

No School, No Support: The Rule That's Hurting Kashmir's Poorest Girls

Thousands of poor girls in Kashmir are ineligible for state marriage aid due to one education clause. Now, a court wants answers.

Ansar Hussain Dar

Srinagar: When Rubeena's name was struck off the list for marriage assistance last year, her mother folded the rejection letter and tucked it under a stack of prayer beads, as if hiding it would also hide the humiliation.

Rubeena, 23, had never gone to school. Her remote village



in Baramulla didn't have one when she was a child, and her father's sudden death during her childhood left the family too fragile to think about anything beyond survival.

Still, her mother had hoped. The state-run Marriage Assistance Scheme promised 50,000 and five grams of gold to help poor girls begin their married lives with dignity.

But there was a catch: the girl had to be at least 8th class pass. Rubeena had never seen the inside of a classroom.

"We never thought they would use education to decide if we are poor enough," her mother said. "My daughter isn't less because she didn't go to school."

Now, a court ruling is giving hope to Rubeena and

thousands like her.

On July 15, the Jammu & Kashmir High Court directed the administration to revisit this clause in the State Marriage Assistance Scheme (SMAS), calling into question a condition that critics say unfairly punishes girls for structural failures beyond their control.

The ruling came after a Public Interest Litigation (PIL)

filed by Hamid Rather, an advocate from Pattan, Baramulla.

He argued that the educational requirement was arbitrary, unconstitutional, and blind to the social fabric of Kashmir, a place where poverty, displacement, and conflict routinely interrupt the most basic rights, including education.

"The scheme is meant to support poor

FAKE J&K BANK APPS

Cyber Police Issues Alert



Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Cyber Police in Jammu and Kashmir has sounded a public alarm over the circulation of fake JK Bank mobile application files being shared through WhatsApp groups and other social media platforms.

In a formal advisory, the cyber cell warned that these fraudulent APK files closely resemble the official JK Bank app but are in fact designed to steal users' personal, financial, and banking information.

The police emphasized that unsuspecting users who download these malicious files risk exposing their sensitive data to cybercriminals. Once installed, the fake apps can capture confidential details such as OTPs, MPINs, passwords, and account credentials, leading to potential financial fraud and identity theft.

Authorities have strongly urged the public not to download or install any mobile application shared via messaging apps or social media, particularly those claiming to be related to banking. Citizens have been advised to install only the official JK Bank application from verified sources such as the Google Play Store or Apple App Store.

The advisory further cautioned users never to enter their bank details in any unofficial applications and never to share sensitive banking information with anyone. People are encouraged to remain vigilant and report any suspicious files, links, or messages to the cybercrime helpline or lodge a complaint on the national cybercrime portal.

Rain Halts Amarnath Yatra; 500 Rescued

9,000 Pilgrims Manage Darshan, Army Steps In

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Amarnath Yatra was suspended on Thursday from Jammu as well as the twin routes of Baltal and Pahalgam due to continuous rainfall and adverse weather conditions. However, over 9,000 pilgrims managed to offer darshan at the holy cave, officials said.

"No fresh batch was allowed to move from Jammu towards the base camps," an official said, adding that the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) deployed additional personnel and machinery to carry out urgent repairs on the rain-damaged tracks.

Kashmir, Vijay Kumar Bidhuri, said critical restoration work was underway and the Yatra is expected to resume on Friday, subject to weather conditions. "Only pilgrims already stationed at Panjtarni were allowed to descend towards Baltal today under the supervision of BRO and Mountain Rescue Teams," he said.

This is the first time this year that the pilgrimage has been halted simultaneously from Jammu and both the base camps.

Despite the suspension, 9,020 pilgrims performed darshan today. These included 6,345 men, 2,232 women, 132 children, 112 sadhus, 12 sadhvis, and two transgender devotees. Additionally, 185 security personnel also paid obeisance. Since the Yatra began on July 3, over 2.56 lakh pilgrims have visited the shrine.

Meanwhile, the Indian Army rescued around [| More on P10](#)

LG Sinha Meets PM In New Delhi

Observer News Service

New Delhi – As he nears the completion of his five-year tenure as the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Manoj Sinha met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Thursday to discuss key developments and ongoing priorities in the Union Territory.

During the meeting, sources said Sinha apprised the Prime Minister of several critical issues, including the elaborate arrangements for the annual Amarnath Yatra pilgrimage, progress on major infrastructure projects, and the prevailing security situation in the region.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO), in a post on X (formerly Twitter), confirmed the meeting and



wrote: "Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, Manoj Sinha met Prime Minister Narendra Modi."

The meeting comes a

day after LG Sinha publicly reiterated that Jammu and Kashmir's statehood would be restored at an appropriate time, echoing the

commitments made by both Prime Minister Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Sinha, who was appointed following the [| More on P10](#)

LG Sanctions Grievance Cell For Armed Forces

The Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir has accorded sanction for the establishment of the Lieutenant Governor's Sainik Sahayta Kendra (LGSSK), a dedicated institutional mechanism aimed at addressing civilian grievances of serving personnel from the Indian Armed Forces and Central Armed

Police Forces. According to Government Order No. 933-JK(GAD) of 2025 dated July 17, the Kendra will function as a single-window assistance and liaison cell for soldiers who are either currently posted in the Union Territory or originally belong to J&K and are serving elsewhere in the country. [| More on P10](#)

Pilgrim's Death Not Linked To Landslide: SSP

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Ganderbal, Khalil Ahmad Poswal has dismissed claims of any pilgrim losing their life in the minor landslide that occurred at Rail Pathri along the Amarnath Yatra route. "No pilgrim died due to the landslide," SSP Poswal said. "The landslide at Rail Pathri was minor, but a video [| More on P10](#)

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THIS YEAR that the pilgrimage has been halted simultaneously from Jammu and both the base camps.

No One Should Mess With India: Shah

Press Trust Of India

Jaipur: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said a strong message has gone out to the world that no one should mess with India's citizens, its borders or its defence forces, and those who do so will have to face consequences.

Referring to Operation Sindoor carried out to destroy terrorist camps in Pakistan after the Pahalgam terrorist attack, Shah said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has done the biggest job of securing the country. During Congress rule, the country had to face terror attacks almost every day.



"When the Uri attack occurred, Modi took decisive action and a surgical strike was carried out. Following the Pulwama attack, an airstrike was done. And when an attack took place in Pahalgam, [| More on P10](#)

Sale Deeds Manipulated, Khasra Numbers Changed

Tehsildar Among 7 Booked In Multi-crore Revenue Fraud

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) on Thursday carried out searches at multiple locations in Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar and Budgam districts in connection with a case against seven individuals, including two officials from the revenue department, for alleged corruption and cheating.

"Search warrants have been obtained from a court and searches are underway at seven locations in Srinagar and Budgam districts," said a spokesperson of the EOW, which was earlier known as the Crime Branch of the Jammu and Kashmir Police.

According to the spokesperson, the case involves seven people, including the then Tehsildar of Balahama, Nusrat Aziz Lone, and Patwari Ashiq Ali, who were booked earlier

this year for "fraudulently" making insertions in revenue records to benefit a private individual.

The case was registered following a written complaint in which the complainant alleged that they had purchased a piece of land at Balhama from one Mohammad Shafi Lone alias Shafi



Cheeni and had prepared three sale deeds. The complainant paid an amount of Rs 88.4 lakh to Shafi Cheeni and also gave two kanals of land situated at Goripora Rawalpura to the accused in exchange for the Balhama land. This two-kanal land was later sold off by the accused.

It was further alleged that

the sale deeds were taken back by the accused under the pretext of updating records. "However, after their return, it was found that insertions have been made in the sale deeds by changing Khasra numbers," the EOW spokesperson said.

The complainant also alleged that one Rayaz Ahmad Bhat has forcibly occupied 2.5 kanals of the land at Balhama.

Following the complaint, a verification process was initiated at the EOW police station in Srinagar. During the probe, it was prima facie substantiated that the accused had deceived the complainant and inserted wrong survey numbers in the sale deeds, in connivance with revenue officers and officials.

"During the investigation, it also surfaced that false mutations were inserted afterwards in the revenue records by the then [| More on P10](#)

Dream Of PM Has Taken Shape: CM On AIIMS Jammu

Says Institution Will Be One Of The Best Among 23 AIIMS In India



Observer News Service

Srinagar: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday expressed satisfaction over the rapid progress of AIIMS Jammu, stating that the institution is on track to

become one of the best among the 23 AIIMS in the country.

"If we look at the 22 other AIIMS in the country, perhaps the best AIIMS will be counted as that of Jammu. Not only do patients from [| More on P10](#)

Calls For Strict Action In Jammu Doctor's Assault Case

Asserting that doctors must never bear the brunt of violence, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday said that strict action has been directed in the recent case of assault of a female doctor at a government hospital in Jammu. Irate over the death of a patient at the [| More on P10](#)

'We Don't Want to Mourn Another Life'

Uri Locals Seek Fencing, Rescue Teams Along LJHP Canal

Idrees Bukhtiyar

Srinagar: Residents of border town Uri in north Kashmir's Baramulla district have urged the authorities to immediately install fencing along the Lower Jhelum Hydrel Project (LJHP) canal in Gantamulla to prevent tragedies.

Locals have expressed serious concern over recurring drowning incidents in the canal and are calling for urgent safety measures.

The canal, which attracts many visitors - especially



during summer months has witnessed several drowning cases in recent years, most involving youth and children.

Locals said the lack of basic safety infrastructure, including fencing, signage, and rescue equipment, has [| More on P10](#)

Swachh Survekshan 2024

Jammu Named Cleanest City In J&K

Agencies

Jammu: Jammu has been declared the cleanest city in Jammu & Kashmir under the Swachh Survekshan 2024 rankings, released by the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA), Government of India.

Jammu Municipal Corporation not only topped the UT rankings but also earned the prestigious 3-Star Garbage-Free City (GFC) certification. It was further honoured with the 'Promising

Swachh Shehar' award for its consistent efforts in cleanliness, citizen participation, and waste management. The state award was received by Dr. Devansh Yadav (IAS), MD SBM and Commissioner JMC, at a function in New Delhi.

The survey, India's largest annual urban cleanliness assessment, evaluated waste management, sanitation facilities, public feedback, and cleanliness compliance across all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in the UT.

Adding to [| More on P10](#)

Statehood Restoration

J&K Cong To Launch 'Chalo Delhi' Campaign On July 21

KO Web Desk

Jammu: The Jammu and Kashmir Congress has intensified its campaign for the restoration of statehood by announcing a series of protests beginning this week, including a 'Delhi Chalo' march and a symbolic gherao of Parliament during the upcoming Monsoon session.

Announcing the schedule, J&K Congress president Tariq Hameed Karra said that the party will stage a protest in Kashmir on July 19 and in Jammu on July 20, before heading to Delhi.

"Workers from every block and district will participate in the 'Delhi Chalo' campaign on July 21, led by Congress, to raise the statehood issue in the national capital alongside leaders from the INDIA bloc," Karra said.

The Monsoon session of Parliament is set to begin the same day, giving the opposition a strategic platform to highlight their demand.

Calling the campaign a "significant movement", Karra said, "We aim to raise our voice both in Parliament and on the streets. Without the [| More on P10](#)

Why Drones And AI Can't Quickly Find Missing Flood Victims, Yet

The Conversation

For search and rescue, AI is not more accurate than humans, but it is far faster.

Recent successes in applying computer vision and machine learning to drone imagery for rapidly determining building and road damage after hurricanes or shifting wildfire lines suggest that artificial intelligence could be valuable in searching for missing persons after a flood.

Machine learning systems typically take less than one second to scan a high-resolution image from a drone versus one to three minutes for a person. Plus, drones often produce more imagery to view than is humanly possible in the critical first hours of a search when survivors may still be alive.

Unfortunately, today's AI systems are not up to the task.

We are robotics researchers who study the use of drones in disasters. Our experiences searching for victims of flooding and numerous other events show that current implementations of AI fall short.

However, the technology can play a role in searching for flood victims. The key is AI-human collaboration.

AI's potential

Searching for flood victims is a type of wilderness search and rescue that presents unique challenges. The goal for machine learning scientists is to rank which images have signs of victims and indicate where in those images search-and-rescue personnel should focus. If the responder sees signs of a victim, they pass the GPS location in the image to search teams in the field to check. The ranking is done by a classifier, which is an algorithm that learns to identify similar instances of objects – cats, cars, trees – from training data in order to recognize those objects in new images.

For example, in a search-and-rescue con-



text, a classifier would spot instances of human activity such as garbage or backpacks to pass to wilderness search-and-rescue teams, or even identify the missing person themselves.

A classifier is needed because of the sheer volume of imagery that drones can produce. For example, a single 20-minute flight can produce over 800 high-resolution images. If there are 10 flights – a small number – there would be over 8,000 images.

If a responder spends only 10 seconds looking at each image, it would take over 22 hours of effort. Even if the task is divided among a group of “squinters,” humans tend to miss areas of images and show cognitive fatigue.

The ideal solution is an AI system that scans the entire image, prioritises images that have the strongest signs of victims, and highlights the area of the image for a responder to inspect. It could also decide whether the location should be flagged for special atten-

tion by search-and-rescue crews.

Where AI falls short

While this seems to be a perfect opportunity for computer vision and machine learning, modern systems have a high error rate. If the system is programmed to overestimate the number of candidate locations in hopes of not missing any victims, it will likely produce too many false candidates.

That would mean overloading squinters or, worse, the search-and-rescue teams, which would have to navigate through debris and muck to check the candidate locations.

Developing computer vision and machine learning systems for finding flood victims is difficult for three reasons.

One is that while existing computer vision systems are certainly capable of identifying people visible in aerial imagery, the visual indicators of a flood victim are often very different compared with those for a lost

hiker or fugitive. Flood victims are often obscured, camouflaged, entangled in debris or submerged in water. These visual challenges increase the possibility that existing classifiers will miss victims.

Second, machine learning requires training data, but there are no datasets of aerial imagery where humans are tangled in debris, covered in mud and not in normal postures. This lack also increases the possibility of errors in classification.

Third, many of the drone images often captured by searchers are oblique views, rather than looking straight down. This means the GPS location of a candidate area is not the same as the GPS location of the drone. It is possible to compute the GPS location if the drone's altitude and camera angle are known, but unfortunately those attributes rarely are. The imprecise GPS location means teams have to spend extra time searching.

How AI can help

Fortunately, with humans and AI working together, search-and-rescue teams can successfully use existing systems to help narrow down and prioritise imagery for further inspection.

In the case of flooding, human remains may be tangled among vegetation and debris. Therefore, a system could identify clumps of debris big enough to contain remains. A common search strategy is to identify the GPS locations of where flotsam has gathered, because victims may be part of these same deposits.

An AI classifier could find debris commonly associated with remains, such as artificial colours and construction debris with straight lines or 90-degree corners.

Responders find these signs as they systematically walk the riverbanks and flood plains, but a classifier could help prioritise areas in the first few hours and days, when there may be survivors, and later could confirm that teams didn't miss any areas of interest as they navigated the difficult landscape on foot.

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 Mohammad Anas Wani s/o Gulzar Ahmad Wani R/o Sheerpora bangil with verified date of birth 26/06/2024 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 inadvertently recorded as Syeeda Begum in the Aadhaar card bearing number 2031-5840-5873, which is incorrect. The correct and actual name is Saïda Bano. I have now applied for the correction of the same. If anybody has any objection in this regard, he/she may file it with the concerned office within seven (07) days from the date of publication of this notice. After that, no objection shall be entertained.

Saïda Bano
W/o Mohd Maqbool Mir
R/o Chukar, Tehsil Kunzer, District Baramulla
fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

My DOB has been wrongly written in my Adhaar card as 05-03-2011 while my correct DOB is 05-03-2012. 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 Block development officer Gunastan within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Insha Nazir
D/o Nazir Ahmad Dar
R/o Dangerpora
DOB 05-03-2012
FKO_R

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have lost the number plate of my Alto 800 JK05D 0971 . 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 eof the ARTO Sopore within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Mohammad Lateef Nazru
S/O Ali Mohammad Nazru
R/O Aram Mohalla Pattan
fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

My name has been wrongly mentioned as Jawher Akhtar instead of Jawhara in my adhaar card . Now I have applied for the correction of the same if anybody ha 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.

Jawhara
W/o. Mohd. Yaqoob Shah
R/o. Sidiqabad Shopian
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 Zahid Bashir Marazi s/o Bashir Ahmad Marazi R/o Hartrath with verified date of birth 16/12/2022 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_R Naib Tehsildar Pattan

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 Mohammad Usman Ganai s/o Ghulam Nabi Ganai R/o chanderhama with verified date of birth 07/07/2024 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_R Naib Tehsildar Pattan

ازنیات یومی زیستگیر

عنوان :- درخواست منجانب شوکت سلطان لون ولد محمد سلطان لون ساکنہ چرخیلی ہار ہرادر
اجرائی ڈیپنڈنٹ سرٹیفکیٹ تحت 43 SRO بحق خود

اشہدار ہرخاص و عام

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدر میں سائل نے ایک درخواست بغرض لیگل ہیر/ڈیپنڈنٹ سرٹیفکیٹ پیش کی ہے جو کہ زیر کاروائی ہے اس بارے میں پٹواری حلقہ سے رپورٹ طلب کی گئی ہے جس سے عیاں ہے کہ سائل کا والد محمد سلطان لون ولد غلام محمد لون مورخہ

13-08-1994 کو فوت ہوا ہے اور متوفی کے وارثان جائز بدیل ہے

شاہد ملی بیگم بیوہ محمد سلطان لون 66 سال گھریلو کام

شوکت سلطان ولد محمد سلطان 36 سال مزدوری

محمد مظفر ولد محمد سلطان لون 33 سال --

روقیہ سلطان دختر محمد سلطان لون 29 سال گھریلو کام

اس کے علاوہ اور کوئی افراد کہیں ہے سرٹیفکیٹ زیر بحث اجراء کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ بعد ششہر اخبار سات دن کے اندر اندر اپنے عذر یا اعتراض عدالت حذا کو دفتری اوقات کے دوران پیش کریں۔ بعد گزرے بیجا کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

FKO نايب تحسیدار

OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS ZAINGEER BOMAI

No: 229/B&D/T2/2025 Date: 17/07/25

Subject: Issuance of registration order in respect of delayed Birth & Death

Public Notice

This office has received a written application from Ghulam Nabi Rather S/o Ab Satar Rather R/o Hardushiva Tehsil Zaingeer for issuance of Birth & Death certificate in favour of her Duaghter Nafiyah Nabi who was Born on 11/05/2020 and as per document evidence produced by the applicant.

