the Jammu division and 5 in the Rural Sanitation Department.

The structured recruitment included 1 post at the UT level, 2 each for the divisional cadres and the rest have been distributed among the districts.

Congratulating the appointees, Javid Ahmad Dar highlighted their vital role in improving the department's performance. "This batch of Junior Assistants will serve as a much-needed boost to the department, strengthening the public service delivery system across the rural areas," he said.

He said that these appointments will expedite file processing, enhance grievance redressal, support implementation of welfare schemes and reduce the workload in the Block Development Offices (BDOs).

The Secretary noted that the new clerical staff would significantly improve the operational efficiency of rural governance structures in the Union Territory.

The appointments have come in continuation of last year's recruitment drive, where 1,395 Panchayat Secretaries were inducted into the RDD&PR department, strengthening the administrative infrastructure at the Panchayat level.

Career Counseling Session Held At Yakmanpora

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: On the occasion of Eid-e-Ghadeer, the Idara Islamic Library Imam Khamenei (Regd), Yakmanpora, successfully conducted a career counseling and drug de-addiction session for youth and students of Yakmanpora, Dewar, and adjoining areas on Saturday.

The event, held at Imambarah Sofi Mohalla, Yakmanpora, aimed to offer guidance and support to participants in making informed career choices and to raise awareness about the perils of drug abuse.

Expert speakers delivered detailed insights into career planning, emerging job

trends, and professional development. Participants also received personalized feedback and advice tailored to their aspirations.

Interactive sessions during the program enabled meaningful exchanges between the attendees and experts, fostering a collaborative and encouraging atmosphere.

The participants lauded the initiative, describing it as informative, timely, and much needed in the current social context.

The Idara Islamic Library Imam Khamenei has expressed its commitment to organizing more such career-oriented and social awareness programs in the future.

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KO VIEW

Food Safety First

How safe is the food we eat every day? This question doesn't get asked enough in our media discourse. Every year, millions across India fall sick because what they ate was contaminated, full of harmful bacteria, chemicals, or simply mishandled. In Kashmir too, news of expired products, adulterated spices, or unhygienic street food is not uncommon. Rarely it makes headlines, but most times it quietly harms people: children, elders falling sick, families spending their savings on hospital bills. So it is urgent that we treat food safety not as an occasional talking point but as an everyday habit.

But this needs effort from everyone. Authorities must keep surprise checks regular and strict - not just before Eid or weddings. Local food safety labs must be well-equipped so results come quickly, and action is swift. Farmers, shopkeepers and restaurant owners must get proper training, not just fines. Many small vendors want to do the right thing but don't know how.

Most importantly, we, the people, need to care too. Look at expiry dates. Don't buy loose products from shady stalls. Teach children at home and in school that safe food is their right. Safe food protects health. Reports of contaminated milk, adulterated spices or stale meat crop up every now and then, denting consumer trust and hurting local businesses.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)'s training programs must reach even the farthest hamlets. We also need robust local testing labs so that samples do not have to be sent outside the valley for months-long analysis.

This is an alarming situation. As things stand, street vendors, restaurants and even hoteliers operate with little to no oversight. The roadside vendors have been found to reuse oil multiple times, handling food with bare hands, and often storing it in substandard conditions. Worse, the unchecked use of adulterants in food products poses serious health risks, contributing to a rise in gastrointestinal infections, food poisoning, and even cancer. Although recent activism of food safety authorities should be appreciated, they shouldn't act only after a crisis surfaces. The prevailing situation calls for routine, surprise inspections. We need a preventive rather than a reactionary approach to food safety.

True, the crackdown against the violators of the food safety standards is hampered the logistical issues. It remains woefully understaffed. And without sufficient manpower, thorough and regular inspections are impossible. This leaves room for food vendors to operate without fear of accountability. So, the need of the hour is for the government to fill up the vacancies in the department quickly. Food safety is not just a regulatory issue; it is a matter of life and death.

FINANCIAL FIX

Kashmir's Labour Void

To grow industry, Kashmir must stop treating effort like a burden.

Irshad Mushtaq

Walk into most industrial units in Kashmir and you'll see a common pattern: machines waiting, owners frustrated, workers missing. The region has potential, but too many businesses are held back by one thing. People not showing up, or not sticking around.

Skilled labour is in short supply. Not because people don't exist, but because many aren't trained, or willing, to work consistently. There's a growing preference for "easy" jobs, or none at all. Conflict and instability have shaped a mindset where government jobs are idealized and industrial work is dismissed as too hard or uncertain.

This attitude hurts both entrepreneurs and the economy. In comparison to other regions, Kashmir's industries fall behind because they lack teams that can adapt, commit, and build. Even the most passionate founder can't grow a business alone.

What's missing isn't just training in tools or machines. It's a culture that values effort. Many job seekers lack soft skills, communication habits, or the grit to learn on the job. Without these, productivity stalls and innovation fades.

To change this, we need more than subsidies or schemes. We need workshops that build confidence, programs that teach problem-solving, and stories that celebrate hard work. The focus must shift from quick income to long-term growth. Imagine a Kashmir where today's worker becomes tomorrow's entrepreneur. Where skill, not shortcut, is the way forward. If we invest in people, not just in infrastructure, we can build industries that last. But it starts with changing how we think about work.

The author is a Srinagar-based reputed financial advisor.

Why Kashmir Rejects the Global Breakfast Menu

Despite the cereal boom and croissant craze, India's diverse breakfast traditions—from Kashmir's czot to Maharashtra's poha—stand strong against globalised food fads.

By Seema Sangra

Most of us have grown up hearing the famous quote by American nutritionist Adele Davis: "Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, and dinner like a pauper."

Davis, a prominent advocate of natural foods in the 1930s, also criticised the food industry for promoting unhealthy habits through misleading advertising.

That problem continues even today, as the U.S. remains among the most obese nations globally.

But her prescription for a heavy breakfast isn't universally echoed across cultures. In fact, Ayurveda suggests the opposite: Don't eat like a king in the morning.

Across the world, breakfast was never a formal meal. Some languages, like Kashmiri and Dogri, don't even have a direct word for it.

In many Indian regions, traditional eating patterns revolve around one or two main meals a day, with little to no emphasis on an early morning meal.

In most traditional societies, there was no separate menu for different meals. People ate the same types of food at different times, and meal patterns varied widely by region and social class.

Historically, Asian peasants often ate two main meals: a late morning meal and an early supper.

"In Punjab and parts of Jammu," explains Nikhil Sharma, a Jammu-based chef and founder of a healthy diet food chain, "the term shawela refers to the food women carried to the fields for their husbands, who left for work at dawn without eating."

That freshly cooked meal, often served with buttermilk, was their first substantial intake of the day, Nikhil adds. "Even those at home typically had a very light start, perhaps just a handful of roasted grains or leftover flatbread, before a main meal around 11 or 11:30 am."

The concept of breakfast as we know it to-

In Kashmir, Western breakfast trends and packaged options are slowly entering households, but the enduring ritual of czot with freshly churned butter and hot noon chai remains central.

day arrived in the Indian subcontinent with the British East India Company in the 19th century.

Equally interesting is the role of media in reshaping breakfast habits globally.

Television ads, newspaper write-ups, and food packaging visuals inundated us with the idea of the 'ideal breakfast': cornflakes, eggs, toast, jam, fruits, and a glass of milk.

This visual narrative gradually replaced traditional options like paratha with butter, chidwa, idli-dosa, dhokla, poha, and upma in popular imagination.

"In Kashmir," says Peer Mohammed Adil, a long-time resident of the valley, "people traditionally ate czot, lawasa, jo, and makkai sattu, without butter or fancy toppings."

Noon chai remains, he continues, a quintessential part of both morning and evening routines.

Breakfast, once a simple or even non-existent meal, has transformed dramatically due to indus-

trialisation, migration, and modern marketing.

Today's media pushes grab-and-go options: mini cereal pots, energy shots, breakfast bars, instant oats, and just-add-water noodles. All aimed at busy lives craving convenience.

According to recent business reports, the Asia-Pacific breakfast cereal market, crossed \$8.8 billion in value last year.

While packaged cereals gain popularity in urban centers, India's morning meals remain deeply rooted in regional diversity. Mostly vegetarian, savoury, and freshly prepared.

In Kashmir, Western breakfast trends and packaged options are slowly entering households, but the enduring ritual of czot with freshly churned butter and hot noon chai remains central.

Some families now add protein-rich foods like boiled eggs or omelets, but the real stars of the Kashmiri breakfast table are its many traditional, hand-made breads.

From soft, flaky lavasa (a thin, unleavened flatbread) to the rich, sesame-crust ed bakarkhani, Kashmiri bakeries (kandurs) still craft these artisanal breads using time-honoured techniques.

The slightly sweet, saffron-laced sheermal and the crusty, round girda are also morning favourites, often paired with butter, or jam.

Despite the convenience of factory-made breads and croissants, it is these local, deeply flavourful breads, rooted in Kashmir's identity and history, that dominate breakfast tables.

Their continued popularity is proof: in a rapidly globalizing food landscape, taste and tradition often win over uniform, mass-produced alternatives.

Seema Sangra, a native of Jammu & Kashmir, is Program Leader of the Media Studies Department at Amity University, Dubai. She also serves as Media Advisor to the Kashmir World Film Festival and writes on food, media, and tradition

Kashmir's Schools Must Wake Up

After the suicide of 14-year-old Numan, it's time Kashmir's schools leave behind old patterns and finally learn how to care for real, and for every child.

Khurram Rasool

this mindset. A child in Srinagar ended his life, and in doing so, left behind a question we must all answer: how did we let him slip through?

His story is not one of rebellion. It's one of grief. Numan had lost his mother when he was around ten. He coped the only way he could. He drew symbols and words onto his skin, small tattoos that probably gave shape to feelings he couldn't express in words. Instead of care, he received humiliation.

According to his family and classmates, school authorities repeatedly shamed him for the tattoos. They didn't ask why. They just punished the how.