In this regard, if anyone has any objection, he/she may file the same before the undersigned within 07 days.

After that, no objection whatsoever will be entertained by this office.

Naib Tehsildar
Executive Magistrate
Bomai
fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have lost the number plate of my scooty bearing regd no; JK05N 2474 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.

Mohammad Maqbool Ittoo
S/o Mohammad Akbar Ittoo
R/o Sultanpora Pattan
fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

The name of daughter has wrongly mentioned as Aafiya Instead of Aafiya Irshad in her adhaar card . Now I have applied for the correction of the same if anybody ha 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.

Shareefa Bano
M/o Aafiya Irshad
R/O Renji Tehsil Khoie
fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

The name of daughter has wrongly mentioned as Shafi Sajad instead of Shafia Sajad in her adhaar card . Now I have applied for the correction of the same if anybody ha 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.

Sajad Ahmad Malla
F/o Shafia Sajad
R/o Palhallan Tehsil Pattan
fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have changed my name from old name Zeba Bano to new name Zaiba Bano. In future I will be know as Zaiba Bano. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them In the Passport office Srinagar within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Zaiba Bano
D/o Ghulam Hassan
W/o Assadullah Mirza
R/o BAZAR Mohalla Budgam
fko

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KU Youth Power Shines Again



Agencies

SRINAGAR: The University of Kashmir's (KU's) Youth Parliament Team has emerged victorious in the group-level competition of the 17th National Youth Parliament, organized by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India.

With this commendable achievement, the team has now qualified for the final round of the National-Level Youth Parliament, marking a proud moment for the University and the region.

Held under the banner of promoting democratic values, leadership and parliamentary knowledge among students, the competition witnessed enthusiastic participation from leading institutions across the country. The KU team stood out for its powerful presentation, clarity of thought and spirited debate, reflecting the University's commitment to nurturing talent and youth leadership.

The selection of the team to the final round of this prestigious national competition is a testament to their hard work, dedication and the vibrant culture of student engagement promoted by the Division of Youth Affairs, under the aegis of the Department of Students Welfare (DSW), University of Kashmir.

VC KU Prof Nilofer Khan while applauding the team said "This achievement reflects the intellectual potential and disciplined energy of our youth. I commend the team and the mentor for bringing such laurels to the University and the region. The Youth Parliament is a vibrant platform that cultivates leadership, civic awareness and the ability to articulate one's vision for the country. I am proud of the way our youth parliament team has represented the

'70% Of City's Roadside Vendors Are Reportedly Millionaires'

Agencies

SRINAGAR: The common perception that roadside vendors in Kashmir are poor and struggling to make ends meet is now under serious question. An investigation conducted by KNT has revealed a startling economic reality: nearly 70 percent of roadside vendors in Srinagar and surrounding areas are, in fact, millionaires, living far removed from the poverty they project daily on the streets.

Field surveys and data collected from areas such as Mehjoor Nagar, Qamarwari, HMT, Shalteng, Bemina, and other localities show that a large number of these vendors own plush properties, drive expensive vehicles, and maintain comfortable lifestyles while continuing to operate makeshift stalls in the busiest public spaces of the city.

Far from being marginalized, these vendors have successfully built a parallel economy, thriving amidst lax regulations and weak enforcement. According to sources, many of them have not only occupied prime public spaces—such as footpaths near hospitals and markets, but have also monetized these spots, leasing them out or handing them over to relatives and acquaintances under government-sanctioned relocation schemes.

In one glaring example, dozens of vendors who were relocated by the administration from congested commercial areas quietly returned under different names or had their kin reoccupy the same spaces. This

University and of the efforts made by the Department of Students Welfare in nurturing such talent."

Registrar KU Prof. Naseer Iqbal said "Kashmir University continues to shine in national forums through its dedicated and dynamic mentor and students. Their success at this stage of the Youth Parliament reflects not only their confidence and preparation but also the support ecosystem we are building through academic and extra-curricular excellence."

Prof. Pervez Ahmed, Dean Students Welfare, KU added: "This milestone reflects our sustained efforts in empowering students to grow as responsible, articulate and thoughtful citizens. The Department has consistently created platforms that allow our students to lead, express and engage with contemporary issues."

Dr. Shahid Ali Khan, Cultural Officer, DSW KU and Coordinator, and Mentor of the KU Youth Parliament Team while sharing his thoughts on the occasion said "We have adopted scientific and performance-based methods to train our students, the same approach used by premier institutions such as the National School of Drama and other leading academies. Our students have immense potential, which simply needs direction, discipline and confidence-building."

He added "After rigorous training and guidance, they not only showcased their oratory skills but also demonstrated a deep understanding of democratic values and public dialogue."

He informed that this year, 51 teams from leading universities across the country participated in the group-level competitions, out of which only 8 teams have qualified for the final round—(KNO)

manipulation of policy has allowed them to maintain their stranglehold on some of the city's most high-value real estate, rent-free and tax-free.

The entire stretch behind LD Hospital in Srinagar has become a chaotic, uncontrolled sprawl of street vending, causing severe disruptions to vehicular and pedestrian movement. "They are like locusts," remarked one official anonymously, "spreading unchecked from one part of the city to another, exploiting every loophole in the system."

Ironically, public sympathy often shields these affluent vendors. Every time the authorities initiate an anti-encroachment drive, social media buzzes with criticism, portraying such actions as oppressive. "What people don't see is the scale of money involved," said a source in the Srinagar Municipal Corporation. "Many of these individuals own multiple shops and still run street carts. They play the poverty card brilliantly."

The lack of strong municipal legislation and poor coordination among departments has emboldened these vendors to assert ownership over public property, leading to worsening traffic jams, shrinking pedestrian space, and serious safety hazards.

T findings challenge the simplistic narrative of urban poverty often associated with street vending. It is now clear that street vending in Kashmir, in many cases, is not a means of survival but a route to untaxed, unregulated affluence.

CBC Organises Orientation Programme For Empaneled Cultural Troupes



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Central Bureau of Communication, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Regional Office J&K on Thursday organised a day-long orientation programme for empaneled cultural troupes and individual artists. The event was held at the Conference Hall of the Chief Commissioner of Income Tax Office, Rajbagh, Srinagar.

The objective of the orientation was to familiarise artists with various aspects of public communication and to strengthen their role in CBC's outreach initiatives aimed at promoting central government schemes and welfare programmes across Jammu and Kashmir.

Vikram Sahay, Chief Commissioner of Income Tax for UTs of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh was the Chief Guest. In his address, Shri Sahay emphasised the power of traditional communication tools, saying "tradi-

tional communication remains one of the most powerful tools to connect with the masses. Local artists and their art forms carry a natural resonance with the community, making messaging more impactful."

Sahay, who previously served as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, lauded the Ministry's consistent efforts to enhance outreach in the region. He further suggested that other than raising awareness about government schemes, CBC, through its empaneled Cultural Troupes, should also raise awareness about various social evils such as drug abuse, adding these art forms have a significant positive impact on the ground.

Ghulam Abbas, Director, CBC J&K said the orientation was part of a broader strategy to equip artists with the necessary knowledge to create impactful, meaningful content that resonates with local audiences. He said that CBC will or-

ganise a large number of outreach programmes across J&Kto raise awareness about various government schemes and other welfare initiatives.

Senior Programme Executive at Doordarshan Srinagar, Talha Jehangir, conducted a technical session as the programme's resource person. Stressing that "content is king," he underscored the importance of a strong script and authenticity in performance. He praised CBC for organising such programmes, noting their vital role in helping artists understand the finer nuances of infotainment and public messaging.

Field Publicity Officers Shahid Mohammad Lone and Naseer Rather also addressed the gathering, shedding light on the contributions of cultural troupes and traditional art forms in spreading awareness about government schemes and combating social evils.

DC Inspects Renovation Of Khanqah-e-Naqshband Sahib, Aali Masjid

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo conducted an on-site inspection of the ongoing restoration/ renovation works on the Khanqah-e-Naqshband Sahib (RA) at Khawaja Bazar and historic Aali Masjid at Eidgah being executed under the Preservation of Heritage Scheme of the Government to preserve the rich cultural and architectural heritage in the district.

At Khanqah-e-Naqshband Sahib (RA) at Khawaja Bazar Nowhatta in Shahr-e-Khaas area of the district, DC took on spot review of the Rs 3.37 crore project for renovation, restoration and development of Khanqah on heritage pattern.

On the occasion, DC said that the project is of significant heritage importance, aiming to preserve and restore historical architectural aesthetics of centuries old Khankah-e-Naqshband Sahib (RA), a spiritual and architectural landmark in the Shahr-e-Khaas area of Srinagar district.

The DC was given a detailed appraisal of the works taken up as per approved DPR for restoration, revival, preservation and maintenance of heritage architecture of the 600 years old historic Khankahi Naqshband Sahib (RA). He was informed that the project includes structural conservation, retaining the original exterior appearance of wooden ar-



chitecture & ornamentation, restoration of wooden elements on the exterior façade, installation of khatamband ceiling with papier mache work in the central hall.

Similarly, DC visited the historical Aali Masjid in the Eidgah area and took on the site review of the Rs 3.28 crore project being executed for its preservation and conservation of heritage pattern.

While taking stock of the ongoing works under the heritage conservation project, DC stressed that conservation efforts must retain original aesthetic & heritage.

It was informed that the project include works of water proofing solu-

tion to prevent the water seepage in the floor, waterproofing painting on the rooftop, khatamband on the outer open area of the Masjid with papier mache, ashlar stone work on the outer side of the plinth and other works.

He directed the concerned executing agency to accelerate the pace of work on the prestigious project with quality and strictly adhere to the set timelines.

During the visit, DC was accompanied by Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Executive Engineers of R&B, SMC, PHE, PDD, Tehsildar, Khanyar, Tehsildar Eidgah, Officers of Archives & Archeology and other concerned departments.

Mental Health Camp Held For Inmates At Central Jail

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In a dedicated effort to support the mental well-being of incarcerated individuals, District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Srinagar, in collaboration with trained counselors from the Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (IMHANS), conducted a mental health counseling session for jail inmates at Central Jail Srinagar.

The programme was held under the chairmanship and guidance of Tasleem Arief, Chairman DLSA (Principal District and Sessions Judge), Srinagar, and under the supervision of Sajad Ur Rehman, Sub-Judge/ Secretary, DLSA Srinagar.

The session aimed to address the psychological issues faced by inmates and provide therapeutic interventions through structured counselling.

A team of trained mental health professionals namely Dr.Aijaz Ahmad Suhaff, Assistant Professor (Psychiatry), and Dr. Zahoor Ahmad Wagay from IMHANS, along with Para Legal volunteers and DLSA's LSUM unit members and Legal Aid



Defence Counsels interacted with the inmates and provided one-on-one and group counseling sessions.

During the session, inmates were encouraged to express their thoughts, emotions, and challenges. The counselors also educated them on coping mechanisms, stress management techniques, and the importance of mental health in rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

Speaking on the occasion, an official of DLSA Srinagar emphasized the

importance of such initiatives in ensuring the holistic development and human rights of prisoners. "Mental health support is a crucial part of the reformation process. This collaboration with IMHANS is a step forward in making rehabilitation more meaningful for the inmates," she said.

The initiative was well-received by the prison authorities and inmates alike, and similar sessions are planned as a regular feature in the coming months.

- 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
- BIJBHERA: 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 22 Muharram 1447	PRAYERS FAJR 3:51 ZUHR 12:37 ASR 5:34 Magrib 7:45 ISHA 9:22
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This Day In History

- 1922 - German-Russian treaty signed in Italy, Soviet Union recognized •
- 1925 - Adolf Hitler publishes Mein Kampf (original title was the catchy "Four and a Half Years (of Struggle) Against Lies, Stupidity and Cowardice")
- 1929 - NY Yankees become 1st team to wear uniform numbers
- 1932 Belgium, Luxembourg & Netherlands sign Ouchy Convention, a customs treaty
- 1932 - US & Canada sign a treaty to develop St Lawrence Seaway
- 1936 - Spanish Civil War : General Francisco Franco issues manifesto and leds uprising with army in Morocco .
- 1938 - Great Britain recognizes Italian annexation of Abyssinia Agreement/Treaty of Interest
- 1939 - Stalin requests British, French & Russian anti-nazi pact
- 1942 - Japanese occupying army on Java installs film censorship 1943 - Swiss scientist Dr. Albert Hofmann discovers the psychedelic effects of LSD
- 1944 - British air raid on German convoy SW of Heligoland
- 1944 - British troops occupy Bourquebus hill range, Normandy
- 1945 - German troops in Groningen surrender
- 1945 - Red Army begins Battle of Berlin
- 1945 - US troops enter Nuremberg, Germany
- 1945 - US troops land on He Shima, Okinawa 1946 - 1st US launch

From KO Archives

Australia Frees Kashmiri Detainee After 7 Years

Observer News Service

SYDNEY - A Kashmiri youth, freed yesterday after spending a record of almost seven years in an Australian immigration detention, thanked the Prime Minister, John Howard, and the Immigration Minister, Amanda Van stone, for "showing me compassion".

Peter Qasim; was 24 when he arrived on Thursday Island via Papua New Guinea, in September 1998.

He is still in the Adelaide psychiatric hospital to which he was admitted five weeks

ago, but will leave early this week after being granted a visa to live in the community, with full health benefits and employment rights. A Christian couple from Adelaide's southern suburbs, Faye and David, who have visited him in Baxter detention centre near Port Augusta many times, were at his side yesterday, excited to be taking him home.

He calls them Mum and Dad, and thanked them and the Liberal backbenchers who made his plight public, and other "loving, caring supporters" including the Sydney entrepreneur Dick Smith.

"I have been living for almost seven years in a very hard situation," said Qasim, looking relaxed as he read slowly from a prepared statement. "I don't know what my future is now, but I am happy to have the chance to live a normal life. I never wanted to be a burden on Australia." Although his application for asylum was rejected, Qasim can live as an Australian citizen pending deportation. In reality, he has tried unsuccessfully to be deported for the past two years, and it is unlikely this will happen. Although he asserts he is a Kashmiri national, an orphan who fled the country after becoming involved with the separatist Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, no government will accept him and he is effectively stateless.

He has also applied for a permanent visa under a section of the Immigration Act that allows the minister to grant visas on humanitarian grounds.

(Kashmir Observer, 18 July, 2005)

61 People Killed As Fire Engulfs New Mall In Iraq's Wasit

Associated Press

Baghdad: At least 61 people have been confirmed dead after a massive fire engulfed a newly opened shopping mall in the eastern Iraqi city of Kut, according to the Iraqi Interior Ministry on Thursday.

In detail, most of the fatalities died in bathrooms from suffocation. Rescue teams found 14 charred bodies yet to be identified.

"The tragic fire claimed the lives of 61 innocent citizens, most of whom suffocated in bathrooms, and among them 14 charred bodies yet to be identified," the ministry said in a statement. Authorities had previously put the toll at 50 dead.

The fire broke out late Wednesday night at the Hyper Mall, a major commercial center that had been operating for just five days. The cause of the fire remains unknown, though early reports suggest the blaze may have started on the mall's first floor.

Emergency crews worked through the night as ambulances continued to transport the injured well into Thursday morning. By 4:00 am, local hospitals in Kut, located roughly 160 kilometers (100 miles) southeast of Baghdad, were overwhelmed by the influx of casualties.

An AFP correspondent at

the scene described chaotic conditions in medical wards and reported seeing charred bodies among the fatalities.

More than 45 people were rescued by civil defense teams, the Interior Ministry confirmed. It is worth noting that the building housed both a restaurant and a supermarket and was packed with families seeking relief from the summer heat and frequent power outages.

Among the victims was Nasir al-Quraishi, a local doctor in his fifties, who lost five members of his family in the tragedy. "A disaster has befallen us," he told AFP. "We went to the mall to have some food, eat dinner, and escape power cuts at home. An air conditioner exploded on the second floor, and then the fire erupted, and we couldn't escape." **Mourning declared, legal action to follow**

Iraq's top Shiite religious authority, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, expressed his condolences to the victims' families.

On his part, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani called for an immediate investigation into the causes and circumstances of the Kut shopping mall fire tragedy and directed the dispatch of a fully-equipped medical team to support efforts to rescue and treat the injured.

France to Release Georges Abdallah After 41 Years

Trans Asia News

Beirut - A French court on Thursday ordered the conditional release of pro-Palestinian Lebanese activist Georges Ibrahim Abdallah, ending more than 41 years of detention in France.

Abdallah, a prominent figure in resistance movements and a staunch advocate for the Palestinian cause, is set to be released on July 25, according to his defense lawyer Jean-Louis Chalanset. The decision marks the conclusion of a decades-long legal and political battle over his continued imprisonment.

Chalanset confirmed that political interference—particularly from the United States—delayed legal proceedings that should have led to Abdallah's release much earlier.

"The United States exerted pressure to obstruct the legal process leading to his release," he said, describing the case as a political issue rather than a purely judicial one.

Chalanset called Abdallah the longest-held political prisoner in Europe and emphasized, "He has never renounced his convictions."

He also accused U.S. authorities of lobbying the Paris court to reject the 74-year-old's release request, framing the outcome as "a political victory—even after nearly 41 years in detention—against the United States."



Georges Ibrahim Abdallah

Abdallah has refused to pay any form of compensation as a condition of his release, remaining firm in his longstanding refusal to concede to demands he considers politically motivated.

He has long been eligible for release under French law. In November, an enforcement court ruled in favor of his release, concluding that he "no longer poses a serious threat if released."

At the last hearing on 19 June, the appeals court ruled in favour of his release on the grounds that the length of his detention was "disproportionate" to the crimes committed.

The court said his release will allow him to return to Lebanon and "finish his days" in his village in the north of the country, adding that he no longer posed a risk of disturbing public order.

But anti-terror prosecutors opposed the move, arguing that he had not changed his political views and appealed the decision which was subsequently suspended.



Trump Hosts Gulf Leaders Amid Renewed Mideast Violence

Trump Hosts Gulf Leaders Amid Renewed Mideast Violence

Associated Press

Washington- President Donald Trump hosted a pair of Arab Gulf leaders at the White House on Wednesday as violence between Israel and Syria renewed doubts about his pledge to impose peace on the Middle East.

Trump held a meeting in the Oval Office with Bahrain's crown prince and dined privately with Qatar's prime minister.

The Republican president has lavished attention on the Persian Gulf, a wealthy region where members of his family have extensive business relationships. He has already visited Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates on the first foreign policy trip of his second term.

With little progress to share on the region's most intractable problems, including the war in Gaza, Trump was more focused Wednesday on promoting diplomatic ties as a vehicle for economic growth.

"Anything they needed, we helped them," Trump said in the Oval Office while meeting with Bahrain Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa. "And anything we needed, they helped us."

Bahrain is a longtime ally that hosts the US Fifth Fleet, which operates in the Middle East.

Like other Arab leaders, Al Khalifa was eager to highlight

the lucrative potential of diplomatic ties with the US, including \$17 billion of investments.

"And this is real," he said. "It's real money. These aren't fake deals."

According to the White House, the agreements include purchasing American airplanes, jet engines and computer servers. More investments could be made in aluminum production and artificial intelligence.

Bahrain's king, the crown prince's father, is expected to visit Washington before the end of the year. An important part of the relationship will be an agreement, signed on Wednesday, to advance cooperation on civilian nuclear energy.

Dinner with Qatari prime minister

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, the prime minister of Qatar and a member of the country's ruling family, was at the White House for a private dinner with Trump on Wednesday evening.

Trump visited Qatar during his trip to the region, marveling at its palaces and stopping at the Al Udeid Air Base, a key US military facility.

The base was targeted by Iran after the US bombed the country's nuclear facilities. One ballistic missile made impact, while others were intercepted.

Trump wants to use a luxurious Boeing 747 donated by Qatar as his Air Force One because he's tired

of waiting for Boeing to finish new planes. However, the arrangement has stirred concerns about security and the ethics of accepting a gift from a foreign government.

Aaron David Miller, who served as an adviser on Middle East issues to Democratic and Republican administrations, said "the Gulf represents everything that Trump believes is right about the Middle East."

"It's rich, it's stable, it's populated by authoritarians with whom the president feels very comfortable," he said.

Fighting in Syria

The fighting in Syria began with clashes between Sunni Bedouin tribes and Druze factions in the country's south. Government forces intervened, raising alarms in Israel, where the Druze are a politically influential religious minority. On Wednesday, Israel launched strikes in the Syrian capital of Damascus. A ceasefire was later announced, but it was unclear if it would hold.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who was in the Oval Office for Trump's meeting with the crown prince of Bahrain, said the fighting was the result of "an unfortunate situation and a misunderstanding."

He said "we think we're on our way to a real de-escalation" that would allow Syria to "get back on track" to rebuilding after years of civil war.

Syrian Govt Forces Begin Withdrawing from Sweida

Asharq Al Awsat

Damascus: Syrian government officials and leaders in the Druze religious minority announced a renewed ceasefire Wednesday after days of clashes that have threatened to unravel the country's post-war political transition and drawn military intervention by powerful neighbor Israel.

Convoys of government forces began withdrawing from the city of Sweida, but it was not immediately clear if the agreement, announced by Syria's Interior Ministry and in a video message by a Druze religious leader, would hold. A previous ceasefire announced Tuesday quickly fell apart, and a prominent Druze leader, Sheikh Hikmat

cal Bedouin tribes and Druze armed factions in the southern province of Sweida.

The violence appeared to be the most serious threat yet to efforts by Syria's new rulers to consolidate control of the country after an offensive by opposition factions ousted longtime despot leader Bashar Assad in December, ending a nearly 14-year civil war.

Interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa, in footage on state television early Thursday, called the Druze an integral part of Syria and denounced Israel's actions as sowing division.

"We affirm that protecting your rights and freedoms is among our top priorities," he said, specifically addressing Druze people in Syria. "We reject any attempt — for-



Al-Hijri, disavowed the new agreement.

Israeli strikes continued after the ceasefire announcement, reported The Associated Press.

Rare Israeli airstrikes in the heart of Damascus

The announcement came after Israel launched rare airstrikes in the heart of Damascus, an escalation in a campaign that it said was intended to defend the Druze and push militants away from its border. The Druze form a substantial community in Israel as well as in Syria and are seen in Israel as a loyal minority, often serving in the military.

The escalation in Syria began with tit-for-tat kidnappings and attacks between lo-

eign or domestic — to sow division within our ranks. We are all partners in this land, and we will not allow any group to distort the beautiful image that Syria and its diversity represent."

He said Israel sought to break Syrian unity and turn the country into a theater of chaos but that Syrians were rejecting division.

He said Syrians did not fear renewed war but sought the path of Syrian interest over destruction. "We assigned local factions and Druze spiritual leaders the responsibility of maintaining security in (Sweida), recognizing the gravity of the situation and the need to avoid dragging the country" into a new war, he said.

Munir To Be Blamed If Anything Happens To Me, Says Imran

Press Trust Of India

Islamabad: Incarcerated former PM Imran Khan on Wednesday asked his party members to hold Pakistan Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir accountable if anything happens to him in jail.

Khan's party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf is gearing up to launch a massive drive from August 5 to press the government and military establishment to free Khan. "In recent days, the harsh treatment I face in jail has intensified. All basic rights — both human and those legally granted to prisoners — have been suspended," he rued.



"In recent days, the harsh treatment I face in jail has intensified. All basic rights — both human and those legally granted to prisoners — have been suspended"

Al Mayadeen

Beijing: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi reaffirms support for Iran's sovereignty and peaceful nuclear rights, denouncing US and Israeli military actions as threats to Middle East stability.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi assured his Iranian counterpart, Abbas Araghchi, that China "will continue to support Iran in safeguarding its national sovereignty and dignity, and in resisting hegemonic and bullying policies."

According to a statement from the Chinese Foreign Ministry on Wednesday, Wang said that Beijing "attaches importance to Iran's commitment not to develop nuclear weapons and respects its right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy."

Wang also expressed China's readiness to "continue playing a constructive role in advancing the settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue and maintaining stability in the Middle East," while acknowledging Tehran's diplomatic efforts to promote peace.

Iran's foreign minister met with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday in the city of Tianjin, where the two held a brief bilateral meeting before Araqchi went on to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit.

Related News
Iran rejects US claims over Yemen and Red Sea, slams regional meddling
Iran rejects US claims over Yemen and Red Sea, slams regional meddling
Deal or sanctions: West threaten Iran ahead of August deadline

N E W S M A K E R S

Shubhanshu Adjusting To Life On Earth, Says His Father; Lucknow Awaits Hero's Return

PTI

Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla, the Indian astronaut who along with three others returned recently from a successful space mission, is in Houston in the US, as he readjusts to life on Earth, his father said on Thursday.

Shukla, or "Shux", his call sign among colleagues and nickname for friends, splashed down on Earth on Tuesday after 18 days aboard the International Space Station (ISS). He is the first Indian on the ISS and the second after legendary Rakesh Sharma to venture into space.

Right now, he is in Houston. His wife Kamna, and their six-year-old son, Kiash, are already there.

According to an official statement quoting Union Minister Jitendra Singh, Shukla and the three other astronauts of the mission will remain in quarantine until July 23 to complete medical and re-adaptation procedures.

"From the 24th, they will begin discussions with ISRO. Briefings with Axiom and NASA will follow," he added.

"He (Shubhanshu) said he is under excellent care; (it) is required for him to readjust to life on Earth. His wife and son are there too," Shambhu Dayal, Shukla's father, told



Astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla meets his son, a day after his successful return to the Earth from the International Space Station, at Houston, Texas. (Insta@gagan.shux via PTI)

PTI in Lucknow.

"During our telephonic conversation, Shubhanshu

appeared excited at the accomplishment that means so much for the country."

The 39-year-old Indian Air Force officer, who became a national icon after his mission to ISS aboard the SpaceX's Dragon 'Grace' spacecraft, is currently with his family in Houston.

Speaking to PTI from the US, Shukla's wife, Kamna Shukla, said, "We are in Houston and we have already met him. He is with us. Homecoming has happened."

Shukla's father said the family in Lucknow was overwhelmed by the public response to Shubhanshu's achievement and they are eager to welcome him.

'Hands Up In The Air'

Delhi Court Punishes 4 Accused For Contempt

Trust Of India

New Delhi- A Delhi court directed four accused persons to stand in the court with their hands raised in the air for the entire day after finding them guilty of contempt of court.

Judicial Magistrate Saurabh Goyal was hearing a 2018 complaint case, which was at the stage of pre-charge evidence.

In an order dated July 15, he said, "Despite waiting and calling the matter twice from 10 AM till 11:40 AM, the bail bonds were not furnished by the accused persons. For wasting the time of the court, which is in contempt of the order duly promulgated on the last date of hearing, the accused persons are hereby held guilty for contempt of court proceedings and are convicted for the offence under Section 228 (intentional insult or inter-



ruption to public servant sitting in judicial proceeding) of the IPC."

"They are directed to stand in the court till the rising of this court with their hands straight in the air," the magistrate added.

The court posted the matter for further proceedings on August 11.



Workshop On 'Transforming Skilling Landscape In J&K' Concludes

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Department of Skill Development, Government of Jammu & Kashmir, successfully concluded a two-day National Conference on "Transforming the Skilling Ecosystem in Jammu & Kashmir" held on July 16-17, 2025 in Srinagar.

The conference brought together over 100 key stakeholders from across India—including senior government officials, industry leaders, academic experts, civil society representatives, and skilling professionals—to chart a unified and outcome-driven roadmap for skilling in J&K.

Delivering the keynote address, the Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, reaffirmed the government's commitment to creating sustainable skilling pathways aligned with the national vision of Viksit Bharat.

He calls it a moment to align skilling with the aspirations of our youth and the demands of a dynamic economy. He termed this workshop a deliberating form where all national level stakeholders put their heads together to give their inputs about framing a robust 'Skill Vision Plan' for J&K to implement over the next several years.

Key messages from the Chief Secretary's address included the active involvement of industries in co-developing curricula. He also called for the introduction of vocational education at the school and college level.

Emphasizing adaptability through the quote: "The illiterate of the future will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."

Secretary, Department of Skill

Development, Shri Rajeev Ranjan, echoed these sentiments, stating that "The real challenge today is not unemployment, but unemployability."

He underscored the need for aligning workforce skills with evolving market requirements and stressed that curriculum design must be integrated with delivery mechanisms for tangible outcomes.

Shahzad Alam, Director, Skill Development Department, played a key leadership role in steering the conference, ensuring cross-sectoral participation and driving forward the vision of a holistic skilling ecosystem.

The Conference Highlights constituted the strategic panels on Systemic Gaps and Market Alignment, Market Needs vs. Skill Gaps, Systemic Skilling Reform through Coordination, Apprenticeship to Placement, Innovation, Infrastructure, Curriculum for Future-Readiness, Human Resource Management in Skilling, Strengthening the role of Education Institutions, Tech Tools & Data Systems in Skilling, Skilling for Entrepreneurship

Key Themes Across the Conference includes current state of skilling infrastructure in J&K, Sector-wise skill-gap analysis, Alignment of curriculum with industry needs, Best practices in public-private partnership (PPP) model besides others.

One of the central outcomes of the conference was a structured consultation on a visionary skilling roadmap for Jammu & Kashmir. This roadmap envisions "Skills for All"—including students, women, and youth in rural areas. Building a supportive and collaborative ecosystem for the same in the times to come.

CM Reviews Mubarak Mandi Restoration, Stresses Heritage Appeal



Observer News Service

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday reviewed the ongoing restoration work of the historic Mubarak Mandi complex, which was the power centre of the Dogra kings in Jammu, and stressed on enhancing its heritage appeal.

The Mubarak Mandi Complex is one of Jammu's most significant architectural heritage sites and is envisioned as a comprehensive cultural centre, housing museums, conference venues and heritage hospitality services.

Accompanied by Advisor Nasir Aslam Wani and MLA Yudhvir Sethi during the visit, the chief minister was briefed in detail on the multi-phase project aimed at reviving the architectural grandeur of the former Dogra royal palace, a spokesperson said.

Key infrastructure proposals, including a span bridge and lift installations, were also discussed to improve accessibility and to augment visitors' experience. Officers informed Abdullah that most structures were recoverable and being systematically restored to their original splendour.

"The central courtyard area should be developed as a priority for public attraction and must look welcoming for visitors, reflecting its true heritage character," Abdullah told officers.

According to PTI, he urged officials to complete the works on time and added that Dogra crafts must be promoted through events and planned activities in the complex.

Several Delegations Call On CM Omar

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Several deputations and individuals called on Chief Minister Omar Abdullah at the Public Outreach Office, Raabita, Jammu, and apprised him of various issues, grievances and sector-specific demands.

The visiting delegations and individuals expressed gratitude for the government's open-door policy and brought forth important concerns from diverse sectors including infrastructure, automobile, education, industry, sports, adventure tourism, and welfare of specially-abled children.

Ms. Kavita Shirvaikar, Managing Director of Patel Engineering Ltd., along Deputy General Manager and Project In-charge of the Parnal Hydro Electric Project, discussed key issues pertaining to the implementation and progress of the hydroelectric project in Jammu and Kashmir.

Sanjay Aggarwal, Chairperson of the Federation of Automobile Dealers Association (FADA), Jammu, led a delegation conveyed sector-specific recommendations aimed at strengthening the automobile industry in the region.

In recognition of outstanding sports achievements, Satwik Luthra, who secured silver medals in both the Khelo India Games held in Patna (May 2025) and the National Games in Himachal

Pradesh (December 2024), was warmly acknowledged for bringing laurels to Jammu and Kashmir in the field of weightlifting.

Dr. Harpreet Singh, Principal of Jammu Sanskriti School, met the Chief Minister to felicitate the Children with Special Needs (CWSN) achievers who excelled in Volleyball and Badminton at the Special Olympics Bharat's National Unified Sports Meet held at IIT Gandhinagar.

Rakesh Sharma, President, Confederation of Industries & Commerce J&K, and Member of the National Council of CPI, called on the Chief Minister along with other representatives to raise pressing issues being faced by entrepreneurs and the industrial sector in the region.

Dr. Surinder Kumar Atri, Principal of Government Medical College, Kathua, apprised the Chief Minister about various academic and infrastructural challenges at the college and sought government intervention for redressal.

Kamal Gupta, Chairman of the J&K Private School Association, along with senior representatives, discussed challenges confronting unaided private schools and emphasized the need for policy support to sustain quality education. A delegation of the Pashmina Goat Project, met the Chief Minister to discuss further developmental opportunities under the initiative.

Wani echoed the chief minister's sentiments, stating that it is important that Mubarak Mandi is attractive to visitors

and becomes a vibrant heritage site that balances historical authenticity with modern expectations.

Mobile Passport Van To Offer Five-Day Doorstep Service In Kargil

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In a citizen-centric initiative aimed at improving accessibility to passport services, the Regional Passport Office Srinagar, under the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, will deploy a Mobile Passport Van in Kargil from Monday, 21st July 2025 to Friday, 25th July 2025.

The initiative is part of the Passport Seva Project (PSP), aimed at delivering efficient, transparent, and citizen-friendly passport services across the country. The Mobile Passport Van will provide doorstep passport facilities, especially in remote and far-flung regions under the jurisdiction of the Srinagar office.

Commenting on the initiative, Shri B.S. Rawat, Regional Passport Officer, Srinagar, said that the introduction of the Mobile Passport Van service in Kargil is a proactive step towards extending passport ser-



vices to underserved regions. This initiative reflects the Ministry's continued efforts to ensure that citizens, irrespective of their location, are provided timely and hassle-free access to essential documentation.

The Mobile Passport Van will be stationed at the National Informatics Centre (NIC), VC Hall New Building, near Deputy Commissioner's Office, Kargil, during the specified dates.

Applicants from Kargil and nearby areas who wish to avail the services must book an appointment through the official Passport Seva website www.

passportindia.gov.in. While booking, applicants should select "Passport Van" as the service option and choose a suitable date and time slot between 21st and 25th July 2025.

On the day of their appointment, applicants are advised to visit the designated location at the scheduled time. They may contact the Mobile Passport Van team, bearing Registration Number PB65BF1377, for any on-site assistance or procedural support.