This wasn't discipline. It was neglect disguised as authority. It was failure disguised as order.

What happened to Numan isn't rare, even if his end was.

Teachers in Kashmir often respond to distressed behaviour with sharpness, not sensitivity. They were trained, perhaps, in more

peaceful times, or at least in a system that never asked them to understand children beyond their grades and manners.

But the world has changed. And Kashmir's children are growing up in a place where trauma is layered and unresolved.

In such a place, emotional care is not an extra. It is the core of any meaningful education.

But how many schools have counsellors? How many have teachers trained to recognize anxiety, depression, or signs of grief? Very few.

We teach them equations, but not empathy. We grade their grammar, but ignore their silences. We make them sit straight, while inside they are collapsing. We do not prepare our teachers for this reality, and we do not reform our institutions to meet it.

This has to stop.

We need every school in Kashmir to rethink what it means to educate a child. We need mandatory, full-time

school counsellors. Trained professionals, not part-time volunteers.

Every teacher must undergo training not just in pedagogy, but in trauma care and child psychology. Not every child who talks back is disrespectful. Some are scared. Some are angry. Some are just trying not to cry.

Classrooms need to become softer places. Places where behaviour is not punished blindly, but understood. Where a student like Numan would be asked gently about his tattoos, not mocked. Where guidance, not ridicule, is the first response. Where children can be complex, emotional, and human, and still be safe.

His classmates say he was laughed at, singled out, made to feel different. That's not education. That's abandonment.

We are not preparing children for exams alone. We are preparing them for life. And if we continue to ignore their inner world, we will lose more. Maybe not all to suicide, but slowly, to shame. To isolation. To silence.

Numan's death is not just one family's tragedy. It is a mirror held up to an entire system. His tattoos weren't rebellion. They were sorrow looking for shape. And his story is not a warning, it's a plea.

Let it be the moment we decide to stop failing our children. Let it be the last time we choose silence over care.

The author is a senior scribe from Kashmir. She can be reached at khan.khurramrasool@gmail.com

Letter to Editor

Digital Kashmir Is Disconnected at the Core

We're always online. But rarely present.

At home, in classrooms, during meals—people are together, yet not really. Eyes locked on screens, not each other. Conversations cut short by pings. Emotions filtered through emojis. We text more than we talk. We scroll past people we once knew.

Digital technology has made life easier in many ways. But somewhere along the way, our phones stopped being just tools. They became habits. And now, those habits are changing how we live, feel, and connect.

We see it around us every day. Couples sitting silently in cafés, each lost in their feed. Friends in the same room laughing at different reels. Parents checking Instagram while their child tugs at their sleeve. Children glued to screens before they even learn to hold a pencil.

This isn't about demonizing technology. It's about balance. Right now, we're not getting it right.

A 2023 JAMA Pediatrics study found that high social media use nearly doubles the risk of anxiety and depression in teenagers. In India, the average young person spends over 8 hours a day on screens. Meanwhile, families spend less than 30 minutes in meaningful conversation. That gap says a lot.

It's not just mental health that suffers. Relationships do too. We've begun to treat people like content—skippable, scrollable, replaceable. We miss facial expressions. We overlook tone. We forget how to listen. In a world of constant updates, we're losing depth.

The addiction isn't always obvious. It hides behind harmless habits: checking one more reel, replying to one more text, refreshing a feed. But slowly, it eats into time we could spend truly pres-

ent with one another.

We now measure worth in likes. We seek comfort in notifications. We confuse connection with visibility. But thousands of followers can't replace one real friend. A hundred comments can't match a warm conversation.

What if we put our phones down during meals? What if we walked without headphones, or talked without checking our screens mid-sentence? What if we allowed silence, eye contact, and long conversations back into our lives?

We don't have to reject the digital world. We just have to stop letting it replace the real one.

We were never meant to live through screens. We were meant to live together.

Sincerely,
Mohammad Arfat Wani,
Kuchmulla Tral.

Tradition on a Timer

Kashmir's Vanishing Food Wisdom

Modern gadgets have made life easier, but they're draining the soul from our traditional cuisine, altering not just taste, but our health.

Dr. Iftikhar Ahmad Wani

In every Kashmiri home, food has always been more than just sustenance. It's memory, ritual, identity. Dishes like haakh, nadru yakhni, rista, and rogan josh were once prepared slowly, often over firewood, allowing flavours to deepen and ingredients to release their healing qualities. Breads like girda, tchot, and lawasa were baked in local kandar waans. They were hand-kneaded, naturally fermented, and slapped onto hot clay walls. Even our staple rice, or batta, was boiled in open pots, with the starch-rich water (kantz) drained out to keep it light on the stomach. Today, the dishes remain. But something essential has changed. They don't nourish us the way they once did. Why? The answer lies in how we cook them. The pace of modern life has brought an avalanche of kitchen gadgets. Microwaves,

rice cookers, air fryers, pressure cookers, non-stick pans, kettles. These have made cooking quicker, but they've also stripped our food of its vitality. Take rice. Cooked in electric pots, it often turns sticky and heavy. Unlike traditional boiling, which drains excess starch, rice in a cooker retains it, raising its glycemic index and making it harder to digest. Over time, this can disturb blood sugar balance, increase weight, and slow digestion. Pressure cookers are now used for everything, from rajma to yakhni. While time-saving, they destroy heat-sensitive nutrients like vitamins B1 and C. A traditional yakhni brewed slowly was calming and aromatic. Cooked under pressure, it often feels heavy and lacks depth. Microwaves, another staple, come with their own problems. Leftovers like haakh or nadru, often reheated in plastic containers, are unevenly warmed and can absorb harmful chemicals like BPA. The food may fill us, but it doesn't

fortify us. Repeated exposure may even prove mildly toxic over time. Even bread has changed. Girda, once fermented with wild cultures and baked in tandoors, is now often made with baking soda or instant yeast. This shortcut skips natural fermentation, which aids digestion and supports gut health. Add to that the refined maida used in bakeries, stripped of fiber and nutrients, and we get bread that raises blood sugar and disrupts digestion. Our tea culture has also suffered. Noon chai, once lovingly brewed for over an hour in a samavar, is now hastily prepared or reheated multiple times. The result? A brew that's no longer soothing but acidic. Drinking water from electric geysers, another growing habit in winters, poses risks too. These appliances often harbour metallic residues or stale water, unfit for regular consumption. Air fryers and deep fryers come with their own risks.

Air fryers, though marketed as healthy, use high temperatures that can form acrylamides, compounds linked to cancer, especially in starchy snacks. Deep frying in reused oils, common in homes and markets, generates trans fats that harm the heart and raise inflammation. Non-stick pans, though convenient, release toxic fumes when scratched or overheated. Everyday dishes, like omelets or shallow-fried paneer, can carry traces of these toxins, subtly harming our liver and hormone systems over time. Even boiling water in electric kettles can be problematic. They often over-boil, leaving water flat and lifeless. Many families reheat tea in them, unknowingly destroying its antioxidants. Plastic containers are another hazard. Storing hot food, like leftover rista or rice, in plastic leads to chemical leaching, altering flavour and disrupting hormones. All these conveniences come at a hidden cost. Our food may look the same, but its

energy, digestibility, and healing power are fading. The result? A slow but steady rise in acidity, IBS, obesity, hormonal disorders, and fatigue, even among the young. So what's the solution? Not rejection, but restraint. Use rice cookers mindfully. Wash the rice well, avoid the 'warm' mode for hours. Pressure cook pulses, not everything. Swap non-stick pans for steel or iron. Never microwave food in plastic. Use air fryers sparingly. Don't reuse oil. Boil water in clean steel or copper vessels. And when you can, cook slowly. Cook with love. The way our grandmothers did. Let's return to the principles that made our food more than just fuel. Let it once again become our strength, our medicine, and our cultural memory. Not by abandoning modern life, but by cooking with intention, and heart.

The author is an Assistant Professor at the Directorate of Physical Education & Sports, University of Kashmir.

Kashmir's Culture of Excess

How modern consumerism is hollowing out our values, traditions, and peace of mind.

Mirza Arshad Hussain

Once, life was slow. Not because the world lacked speed, but because our desires had limits. A Maruti 800 meant you'd arrived. A Nokia phone lasted forever, and no one questioned its wisdom. There was time for conversation, not just connection. There was contentment in enough. Now, the world spins faster than we can breathe. We chase more. More things, more upgrades, more identity. A new gadget doesn't just promise efficiency; it sells the illusion of self-worth. A school isn't just for learning anymore; it's a branding platform. Clothes aren't worn, they're broadcast. Meals aren't served, they're staged. "You want the best for your child," says a parent outside a Srinagar coaching centre, "so you give them everything." Her son wears a designer jacket, carries two phones, and dreads math class. "I just want him to feel confident," she adds. But it's not confidence. It's camouflage. What used to be about education is now about image. Coaching centres, once academic lifelines, are now lifestyle hubs. At weddings, the change is even louder. The bride arrives not to a prayer, but to a drone shot. Her entrance is rehearsed. Her lehenga weighs as much as a suitcase. The groom waits on a throne-like stage, under lights bright enough for a film set. "We wanted it to feel cinematic," says a cousin, adjusting her makeup in the reflection of a chocolate fountain. Every moment is curated for the camera. Every plate groans under excess. The Wazwan, once a sacred feast, has become a performance. Guests barely taste the food. They compare. They photograph. Then they move on, leaving untouched platters behind. "We made 35 dishes," says a father of the groom, "and people still said it was

average." He laughs, but there's a fatigue in his eyes. Even grief has fallen into the trap. Condolence tents now overflow with packaged food, bottled drinks, crates of fruit. You sit to pray, and a packet of juice is pressed into your hand. There's no silence, no stillness. Just logistics. "It's what people expect," says a neighbour. "They judge if you don't offer enough." We no longer mourn. We cater. Religious festivals, too, have joined the display. Eid goats are paraded like luxury cars. Children pose for selfies. The price tag gets whispered more than the prayer. Sacrifice has been reduced to a hashtag. What does this do to the soul? Studies suggest a rise in anxiety, in depression, in burnout. We're more connected than ever, yet more alone. Young people in cities across India, including Kashmir, report lifestyle-related stress at unprecedented levels. Sleep disorders are diagnosed in children. Therapy is trending. But even therapy is a subscription now. We scroll endlessly for answers, as if wisdom lies in updates. A new phone promises better focus. A new car promises peace of mind. But the relief fades faster than the battery. In our craving for novelty, we have lost the capacity for stillness. Even artificial intelligence has a cost. Ask a chatbot a late-night question, "Do cats dream?", and a global machine kicks into motion. Data centers hum, electricity flows, entire ecosystems are tapped just to deliver a moment of digital curiosity. We call this efficiency. But it's indulgence, on a planetary scale. Every religion, Islam included, offers rituals to pause, to realign. The call to prayer is not just a schedule; it's a disruption. A moment to break from the stampede. Five times a day, you're reminded: This is not all there is. But we rise from sujoed only to fall back into the cycle. Our heads bow; our habits don't. History, too, whispers warnings. The

fall of Rome wasn't war. It was rot. A society so consumed by pleasure, it forgot how to endure pain. Bread and circuses kept people fed and distracted. Today, we have fast food and infinite content. The tools are different. The story is the same. Modern corporations didn't invent desire, they engineered it. They study our eyes, our clicks, our cravings. They don't sell us what we need. They make us need what they sell. It's not just business. It's belief. We believe that a better life is something you can unbox. That happiness arrives in EMI plans. That peace can be delivered. But simplicity was never scarcity. It was space for thought, for prayer, and for human closeness. Look at your grandmother's kitchen: one stove, one spoon, one cake recipe that worked for every guest. Now walk into a modern home: ten brands of biscuit, four flavours of tea, and a child scrolling alone in the corner. We are not evolving. We are escaping. From ourselves. From discomfort. From the kind of reflection that hurts before it heals. And yet, the remedy is still within reach. We don't need a revolution. Just a recalibration. A moment to pause before we purchase. To breathe before we broadcast. To remember that some of the best things are not things at all. Let weddings be for love, not for lighting. Let classrooms teach, not perform. Let grief be quiet. Let celebrations be enough. No device, no dessert, no designer outfit will follow us into the grave. But the lives we build, the relationships we honour, the peace we choose, those will echo. So next time you find yourself reaching for more, ask: What am I really hungry for? And then, maybe, put the phone down. Light a candle. Sit with someone. Or sit alone. Sometimes, that is enough.

- The writer can be reached at mirzaah@yahoo.com

Kashmiri Children Are Growing Up Too Fast

In a place hardened by history, even the smallest children have stopped asking silly questions. A father reflects on what's being lost.

Dr. Shoib Ahmad Baba

"Baba, are you tired today?" My son Eesa asked me this on a routine evening. His voice was soft, but the question landed heavy. It wasn't curiosity. It was concern. And it didn't belong on the lips of a boy still small enough to believe in magic. I froze. Not because he asked, but because he meant it. When did our children grow old? In Kashmir, childhood used to come with mud-streaked clothes, cricket on roads, snow fights in the yard, and questions like, "Why do stars twinkle?" Now I hear children ask: "Are you okay?" "Is situation fine tomorrow?" "Why is everyone angry?" They're still little. But their eyes have seen too much. Their voices carry a weight that shouldn't be there. Eesa doesn't ask childish questions anymore. He watches me. He worries. He reads the silence in a room before anyone speaks. He knows when I'm hiding stress, and he carries it with me. I never asked him to. He just does. That's what scares me. He should be chasing clouds, not tension. But in Kashmir, that kind of freedom is rare now. I see it in other children too. In classrooms. On playgrounds. In the pauses between their words. Their innocence has teeth marks on it, bitten off by news alerts, adult talk, fear, and an atmosphere that never lets them breathe easy. This is the crisis we don't talk about. We call them "mature for their age" like it's a medal. But that medal hides something sad: a child who had no choice but to grow up. Who skipped wonder and landed in worry. Who carries calmness not as a gift, but as a defense.

Innocence is not weakness. It's a right. A right to ask strange questions. To believe the stars follow you home. To think snowflakes are magic and monsters live under beds. When that vanishes, something breaks. Not with noise. But with a soft, permanent snap. Even schools add pressure. Kindergartners sit in exam halls. Marks matter more than play. Childhood is now a ladder, and every step must lead somewhere. There's no room for pause. No room for pointless joy. At home, we're no better. We leak our stress into their lives. We're distracted. Distant. Always rushing. Our children might be surrounded by toys, but many feel emotionally alone. They pick up our moods like antennae. They decode silences. They comfort us. That's not how it should be. I remember my own childhood. Sitting by my father, asking questions just for the fun of it. He answered them all, but never once made me feel like I had to protect him. That line was clear. Now, I fear it's gone. What can we do? We can start by slowing down. Listening more. Protecting them from the noise. Giving them space to be wild, to be messy, to be beautifully, gloriously clueless. Stop calling early maturity a strength. Stop rushing their growth. Childhood doesn't come back. One day, they will grow up. They'll face the world. But let it not be because we shoved them there too soon. In Kashmir, resilience is everywhere. But what about softness? What about safety? What about joy without condition? Let tenderness be our new legacy. Let our children be children, for as long as they possibly can.

The author is a lecturer at the Department of School Education, Jammu and Kashmir.

A Smart Turn in Valley

In a region known for its serenity and strife, digital boards are bringing lessons to life, and offering students a new way forward.

Dr Waseem Ahmad

In Budgam, on a winter morning when frost clung to the windows and boots squeaked on school floors, a seventh-grade student sat still, eyes wide. A digital board flickered on. On it, clouds formed, climbed, and rained. "Before this," he said later, "I could only imagine it. Now I can see it happening." That small moment held something bigger. It showed how classrooms in Jammu and Kashmir are changing, and why that matters. Across this region, where education has often meant makeshift arrangements, old books, and missed school days, there's a silent push to bring in digital learning. Over the past two years, hundreds of government schools have been equipped with digital boards. They've arrived in far-flung areas like Kupwara, Poonch, and Leh. Some schools, long cut off from resources and training, are now watching animations, streaming poetry, and practicing pronunciation with real-time feedback.

It's a big shift. And it's being driven by national and local schemes like Samagra Shiksha and Digital India. The aim: to modernise education, especially in places that have seen more struggle than support. Teachers, too, are adapting. In Baramulla, one showed me how he used the board to simulate a lab experiment. "We don't have proper lab space," he said, "but this lets me show how things work." Another teacher in Anantnag said student attendance had improved since the screen came in. "They don't want to miss class now," he smiled. In a place where weather and political forecasts can halt lessons for days or weeks, recorded classes and offline content have been a lifeline. Teachers in Gurez, where internet access is patchy, now preload entire syllabi. If the net goes down, the board still works. And when the road to school is blocked, the lesson doesn't have to wait. In classrooms where resources have always been scarce, digital boards are doing more than fill gaps. They're sparking curiosity.

I watched a group of students in Kishtwar lean in as their teacher played an animated video on the solar system. Later, one of them raised his hand and asked if Pluto could become a planet again. "They never asked questions before," the teacher said. "Now, they do." This isn't just about flashy tech. It's about reach. In Tangdhar, where access to quality teaching has always been limited, the board brings in NCERT content and interactive quizzes. Students use the same tools their peers do in Delhi or Mumbai. But none of this works without training. That's something the Jammu and Kashmir administration seems to understand. Over the last year, more than 5,000 teachers have been trained in using these digital tools. Some were unfamiliar with even basic controls at first. Others picked it up quickly. One workshop leader told me, "What they lacked in skills, they made up for in hunger to learn." The tools are also helping change the image of government schools. Often seen

as the last choice for poor families, these schools now have something new to offer. In many cases, private schools without smart boards are lagging behind. "For once," said a teacher in Udhampur, "we're not the ones catching up." The 2023 Union Budget pushed further in this direction, setting aside 100 crore for innovation in school education. There's also a district-level plan tied to National Achievement Survey data, meant to respond to local needs. And the promise of more residential schools for tribal children, if followed through, could give places like Doda and Reasi a stronger foundation. But let's not pretend all is fixed. In some schools, the boards have been installed but left unused. No electricity. No technician. No one to explain how it works. In others, they were used for a while, then forgotten. The screen froze. No one came to repair it. And while there's a flood of content in Hindi and English, there's very little in Kashmiri, Dogri, or Ladakhi. That matters. Stu-

dents connect better with what they hear at home. Without local language support, some feel left out. Then there's the question of what happens when the school day ends. At home, many students still don't have smartphones, laptops, or even steady power. So while some are catching up, others are still waiting on the sidelines. The digital leap must not widen the old divide. But even with these concerns, something has shifted. A girl in Kargil told me she's learning to write simple code, using a program on the school's smart board. In Shopian, a digital science project made by students was selected for a national-level fair. These stories are no longer rare. Screens haven't solved everything. But they've given schools a new way to reach children, and children a new reason to stay curious.

Dr Waseem Ahmad is a writer focused on agricultural technology and education. He can be reached at waseembhatpn@yahoo.com.

Need a Specialist? Brace for Big Bills or Long Waits – Here’s What Must Change

The Conversation

If you have cancer, a disease such as diabetes or dementia, or need to manage other complex health conditions, you often need expert care from a specialist doctor.

But as our new Grattan Institute report shows, too many people are forced to choose between long waits in the public system or high costs if they go private.

Governments need to provide more training for specialist doctors in short supply, make smart investments in public clinics, and regulate the extremely high fees a small number of private specialists charge.

High fees, long waits, missed care

Fees for private specialist appointments are high and rising.

On average, patients’ bills for specialist appointments add up to A\$300 a year. This excludes people who were bulk billed for every appointment, but that’s relatively rare: patients pay out-of-pocket costs for two-thirds of appointments with a specialist doctor.