This initiative marks a significant step in decentralising passport services and making them more accessible to citizens residing in remote regions. It reflects the Ministry's broader vision of delivering timely, transparent, and efficient services to all sections of the population.

For further information and queries, applicants are advised to visit the official Passport Seva website or contact the Regional Passport Office, Srinagar.

Div Com, IGP Review Arrangements For Independence Day-2025

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Ramesh Kumar, and Inspector General of Police, Bhim Sen Tuti chaired a high-level meeting to review the preparations for the Independence Day celebrations across the Jammu Division.

The meeting was attended by senior officers from the Police, CRPF, BSF, Deputy Commissioners, SSPs, Managing Director JPDCL, Heads of different Departments and representatives from executing agencies.

At the outset, the Divisional Commissioner highlighted the significance of celebrating the national festival with active public participation and administration at Division, Districts, Sub-divisions and Tehsils levels, while ensuring comprehensive security and logistical arrangements.

The meeting focused on the Divisional level event to be held at M A Stadium, Jammu. Detailed discussions were held on key aspects including barricading, seating arrangements, parking, traffic regulation, illumination of offices and key locations, uninterrupted power and water supply, security deployment, sanitation, healthcare facilities, participation of contingents and cultural performances.

The Sports Council and Public Works Department was directed to start the repair and renovation works inside the M A Stadium, while the Hospitality department was asked to install waterproof tents and an adequate number of chairs for

seating.

The MD JPDCL was asked to take measures for the illumination of identified buildings and rotaries around the City, besides ensuring uninterrupted power supply at the main venue.

The Director Health Services was directed to ensure availability of ALS ambulances and medical staff.

The Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) was directed to maintain cleanliness in and around the stadium. The SRTC will provide buses for ferrying participants and the public to the venue.

To ensure smooth execution of arrangements, the Divisional Commissioner directed all departments to nominate nodal officers for coordination. He further asked for establishing a dedicated control room at the venue with representatives from concerned departments.

The Deputy Commissioner Jammu was asked to oversee timely publication of invitation cards and constitute a selection committee to finalize the cultural activities to be presented on the Day.

It was informed that this year's Parade will include contingents from BSF, CRPF, SSB, JKP, JKAP, IRP, SDRF, JKPF, JK-FES, NCC and school students along with pipe and brass bands of BSF, JKP and Schools.

The Information Department will install the Public Address System, while the Floriculture Department will provide floral decorations. The Jal Shakti Department will ensure adequate drinking water supply.

Satish Sharma Reaffirms Govt's Commitment To Public Welfare



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In a series of public outreach interactions, Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Transport Youth Services & Sports, IT, Science and Technology, Satish Sharma met with multiple delegations from across Jammu and Kashmir.

These included retired employees of JKRTC, National Youth Corps (NYC) volunteers and several public deputations from various districts.

The meetings highlighted the government's responsive approach towards the concerns of various segments of society.

A delegation from the Retired Workers Union of JKRTC called upon the Minister and submitted a memorandum requesting release of long-pending Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) and 6th Pay Commission arrears. The representatives highlighted that although Order No. GMC/PS/81 dated 16.06.2021 had been issued by the department to facilitate identification and fund allotment, no action or fund release has been taken, so far.

The delegation expressed distress over the prolonged delay, citing that most affected retirees were non-pensionable employees of the erstwhile Government Transport Undertaking (GTU) and are facing serious financial hardships.

Satish Sharma, while assuring full support, stated "the

government stands committed to the welfare and dignity of our retired workforce. We acknowledge their years of dedicated service and will take up their case with the concerned on priority."

The National Youth Corps (NYC) volunteers also met the Minister and urged for regularisation of their services. They pointed out their crucial role in supporting the government initiatives at the grassroots level, especially in rural outreach, COVID management and youth engagement programs.

The Minister assured the NYC volunteers that efforts are being made to formulate a long-term solution in line with policy commitments.

In addition, several deputations from different areas of Jammu and Kashmir met the Minister and raised demands related to infrastructure development, ration supply improvements, sports infrastructure, youth employment and transport connectivity.

The Minister directed officers to examine the demands raised by the deputations for appropriate redress.

"The present government is committed to inclusive governance and equitable development. Public grievances are being addressed through sustained outreach and responsive administration," stated the Minister.

Sakeena Reviews Functioning Of Medical Supplies Corporation Limited



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo directed the J&K Medical Supplies Corporation Limited (JKMSCL) to ensure zero stock-outs of life-saving drugs and injections, particularly in emergency and trauma care units of all district hospitals across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister passed on these directions while conducting a comprehensive review of functioning and performance of the J&K Medical Supplies Corporation Limited (JKMSCL) in a meeting held at the Civil Secretariat here.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Health and Medical Education, Dr. Syed Abid Rasheed Shah; CEO State Health Agency, Ananth Dwivedi; MD JKMSCL, Kapil Mishra; Director Health Services Kashmir/Jammu, Director Family Welfare and Immunization, Director Finance, Health and Medical Education department, Principals of various GMCs and other senior officers, either in person or through video conferencing.

Addressing the officers, the Minister underlined the pivotal role of JKMSCL in ensuring seamless procurement and distribution of essential medicines, surgical equipment and other necessary medical supplies to the government health institutions across Jammu and Kashmir.

While having detailed appraisal of the corporation's procurement processes, inventory management systems, logistics networks and district-wise supply status, the Minister stressed on the urgent need to plug any gaps in real-time supply of critical and life saving medicines.

She directed the JKMSCL to ensure zero stock-outs of life-saving drugs and injections, particularly for cancer patients as well as cardiac patients in all district hospitals of J&K. "Health and well-being of the people is non-negotiable. We must ensure that no hospital, regardless of its location, faces a shortage of essential or emergency medicines", asserted the Minister.

Highlighting that a robust, transparent and responsive supply chain is the backbone of any public healthcare system, she instructed the JKMSCL management to adopt tech-enabled inventory tracking systems, ensure real-time coordination with GMC Principals, Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) and conduct monthly audits to monitor availability of essential healthcare supplies and utilization of stock.

She directed both the Directors of the health department to give advance requisition for healthcare equipment and accessories to the JKMSCL in order to avoid any delay in healthcare service delivery to people. "The effectiveness of our health system is closely tied to the efficiency of medical supply chains, any delay or lapse directly affects patient care", the Minister stated.

Calling for maintaining quality standards, especially in procurement of antibiotics, cardiovascular and other critical drugs, Sakeena Itoo emphasized upon the management of JKMSCL to maintain stringent quality control benchmarks for procurement process for enhanced transparency and competitiveness. She also asked them to avoid any kind of delay in the procurement process as these equipment and medical supplies are very critical for improving the healthcare facilities across Jammu and Kashmir.

DC Reasi Reviews Arrangements For Kousar Nag Yatra 2025

Observer News Service

REASI: Deputy Commissioner Nidhi Malik on Thursday chaired a meeting to finalise the arrangements for the smooth and safe conduct of the Kousar Nag Yatra, scheduled to commence from July 27, 2025.

The meeting was attended by Senior Superintendent of Police Paramvir Singh; Commandant 126 CRP Manoj Verma; ADC Rakesh Kumar; ASP Iftikhar; ACD Vijay Kumar; DFO Mahore and

other officers. The President and Members of Kousar Nag Yatra Management Committee were also present.

The meeting discussed security arrangements, track clearance, drinking water facilities, toilet infrastructure, medical support and transportation logistics.

The DC directed the CMO to establish medical check-up camps at Sungari and Sari and deploy dedicated medical teams along the entire yatra route. She emphasized the availability of essen-

tial medicines, first aid kits, oxygen cylinders and ambulances to handle any medical emergencies. She stressed on thorough screening and said only those pilgrims found medically fit will be authorized to undertake the yatra.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasized on following the designated yatra route. She instructed the Forest and Rural Development Departments to ensure thorough clearance of the path and renovation of existing and installation of new toilets and sheds

at night halt points.

The Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Department was asked to make adequate arrangements for drinking water at langar sites and halting points. The Transport Department was tasked with co-ordinating transportation for the pilgrims, while SDM Mahore was directed to monitor the overall progress on a daily basis.

To enhance safety, State Disaster Response Force and mountain rescue teams will be deployed all along the yatra

track. The Tehsildar Chassana informed that the registration process will begin one week before the yatra, and pony-walla rates will be notified shortly.

The Deputy Commissioner also instructed the BRO and PMGSY departments to deploy machinery for road clearance in case of any natural disaster. She further directed the Executive Engineer, PDD Mahore, to ensure uninterrupted power supply and make arrangements for backup generators at critical points.

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KO VIEW

Statehood Debate

In a fresh development in the politics surrounding the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Khargehave written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging the,restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. The move has been welcomed by the National Conference (NC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP).

It has now been six years since August 5, 2019, since the revocation of Article 370 and the simultaneous downgrading of the J&K state into a union territory. However, the home minister Amit Shah, at the time, assured the nation that statehood would be restored, albeit at an “appropriate time.” That time, clearly, is long overdue.

The Congress has now called for statehood legislation in the upcoming Monsoon session of Parliament. According to the ruling NC, there is simply no reason for further delay. J&K has held peaceful elections, seen a relative calm in recent years, and demonstrated resilience in the face of adversity.

There is also the Ladakh question. Congress has sought Ladakh's inclusion under the 6th Schedule, which offers special protections for tribal areas. This is in response to concerns voiced by people of Ladakh about losing their identity, land rights, and representation.

The BJP, on the other hand, has maintained that the abrogation of Article 370 was meant to integrate J&K fully into the Indian Union. Both the PM Modi and the home minister Shah have promised return of statehood. People in J&K now want the words to be matched with action. If the Monsoon session comes and goes without any concrete legislation, it will certainly disappoint people in J&K.

In recent past, however, centre has largely gone silent on the issue. More so, following the brutal Pahalgam attack and the attendant four-day war between India and Pakistan. The question is whether the centre has any immediate or near-term plan to reinstate J&K's statehood? There is no easy answer to this. If the recent statements by the senior union government leadership are anything to go by, there are no signs to this effect. This is a promise whose reiteration has been conspicuously absent from any remarks on Kashmir. The PM too skipped any mention of J&K statehood in his recent visit to the region to inaugurate Chenab bridge. This, despite the fact that the Chief Minister specifically mentioned this in his speech at the event. That said, the PM Modi has in the past pleasantly surprised the people of J&K. For example, last year, Assembly elections were announced when no one in the union territory expected them to be held.

FINANCIAL FIX

Trapped in the EMI Life

In a valley chasing borrowed dreams, financial peace starts with discipline, not display.

Irshad Mushtaq

A fierce financial crisis is tightening its grip in the valley. Loans, once rare and strategic, are now routine. Weddings, homes, businesses, even daily expenses are increasingly financed by borrowed money. On the surface, it looks like progress. Beneath, it's a financial time bomb.

Banks and lenders promise easy access to credit. Social media sells curated lifestyles. Together, they fuel a mindset where debt becomes the shortcut to status. But many of these shortcuts lead straight into a trap. Equated Monthly Instalments (EMIs) quickly eat into income. Interest silently compounds. Businesses, once hopeful, begin to stumble under the pressure to repay.

In a region like Kashmir, where uncertainty is already baked into everyday life, the added burden of poorly managed debt is devastating. Entrepreneurs who take loans without plans find themselves sinking. Families borrow to impress, not invest. And soon, peace of mind vanishes under rising dues.

We need a cultural reset. Debt is not always the enemy, but undisciplined debt is. Before signing up for a loan, assess the risk. Understand the full cost. Consult a professional. Don't take on liabilities just to keep up with an illusion.

Financial health isn't glamorous, but it's powerful. Living within means, building slowly, and thinking long-term are choices that protect your future.

True dignity doesn't come from borrowed money, it comes from financial clarity.

The path to peace isn't paved with EMIs. It's built on restraint, planning, and the courage to say no to pressure. We owe it to ourselves, and to the next generation, to stop trading lasting security for temporary image.

The author is a Srinagar-based reputed financial advisor.

A Generation Adrift

Delays, scams, and endless waiting: How Kashmir's job crisis is crushing a generation's spirit.

Amir Altaf

I'm 25 years old, a graduate from a well-known university. Like many others in Jammu and Kashmir, I didn't step into the workforce right after finishing college. Instead, I enrolled in a Master's program through IGNOU, because it felt like the only way to stay busy while preparing for government exams that always seem just out of reach.

We, the youth of this region, held onto a fragile hope, especially after 2019, when Article 370 was abrogated and our state transitioned into a Union Territory under Governor's rule.

We were told of a new dawn of development, opportunities, and most importantly, transparent and timely recruitments. We envisioned a future where merit would prevail, our hard work would be rewarded, and the chronic unemployment that plagued our parents' generation would finally be a thing of the past.

But look at us now. The promised dawn has yet to break. Instead, we find ourselves trapped in a relentless cycle of disappointment, our aspirations crumbling under the weight of broken promises.

Whenever a recruitment notification appears, a rare event in itself, often after years of anticipation, it's either marred by allegations of scams, forcing us to witness the brazen theft of our futures, or indefinitely delayed, caught in a bureaucratic labyrinth or legal quagmire.

The Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPSC) has managed to notify the Combined Competitive Exams only four times since 2019. It's a positive step, but the glacial pace and unpredictable timing cost us invaluable opportunities, years of our prime youth that can never be reclaimed.

Each postponement, cancelled exam feels like a punch to the gut. It drains our savings spent on coaching and forms, as well as our will to persevere.

Adding insult to injury, the very system designed to offer a fair chance has turned its back on a significant section of us.

With a staggering 67% of seats now reserved for various categories, candidates from the Unreserved category, like myself, find ourselves in an agonizing limbo: na ghar ke na ghat ke, neither

here nor there.

We are not against affirmative action, but when such a vast majority of opportunities are reserved, it leaves us, who have also toiled and sacrificed, feeling utterly marginalized. We bear the disproportionate burden, watching as our age limits tick down, our chances dwindle, and our future becomes increasingly uncertain.

It's a cruel irony: we are told to compete, to excel, only to find the goalposts constantly shifting, leaving us with a sense of profound injustice.

We had a flicker of renewed hope when, after a decade, we finally elected a new government in this new era of Jammu and Kashmir as a UT. We believed they would listen, that they would understand our plight, and that they would usher in an era of transparency and timely recruitments. We thought our voices, finally, would matter.

Yet, the malice persists. The recent notification for Naib Tehsildar posts in the Revenue Department, a beacon of hope for many, was met with protests over a qualifying Urdu language requirement. The case went to the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), and once again, the entire recruitment process has been put on hold.

Nothing, it seems, is going right. Every single step forward is met with two steps back, and it's the youth who pay the price.

The emotional toll is immense. Students are sinking into depression, their eyes hollowed by sleepless nights and endless anxiety. Unemployment figures continue their relentless climb, and a pervasive sense of helplessness grips our generation.

When we question the elected government, they claim a lack of powers, citing the UT status as a shield. When we turn to the Lieutenant Governor's administration, we are met with indifference, told they are “not concerned.”

Who, then, is concerned about our future? Who is accountable for the years we are losing?

This bureaucratic ping-pong leaves us feeling like pawns in a game we never signed up for. Our futures are sacrificed at the altar of political and administrative inertia.

I don't want this trauma anymore. I am exhausted by the constant uncertainty, the dashed hopes, and the feeling of being utterly abandoned.

The government's efforts to empower

youth with skills have been negligible, offering little more than tokenistic programs that fail to address the core issue of job creation and fair access.

Corruption, it seems, remains at its peak. It's a cancerous growth on the very system meant to uplift us.

I find myself confined to my home, unable to study, unable to focus, consumed by a gnawing anxiety. The vibrant dreams I once held have faded into a dull ache. Being an unreserved category candidate, the ticking clock of age limits on competitive exams is a constant, suffocating reminder of my diminishing prospects.

My health is deteriorating, plagued by stress and despair, and I feel like a leech, unwillingly sucking the blood of my parents. I'm unable to contribute, and thrive. The guilt is immense. The feeling of being a burden, a failure, despite my best efforts, is fierce.

This is not just my story. It is the collective agony of a generation in Jammu and Kashmir. We are not asking for handouts, but for a fair chance, a transparent system, and a future that doesn't feel like a mirage.

We are losing our youth, mental peace, and faith in the system. The silence from those in power is deafening, and the cost of their inaction is the slow, heartbreaking erosion of our dreams, replaced by a chilling sense of hopelessness.

It is time for the authorities to stop passing the buck. It is time for concrete action, for a clear roadmap to address the unemployment crisis, for a review of policies that disproportionately burden sections of the youth, and for accountability in every recruitment process.

Our future, and the stability of this region, depends on it. We implore those in power to look beyond the statistics and see the faces of a generation on the brink.

A generation that simply wants the opportunity to build a life, contribute, and live with dignity in their own land.

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The Resume They Ignored

Behind every jobless youth is a system that asks for more and gives nothing back.

Armaan Tariq

tract ended, they let him go with nothing but silence.

He sent out resume after resume, thirty in total, and heard nothing. Each rejection, or worse, indifference, felt like a knock at the core of who he was.

One morning, he got a message from a company in Rangreth. He didn't have money for the fare, so he borrowed it from his brother. The interview stretched across seven rounds in one day. He didn't flinch. One woman handed him an envelope. Before he could open it, someone whispered, “You're in.”

The owner looked at him and said, “We've seen your potential. We want you on our international project.”

That project never took off. But something else did.

Zaid updated his resume. He kept learning. He managed a pharmacy. Through a referral, he entered another company. This time, he didn't just work, he led. Departments that once ignored him now waited for his decisions. His signature started to carry weight.

Zaid smiles differently now. It's not the smile of someone who's

finished struggling. It's the smile of someone who finally knows what he's worth.