Increasing GP costs make national headlines, but specialist fees have risen even more – they’ve grown by 73% since 2010

People who can’t afford to pay with money often pay with time – and sometimes with their health, as their condition deteriorates.

Wait times for a free appointment at a public clinic can be months or even years. In Victoria and Queensland, people with an urgent referral – who should be seen within 30 days – are waiting many months to see some specialists.

High fees and long waits add up to missed care. Every year, 1.9 million Australians delay or skip needed specialist care – about half of them because of cost.

Distance is another barrier. People in regional and remote areas receive far fewer specialist services per person than city dwellers (even counting services delivered virtually). Half of remote commu-



nities receive less than one specialist appointment, per person, per year. There are no city communities where that’s the case.

Train the specialists we’ll need in the future

Specialist training takes at least 12 years, so planning ahead is crucial. Governments can’t conjure more cardiologists overnight, or have a paediatrician treat elderly people.

But at the moment there are no regular projections of the specialists we’ll need in the future, nor planning to make sure we get them. Government-funded training places are determined by the priorities of specialist colleges, which approve training places, and the immediate needs of public hospitals.

As a result, we’ve got a lot of some types of specialist and a shortage of others. We’ve trained many emergency medicine specialists because public hospitals rely on trainees to staff emergency departments 24/7. But we have too few dermatologists and ophthalmologists – and numbers of those specialists are growing slower than average.

The lack of planning extends to where specialist training takes place. Doctors tend to put down roots and stay where they train. A shortage of rural training places leads to a shortage of rural specialists.

To fix these problems, govern-

ments need to plan and pay for training places that match Australia’s future health needs. Governments should forecast the need for particular specialties in particular areas. Then training funding should be tied to delivering the necessary specialist training places.

To fill gaps in the meantime, the federal government should streamline applications for overseas specialists to move here. It should also recognise qualifications from more similar countries.

More public clinics where they’re needed most

Public clinics don’t charge fees and are crucial in ensuring all Australians can get specialist care. But governments should be more strategic in where and how they invest.

There are big differences in specialist access across the country. After adjusting for differences in age, sex, health and wealth, people living in the worst-served areas receive about one-third fewer services than people in the best-served communities.

Governments should fund more public services in areas that need it most. They should set a five-year target to lift access for the quarter of communities receiving the least care in each specialty.

We estimate 81 communities need additional investment in at least one specialty – about a million extra appointments in total. Some communities receive less

care across the board and need investment in many specialties.

With long waiting times and unmet need, governments should also make sure they’re getting the most out of their investment in public clinics.

Different clinics are run in very different ways. Some have taken up virtual care with a vengeance, others barely at all. One clinic might stick to traditional staffing models, while the clinic down the road might have moved towards “top of scope” models where nurses and allied health workers do more.

Governments should lay out an agenda to modernise clinics, encouraging them to adopt best practices. And they should introduce systems that allow GPs to get quick written advice from specialists to reduce unnecessary referrals and ensure services can focus on patients who really need their care.

Curb extreme fees

Even with more public services, and more specialists, excessive fees will still be a problem.

A small fraction – less than 4% – of specialists charge triple the Medicare schedule fee, or more, on average. These can only be described as extreme fees.

In 2023, an initial consultation with an endocrinologist or cardiologist who met this “extreme fee” definition cost an average of \$350. For a psychiatrist, it was \$670.

There is no valid justification for these outlier fees. They’re beyond the level needed to fairly reward doctors’ skill and experience, they aren’t linked to better quality and they don’t cross-subsidise care for poorer patients. Incomes for average specialists – who charge much less – are already among the highest in the country. Nine of the top ten highest-earning occupations are medical specialties.

The federal government has committed to publishing fee information, which is a positive step. But in some areas, it can be hard to find a better option, and patients may be hesitant to shop around.

‘Warmer Climate Could Make Sleep Apnoea More Severe Common’



Press Trust Of India

Sleep apnoea, a condition characterised by having trouble breathing properly while sleeping, could become more common and severe in a warmer future, a new study has found.

Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA) is a common sleep disorder, estimated to affect about a billion worldwide. The condition occurs when muscles in the throat narrow the airways, impacting breathing and blood oxygen levels during sleep.

The findings, published in the journal Nature Communications, show that one’s chances of experiencing sleep apnoea could spike by 45 per cent on days with higher temperatures.

The effect is projected to be stronger in European countries.

However, chances of these effects in populations of countries with a lower gross domestic product per capita, including India, Israel and Brazil, are higher, the study found.

Lead author Dr Bastien Lechat from Flinders Health and Medical Research Institute Sleep Health, Australia, said the study helps “understand how environmental factors like climate might affect health by investigating whether ambient temperatures influence the severity of OSA.”

The study also projected that the burden, impacts, and costs of obstructive sleep apnoea could double by 2100, under a warming of 1.8 degrees Celsius in global ambient temperature above pre-industrial levels.

In 2023, the increased prevalence

of sleep apnoea due to global warming was “associated with a loss of over 780,000 healthy life years and 105 million workplace productivity days across 29 countries,” the authors wrote.

The authors quantified well-being and productivity burden due to sleep apnoea.

The overall loss was found to be USD 98 billion, with a workplace productivity loss of USD 30 billion, and a well-being loss of USD 68 billion.

The study is the first of its kind outlining how global warming could be expected to affect breathing during sleep and impact the world’s health, wellbeing and economy, Lechat added.

Studies have related sleep apnoea with an increased risk of developing cardiovascular disease and mental conditions, including anxiety, depression, dementia and Parkinson’s disease.

More than 500 nights of sleep data of 116,620 people from across 41 countries -- a total of about 62 million nights -- were analysed. Data was gathered using a sensor placed under the participants’ mattresses.

The researchers then compared this sleep data with detailed 24-hour temperature information sourced from climate models.

"Globally, higher temperatures were associated with a 45 per cent higher probability of having OSA (obstructive sleep apnoea) on a given night," the authors wrote.

Further, "scenarios with projected temperatures (of over) 1.8 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels would incur a further 1.2 to 3-fold increase in OSA burden by 2100," the study said.

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WPI Inflation Dips To 14-Month Low Of 0.39 Pc In May On Easing Food, Fuel Prices

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- Wholesale price inflation (WPI) declined to a 14-month low of 0.39 per cent in May on easing prices of food articles and fuel, and experts said geopolitical tensions could push up prices.

WPI-based inflation was 0.85 per cent in April. It was 2.74 per cent in May last year.

In a statement, the industry ministry said the inflation in May is in positive zone primarily due to "increase in prices of manufacture of food products, electricity, other manufacturing, chemicals and chemical products, manufacture of other transport equipment and non-food articles".

According to the WPI data, food articles saw a deflation of 1.56 per cent in May, against a deflation of 0.86 per cent in April, with vegetables, onion, potato and pulses seeing negative inflation.

Deflation in vegetables was 21.62 per cent in May, compared to 18.26 per cent in April. Fuel and power, too, saw a deflation of 2.27 pc in May, compared to a 2.18 per cent inflation in April.

Manufactured products, however, saw positive inflation at 2.04 per cent, compared to 2.62 per cent in April.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) mainly takes into account retail inflation while formulat-

ing monetary policy.

Data released last week showed retail inflation eased to over six-year low of 2.82 per cent in May mainly due to subdued food prices.

The RBI this month cut benchmark policy interest rates by a sharp 0.50 per cent to 5.50 per cent amid easing inflation.

The RBI has cut inflation projections for the current fiscal year to 3.7 per cent from the earlier estimate of 4 per cent, as it expects core inflation to remain benign with the easing of international commodity prices.

The sub-4 per cent average retail inflation projection is the lowest in recent years.

ICRA Senior Economist Rahul Agrawal said the cooling in WPI was broad-based, with the food, non-food manufacturing, minerals, and fuel and power segments contributing to the dip in headline print between these months.

Notwithstanding the early onset of southwest monsoon, its progress halted in early-June, with a significant lag of 31 per cent over the normal levels up to June 15, 2025. The temporal and spatial distribution of the monsoon remains key for crop outlook, and consequently, food inflation, Agarwal said.

ICRA said crude oil prices have risen quite sharply in the ongoing month, following escalation of tensions between Israel and Iran.

CS For Leveraging Technology, Global Tie-Ups To Popularise J&K Handicrafts



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR- Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Monday chaired a high-level meeting to review the ongoing and proposed initiatives of the Handicrafts & Handloom Department aimed at promoting and preserving the rich craft heritage of Jammu & Kashmir, while simultaneously improving the socio-economic condition of artisans and weavers.

The meeting was attended by Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce, Vikramjit Singh; MD, JKTPD; Directors of Handicrafts & Handloom, Kashmir and Jammu, besides other senior officers.

Underscoring the global demand for authentic and high-quality handmade products, the Chief Secretary stressed the need to safeguard the interests of genuine artisans by leveraging modern technological interventions. He called for widespread use of Geographical Indications (GI), QR code tagging, traceability tools and digital authentication mechanisms to clearly distinguish the original handmade products from counterfeits.

He directed the department to aggressively follow up with the Government of India for expediting approvals of dozens

of project proposals submitted for promotion of various crafts across the UT. He emphasised the need to designate a senior nodal officer to spearhead the coordination and ensure timely clearances of these projects.

The Chief Secretary also called for fast-tracking the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the World Craft Council. He said this partnership is expected to significantly elevate the global footprint of J&K's traditional crafts by establishing a World Craft Hub and Living Crafts Museum, envisioned as an international centre for craft preservation, innovation, and exchange.

Dulloo further highlighted the need for consistent promotion at national and international levels, leveraging not just conventional marketing channels but also digital and social media platforms. He remarked that the market for our crafts is vast, and we must tap into its full potential to uplift the lives of our artisan community.

Reviewing the progress on Ekta Malls being established in Jammu and Srinagar, the Chief Secretary urged for their timely completion. These malls are envisioned as dedicated platforms to showcase

and sell indigenous products, enabling artisans to directly connect with consumers.

Commissioner Secretary, I&C, Vikramjit Singh, during his presentation, elaborated on the post-2020 policy reforms that have led to structured support for artisans, improved market access and revitalised the traditional craft economy in the UT. He noted that these initiatives paved the way for GI protection, upgraded infrastructure and financial empowerment of the artisan community.

He highlighted flagship interventions like the Credit Card Scheme for Artisans (CCSA), Financial Support Scheme for Cooperatives/SHGs, Karkhandar Scheme, Raw Material Banks, and Artisan Education Schemes—all aimed at holistic upliftment of artisans and weavers across J&K.

Regarding the key infrastructure and promotional projects, Director, Handicrafts & Handloom, Kashmir, Masrat-ul-Islam, provided a detailed overview of recent initiatives, including the establishment of Craft Villages, Common Facility Centres (CFCs), Flatted Factories, De-hairing Plants, Bamboo Clusters and Craft-Based Resource Centres in various districts.



DULLOO FURTHER HIGHLIGHTED THE NEED FOR consistent promotion at national and international levels, leveraging not just conventional marketing channels but also digital and social media platforms.

Iran-Israel War: Govt To Meet Stakeholders This Week To Assess Impact On India's Trade

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- The government is closely monitoring the situation arising from the Iran-Israel conflict, and a meeting with shipping lines, container firms, and other stakeholders will be held this week to assess the impact on the country's overseas trade and address any issue, a top official said on Monday.

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said that the impact of the war on India's trade will depend on how the situation unfolds over a period of time.

"We are watching the situation. We are also calling a meeting (this week) of all the shipping lines, the container organisations and the concerned departments, and stakeholders to understand from them that what are the kind of issues they are facing and how we can sort it out," he told reporters here.

Exporters have stated that the war, if escalated further, would impact world trade and



push both air and sea freight rates.

They have expressed apprehensions that the conflict is expected to impact movement of merchant ships from the Strait of Hormuz and Red Sea.

Nearly two-thirds of India's crude oil and half of its LNG imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran has now threatened to close.

This narrow waterway, only 21 miles wide at its narrowest point, handles nearly a fifth of global oil trade and is indispensable to India, which de-

pends on imports for over 80 per cent of its energy needs.

According to think tank GTRI, any closure or military disruption in the Strait of Hormuz would sharply increase oil prices, shipping costs, and insurance premiums, triggering inflation, pressuring the rupee, and complicating India's fiscal management.

Meanwhile, Israel's June 14-15 strike on Houthi military leadership in Yemen has also heightened tensions in the Red Sea region, where Houthi forces have already attacked commercial shipping.



EPFO Cautions Members Against Taking Help From Agents For Online Services

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- Retirement fund body EPFO on Monday cautioned its members against taking help from third-party agents and advised using online portal for services related to their provident fund accounts to avoid exposure risks to key details.

The Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) has taken a series of reforms to make services faster, transparent and user-friendly for all its stakeholders, a labour ministry statement said.

EPFO has more than 7 crore members who are employees or ex-employees of various private and public sector enterprises.

It has been observed that several cyber cafe operators/fintech companies are charging EPFO members large sums of money for services that are officially free, it stated. In many cases, these operators simply use EPFO's online grievance portal, something any member can do on their own, free of cost.

The stakeholders are cautioned against visiting or engaging with third-party companies or agents for EPFO-related services as this may expose their financial data, the statement said, adding these external entities are not authorised by EPFO.

It further said that EPFO has

a robust grievance monitoring and redressal system wherein the member grievances are registered on CPGRAMS or EPFIGMS portals and are monitored till their resolution in a time-bound manner.

A total of 16,01,202 grievances were received in EPFIGMS and 1,74,328 in CPGRAMS in FY25.

Out of these, 98 per cent of the grievances were resolved within timelines. EPFO strongly advises all its members, employers, and pensioners to utilise the online services available through the EPFO portal and UMANG app.

All EPFO services, including claim filing, fund transfers, KYC updation, and grievance redressal, are entirely free of cost and members should not pay any fees to third-party agents or cyber cafes for services that can be easily accessed online.

Further, members can contact EPFO helpdesks/PROs at regional offices as listed on the official website (www.epfindia.gov.in) for any issues, it said.

The EPFO has recently issued circulars for simplification of KYC or member details correction and for submission of transfer claims, deployment of functionality for auto settlement of advance claims up to ₹1 lakh and Centralized Pension Payment System (CPPS) for simplifying the pension disbursement process.

Exports Fall 2.17% To USD 38.73 Bn In May; Trade Deficit Narrows To USD 21.88 Bn

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- After registering a positive growth for two months, India's exports slipped into negative territory again, contracting 2.17 per cent year-on-year to USD 38.73 billion in May due to a fall in global petroleum prices, while trade deficit narrowed at USD 21.88 billion during the month.

According to government data released on Monday, imports declined 1.7 per cent year-on-year to USD 60.61 billion during the month under review due to fall in the in-bound shipments of gold and crude oil.

Cumulatively, during April-May 2025-26, exports increased by 3.11 per cent to USD 77.19 billion, while imports rose by 8 per cent to USD 125.52 billion, the data showed.

The trade deficit was USD 48.33 billion.

The dip in exports and imports narrowed the trade deficit – the difference between the value of imports and exports in May. It was USD 22.51 billion in the same month last year. It was USD 26.42 billion in April.

The fall in merchandise shipments can be attributed to increasing global uncertainties. The Iran-Israel war could further dampen the prospects.

The commerce ministry is holding an inter-ministerial meeting along with stakeholders this week to discuss what can emerge out of this conflict.

The main export sectors which recorded negative growth during the month included rice, iron ore, gems and jewellery, engineering, and certain textile segment goods. Exports of petroleum products declined by 30.32 per cent to USD 5.6 billion in May.

Similarly, crude oil and gold imports decreased by 26.14 per cent and 12.6 per cent to USD 14.75 billion and USD 2.5 billion, respectively.

However, exports of tea, coffee, spices, ready-made garments of all textiles, chemicals, marine products, and pharma have registered positive growth. Electronic goods' shipments rose 54.1 per cent to USD 45.7 billion in May.

Briefing the media on the data, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said that despite global uncertainties, India is doing good on the exports front.

"Despite the global policy uncertainty regarding trade, ongoing conflicts, we have done extremely well (during the April-May period)," he said, adding petroleum prices are volatile.

Would Like To Conclude Early Tranche Of Trade Pact With US Before July 9: Commerce Secy

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- Negotiations for the proposed India-US trade agreement are in good progress and the two sides are expected to agree on an early tranche of the pact before July 9, a top government official said on Monday.

"We are working on the early tranche and as you are aware that there is a date (July 9), before that we would like to conclude this early tranche," Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal told reporters here.

He said that Indian and the US teams are making visits to each other's country for trade talks.

"We also visited the US twice. The US team also came here twice. There is good progress and we are hopeful that this will be done within the timelines," he added.

The US on April 2 imposed an additional 26 per cent reciprocal tariff on Indian goods but suspended it for 90 days till July 9. However, the 10 per cent baseline tariff imposed by America remains in place. India is seeking full exemption from the additional 26 per cent tariff. The US team was here from June 5 - 11 for the talks. The negotiations will continue both virtually and physically in the days to come.

When asked if the absence of the US Fast Track Trade Authority (also known as Trade Promotion Authority) could delay the proposed trade pact with India, an official said that it is up to the US authorities to decide how to navigate its local regulations for the trade agreement with India.

The official said that as India and the US are aiming to more

than double the bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030, this can not happen unless and until tariffs are reduced.

"Both the countries are looking for better market access into each other's markets," the official said adding for this "the product mix could be different for both the countries".

India is seeking duty concessions for labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, gems and jewellery, leather goods, garments, plastics, chemicals, shrimp, oil seeds, grapes, and bananas in the proposed trade pact.

The US, in turn, wants duty concessions on certain industrial goods, automobiles - especially electric vehicles, wines, petrochemical products, dairy, and agricultural items like apples, tree nuts, and genetically modified crops.

Unemployment Rate Rises To 5.6% In May, Female Joblessness Higher At 5.8%

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- The rate of unemployment in the country, measured in monthly term, rose to 5.6 per cent in May from 5.1 per cent in April this year mainly due to seasonal variation, showed the government data released on Monday.

Earlier last month, the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation released the first monthly Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) as part of efforts to monitor the proportion of unemployed people among those eligible for jobs in the country in real-time.

The latest data collected in the current weekly status (CWS) showed that the unemployment rate (UR) for persons of all ages during May 2025 rose to 5.6 per cent from 5.1

per cent in April 2025.

The pace of joblessness among females was higher at 5.8 per cent compared to 5.6 per cent in males at the country level in May 2025.

Joblessness among those in the age group of 15-29 increased to 15 per cent in May from 13.8 per cent in April 2025 across the country.

The rate of unemployment in urban areas rose to 17.9 per cent in May from 17.2 per cent in April, while it was 13.7 per cent in the month under review up from 12.3 per cent in the previous month in rural areas.

CWS refers to the activity status determined on the basis of a reference period of the last 7 days preceding the date of the survey.

In rural areas, employment

shifted away from the primary sector (agriculture) (from 45.9 per cent in April to 43.5 per cent in May 2025) to the secondary and services sectors, it noted.

Reduction in agricultural activities with the end of Rabi harvest season for both males and females in the rural areas may have brought about the downward shift in number of workers, it stated.

In urban areas, changes were more marginal with slight declines in own account workers and casual labourers, affecting workforce numbers, it stated.

The study further showed that the unemployment rate (UR) among women in the age group of 15-29 also increased to 16.3 per cent in May from 14.4 per cent in April across the country (rural+urban).



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NIT Srinagar marks World Blood Donor Day with successful blood donation camp

Srinagar, June 16: The National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar on Monday marked World Blood Donor Day by organizing a successful blood donation camp at the institute's Medical Unit.