And this, right here, is where Kashmir keeps failing its youth.

Zaid's story isn't a rare exception. It's a pattern. It's what happens to thousands of young Kashmiris every year, the ones with degrees, drive, and determination, but no system that knows what to do with them.

The government speaks of schemes. Institutions boast of programs. Yet in the real world, young men and women are stuck in endless loops of rejection, unpaid internships, and half-chances.

Employers ask for experience but offer none. They expect confidence but give nothing to build it. They run interviews like interrogations and pay as if the youth should be grateful for scraps.

The private sector in Kashmir barely functions. What little exists often mimics the worst of corporate habits: demanding reference checks in a place where most youth don't have networks, asking for five years of experience for entry-level jobs, and

treating internships like charity.

And the result is devastating. Brilliant minds are wasted. Skilled hands sit idle. Ambition burns out before it ever gets a chance to ignite.

What Zaid needed wasn't a miracle. He needed a fair chance. He needed someone to see his effort, reward his learning, and give him time to grow.

This is what Kashmiri youth need: a system that works, a hiring process that makes sense, workplaces that offer respect before results, a culture where you don't need a connection to be considered, and where your worth isn't measured only by the name of your degree.

Zaid was lucky. He got that one message. That one chance. But why must it always come down to luck?

To the employers reading this: someone like Zaid is knocking on your door today. He may not have the perfect resume. He may be nervous in the interview. But he's ready.

And to the youth of Kashmir: you are not a failure just because no one has chosen you yet. You are becoming, you're rising, and your time hasn't even begun.

Zaid's story isn't about success. It's about survival in a system that keeps asking for more but rarely gives back. It's about holding on when everything tells you to let go.

And it's about what happens when someone finally says: Yes, we see you.

The author is a Srinagar-based writer focused on youth employment and social equity in Kashmir.

Letter to Editor

Kashmir's Job Market Is Stuck in Promise Mode

It's been almost six years since the government of India revoked Article 370, stripping Jammu and Kashmir of its special status, and promising a new era of growth. We were promised development, investment, and jobs. But today, on the ground, that promise feels like a mirage.

The roads are smoother. The streetlights stay on longer. And yet, behind the façade of progress, unemployment looms large, especially among the youth.

Jammu and Kashmir currently has one of the highest unemployment rates in India. According to data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), it hovers between 17% and 19%, almost twice the national average.

In places like Srinagar and Anantnag, it's worse. The story that

numbers tell is sobering. Thousands of young men and women, many of them well-educated, are struggling to find work. They go from exam centers to coaching institutes, clinging to the hope of a government job that may never come.

Programs like Mission Youth were launched to build skills and prepare candidates for modern careers. They reached wide. But the results fell short. Over 60% of the people trained under such initiatives are still without work. The training didn't match the job market, and the market itself hasn't grown fast enough.

The private sector was supposed to bloom in this new phase. Investors were expected to arrive, factories to rise, and startups to thrive. That momentum never fully took off.

Local businesses are struggling

to compete with bigger companies from outside the region. Procurement changes meant to improve transparency ended up pushing smaller regional manufacturers to the sidelines.

Even the public sector, the traditional employer of choice in Kashmir, has slowed down. Between 2022 and 2025, only about 12,500 government jobs were filled. That doesn't come close to covering the annual retirement rate, let alone addressing the growing backlog.

This crisis isn't just economic. It's social. Young people with degrees but no jobs are slipping into despair. Anxiety, depression, and a deepening sense of alienation are taking root.

In a region that has spent decades dealing with discord, this sort of despair is ominous.

What Kashmir needs now is a

clear-headed, inclusive employment strategy. Bring back trust in public hiring. Focus on reviving core local sectors: horticulture, tourism, handicrafts. Align skills with real jobs. Support rural and tribal youth, including women and those with disabilities, through funding and mentorship.

Above all, build transparency into the process. Track progress, audit outcomes, and listen to those affected.

A job is more than a paycheck. For many in Kashmir, it's proof that their future matters. And until the promise of opportunity reaches them, true progress will remain out of reach.

Sincerely,

Amir Rahoof
Research Scholar,
MANUU

Gulmarg Goes Smart, Sustainable

With high-tech tools and local wisdom, Gulmarg is setting the stage for a new kind of Himalayan tourism.

Aashiq Hussain Andrabi

The rules are finally catching up with the rush in Kashmir's postcard-perfect tourist town. Over the past few weeks, teams under the Gulmarg Development Authority (GDA) have launched a sweeping crackdown, sealing and seizing illegally built hotels, shops, and other encroachments that have crept into the fragile alpine zone.

Leading this action is Tariq Hussain Naik, the JKAS officer at the helm of the GDA. For him, this isn't just an anti-encroachment drive.

"It's a turning point," he says. "Encroachment is an environmental theft. Every inch of land taken without approval erodes the future of Gulmarg."

With over 1.5 million visitors each year and 15,000 on peak days, the pressure on Gulmarg's ecosystem is enormous.

For years, lax regulation and unchecked expansion chipped away at its balance. Now, Naik is reimagining how high-altitude tourism should work in Kashmir.

Under his watch, the focus has shifted from footfall to foresight: geotagging tourists, zoning the recreation core, regulating guides, enforcing construction norms, and rolling out AI-backed permit systems.

The goal is bold, make Gulmarg South Asia's smartest and safest alpine destination, where safety protocols mirror air travel, and every season is managed, not just marketed.

A 2008-batch officer with a historian's eye and a reformer's drive, Naik sees Gulmarg not as a trophy town, but a living system.

In this conversation, he lays out how enforcement is just the first step, and why Gulmarg's real transformation will be led by locals, backed by tech, and rooted in sustainability.

Let's start with Pahalgam. It wasn't just tragic. It really rattled people. From your end, what changed after that?

A lot changed. It was a targeted terror attack. And it exposed something we'd never dealt with head-on: how fragile our tourism setup really is. The loss shook everyone. But what came after that forced a rethink.

Would you call it a turning point?

Absolutely. We realised this can't be a numbers game anymore. It's not just about how many people visit. It's about how safely we host them. That's where the real shift happened. Now, safety and sustainability are at the heart of every tourism plan.

What were the key lessons?

Three. First, preparedness. We can't wait for things to go wrong. So we're building in predictive weather alerts, evacuation plans, satellite-linked communications, especially

for high-altitude spots.

And regulation?

Big one. We had to clean up the mess: unlicensed pony rides, illegal camps, informal guides. Now, we're rolling out a Universal Licensing Framework. QR-coded IDs for every service provider. It's a total transparency.

And third?

Communication. It has to be fast, clear, and multilingual. Our alert system now syncs with the Indian Meteorological Department. Tourists get briefed at hotel check-ins, kiosks, and even on Instagram. Emergencies shouldn't be guesswork.

Sounds like this is part of something bigger. Is it?

Yes, the Tourism Risk Management Framework, built with the State Disaster Management Authority. Think biometric check-ins, AI-driven alerts, and geotagged tourists in sensitive zones. Pahalgam and Gulmarg are pilot sites. We're using drones to monitor crowds. We want safety here to feel as structured as air travel.

Gulmarg's tricky though - huge crowds, delicate ecosystem. How do you balance that?

That's the tightrope. Gulmarg gets 1.5 million visitors a year. On peak days, 15,000. It's our crown jewel, and our biggest test.

So what's the plan?

Zoning. We've mapped the core recreational zone digitally. Buffer zones are off-limits to commercial activity. Construction follows the Master Plan 2032. Gondola rides are capped. And we run annual ecological impact audits: snow, waste, traffic, everything.

Are you planning to cap visitors?

Yes. We're working with TERI on a Carrying Capacity Index. It looks at stay duration, transport mode, and activities, not just headcount. Based on that, we'll roll out an AI-based permit system during peak seasons. Controlled entry without hurting local livelihoods.

What about fragile zones?

Places like Alpathar Lake and Khilanmarg will have seasonal windows. They need to breathe too.

Alright. Let's talk waste and sustainability. What's new there?

Two big projects are underway, sewage and solid waste treatment plants. Hotels with more than 20 rooms must use bio-digesters and efficient heating. For trekkers, it's "Backpack Out,

Waste Out": you carry your waste back.

And with WWF India, we've launched biodiversity trails, complete with eco-guides and audio tools for students and nature groups.

"Sustainable tourism" gets thrown around a lot. What does it really mean here?

For us, it means three things: protect nature, respect culture, and empower locals.

In Gulmarg, that looks like hydro-powered ski lifts, zero-plastic zones, and farm-to-resort supply chains. Over 70% of resort produce now comes from Tangmarg farmers.

That's a big shift.

And we're investing in cultural preservation too. We're working with Dastkar Kashmir to bring back local wool and pashmina crafts, and make them part of the tourism economy.

Are locals involved in planning?

More than ever. We now hold regular townhalls with hoteliers, artisans, service providers. Three regional tourism task forces are in place, with 50% local representation. They help decide where to build, what to host, and how funds get used. We've even introduced participatory budgeting.

What about homestays, local guides, and artisans? Are they getting help?

They are. Over 140 homestays registered, with zero-interest loans and solar subsidies. Our Trail Guide Programme trained 180+ youth in first aid, storytelling, and ecology. Local food festivals and artisan workshops are now part of our official calendar.

But can tourism really curb youth unemployment and outmigration?

It already is. The J&K Economic Survey 2023 shows thousands of tourism-linked jobs. In Baramulla alone, youth-run tourism startups are up 28% since 2021. One homestay, one bike rental, that's what keeps people rooted.

OK, let's talk tech. What's next for Gulmarg?

The Smart Gulmarg Initiative launches in 2026. AI-powered surveillance for crowd control, alerts, and planning. Online bookings already work for gondolas, huts, gear. We're adding VR ski simulators and AR overlays for heritage spots, perfect for off-season tourism and schools.

So the goal is a smart mountain destination?

Exactly. By 2030, we want to be the first net-zero Himalayan tourism zone. Real-time monitoring, sensor-managed utilities, digitally guided visitors. A place that's smart, inclusive, and gentle on the land.

And changing how the world sees Kashmir, any digital storytelling efforts?

Yes. We're working with Meta and Google India on immersive content: short films, virtual tours, essays. Campaigns like #RealKashmirStories and #BeyondThePostcard are gaining traction. Influencer residencies are on. The world needs to hear Kashmir's story, from



Kashmiris.

With slow travel and wellness on the rise, how does Kashmir fit in?

Perfectly. With walnut groves, shrines and old trails, we're built for it. We're reviving pilgrimage routes, creating healing trails, working with Ayurveda and Unani experts to design retreats. Gulmarg will host our first regenerative tourism workshop this year.

Could we see yoga residencies or artist fellowships here?

Already in motion. Wellness retreat centers are coming up near Baba Reshi. We're planning an Eco-Residency Fellowship for artists, yoga teachers, sustainability thinkers. And yes, an annual Himalayan Sustainability Bootcamp is in the works.

Skiing made Gulmarg famous. What about the rest of the year?

We've got a full-year blueprint. Summer brings golf, fishing, heritage walks. Autumn's about foliage and festivals. Spring brings flower trails. We've launched a Summer Adventure Series: paragliding, biking, long-distance runs. Gulmarg isn't just a winter postcard anymore.

Any new treks or birding zones?

Yes. New GPS-mapped trekking routes, eco-trails with audio guides, signage, and shelters. And we're developing a birding hub at Ferozepur Nallah to offer deeper experiences, without harming the environment.

Big picture. What's Gulmarg's role in Kashmir's adventure tourism map?

It's the flagship. The terrain, snow quality, and safety upgrades are setting it up as South Asia's top alpine destination. But it won't stand alone. We're linking Gulmarg with Gurez, Sonamarg, Pahalgam to form a full-fledged high-altitude circuit.

Fast forward to 2030, what should Gulmarg feel like?

For visitors: seamless, safe, and soulful. For locals: something they own with pride. And for nature: a place that breathes and heals.

And personally, what legacy do you hope to leave?

That we didn't just run tourism. We reimagined it. Gulmarg became a space where progress and preservation walked together. A living, year-round sanctuary.

The author is a senior scribe based in Pulwama

This Artist's War on Waste Is Kashmir's Wake-Up Call

Armed with nothing but discarded trash and a fierce sense of duty, a young Kashmiri artist is turning waste into urgent public art, and a message too loud to ignore.

Fiza Masoodi

On a recent summer morning, as crows circled a trash-strewn canal near the government school playground in Kulgam's Kulpora, Mudassir Rehman Dar unpacked his kit: crushed bottle caps, torn paper, a spool of jute string, and a stack of flattened cardboard.

He was preparing an art installation with a dozen schoolchildren, part of a self-organized eco-campaign he's been running for over two years.

The children watched closely as Dar pressed a yellowed polythene wrapper into shape and whispered, more to himself than to anyone else, "Nothing is waste. It's just waiting to be seen."

Dar's eco-campaign is trending at a time when his homeland Kashmir's beauty is increasingly buried under plastic.

According to a 2023 report by the Jammu & Kashmir Pollution Control Board, over 3,100 metric tons of solid waste are generated across the region every day, with nearly half dumped into open fields and waterways without treatment.

In places like Kulgam, where infrastructure is thin and environmental awareness even thinner, the problem is multiplying.

"There are mounds of garbage where orchards used to be," said Dar. "We talk of paradise, but we're living in a dump."

And so, he chose art as his form of resistance.

Dar, 28, is a self-taught artist who has never attended an art school, held a salaried job, or received government funding. He works from a makeshift studio in the back room of his



family's modest home, tucked between apple trees and grazing fields.

The walls of his workshop are covered with hanging scraps - painted leaf portraits, a globe made of shredded polythene, a child's face drawn in ink on torn cardboard.

His tools are all improvised. He paints with old makeup brushes, builds frames from bent wires or used matchsticks, and colors his work using ink from dried markers or leftovers from house renovations.

But the message comes through.

In one of his most powerful works, Shades of Chinar, Dar uses scrap paper and plastic to recreate the famed red-gold chinar trees of Kashmir.

Upon closer inspection, the leaves are

made of worn-out food wrappers. A rusty syringe lies embedded at the tree's base. "This is where we're headed," he said. "Beauty on the surface, rot underneath."

Kashmir's environmental degradation is not just a local concern. The Himalayan region, already vulnerable to climate change, is seeing accelerated glacier melt, erratic weather patterns, and disappearing wetlands.

But municipal responses remain slow and fragmented. Many towns lack proper waste segregation. In rural areas, open burning of plastic is common.

For Dar, the lack of infrastructure is matched only by the absence of urgency. "There are policies," he said. "But there is no people's movement. And what is art, if not a cry?"

His work has already taken him across India, from exhibitions in Delhi, Chandigarh, and Amritsar to workshops in Kerala and Kolkata.

In 2021, he entered the Asia Book of Records and India Book of Records for creating the world's smallest painting of the Holy Kaaba and Masjid-e-Nabawi, etched on a stone smaller than a grain of rice.

International admirers have followed. His leaf portraits of Gandhi, Tagore, Mother Teresa, and poet Iqbal have circulated widely on social media, gaining traction in countries like Sri Lanka, Russia, and the UAE.

And yet, Dar says, "I've never sold a painting, because people still don't believe art should cost anything unless it's on canvas in a frame."

Despite his growing recognition, Dar receives no government grants or gallery representation. He runs his campaigns from his own savings, money scraped together by selling handmade greeting cards or accepting small private commissions.

He spends most of his time visiting schools, parks, or shrines, holding pop-up installations or hands-on sessions where students learn to make portraits from biscuit wrappers or craft animals from used toothbrushes.

In a recent awareness event held at a school in South Kashmir, Dar spelled out the word "SORRY" using 400 crushed soft drink bottles. He then painted the face of the Earth crying over it.

"That's the apology our land never got," he told the students.

Dar's work draws deeply from Islamic spiritualism and the emotional textures of daily life in Kashmir. Some pieces depict the Prophet's Mosque in miniature form on a ring

stone. Others address addiction, domestic abuse, and child labour.

These issues, he says, are linked to the same cycle of neglect and waste.

"I was never taught to separate the spiritual from the ecological," he said. "If the Earth is sacred, how can we desecrate it like this?"

His motivation majorly comes from a place of pain, watching his homeland decay beneath the surface.

"This place gave me everything: language, faith, childhood. It hurts to see it buried under plastic."

In recent months, Dar unveiled a viral portrait of IPL cricketer Rasikh Salam Dar, another son of Kulgam.

The painting, made from reused art paper and old charcoal pencils, drew widespread praise on Instagram and was shared by sports fans across India.

And yet, on most days, he walks the short dirt path to his studio alone, past ditches lined with trash, past burnt plastic heaps smoldering in silence.

He says he'll keep going as long as his hands work.

"Art is not about galleries," he said. "It's about making people pause, look, and care."

Back at the school, the children finish assembling the installation: a large butterfly, its wings cut from biscuit packs and discarded examination forms. It doesn't fly, but it holds its own.

"It's not perfect," one boy says.

"It doesn't have to be," Dar replies. "It just has to be honest."

The author is a scribe based in Srinagar. She can be reached at fizamassoodi2001@gmail.com

Brain Scans Reveal Changes Due To Exposure To Extreme Conditions Affect Physiology Cognition

Press Trust Of India

A study analysing brain scans of crew members who spent a year at an Antarctic research station has revealed changes due to exposure to isolated and extreme environments with potential impacts on physiology and cognition.


The findings, published in the journal 'npj Microgravity', have implications as extended space missions are planned from around the world, researchers said.

The team from the US, Europe, Australia and New Zealand found an overall reduction in white matter and a reduced grey matter in brain regions known to help with memory, language and spatial awareness.