The initiative was led by the NCC Unit of NIT Srinagar under the aegis of the 9 J&K Girls Battalion, in collaboration with the National Service Scheme (NSS), Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat (EBSB) Club, Sports Club, Alumni Association NIT Sgr, Medical Unit, and SMHS Hospital (Government Medical College Srinagar).

Held under the national

theme "Nation First, Donate Blood, Save Lives," the camp aimed to raise awareness about the importance of voluntary blood donation and instill a spirit of patriotism and humanitarian service among the youth.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, staff, and faculty. A total of 77 pints of blood were collected, with 80 voluntary donors and 18 NCC cadets actively participating.

In his message, Director NIT Srinagar, Prof. Binod Kumar Kanojia, appreciated the efforts of the organizers and participants.

"Such initiatives reflect the true spirit of service and responsibility that we aim to nurture in our students. I commend the NCC Unit and all collaborating bodies for successfully organizing this blood donation camp, which not only contributes to public health but also strengthens the values of empathy and civic engagement within our campus community," he added.

Notably, Lt Dr. Nitika Kundan, Associate NCC Officer (ANO) and event coordinator, also donated blood herself, exemplifying leadership by action. She commended

the collective spirit shown by the NIT Srinagar community.

The enthusiastic response from our cadets and the larger campus community reflects the institute's enduring commitment to nation-building through service," she said.

The blood donation camp was supported by the presence of all key coordinators, who also donated blood in the camp. These included Prof. M. A. Shah, Dean Alumni and International Affairs, Lt. Dr. Nitika Kundan (NCC Officer), Dr. Jitendra Gurjar (NSS), Dr. Ashok Kumar (EBSB), Dr.

Gowhar Nabi (Medical Officer), and Dr. Manoj Kumar (SAS).

The organizing team extended heartfelt thanks to Prof. Binod Kanojia, Director, NIT Srinagar, for his encouragement and permission to hold the event. His continued support was instrumental in the success of the initiative.

Medical Officer Dr Ulfata Gul at SMHS Hospital praised the discipline and turnout of the participants. "This contribution is not just commendable, it will directly help save lives in critical care and trauma situations," she said

Dr Ulfata also expressed her

heartfelt gratitude to all the volunteers who came forward to donate blood, appreciating their selfless contribution to saving lives.

Prof. Atikur Rehman, Registrar, NIT Srinagar, extended his support and commended the initiative, describing it as an essential part of the institute's vision.

"Beyond academics, we believe in nurturing empathy and service among our youth. Today's successful blood donation drive is a testimony to that belief," he added.

Prof. M. A. Shah, Dean Alumni and International Affairs, stressed

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Kashmiri Students

from Israeli airstrikes. From there, officials hope they might reach the Armenian border. But no one knows how long that will take.

"We've been told to get out. So we're going," said a medical student from Srinagar who asked not to be named. "They said no one should stay back in dorms or apartments. We've seen missiles fall near us. No one wants to be left behind."

The Indian Embassy in Tehran has coordinated the bus relocations as part of a limited evacuation plan for students caught in the middle of a conflict that seems to grow more violent by the hour.

On Sunday, the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs granted permission for Indian students to be escorted to the Armenia border through Norduz. The buses started moving soon after.

But not all students are moving. Hundreds remain trapped in Qom, a city south of Tehran, where dozens of Kashmiri students are enrolled in seminars. Many haven't been able to make contact for days.

"We don't know what's happening in Qom," said a student in Tehran. "We've been calling and texting our friends. No replies. Maybe they've lost the internet. Maybe worse."

The tension is growing. Just days ago, a missile struck near the Hujjatdost Dormitory in Tehran, injuring two Indian students from Kashmir. "Their condition is stable," said Nasir Khuehami of the J&K Students Association. "But the psychological impact on everyone here is huge. These are young people living in a warzone."

The Association has confirmed that the students injured in the blast have been relocated to Ramsar, another northern area. The Embassy and university officials are working to move students from city to city, trying to avoid the most dangerous zones.

"Some areas like Tabriz are still vulnerable," one student said. "So it's not like we're out of danger. We're just moving away from the worst of it."

Back home in Kashmir, families are living minute to minute, tracking updates through news alerts and WhatsApp voice notes. Many have already reached out to government officials.

On Sunday, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said he spoke with Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar. "He assured me that all necessary steps are being taken," Abdullah posted on X.

Others have echoed the concern. MP Aga Ruhullah Mehdi wrote that he has urged the Foreign Ministry to relocate students within Iran or evacuate them once the airspace opens.

Kashmir's chief cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq expressed worry about the 1,300-plus Kashmiri students in Iran. "Their families are in anguish," he said in a message. "We pray for their safety and urge swift action."

For students still in Tehran and cities like Ahvaz and Qazvin, anxiety is building. Amir Ali, a student from North Kashmir, said he has been calling help lines with no response. "I'm stuck in Ahvaz," he said. "My friends are in Tehran. A missile hit near their college. I haven't slept in two nights."

Kashmiri student groups have been trying to help by sharing verified updates, relocation instructions, and embassy contacts.

One urgent message that circulated Monday told students to gather at Gate No. 2 of Velenjak University by 9:30 a.m. "No Indian student should stay back," it read. "Ensure this is followed without exception."

The broader conflict, now in its fourth day, has claimed at least 224 lives in Iran, according to the country's Health Ministry. Most of the casualties are civilians.

Israel has been targeting military and nuclear sites across Iran, while Tehran has retaliated with missile strikes on cities like Tel Aviv and Haifa.

For now, the road to safety is long and uncertain. Gilan might only be a stopover. The Armenian border may still be days away. And the hope of flying home seems far off, as Iran's airspace remains closed.

Yet the buses keep coming. And for students like Amir, that's enough, for now.

"Just tell people we want to come home," he said. "That's all we want. Just to come home."

Indian Pilgrims

call from Qom.

Another pilgrim, Abbas Muzaffar, described scenes of growing anxiety and helplessness. "We are a group of 91 people from Allahabad. Other hotels are also packed with pilgrims from different Indian states. Everyone is confused and scared. The Internet is down, and we feel completely cut off," he said. "We urge the Indian government to evacuate us."

As the war deepens and Iranian airspace remains closed, the road to safety is long and unpredictable. For now, buses continue to roll out from campuses and dormitories—offering a sliver of hope to Indian nationals caught in the crossfire.

Harness AI

policing back to the centre of our security architecture and strike the right balance between 'Techint' (technological intelligence) and 'Humint' (human intelligence)," Sinha said.

He stressed that while Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data analytics should be leveraged to track and prevent threats, traditional policing methods remain indispensable. "Despite remarkable changes in technology, there is no alternative to beat policing and area policing," he asserted.

Reviewing the parade of 49 DySPs and 1,112 PSIs, the Lt Governor called for intensified, intelligence-led anti-terror operations and pinpointed strikes on the network of over-ground workers (OGWs) — individuals who provide logistical and financial support to terrorists.

"I have given a free hand to the J&K Police, Indian Army, and CAPFs to deal firmly with terrorists and their support systems. We must intensify operations against OGWs and ensure that those aiding terrorism face the law," he said.

Sinha also highlighted the importance of community involvement, urging police personnel to foster "collective vigilance" across society to strengthen public trust and enable swift, coordinated responses to threats.

He paid homage to fallen police personnel and hailed the J&K Police for its professionalism, courage, and effectiveness in tackling multifaceted security challenges.

"The entire nation looks at our police force with admiration and respect for its commitment and sacrifice," he said, adding that the force must also uphold the values of truth, justice, morality, and good governance rooted in ancient Indian traditions.

Director of the Police Academy, Garib Dass, informed that the training imparted to the new recruits was comprehensive and covered key areas such as the new criminal laws, Artificial Intelligence, cybercrime, narco-terrorism, counter-insurgency, field craft, human rights, and law and order.

The Lt Governor took the ceremonial salute, inspected the parade, and felicitated top-performing recruits. An oath was administered to the officers, committing them to serve with integrity and dedication.

5 August, 6 June

lens has documented the region's developmental stride post-2019. Books are documents of time, and this one showcases how J&K is on the move," he added.

Highlighting the administration's achievements, the LG noted that over one million youth in the UT had availed self-employment opportunities in just four years. "Our cities have regained vibrancy, nightlife has returned to Kashmir, and the bond with our lakes and rivers has been revived after decades," he said.

Sinha reiterated his administration's approach to peace and security: "We do not believe in buying peace but in establishing it. My message to security agencies was clear – don't harass the innocent, don't spare the guilty."

He cautioned against what he called "fear mongers" trying to disrupt peace through baseless statements. "People should do their politics, but not at the cost of unity and integrity of our great nation," he said.

The event was attended by dignitaries including former Union Minister Meenakshi Lekhi, IGNCRA President Ram Bahadur Rai, and other senior officials and cultural figures.

J&K Has 15 Active

parts of Asia. In Jammu and Kashmir, routine testing for Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI) and Influenza-Like Illnesses (ILI) continues across all major healthcare facilities.

To assess preparedness, the Union Health Ministry recently conducted a high-level review involving key institutions like the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), and central hospitals. The meeting focused on strengthening surveillance and ensuring the availability of essential medical infrastructure.

Health experts have urged the public to remain cautious but not panicked. "Most current infections are mild or asymptomatic. Healthcare systems are now much stronger than during the early waves," a senior doctor said, adding that most patients recover without needing hospitalization.

Hospitals across the UT have dedicated COVID isolation wards in place, and awareness campaigns are being run to inform people about symptoms and preventive measures.

Officials also confirmed that all current patients have mild symptoms and are stable. The Union Health Ministry has directed all states and UTs to ensure the availability of oxygen supplies, isolation beds, ventilators, and essential medicines as a precautionary measure.

Authorities continue to monitor the situation closely and have advised the public to follow COVID-appropriate behavior, including masking in crowded places and getting vaccinated on time.

India Plans 113-km

that Pakistan will be left "craving for every drop of water".