Astronauts experience considerable stress in space, and understanding its effects on the brain can aid in assessing risks and building resilience, the researchers explained. They pointed out that analogue environments — locations on Earth with features similar to those found on the Moon or Mars— such as the Antarctic Concordia Station, simulate "isolated, confined, and extreme" (ICE) conditions.

The findings are also relevant for individuals in the general population where a perception of isolation -- or loneliness -- has been on the increase, and many have experienced chronic stress over the past years, the team said.

The researchers, including those from the University of Pennsylvania and the New Zealand Brain Research Institute, analysed MRI scans of 25 crew members who



subjected to isolated, extreme conditions.

The team found an overall reduction in white matter, along with decreased grey matter in the brain's temporal and parietal lobes, hippocampus, and thalamus. These regions are critical for processing sensory information, memory, language, and spatial awareness.

While it is known that white and grey matter naturally decrease with age—leading to age-related cognitive decline—other factors like diseases and lifestyle choices can also contribute to these reductions.

The study revealed that improved sleep and physical activity, such as gymming, during periods of isolation and confinement were linked to a lesser loss of grey matter, suggesting that lifestyle choices may have protective effects. Moreover, the levels of white and grey matter were observed to return to pre-exposure

levels five months after the participants returned from Antarctica.

"Life in space and on Earth entails exposure to and requires resilience to stress. Elucidating the effects of prolonged stress in extreme conditions highlights significant, but transient brain changes relevant for optimal physiological and cognitive functioning," the authors wrote.

"The current data and future studies in (isolated, confined and extreme) environments, including space travel, reemphasise the need to identify specific countermeasures that may mitigate changes in brain anatomy when individuals are isolated," the team wrote.

"The relevance of the current findings has broadened with the increase in isolation in the general population," they further noted.

IIT Madras Develops India's 'Lightest' Active Wheelchair 'YD One'

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi- Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras on Wednesday launched 'YD One — India's lightest active wheelchair' built indigenously, according to officials.

YD One is the country's first indigenously developed precision-built mono-tube rigid-frame wheelchair, designed to match the world's best, they added.

Built to international standards, YD One is fully customised for each user's body, posture and daily mobility needs. Weighing just nine kilograms, its ultra-lightweight and precision-engineered design delivers maximum strength and energy efficiency while making it effortless to lift, handle and stow in cars, autos or public transport.

According to IIT Madras Director V Kamakoti, the wheelchair is too often seen across the world as a universal symbol of disability — something that confines or re-



stricts its user. This narrative must change. A wheelchair, when built right, is not a burden but an enabler of independence, mobility and full participation in society, he said.

"Yet for millions, the reality remains grim: most still rely on heavy, poorly fitted hospital-style wheelchairs designed for short-term indoor use. These chairs make it hard to move freely and force people to be pushed around by others, limiting

comfort, freedom and dignity.

"YD One transforms this reality. Built with precision-engineered geometry and aerospace-grade materials, it delivers the kind of high-performance, ultra-light mobility once only possible through expensive imports — but at a fraction of the cost. Minimalistic, stylish and fully customised, YD One is not something users are bound to — it's something they are proud to own, a device that

expands their world rather than shrinking it," he said.

To bring YD One to market, the research team partnered with Thryv Mobility, an IIT Madras-incubated startup that will manufacture the wheelchairs locally to global benchmarks, ensuring each chair is truly bespoke and affordable to users in India and emerging markets.

"Today, true independence means inclusion, dignity and self-reliance for each and every citizen of this country, regardless of their background, ability and circumstances. WHO has given a figure where they say that almost 15 pc of the global population suffers from some form of disability.


"In absolute numbers, this amounts to almost 1.3 to 1.9 billion and this number is going up. It is estimated that by 2058, this will be 2.5 billion, which is a huge number," said Surgeon Vice Admiral Anupam Kapur, Nau Sena Medal, Director General Hospital Services (Armed Forces).

UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR, SRINAGAR

(NAAC ACCREDITED GRADE A++)

RESULT NOTIFICATION

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY



Shaheena Akhter D/o Mohmad Yousuf Botoo bearing University Registration No. 7902-BW-2010 who pursued Integrated Ph.D Programme on Whole Time basis in the discipline of Persian, Centre of Central Asian Studies, School of Social Sciences submitted thesis titled "Children's Literature in Iran: A Study of Short Stories of Mohammad Reza Sarshar" under the Supervision of Dr. Abid Gulzar, Assistant Professor, Centre of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir, Srinagar is declared qualified for the award of Ph.D degree on 03-07-2025.

bko

Prof. Majid Zaman
Controller of Examinations
Assistant Controller of Examinations



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Handicrafts & Handloom Dept Earns ₹1.07 Cr From Trainee Product Sales



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR- Demonstrating its sustained efforts in skill development and artisan empowerment, Department of Handicrafts and Handloom, Kashmir, has recorded a cumulative revenue generation of more than 1.07 crore over the last three financial years through sale of products crafted by trainees at departmental training centres across the valley.

In a press statement issued here today, spokesman from the Handicrafts and Handloom Department, stated that this revenue, fully deposited in the Government Treasuries, has been realized from the sale of a wide range of handicraft and handloom products produced by trainees enrolled in over 400 departmental training centres which include Pashmina products, Sozni, Crewel, Chain Stitch, Kani Shawl, carpets and a variety of handloom fabrics, reflecting the region's rich craft heritage. "This also reflects a perfect example of how funds released by the Government are recycled back into the system and utilized for development activities

related to promotion of craft sector," he added.

Department views this achievement as a testament to its ongoing efforts in nurturing traditional skills and enhancing the earning potential of local artisans. By integrating practical, market-oriented production into training modules, Department ensures that trainees gain not just technical proficiency but also a real-time understanding of commercial aspects of the craft sector.

Efforts are underway to further modernize training infrastructure, introduce contemporary design elements and forge stronger market linkages through departmental sale outlets and participation in national-level exhibitions. These steps aim to ensure that products crafted by trainees find broader markets while helping preserve the unique handicraft and handloom traditions of Kashmir.

The Department remains committed to expanding these initiatives, thereby creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for the youth and artisan community of the Union Territory.

Stock Markets Close Lower On Selling In It Stocks, Fresh Foreign Fund Outflows

Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI- Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty settled lower on Thursday following selling in IT and banking shares and investors remaining in a wait-and-watch mode ahead of the outcome of the US-India trade talks.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 375.24 points or 0.45 per cent to settle at 82,259.24. During the day, it fell by 415.21 points or 0.50 per cent to 82,219.27.

The 50-share NSE Nifty closed lower by 100.60 points or 0.40 per cent to 25,111.45.

Fresh foreign fund outflows and subdued quarterly earnings dented investors' sentiment, experts said.

Among Sensex firms, Tech Mahindra declined nearly 3 per cent after its June quarterly earnings failed to cheer investors. IT services firm Tech Mahindra reported a nearly 34 per cent year-on-year increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 1,140.6 crore for the quarter ending June 30, 2025, on the back of growth in communications and financial services verticals.

Infosys, HCL Tech, Eternal, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Consultancy Services and Axis Bank were also among the laggards.

However, Tata Steel, Trent, Titan and Tata Motors were among the gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities



worth Rs 1,858.15 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

"Indian equity benchmarks ended marginally lower as investors exercised caution amid subdued Q1 earnings announcements, particularly in the technology and banking sectors. Market participants remained sidelined due to elevated valuations of large-cap stocks and FII outflows owing to the uncertainty regarding US-India trade deal; however, any positive developments could amplify market sentiment," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.30 per cent and midcap index went up by 0.07 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, BSE Focused IT tanked 1.47 per cent, followed by IT (1.33 per cent), tech (1.06 per cent), bankex (0.51 per cent) and utilities (0.25 per cent).

India Plays Down Threat Of Sanctions On Russian Oil Supplies

Says Can Source From Alternate Places

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- India on Thursday played down the threat of the US imposing sanctions on countries buying Russian oil, saying it is confident of meeting its needs from alternative sources.

Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said the world's third-largest oil importer should be able to deal with any problems with Russian imports by seeking supplies from other countries.

India imports more than 85 per cent of its requirement of crude oil, which is turned into fuels like petrol and diesel in refineries.

Traditionally, the Middle East was the main source, but Russia has been the mainstay supplier for nearly three years now. After much of the West shunned Russian crude following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russia began offering steep discounts to attract alternative buyers.

Indian refiners seized the opportunity, turning Russia, once a marginal supplier, into India's largest source of crude oil, overtaking traditional suppliers from West Asia. Russia now accounts for as much as 40 per cent of India's oil imports.

Speaking at the Urja Varta annual conference of the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH), Puri said there are many new suppliers coming onto the



market, such as Guyana and supplies can also be ramped up from existing producers such as Brazil and Canada.

"I don't feel any pressure in my mind. India has diversified the sources of supply," he said in reply to a question on the impact of the US threatening Russia with sanctions.

Earlier this week, US President Donald Trump had threatened that countries purchasing Russian exports could face sanctions or steep tariffs if Moscow fails to reach a peace agreement with Ukraine within 50 days.

Puri said India is also increasing the hunt for finding new deposits of oil within the country and quickly bringing them to production.

"I'm not worried at all. If something happens, we'll deal with it," he said. "India has diversified the sources of supply and we have gone, I think, from about 27 countries that

we used to buy from to about 40 countries now."

In the event of Russian supplies being hit, Indian Oil Corp chairman A S Sahney said the country could "go back to the same template (of supplies) as was used pre-Ukraine crisis when Russian supplies to India were below 2 per cent."

The Oil Minister said prior to February 2022, India was buying 0.2 per cent of overall crude oil from Russia. "Today... It has gone up considerably," he said.

Addressing a press conference, Puri said at present the market does not react to geopolitical turmoil, especially in terms of prices as much as there is good availability of oil.

Addressing a press conference, he said at present, the price of crude oil is around USD 68.5 per barrel and it is expected to remain around the same levels in the months to come. "I think it will be somewhere around USD 65/barrel," he said.

INDIA HAS DIVERSIFIED THE SOURCES OF SUPPLY AND WE HAVE GONE, I think, from about 27 countries that we used to buy from to about 40 countries now."

SEBI Aims To Deepen Equity Market, Flags Concerns Over Derivatives Frenzy

Press Trust Of India

KOLKATA- SEBI on Thursday expressed concern over the growing dominance of ultra-short-term derivatives trading, cautioning that such trends could undermine the health of India's capital markets, while contemplating steps to extend the tenure and maturity of these products.

"Very short-term derivatives continue to dominate equity derivative volumes, especially expiry-day index options. This is an imbalance that is obviously unhealthy and may have potential for adverse consequences," said SEBI Whole-Time Member Ananth Narayan.

He was addressing the 11th Capital Markets Conclave organised by the CII.

"I would strongly endorse the view that, towards this end, we must look for ways to further deepen our cash equities markets, even as we look to improve the quality of our derivatives market by extending the tenure and maturity of the products and solutions on offer. We need constructive engagement from all stakeholders to achieve this," he said.



Citing the market regulator's research, Narayan pointed out that 91 per cent of individual traders in futures and options (F&O) incurred net losses in FY25 - collectively losing over Rs 1 lakh crore - funds that could otherwise contribute to responsible investing and capital formation.

He highlighted that the Indian derivatives market is unique, with expiry-day index option turnover often exceeding the cash market by as much as 350 times.

"Unlike longer-term derivatives, these short-term products contribute little to capital formation and may actually add to market volatility," Narayan said.

While acknowledging that exchanges, brokers, and other intermediaries have signifi-

cant revenue dependence on such trading volumes, the SEBI official questioned the sustainability of this trend.

"Is all this at all sustainable?" he asked.

SEBI has already introduced regulatory measures in October 2024 and May 2025 aimed at curbing excesses in this space, which Narayan said are showing some early signs of moderation.

However, he emphasised the need for continuous engagement with stakeholders to ensure that both capital formation and market health are protected.

"We must look for ways to deepen our cash equities markets while improving the quality of derivatives through longer-tenure products," Narayan said, urging industry collaboration.

Responding to a question, he underscored the advantages of listing, particularly in the current environment where valuations are "very, very attractive".

Going public can unlock substantial value and enable companies to raise capital in a "very meaningful manner," acting as a "force multiplier" for achieving scale and growth.

We're Very Close To A Deal With India: President Trump

Press Trust Of India

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON- US President Donald Trump on Wednesday said that Washington is "very close" to a trade deal with India.

"We're very close to a deal with India, where they open it up," Trump said in the Oval Office while talking to reporters during a bilateral meeting with Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

"We've made deals with a lot of great places... We have another one coming up maybe with India. I don't know, we're in negotiation. When I send out a letter, that's a deal," Trump said.

A day earlier, Trump had said that America will have access to the Indian market as a trade deal with the country is being worked on.

"We will have full access into Indonesia, and we have a couple of those deals that are going to be announced. India basically is working along that same line. We're going to have access into India," he said.

"And you have to understand, we had no access into any of these countries. Our people couldn't go in. And now we're getting access because of what we're doing with the tariffs," Trump added, while talking to reporters as he departed the White House en route to Pittsburgh.

India and the US have been holding negotiations for the trade pact primarily to keep the tariffs below 20 per cent.

India hopes it will be able



to strike a deal with the US to avoid the reciprocal tariffs.

At the same time, India has indicated that it will not enter into the trade deal in a hurry.

India does not enter into any trade agreement based on deadlines and will accept the proposed trade deal with the US only when it is fully finalised, properly concluded and in the national interest, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said earlier this month.

An Indian commerce ministry team is in Washington for another round of talks on the proposed trade agreement.

India has hardened its position on the US demand for duty concessions on agri and dairy products. New Delhi has, so far, not given any duty concessions to any of its trading partners in a free trade agreement in the dairy sector.

New Delhi is seeking the removal of this additional tariff (26 per cent). It is also seeking the easing of tariffs on steel and aluminium (50 per cent) and the auto (25 per cent) sectors.

President Trump announced heavy tariffs on a number of countries, including India, on April 2. However, it was soon postponed for 90 days until July 9 and later to August 1.

'India Should Negotiate Trade Agreement With US On Its Own Term'



Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- India should negotiate a trade agreement with the US on its own terms, keeping in view the national interest, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) Chairman S Mahendra Dev has said.

Dev expressed hope that India will have an advantage over other countries on tariffs once the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are signed, and it would boost exports.

"The overall approach of India is negotiating trade agreements with countries on its own terms and keeping in view the national interests. The negotiations are going on and the ultimate decision depends on the mutual interests of both countries," he told PTI.

US President Donald Trump has said the proposed trade deal with India would be on the lines of what America has finalised with Indonesia on Tuesday.

Under the US-Indonesia trade pact, the Southeast Asian nation will provide complete access to its market to US products, while Indonesian goods would attract a 19 per cent

duty in America.

In addition, Indonesia has committed to purchasing USD 15 billion in US energy, USD 4.5 billion in American Agricultural Products, and 50 Boeing jets.

The Indian team is in Washington for the fifth round of negotiations for the proposed Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA).

India has hardened its position on the US demand for duty concessions on agri and dairy products. New Delhi has, so far, not given any duty concessions to any of its trading partners in a free trade agreement in the dairy sector.

India is seeking the removal of this additional tariff (26 per cent). It is also seeking the easing of tariffs on steel and aluminium (50 per cent) and the auto (25 per cent) sectors. Against these, India has reserved its right under the WTO (World Trade Organisation) norms to impose retaliatory duties.

Asked should India has a slightly higher inflation target rate for a growth economy, Dev said, "There is no need to increase inflation target when the present framework is doing well on both inflation and growth objectives."

84 JU, College Students Complete Summer Internship At JKEDI

Observer News Service

JAMMU- A fresh batch of 84 students from Jammu University (Bhaderwah Campus), Government Sri Pratap Memorial Rajput (SPMR) College, Jammu, Government Degree College (GDC), Marh, Jammu and Government College for Women (GCW), Parade, Jammu completed their mandatory summer internship at Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) on Wednesday.

The students underwent 10-day (60 hours) Summer Internship at the Bari-Brahmana campus of the institute and JKEDI District Centre Jammu.

As per the New Educa-

tion Policy (NEP) 2020, all undergraduate students have to complete 60 hours of internship program for completion of their degree program.

The students were introduced to the role and functioning of the JKEDI. They gained exposure to the program verticals of the institute, all aimed at promoting entrepreneurship as a viable career choice in the UT of Jammu & Kashmir.

A series of sessions related to core principles of entrepreneurship, decision making, time management and leadership were held for the interns, offering real-time exposure to running a successful business venture. These activities helped the interns to gain insight into

the challenges faced by an entrepreneur and the ways to overcome them.

At the valediction ceremony held at Bari Brahmana Campus, Joint Director JKEDI Chand Kishore Sharma discussed the importance of innovation and emphasized on entrepreneurship as a career choice in today's competitive environment.

Meanwhile, two Internship programmes commenced at Bari Brahmana campus of the institute and JKEDI District Centre Udhampur where 71 students of Government SPMR College of Commerce and 23 students from Bhaskar Degree College Udhampur are undergoing the mandatory internship of 60 hours/10 days.

Gold Falls Rs 200 To Rs 98,670/10 G; Silver Declines Rs 500

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- Gold prices fell by Rs 200 to Rs 98,670 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday due to unabated selling by stockists amid subdued demand trend in the overseas markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity went lower by Rs 500 to close at Rs 98,870 per 10 grams on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity declined by Rs 200 to Rs 98,200 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Thursday. It had finished at Rs 98,400 per 10 grams in the previous market close.

As per the association, silver prices diminished by Rs 500 to Rs 1,10,500 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) on Thursday. The white metal had ended at Rs 1,11,000 per kg on Wednesday.

"Gold prices slipped as safe-haven demand eased after US-China tensions cooled with the lifting of the AI chip ban, and President Donald Trump signalled that a trade deal with India is close.

"Meanwhile, steep 30 per cent tariffs were imposed on Mexico and the European Union, the possibility of further negotiations kept market fears in check. This has reduced the urgency for safety trades like gold, weighing

on prices," Abans Financial Services' Chief Executive Officer Chintan Mehta said.

However, the broader uncertainty from aggressive tariff actions continues to offer some underlying support, limiting the downside for the yellow metal, Mehta added.

Globally, spot gold fell by USD 21.55 or 0.64 per cent to USD 3,326.05 per ounce.

"Gold edged lower as traders turned cautious ahead of US macroeconomic data, including retail sales data, employment numbers, and speeches by several Fed Reserve officials," Kaynat Chainwala, AVP-Commodity Research at Kotak Securities, said.

India's Goods Exports Likely To Face Headwinds In Fiscal 2026: CRISIL

Press Trust Of India

KOLKATA- Ratings firm CRISIL said that India's goods exports are likely to face some headwinds in fiscal 2026, as reciprocal tariffs imposed by the US are seen to aggravate this.

With the tariff hikes expected to come into effect from August, India and the US are negotiating on a bilateral trade agreement and a key monitorable, the report said.

The World Trade Organisation forecasts a 0.2 per cent decline in the volume of merchandise trade in 2025 compared to 2.9 per cent in 2024.

The report said global growth is expected to slow down to 2.9 per cent in 2025 from 3.3 per cent.

Growth in the US, India's largest export destination, is projected to slow to 1.7 per cent from 2.8 per cent.

Accordingly, India's merchandise trade is expected to come under pressure this fiscal.

However, the current account deficit (CAD) is expected to stay in the safe zone at 1.3 per cent of the GDP in the current financial year. The surplus in services trade, a robust flow of remittances is expected to cushion the CAD, the report added.

New Ladakh LG Will Have To Be Sensitive To People's Sentiments: CM

Press Trust Of India

Jammu:Chief Minister Omar Abdullah congratulated BJP leader Kavinder Gupta on his appointment as Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh, and said that he will need to keep in mind that, just like in Jammu and Kashmir, one has to maintain a balance and be sensitive to the sentiments of the people of Leh and Kargil regions.

"My best wishes to Kavinder Gupta on being appointed as the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh. But this responsibility is not easy. Working in high-altitude areas is challenging," Abdullah told reporters during a visit to the Samba district.

Abdullah further said that just as Gupta handled responsibilities as Assembly Speaker and deputy chief minister in Jammu and Kashmir, he will now have to work in Leh and Kargil with the same balance.

"He will also need to keep in mind that, just like here in Jammu and Kashmir, one has to maintain a balance and be sensitive to people's sentiments. There too, he will

have to work with both sides—Leh and the Kargil region—and move forward together. If he does that, he will succeed," he said.

During this visit, Abdullah also toured the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Vijaypur. He inspected the facilities being provided to patients at the hospital and formally launched the Disaster Management Manual.

He said, "The facilities available at AIIMS Vijaypur are quite good. Although the highway's condition is not very suitable for travel right now, even so, this AIIMS will perform better than other AIIMS institutes in the country in the future."

The chief minister further said that not only do patients from Jammu and Kashmir come here for treatment, but now people from nearby states have also started coming. "And despite the fact that travelling on the highway is still difficult and the expressway is yet to be completed, I believe the crowd and rush at the hospital will increase significantly once that happens," he said

Next Indian Astronaut Will Travel In Indigenously Built Spacecraft: Jitendra Singh

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi, Jul 17: Shubhanshu Shukla's successful space odyssey has provided expertise for India's future voyages and the next Indian astronaut will travel in an indigenously built spacecraft, Union Minister Jitendra Singh has said

In an exclusive video interview to PTI, Singh said Shukla's three-week stay at the International Space Station as part of the Axiom-4 mission has given India valuable insights and experience in handling space missions as it prepares for its own Gaganyaan project.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is preparing to launch its human spaceflight mission – Gaganyaan – that will take two astronauts to a low earth orbit sometime in 2027.

"The next mission is going to be totally, totally indigenously, developed in India, right from the scratch. Indian astronauts going in for the



first time in an Indian space-ship," the Union Minister for Science and Technology said.

"It would also place us in that elite league of nations in the world which have actually been able to do so. And it would also pave the way for our future endeavours which includes setting up our own space station," Singh said.

The International Space Station is operated in collaboration by five space agencies – NASA, Roscosmos, European Space Agency, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency and Canadian Space Agency. China has its own

space station Tiangong.

Singh said India was also working towards building its own space station and was open to hosting foreign experiments and astronauts when it becomes operational.

"We are looking forward to having a space station of our own. Most likely it should be possible by the year 2035 and we have also decided to name it as Bharat Space Station," he said.

Singh rejected criticism that Shukla's travel to the ISS was a commercial mission and offered little scientific

value.

"Absolutely not. I think there is some kind of a lack of understanding. In fact, he (Shukla) was the most important player of the four (astronauts who were part of the Axiom-4 mission)," Singh said.

ISRO has paid Rs 550 crore to Axiom Space for sending Shukla to the ISS and the costs included several months of training for him and backup crew Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair.

"Peggy Whitson, the commander, is of course a veteran. Whereas, Shubhanshu was the pilot who performed the bulk of the experiments on board the ISS," the minister said, adding the outcome of the studies carried out by Shukla will benefit the entire mankind.

Singh said Shukla's space travel gave a tremendous amount of experience, expertise for India's future voyages and also put the country in a better position for large international collaborations.

Indore Wins Cleanest City Title For 8th Time



Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Indore retained the top position among the cleanest cities for the eighth time in a row, followed by Surat and Navi Mumbai in the government's annual cleanliness survey.

The results of the Swachh Survekshan were announced on Thursday.

In the category of 3-10 lakh population category, Noida emerged the cleanest city, followed by Chandigarh and Mysore.

President Droupadi Murmu gave away the awards to the winners at an event held here. Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal and others attended the event.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

No School, No Support:

girls," Rather said after the verdict. "How can we then disqualify the very girls who needed school the most but never had it?"

The Division Bench, led by Chief Justice Arun Palli and Justice Rajesh Oswal, heard the petition and directed the government to take a decision on the rule within two months.

While the court did not strike the clause down, it asked the administration to view the matter "in its true perspective", a phrase that legal experts say suggests a deeper discomfort with how welfare is being withheld.

The SMAS was launched in 2015 by the Social Welfare Department to provide financial assistance to women from families living Below the Poverty Line (BPL).

Over 17,000 girls have received benefits under the scheme since its inception, according to government records.

But in Kashmir's remote and underserved districts, the number of rejections on educational grounds has piled up.

A 2023 report from the Directorate of School Education noted that nearly 28 percent of Kashmiri girls between ages 12 and 16 drop out of school. Some leave because their schools are too far. Others leave to care for siblings. Many stop attending after their villages got caught in conflict or closures for months.

In villages like Chadoora and Khansahib, advocate Hamid Rather says he personally documented dozens of applications turned away due to the education clause.

"In some of these cases, the girls were orphans. Others had never seen a school in their lives," he said. "They were poor in every way, and this scheme was supposed to protect their dignity, not become another checkpoint."

Legal scholars say the clause might not withstand a broader constitutional challenge.

"Any condition attached to a welfare scheme must have a rational link to the purpose of the scheme," said Srinagar-based lawyer Zubair Ahmad. "If the goal is to assist the poor, educational attainment cannot be used to exclude those who never had access to school in the first place."

In practice, the clause has created a cruel irony: girls who were denied education are now also being denied empathy.

At the heart of the petition, many argue, is the question of intent: Was the scheme meant to reward schooling, or to uplift the impoverished?

For activists working on ground, the answer is clear.

"Encouraging education is important," said community worker Naseema Bano, who helps families apply for government schemes in Pulwama. "But punishing those who never had that chance is the opposite of social justice."

The government has yet to respond publicly to the court's directive, but officials familiar with the scheme say internal discussions are underway.

Whether this leads to a policy shift remains uncertain, especially in a bureaucracy known for slow-moving reforms.

Yet the court's intervention has opened the door for reassessment.

In homes like Rubeena's, the ruling has re-kindled a small hope. Her wedding is still pending. Her mother still carries the rejection letter in a tin box.

"Maybe now," she said, "someone will remember that our daughters are more than their school certificates."

Across Kashmir, where entire communities live at the margins of visibility, the case has struck a deeper nerve.

"It's not just about one girl's right to marry with dignity," advocate Hamid said. "It's about whether a welfare system meant to serve the poor truly understands the poverty it claims to address."

Rain Halts

500 pilgrims stranded near Z Morh due to landslides triggered by incessant rains. Jammu-based defence spokesperson Lt Col Suneel Bartwal said Army teams at Brarimarg quickly swung into action, accommodating pilgrims in tents and providing tea and water. Nearly 3,000 others were sheltered at langars along Brarimarg and Z Morh.

In a notable rescue effort, a critically ill pilgrim was manually stretchered to Rayalpathri under difficult weather conditions and shifted

to a hospital for further treatment.

The Army and civil authorities assessed the situation as under control. Light rainfall is predicted to continue, and forces remain on high alert.

"These prompt actions underscore the Indian Army's commitment and preparedness to assist yatris during challenging times," the spokesperson added.

Pilgrim's Death

filmed from close range made it look more serious than it actually was."

Following continuous rainfall over the past two days, the Amarnath Yatra was temporarily suspended from both Baltal and Pahalgam routes as a safety measure.

The Border Roads Organization (BRO) swiftly deployed men and machinery to clear the route and restore movement for the yatris.

Clarifying confusion about a death reported earlier, SSP Poswal confirmed that a woman pilgrim did pass away, but her death was unrelated to the landslide.

"She was hit by a stone while on her way to the holy cave. It was an unfortunate and separate incident," he said.

LG Sinha Meets

abrogation of Article 370 and the reorganization of the erstwhile state into a Union Territory, has overseen a transformative period in J&K, marked by security operations, development initiatives, and ongoing efforts to stabilize the political and administrative framework.

As the five-year mark approaches, speculation is rife about the next phase of political developments in Jammu and Kashmir after the conclusion of annual Amarnath Yatra.



LG Sanctions

The LGSSK will operate from the Civil Secretariat offices in both Jammu and Srinagar, and will begin functioning immediately. It will receive, assess, and facilitate the resolution of grievances submitted by serving soldiers, while also coordinating appointments with relevant civil or police officials at the district level. Additionally, it will maintain a performance dashboard and submit quarterly progress reports to the Lieutenant Governor.

To support its operations, the Information Technology Department has been tasked with providing two officials each at Jammu and Srinagar, along with necessary hardware and support systems. The Estates Department has been directed to provide suitable accommodation for the Kendra at both locations.

The government has also nominated key officers to oversee its functioning in addition to their current responsibilities. These include Shri Prasanna Ramaswamy G (IAS), Secretary, Tribal Affairs Department; Shri Afaq Ahmad (JKAS), Under Secretary, Revenue Department; and Shri Abhimanyu Singh (JKAS), Manager-cum-Protocol Officer, Resident Commission, New Delhi.

No One Should

Operation Sindoor was launched, targeting

terrorists within Pakistan and eliminating them," he said. Shah, who is also minister for cooperation, was here to attend an event on the occasion of International Cooperatives Year-2025.

"Modi's actions sent a strong message globally. Through them, Modi conveyed a powerful message to the world that India's citizens, armed forces, and borders should not be messed with. Anyone who dares to do so has to face consequences," he said. Modi, he added, has turned the vision of a prosperous, secure and developed India into reality. Under Modi's leadership, the country has become fourth largest economy in the world and 22 crore people were lifted above the poverty line, the Union minister told the gathering

Praising Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma, he said the BJP government in Rajasthan had done remarkable work in a short period of time. "Rajasthan was suffering due to paper leaks. By forming an SIT, the Bhajanlal government has sent a strong message to the paper leak mafia," he said.

Under Sharma's leadership, Rajasthan signed MoUs worth Rs 35 lakh crore during an investment summit and work has already commenced on MoUs worth Rs 3 lakh crore, Shah said. The BJP government in the state decreased VAT on petrol and diesel and several other initiatives were taken, he went on to say. He also praised the state government for effectively implementing schemes and programmes of the central government.

Tehsildar Among

Tehsildar Balhama Nusrat Aziz and the then Patwari Ashiq Ali illegally to confer undue benefit upon Riyaz Ahmad Bhat, who sold the land which did not belong to him," the spokesperson said.



son said.

He further alleged that Tehsildar Nusrat Aziz Lone and others are also involved in another case under the Prevention of Corruption Act registered in 2021.

Dream Of PM

Jammu come here for treatment, but also patients from neighbouring states have begun coming here," Omar told reporters during his visit to the AIIMS campus in Samba.

He noted that despite challenges in accessibility due to the condition of the highway, the patient inflow has been increasing. "Once the expressway gets completed, the rush of patients will increase," he added.

The chief minister visited AIIMS Jammu to review its functioning and lauded the significant progress the institution has made in a short period. He was accompanied by Adviser to the Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani.

Addressing a gathering of AIIMS management, students and medical staff, Omar praised the collective efforts that have turned the institution into a state-of-the-art healthcare and academic facility.

"The successful establishment and functioning of AIIMS is a testament to the power of will and vision. The dream of the prime minister has truly taken shape here," he said. "World-class efforts and endeavour seem to have come together to create this exceptional facility."

He further added, "It is heartening to see AIIMS already serving patients from across the country. The completion of the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway will further facilitate access for patients."

Omar expressed hope that other healthcare institutions in Jammu and Kashmir would follow the example set by AIIMS Jammu and assured full government support for its continued growth and expansion. He also hoped for the timely completion and operationalization of AIIMS Kashmir.

During the event, Omar released the Manual of Disaster Management prepared by AIIMS Jammu, emphasizing the importance of preparedness. "We sincerely hope never to face a situation that requires the use of this manual. Yet, in the interest of preparedness, it is better to have and not need than to need and not have. Such forward-thinking initiatives by institutions like AIIMS are commendable," he said.

Adviser Nasir Aslam Wani also addressed the gathering, congratulating AIIMS Jammu for its remarkable infrastructure, eco-friendly campus, and emergence as a hub of medical excellence. He particularly appreciated the hospital's patient-friendly registration process and quality of treatment.

AIIMS Executive Director Prof. Shakti Kumar Gupta presented an overview of the institution's growth, stating that the feedback from patients showed that 82 per cent of discharged patients were highly satisfied, while another 17 per cent expressed satisfaction with the services.

He shared the institution's vision to become a global centre for healthcare, research, and education, highlighting several key developments and operational achievements.

Earlier, the chief minister toured various sections of the campus, including diagnostic labs, in-patient wards, testing facilities, and high-tech academic classrooms, taking stock of the infrastructure and ongoing work.

Calls For Strict

Government Medical College (GMC) Jammu, his attendants allegedly assaulted a female doctor on Wednesday, triggering protests and a strike by junior doctors. The Doctors Association Jammu (DAJ) on Thursday sought security cover at medical facilities for doctors, alleging a rise in such assaults and manhandling.

"Strict action has been directed in the recent case. I have asked for a case to be filed and justice to be delivered. Our doctors must work free from fear and intimidation," Omar said while addressing a function at AIIMS in the Samba district.

The chief minister said that doctors must never bear the brunt of violence. "They dedicate themselves selflessly, often beyond duty hours. Their intentions and efforts are unwavering and they must never be blamed for outcomes beyond their control," he said.

Omar said that doctors cannot save everyone. "Life and death are not in the hands of doctors but in the hands of the Almighty. It is not acceptable to assault a doctor for having no fault. It cannot be tolerated. You have to file a case against the person who assaulted the doctor," he said.

He asked how a doctor can perform their duty if they are afraid of the outcome of treatment. "So long as I am here, we will do everything possible to ensure that medical practitioners are in a safe environment while performing their duties," he said.

He further said that one of the female doctors sustained an injury and has been admitted for treatment. He revealed the CCTV footage of the incident at a press conference, clearly showing the doctors being physically attacked.

"I was on emergency duty yesterday. I got a call that a patient was unstable and not able to breathe. I immediately rushed and removed the tube, but still the patient was not able to breathe. During these medical procedures, the patient's attendants were getting aggressive. I tried to make them understand the procedures, but they became aggressive. We do not deserve this treatment because we give our hundred percent," said the doctor who was assaulted.

The Doctors Association Jammu on Thursday reiterated its demand for security cover at medical facilities for doctors and said that the healthcare system will collapse if such incidents continue. (PTI)

Uri Locals Seek

turned the scenic spot into a death trap.

"There's not even a single warning board to alert people about the danger. We keep hearing about people drowning here every year, but authorities do nothing," said Irfan Ahmad, a local of Boniyar tehsil. "We are not asking for much, just basic safety measures like fencing and rescue teams to prevent loss of life."

They are also demanding that the LJHP authorities station boats along the canal for emergency rescue operations and deploy personnel to monitor visitor activity, particularly as the area has become a popular picnic destination.

"People come here with families, children play near the canal, and one slip is all it takes. If boats and rescue men are deployed, lives can be saved," said Tanveer Ahmad, a local of main town Uri.

In addition to fencing, residents have urged the administration to install visible signboards at regular intervals along the canal, warning visitors about the risks of swimming or venturing near the fast-flowing water.

"This is not just a demand, it's a plea. We don't want to mourn another young life just because someone didn't see the danger," said Mohsin Bhat, another local.

Despite repeated appeals, residents claim there has been little to no response from the concerned departments.