There is also a proposal to connect it to Yamuna, said sources, adding that if that happens, then the length of the canal will become 200 kilometers. After this, water can also be transported to Gangasagar via Yamuna, they added. States like Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan are expected to benefit greatly from this scheme. Invoking national security concerns after the April 22 Pahalgam attack in Jammu and Kashmir, India said the Indus Waters Treaty will remain in abeyance until Islamabad "credibly and irrevocably" ends its support for cross-border terrorism.

New Delhi has blamed Pakistan for the terror attack, a charge denied by it. As India launched Operation Sindoor, Prime Minister Narendra Modi repeatedly underlined the government's uncompromising position that "water and blood cannot flow together" and "terror and talks cannot happen at the same time". New Delhi had formally asked Islamabad on several occasions in the last two years to discuss modifications of the treaty, but to no avail.

Not An Era

with Turkiye.

This is his first foreign visit after India carried out Operation Sindoor in May during which it destroyed terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir in retaliation to the Pahalgam attack.

"We are thankful for Cyprus' support to India's fight against cross-border terrorism," Modi, the first Indian prime minister to visit Cyprus in over two decades, said while addressing a joint press conference with Christodoulides after their talks.

A joint statement issued after their talks said Cyprus and India "unequivocally condemned terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations, including international and cross-border terrorism, and reaffirmed their shared commitment to countering hybrid threats that undermine peace and stability."

They reiterated their "zero-tolerance approach" to terrorism, rejecting any justification for such acts, under any circumstances, as they emphasised that those responsible for the attacks should be held "accountable".

"We both expressed concern over the conflicts going on in West Asia and Europe. Their negative impact is not just limited to those regions. We both consider that this is not an era of war. Resolution through dialogue and restoration of stability is the call of humanity," Modi said, without naming any country.

Christodoulides said, "We have a historic friendship, and there is trust in ties".

He recalled the horrific Pahalgam terror attack of April 22 and asserted that Cyprus stands in "full solidarity" with India.

Cyprus "stands with India in its fight against terrorism" in all forms and manifestations, he said.

In his remarks, Christodoulides also referred to the June 12 Air India plane crash in Ahmedabad and said the people of Cyprus are with India in this time of grief.

Christodoulides also said the two sides also discussed the Cyprus issue and added that Cyprus wants to end the "illegal occupation" by Turkiye, referring to the disputed northern region.

"We extend the gratitude of the Republic of Cyprus to India and its people for their support. The support for the territorial integrity of Cyprus, our reunification," he said, and cited India's contribution to the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus.

Cyprus and India "expressed their strong commitment to the resumption of UN-facilitated efforts to achieve a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Cyprus Question on the basis of a bizonal, bicomunal federation with political equality, in accordance with the agreed UN framework and the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions," said the joint statement.

"India reiterated its unwavering and consistent support for the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and unity of the Republic of Cyprus. In this regard, both sides emphasized the need to avoid unilateral actions as essential for creating a conducive environment for the resumption of meaningful negotiations," it added.

The island nation located in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, and neighbouring Turkiye, share an uneasy past.

According to the website of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, the Turkish government, invoking the Treaty of Guarantee of 1960, launched an extensive military operation on the north coast of Cyprus, which resulted eventually in the occupation of the main Turkish Cypriot enclave north of Nicosia's.

In 1974, India had taken a firm stand in support of the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus.

In his press statement, Modi said his visit was a "golden opportunity" to write a new chapter in India-Cyprus bilateral ties.

Modi said there are many similarities between Cyprus' Vision 2035 and the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

"That is why we will shape the future together. We will create a concrete roadmap for the next five years to give a strategic direction to our partnership. Dialogue will be started on cyber and maritime security," he said.

Spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, Randhir Jaiswal, in a post on X wrote on the visit, "A renewed momentum to further deepen India-Cyprus ties."

During the delegation-level talks, both leaders discussed ways to deepen cooperation in newer areas of defence industry, connectivity, innovation, tourism and mobility, alongside traditional areas of trade and investments, counter-terrorism and culture, he said.

They called for enhancing connectivity between the two countries which would strengthen the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC) corridor. They noted that Cyprus is an important partner for India in the EU, Jaiswal wrote.

In his remarks, the Prime Minister asserted that mutual trust in democracy and the rule of law form a "strong foundation of our ties".

"Our ties are neither made by circumstances nor limited. We respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity," he said.

Modi said Cyprus is also a choice tourist destination for Indians, and efforts will be made for direct air connectivity between the two sides.

"We also discussed how to deepen cultural linkages. Yoga and Ayurveda are gaining popularity in Cyprus, which is gladdening to see. Tourism is another area where there is rich potential. We also deliberated on how to improve connectivity," he said.

IMEEC and India-EU ties also figured

in their talks and the joint statement.

Both leaders underscored the significance of the IMEEC as a "transformative, multi-nodal initiative" that fosters peace, economic integration, and sustainable development, it said.

"We are both convinced about the transformative potential of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor. This corridor will boost peace and prosperity in the region," Modi said.

Cyprus will assume the presidency of the Council of the EU next year.

"I have assured the Prime Minister that when Cyprus will assume the presidency of the Council of the EU, we will accord priority to EU-India ties, and we will cooperate so that we can boost it. Also, EU-India free trade agreement we wish it gets concluded," Christodoulides said.

The President also invited Modi to the "unofficial meeting" of the Council of the EU, which he said will take place next year in Cyprus.

The Prime Minister also invited the Cyprus President to visit India.

"The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to multilateralism and reform of global governance institutions, including UN Security Council reform," the MEA said.

Prime Minister Modi thanked President Christodoulides for reiterating Cyprus's support for India's permanent membership of a reformed UNSC.

An MoU to establish an India Studies ICCR Chair at the University of Nicosia was also signed during the visit, the MEA said.

Heatwave Eases

stations recorded below-normal readings, signaling a respite from the heatwave that had gripped the region. Srinagar recorded a maximum temperature of 25.2°C, while Jammu settled at 32.3°C.

Other recorded temperatures included 22.8°C in Qazigund, 20.2°C in Pahalgam, 25.0°C in Kupwara, 21.4°C in Kokernag, and 17.0°C in Gulmarg, while in the Jammu division, Banihal recorded 21.4°C, Katra 29.9°C, Batote 23.1°C, and Bhaderwah 23.6°C.

British High

today," Abdullah posted on his official X handle.

However, the chief minister did not elaborate on the issues that he and the visiting diplomat discussed during the meeting.

J&K's Snowbound

day of October, 2026, it said.

The massive exercise, which is expected to cost the government over Rs 13,000 crore to give population-related data from across the country, will be conducted by about 34 lakh enumerators and supervisors and around 1.3 lakh census functionaries armed with digital devices.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah reviewed the preparation for the census with Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India Mritunjay Kumar Narayan, and other senior officials here on Sunday.

This is the 16th census since the exercise started and the eighth after Independence, a government statement said.

According to Article 246 of the Constitution, the census is a subject listed at 69 in the Union List in the Seventh Schedule. The census is the primary source of data collection from every section of the society and a decennial activity.

In the upcoming census, caste enumeration will also be done, the first such exercise since Independence. The last comprehensive caste-based count was done by the Britishers between 1881 and 1931. Caste was excluded from all census operations conducted since Independence.

The decision to include caste enumeration in the upcoming census was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 30.

"Considering all these circumstances, and to ensure that our social fabric does not come under political pressure, it has been decided that caste enumeration should be included in the main census instead of being conducted as a separate survey," an official statement had said.

In 2010, then prime minister

Manmohan Singh had assured the Lok Sabha that the matter of caste census would be considered in the cabinet. A group of ministers was formed to deliberate on this subject and majority of the political parties recommended conducting a caste census.

However, the previous Congress-led government opted for a survey instead of a caste census, known as the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC).

The SECC conducted in 2011 under the UPA government did collect caste data but it was never fully published or utilised. Bihar and Telangana have conducted caste surveys in the last three years.

While some states have conducted surveys to enumerate castes, these surveys have varied in transparency and intent, with some conducted purely from a "political angle, creating doubts in society", the government had said.

In the upcoming exercise, the provision of self-enumeration will also be made available to the people.

The two-phased census will start with the first step of house-listing operation (HLO) in which the housing conditions, assets and amenities of each household will be collected. This will be followed by the second phase of population enumeration in which the demographic, socio-economic, cultural and other details of every person in each household will be gathered.

Very stringent data security measures would be kept in place to ensure data security at the time of collection, transmission and storage.

The population of the country according to Census 2011 was 1,210.19 million of which 623.72 million (51.54 per cent) were males and 586.46 million (48.46 per cent) were females.

Preparations for the census were done for 2021 and the fieldwork was scheduled to begin in some states and UTs from April 1, 2020. The census work was postponed due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic across the country.

The 2021 census had planned to also update the National Population Register (NPR) but the notification for the 2027 exercise does not make it clear if it will be done.

Even though the reference dates for the census are October 1, 2026 (for snow-bound areas) and March 1, 2027 (for the rest of India), the house-listing phase may start by April 2026.

Before that, the enumerators and supervisors will be given training for the smooth conduct of the exercise. The training process may start in October 2025.

Citizens will answer around three dozen questions ranging from whether they use a telephone, internet connection and the likes; their vehicles, the cereals they consume, water source, house type, whether the head of the household is a woman, a Scheduled Caste (SC) or a Scheduled Tribe (ST).

At the apex level, there will be at least 100 national trainers who will be trained on both census and trainer development skills to further impart training to the next level, that is, the master trainers.

About 1,800 master trainers will impart training to the field trainers. About 45,000 field trainers will be trained to provide training to the field functionaries — the enumerators and the supervisors.

First Headcount

Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies in the Union Territory.

This will be the first time that communities like Paharis, Paddaris, Gadda Brahman and Kolis—added to the Scheduled Tribe list in 2024—will be officially enumerated as separate groups. "There is no exact population data available about the Pahari community. This census will fill that gap," an official told KNO on condition of anonymity.