"We now urge the LG-led government and district administration to intervene and direct the LJHP authorities to take immediate action before more lives are lost," they added.

The demand for safety measures has grown louder following a recent incident in which three individuals drowned in the canal.

Jammu Named

the UT's success, Beerwah Municipal Committee earned a 1-Star GFC rating, and 70 ULBs achieved Open Defecation Free Plus (ODF+) status, with two attaining ODF++ certification.

These results show clear progress in urban sanitation and public awareness.

The Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban 2.0 is being implemented in J&K by the Housing & Urban Development Department, led by Commissioner Secretary Mandeep Kaur (IAS). Under her leadership, urban bodies across the UT have shown remarkable improvement in sanitation, hygiene, and solid waste management.

Officials credit the achievement to strong teamwork between the government, local bodies, and the public. "This success reflects our shared commitment to creating cleaner, healthier, and more livable cities," said a department spokesperson.

Jammu & Kashmir's performance in Swachh Survekshan 2024 is seen as a turning point in its journey towards sustainable urban development, cleaner environments, and active community participation.(KNS)

J&K Cong To

intervention of the Congress and its INDIA allies, restoring statehood is impossible."

The Congress leader claimed support from 233 INDIA bloc MPs, including 100 Congress MPs in the Lok Sabha and 50 in the Rajya Sabha. A joint letter from Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge to Prime Minister Modi has also called for legislation in this session to restore full statehood to Jammu and Kashmir and extend Sixth Schedule protections to Ladakh.

Reacting to Omar Abdullah's remarks thanking the Congress, Karra said, "We are not just issuing press statements. Our fight has been from the grassroots up. It's not about who claims credit—it's about who does the work."

On the question of Article 370, Karra reiterated that the Congress has moved past that debate. "Since the Supreme Court upheld the government's move, our focus is only on achievable goals—full statehood."

He also criticised the current dual control system under the Reorganisation Act, calling it harmful to governance and development. "People are being sensitised at block and district levels. Until statehood is restored, this confusion and stagnation will persist," he said.

Karra thanked the top Congress leadership for keeping the issue alive. "From grassroots workers to Parliament, our party stands united in this fight. Unfortunately, the BJP continues to remain indifferent to the people's aspirations."

India Nets: Team Trains In Relaxed Environment; Arshdeep Injured

Press Trust of India

BECKENHAM: The usually mobbed Indian cricket team likes training in a relaxed atmosphere and that was evident in their body language as the players went about their business in their only practice session at the Kent County Cricket Ground before the fourth Test in Manchester.

Three days after the heart-break of Lord's, the Indian players looked jaded as they de-boarded from the team bus after an hour's ride from London but the quaint setting of the facility in Beckenham lifted their spirits instantly.

The variety of music played in the dressing room – ranging from Hanuman Chalisa, English pop to popular Punjabi numbers – also put the players at ease.

From the dressing room upstairs, the likes of Rishabh Pant and Jasprit Bumrah were involved in a friendly banter with the travelling mediapersons who tracked the training session from the ground level.

When a scribe tried to converse with Pant from a distance, the latter responded saying 'kuch sunai nahi de raha hain'



with the music being played in the background. That was when Bumrah got involved and cracked a joke at his teammate's expense.

"Aaj Duggal Ji behere hain," said India's pace spearhead much to the laughter of the

press pack. It was a reference to a line from a popular Hindi movie.

Both Pant and Bumrah were only part of the warm-up routine and also spent some time in the gym. It is worth mentioning that Pant is nursing a finger

injury but is expected to regain full fitness for the Manchester game.

Bumrah, on the other hand, did not have a bowl and neither did Mohammed Siraj as part of workload management. It remains to be seen if either of

them is rested in the next Test with the series on the line.

Barring K L Rahul, all squad members made the trip to Beckenham.

ARSHDEEP INJURES BOWLING HAND

Left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh, who is yet to play in the series, was bowling alongside Prasidh Krishna when he injured his bowling hand in an attempt to stop a ball that came in his way from Sai Sudharsan's bat.

When batting coach Sitanshu Kotak sought him in the nets for a hit, captain Shubman Gill was heard saying that Arshdeep might not be able to bat due to the hand injury.

Following the incident, the pacer was seen walking around with bandage on his left-hand.

The incident prompted bowling coach Morne Morkel to roll his arm over in the nets. Though far from generating the express pace of Jofra Archer, Morkel provided good practice to the batters.

Keeping up with the light hearted mood of the session, Morkel went back to the dressing room claiming a five-wicket haul against his batters.

Kashmir Super League: United Elegant Beats New JK United



Kashmir Super League witnessed a dominating display on Thursday as United Elegant FC defeated New JK United FC 4-1 at TRC Ground in Srinagar. J&K Bank XI captain Aakif Reshi scored a hat trick to help United Elegant overcome their opponents.

It wasn't a smooth sailing for United Elegant. After Aakif opened the scoring in the 11th minute, New JK United responded with a penalty goal from Amit Kumar. At half time, the score was 1-1.

It wasn't until the minute 76, when Moonis gave United Elegant the 2-1 lead. Soon after, New JK United went all-in to grab the equaliser. However, "Goal Machine" Aakif capitalised on the space he was afforded and scored two goals within four minutes to complete his hat trick.

The Round 3 matchups will conclude on Friday when Greenend Heroes FC will square off against Aqua Kashmir Avengers FC at 7:00 PM. (Observer News Service)

Modern Pentathlon Laser Run C'ship Ends In Budgam



The District Budgam Modern Pentathlon Laser Run Championship 2025-26, held at The Cardiff School, Charar-i-Sharief, Budgam, concluded on Thursday. The event drew over 60 athletes, boys and girls, from across the district.

Shakshi Sharma (SHO Charar-i-Sharief) graced the occasion as Chief Guest, inspiring the young participants. Distinguished Guests of Honour included Dr. Owais Mattoo (Director, The Cardiff School), Numan Aijaz (President, Modern Pentathlon Association Budgam), Nazir Ahmad Mir (Sports Observer Budgam), Adv. Rayees Ahmad Wani, Basit Nabi Wani (Sports Promoter) and Bushra Parvaiz (Physical Education Expert).

The championship promoted youth involvement in fitness and competitive sports. Organisers extended heartfelt thanks to all guests, athletes and supporters for their contribution to the event's grand success. The championship marked another step forward in Budgam's growing sports culture. (Observer News Service)

Andre Russell To Retire After 2nd T20 Against Australia

Flamboyant T20 freelancer Andre Russell will draw the curtains on a start-stop 15-year international career for the West Indies after the second T20I against Australia here on July 22.

Russell's most significant achievement is being a member of two T20 World Cup winning West Indies teams in 2012 and 2016 respectively. Since 2019, Russell has featured exclusively in the T20 format. He has represented the West Indies in 84 T20Is, 56 ODIs and one solitary Test.

The 37-year-old Jamaican, a cornerstone of West Indies' T20 success, had been named in the squad for the five match series against Australia but will play his final two international matches on July 20 and 22 at his beloved home ground -- the Sabina Park.

Russell, who was part of the title-winning squads in 2012 and 2016, announced his decision just seven months ahead of the 2026 T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka. The swash-buckling all-rounder has snapped 61 wickets and scored 1078 runs in 84 T20I outings. (PTI)

Massive Prize Money Boost For Durand Cup This Year

The upcoming Durand Cup may see participation from only six Indian Super League teams this year, down from 12 last season, but Asia's oldest football tournament has received a significant prize money boost, the organisers announced on Thursday.

The reduced ISL presence could largely be due to the ongoing deadlock between Football Sports Development Limited and the All India Football Federation (AIFF) over the renewal of the Master Rights Agreement.

The uncertainty has forced the ISL to put its 2025-26 season "on hold", creating confusion for franchises about their team building, schedules and commitments, and resulting in fewer ISL clubs confirming participation in the Durand Cup, starting July 23.

Chairman of the Durand Cup Organising Committee, Lt Gen Mohit Malhotra announced that the prize money this year has been increased from less than Rs 1.2 crore to Rs 3 crore, and three SUVs will be awarded to individual winners.

Individual awardees -- like the Best Goalkeeper, Golden Boot, and Golden Ball winners -- will receive SUVs.

Only six ISL teams have confirmed their participation this year. (PTI)

DYSS Holds Sports Events Across Jammu & Kashmir



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Department of Youth Services and Sports conducted a series of vibrant sporting events across J&K on Thursday. From inter-district championships to zonal-level tournaments, the day witnessed spirited competitions.

District Youth Services and Sports Office Anantnag continued its dynamic sports calendar with several tournaments across different zones. The Subroto Mukherjee Football Cup (U15 Boys) concluded with Wikkids School Batengoo clinching the title after a gripping final against Radiant Public School Batengoo. The event, inaugurated by a senior education officer, featured 64 young footballers from various schools.

Simultaneously, the District-Level Inter-School Kabaddi Tournament (U19 Boys) kicked off with 432 participants from 36 Higher Secondary Schools. Matches were held at BM-HSS Bijbehara and HSS Brakpora, with several schools advancing to the next round.

Zone Anantnag also organised an Inter-School Zonal Volleyball Tournament for U14 and U17 Girls,



witnessing enthusiastic participation from 191 students. Meanwhile, Zone Achabal hosted a Martial Arts Competition (Taekwondo, Karate, Judo, and Wushu) for U14 and U17 Boys, with 107 students showcasing their skills.

In south Kashmir's Shopian, a Table Tennis Competition for U14 and U17 Boys was held at Gung Baksh Hanfiya High School Arhama, organized by DYSSO Shopian. The event was inaugurated by the In-charge Activity Officer, fostering competitive spirit among participants.

Kishtwar buzzed with energy as Inter-School Zonal Level Competitions unfolded across multiple zones. Cricket, Volleyball, Kabaddi, and Kho-Kho matches for U19 Boys and Girls were conducted under the supervision of Zonal Physical Education Officers, reflecting robust community engagement.

In Doda, the 6th day of the Inter-Zonal District Level Tournament featured high-intensity Kho-Kho and Volleyball matches. Zone Gundna triumphed in U14 Girls Kho-Kho, while Zone Bhallessa secured victory in U14 Boys Volleyball, demonstrating skill and teamwork.

Provincial Level Volleyball Tourney Kicks Off In Budgam

Observer News Service

BUDGAM: The Department of Youth Services and Sports Budgam launched the Inter-District Provincial Level Volleyball Tournament for Boys Under-14 at the Sports Stadium Charar-e-Sharief on Thursday. The tournament marks a vibrant step in promoting sports culture among the youth of the Kashmir Valley, with 10 districts participating and over 110 student-athletes showcasing their skills.

The tournament was formally inaugurated by



District Youth Services and Sports Officer Budgam Ghulam Hassan Lone, who graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Senior officials from the UT administration and representatives of the department were also present at the inaugural event.

In his address, Lone encouraged the young participants to embrace sportsmanship and strive for excellence. He congratulated all the teams for making it to this prestigious UT-level competition and expressed his pride in Budgam being chosen as the host district.

U-14 Provincial Girls Baseball C'ship Concludes In Ganderbal

Observer News Service

GANDERBAL: The Inter-District Provincial Level Baseball Championship Kashmir Province for Under-14 Girls, which began on Wednesday at Government College of Physical Education Gadoora Ganderbal, culminated successfully on Thursday.

The tournament was organised by the Department of Youth Services and Sports and hosted by the District Youth Services and Sports Office Ganderbal. Seven districts from across Kashmir took part in the two-day championship, where young



girls showcased tremendous energy, discipline, and determination on the field.

After a series of highly competitive matches, the final was contested between District Ganderbal and District Pulwama. With excellent teamwork and fearless play, District Ganderbal emerged

victorious, securing the U-14 Girls' championship title.

Meanwhile, the hardliner match saw District Kulgam defeat District Kupwara in another spirited encounter. The next phase, the U-17 Girls Baseball Championship, is set to commence on Friday at the same venue.

Why The US Might Finally Start Calling Soccer 'Football'

AP

It is the world's most popular sport and yet there is still debate over what it should actually be called.

Is it football or soccer?

U.S. President Donald Trump waded into the topic while at the Club World Cup final in New Jersey last Sunday. He joked that he could pass an executive order to bring the United States in line with much of the rest of the world and ensure that from now on Americans refer to it as football.

"I think I could do that," he said with a smile during an interview with host broadcaster DAZN.

It was a light-hearted comment, but at a time when the U.S. is playing an increasingly significant role in soccer the question of why Americans continue to call it by a different name to the one by which it is most commonly known has been raised again.

"They call it football, we call it soccer. I'm not sure that change could be made very easily," Trump said.

Soccer keeps growing in the U.S. and so does its influence on the sport. It is co-hosting the men's World Cup with Canada and



Mexico next year -- the third year in a row that it stages a major tournament after the 2024 Copa America and this summer's Club World Cup.

Other factors are keeping soccer more often in the U.S. consciousness -- and

perhaps they will make saying "football" more commonplace in a tough sporting landscape.

One of the greatest players of all time, Lionel Messi, plays for MLS team Inter Miami; the popularity of the Premier League

and Champions League is booming; and the documentary series "Welcome to Wrexham" about a low-level Welsh club co-owned by Hollywood actors Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney, has attracted new eyeballs.

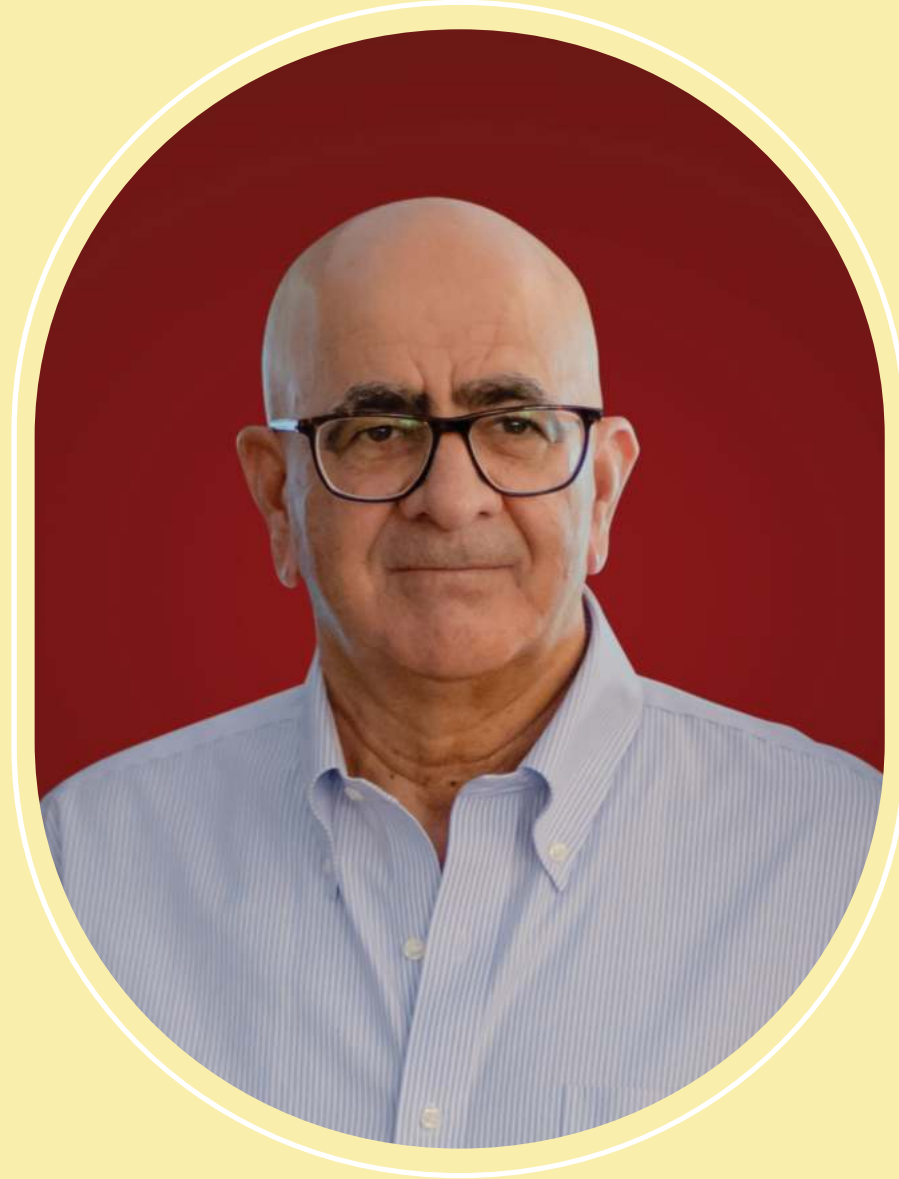
DON'T BLAME AMERICANS FOR CALLING IT SOCCER

Despite "soccer" being widely associated with the U.S., it is commonly accepted that the word was actually coined in Britain, perhaps as far back as the 1880s.

The exact date when it was first used is not known, but it is believed "soccer" was derived from "association football," which was the first official name of the sport.

The charity English Heritage says the nickname may have first been used by pupils at the iconic Harrow School to "distinguish the new association game from their older pursuit, known as 'footer'."

Numerous versions of football began to flourish, often involving handling a ball more than kicking it. One example dating back to the 1600s and still played today in England is Royal Shrovetide. Rugby is another example.



Mohamed Ashraf Mir

(1st August 1949 - 17th July 2025)

**Death leaves heartache no one can heal
Love leaves memories no one can steal.**

Beloved Ashraf Sahib left for his heavenly abode.
Know that no matter what, He will always be with us.
When a bird chirps on a nearby branch,
It is Him singing.

When a butterfly brushes gently, so care free
It is Him celebrating freedom.

Strolling magnificent forests & mountains
He is always by my side.