With caste-based data collection included in the census, the OBC population in J&K will also be documented for the first time. At present, 20 castes are included in the Centre's OBC list for J&K, while the UT list includes 41 communities. OBCs in J&K are entitled to 8% reservation in government jobs.

Crucially, the data will determine the next round of delimitation under the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 1919.

‘England Will Hold The Edge But India Will Push Hard’



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Former Australia opener Matthew Hayden believes India will have a strong chance of winning the upcoming Test series against England if they can clinch the games in Leeds and Manchester, but South African pace great Dale Steyn has backed the hosts to triumph 3-2 in the five-match contest.

India and England kick off their new World Test Championship cycle with the five-match series, starting with the first game in Leeds on Friday. Manchester will host the fourth Test from July 23.

"I don't think England bowlers are that good, they have got a number of injuries and a number of retirees as well, that will be the challenge," Hayden said on

'JioHotstar'.

"The northern Test matches when it's zipping around that will be key, win that one and it could well be a series that goes India's way," he added.

Since India's last red ball tour of England, the hosts' two most experienced bowlers -- James Anderson and Stuart Broad -- have bid adieu to international cricket. Additionally, England's bowl-

ing arsenal is also considerably depleted, with speedster Mark Wood ruled out of at least the first three Tests due to injury.

Fellow quick Jofra Archer will also miss the opening game, and Gus Atkinson is continuing to recover from a hamstring strain.

India, meanwhile, will take the field under new captain Shubman Gill, ushering in a fresh era following the retirements of

stalwarts Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, and R Ashwin.

With a youthful batting line-up and limited red-ball exposure in recent months, the visitors will face a stern challenge.

Steyn didn't write India off but backed England to claim the trophy.

"It is a pretty young team. Probably going to say that England are going to win the series but it's not going to come without a fight. I feel like there are going to be one or two Tests that India will take themselves."

"All games will be close. But every game will have a result. I think it will be 3-2 in favour of England. But even that will be incredibly difficult."

Former India cricketers Deep Dasgupta and Sanjay Manjrekar also backed England to clinch the rechristened Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy, but agreed the series would be a closely fought affair.

"It is a young team, it has a young captain. The team is going through a transition so that will give England a slight advantage and they have the home advantage as well but it (the series) will be very close. I'd say 3-2 in favour of England," Dasgupta said.

Manjrekar echoed the sentiment: "I think England have an edge. They are playing at home and the Indian team is going through a transitional phase so I think England might just pull this off."

DG YSS Flags Off J&K Team For Aquatic Nationals



Anuradha Gupta, Director General of Youth Services and Sports, Jammu & Kashmir, flagged off the J&K contingent for the 78th Senior National Aquatic Championship in a ceremony at MA Stadium, Jammu.

A contingent of 10 swimmers—five men and five women—selected on merit, will represent Jammu & Kashmir at the championship, organised by the Swimming Federation of India in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, from June 22 to 26.

Commending the J&K Swimming Association for its relentless efforts in nurturing talent and promoting sports, Gupta emphasised J&K's vast potential in athletics. Encouraging them to excel at the national stage, she expressed hope that their performances would bring pride to their families, coaches, and Jammu & Kashmir.

The flag-off ceremony, organized by the Jammu & Kashmir Swimming Association, was conducted under the leadership of President Ramandeep Singh Soodan, General Secretary Bharat Kumar Sharma, Joint Secretary and Coach Babita Rani, and Treasurer Vikas Mahajan.

Women's ODI WC: India v Pakistan On Oct 5

India's marquee Women's ODI World Cup match against Pakistan will be held at the neutral venue of R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo on October 5, the ICC announced on Monday.

Colombo had to be added as a neutral venue according to the hybrid model that was accepted for the Champions Trophy and beyond earlier this year after India refrained from travelling to Pakistan for the ICC event.

However, India will kick off their campaign against Sri Lanka at Bengaluru on September 30, and will also face Bangladesh on October 26 at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, dispelling the rumours of the venue losing hosting rights of the matches after the recent stampede during the Royal Challengers Bengaluru victory celebrations.

India's other matches are against South Africa on October 9 and against Australia on October 12 at Visakhapatnam.

From there, India will move to Indore to face England on October 19 and then will proceed to Guwahati to meet New Zealand on October 23.

Head Coach Gambhir To Join India Squad Today

India head coach Gautam Gambhir, who had flown back home last week due to a family emergency, will link up with the squad on Tuesday ahead of the opening Test against England at Leeds, beginning on June 20.

Gambhir had rushed back to India after his mother suffered a heart attack, and had to be hospitalised.

"His mother is doing well now. Gautam will leave tomorrow and join the squad the same day," a BCCI source told PTI.

The former India opener had missed the closed-door intra-squad match between India and India A in Beckenham that ended on Sunday.

In his absence, assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate, batting coach Sitanshu Kotak and bowling coach Morne Morkel supervised the team's preparation ahead of the five-match rubber.

The Shubman Gill-led Indian Test squad is searching for its first series win in England since 2007.

Don't Be Disheartened: Harbhajan To Sarfaraz

Former Indian spinner Harbhajan Singh weighed in on the much-talked-about exclusion of Sarfaraz Khan from the Test squad.

Sarfaraz was dropped from the 18-man squad for the five-match Test tour of England. The opening Test starts on June 20 at Leeds.

Sarfaraz was picked in the India A squad but not in the main 18-man Indian squad. He was dropped from India A's playing XI in the second unofficial Test against the England Lions, despite scoring 92 (119) in the first match.

"It's very unfortunate... I was a bit shocked not seeing his name in the squad. I'm sure he will come back strong. He has got that will to make a comeback... All I can say is, don't be disheartened, you will get your due, if not today, then tomorrow..." Bhajji said on PTI Videos.

"Look at Karun Nair. He scored 300 runs against England and then never got too many opportunities. Now he is back in England with the team," Harbhajan added.

Inter-School Zonal Competitions Held Across Budgam District

Observer News Service

BUDGAM: Under the directions of District Youth Services and Sports Officer Budgam Ghulam Hassan Lone, DYSS Budgam organised inter-school zonal level competitions in multiple zones of the district on Monday.

Zone B.K. Pora conducted a Girls (AAG) Badminton event at HSS Wathoora, inaugurated by Principal Yasmeen Qadir, with Gurmeet Kour (PEM HS Pahroo) as overall incharge, alongside other officials.

In Zone Charar-e-Sharief, the Girls (AAG)

Football event concluded successfully at Sports Stadium Charar-e-Sharief, witnessing enthusiastic participation.

Zone Magam kick-started Football Selection Trials for Boys U-14. The event was inaugurated by ZPEO Ghulam Nabi Lone and overseen by Mohd Ashraf Ganai (PEM). Students from various schools actively participated, showcasing energy and talent.

Meanwhile, Zone Budgam organised a Football tournament for U-14 Boys at Sports Stadium Budgam with a large number of students taking part.



YSS Anantnag's U-19 Girls District Level Baseball Tourney Ends



Observer News Service

ANANTNAG: The District Youth Services and Sports Office Anantnag concluded its District Level Inter-School Baseball Tournament for Under-19 Girls at HSS Dailgam on Monday.

The final match saw HSS Kabamarg clinch the championship title by defeating HSS Vessu in a well-contested game.

This tournament witnessed the participation of 64 female baseball players from various higher secondary institutions of the district in the U-19 age group.

Meanwhile, Zone Anantnag held cricket competitions at two venues, Sports Stadium Monghal and Rooh

Stadium. In one of these matches, Smart Mission High School vs. Oxford Presentation School, Smart Mission posted 106 runs in 10 overs, losing 3 wickets. Oxford Presentation managed 59 runs in 10 overs, losing 4 wickets.

In another match, MS Bumthan vs. Whiz Kids, a 7 wicket victory was registered by Whiz Kids. GHS Khanabal beat MS Ruhoo by 11 runs, powered by Murtaza's 30 runs off 16 balls.

Zone Doru conducted zonal-level inter-school competitions in Kho-Kho, Kabaddi, and Volleyball for Under-14 and Under-17 girls at MS Mehmoodabad, MS Chakpath, and Sports Stadium Dehruna.

BCCI To Hold Additional Bone Test For Age Determination

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: In a significant move, the BCCI has decided to conduct an additional bone test at the junior level to ensure that no cricketer misses out on playing an extra season due to the '+1 factor' that is currently added to the calculation, which renders players ineligible by thinnest of margins.

As per the existing norms, a player undergoes a bone test for age determination via the TW3 method (test used for assessing bone age) and a +1 factor is added to determine his or her eligibility for the next season in the same age group.

However, with the rule change, a cricketer in the Under-16 boys' category, will undergo a second bone test the following season to determine his eligibility to appear in the same age bracket in case the +1 factor rules him out in the previous year.

"It is being done to have an exact age and make sure that no player loses due to arithmetical calculation rather than scientific calculation," a BCCI source told PTI.

The bone age cut-off for U-16 boys is 16.5 years and 15 years for U-15 girls competition.

"This means that the bone age of a player has to be 16.4 or below



in the following season in male cricketers and 14.9 or below in case of females for participation," the source said.

To explain the rule change further, if a male U-16 player under-

goes a bone test in the 2025-26 season and the result shows a bone age of 15.4 years, he would not need to undergo another bone test the following season. Instead, a +1 factor is automatically added

to their bone age.

In this instance, the player's bone age for the 2026-27 season would be arithmetically calculated to be 16.4 years, regardless of their actual bone growth, allowing them to participate in the U-16 tournament with a bone age of 16.4.

Similarly, if a player's bone age is determined to be 15.5 years or higher, the bone age automatically increases to 16.5 years or higher, making him ineligible for the U-16 tournament, since 16.4 is the final cutoff.

"It's possible that this arithmetical calculation does not accurately reflect a player's actual age, which could cause them to lose out on a year of eligibility," the source added.

In the case of U-15 girls, if a player tests 13.9 years this season, she will be eligible for the same category the next season with a bone age of 14.9.

However, if she tests at 14 or above this season, she can play this season but not the next one with cut off being 14.9.

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