

## How Food Vloggers Got Caught In The Rotten Meat Storm

A food safety crackdown has shaken public trust in Srinagar's buzzing dining scene, and the influencers who helped sell it.

**Syed Mohammad Burhan**

Srinagar: In the bustling kitchen of a well-known café in uptown Srinagar, a popular food vlogger frames his shot. Behind him, laminated food safety certificates hang on a spotless white wall. He gestures to a gleaming freezer.

"What you see here," he tells

his thousands of Instagram followers, "are the FSSAI certificates of local meat vendors. The meat is kept at minus 18 degrees. This fresh-cut raan is certified by a government-approved vendor. Every piece you eat here is."

On the screen, the message is reassuring: clean storage, official paperwork, sizzling platters.



### Formaldehyde In Rotten Meat? Kashmir Awaits Lab Results

Over a week after the seizure of large quantities of rotten meat across the Kashmir Valley, authorities are now investigating reports that some of the meat may have been treated with formaldehyde, a chemical used to preserve dead bodies and classified

[| More on P6](#)

In the comments below, the mood is anything but calm.

"This is a cover-up," one user wrote. "Think why this kind of video is being made now. Food bloggers are responsible for promoting poison."

Another accused him directly: "Why didn't you show this earlier? You are responsible for everything."

The vlogger pushed back. He said he only promoted places after checking them, that he cared about health and safety.

The comments kept coming: where was the temperature meter, why wasn't the meat covered, what about other food items?

This simmering distrust has boiled over into a full-blown backlash against [| More on P6](#)

## J&K Tightens Security Ahead Of I-Day



**Observer News Service**

Srinagar: Security forces have stepped up an unprecedented multi-layer security grid across Jammu and Kashmir, especially along the border districts, to ensure a safe and incident-free Independence Day.

In the Jammu region, both ground and aerial surveillance have been intensified, with additional Quick Response Teams (QRTs) deployed in Jammu city.

Army and Border Security Force (BSF) units are maintaining a heightened vigil along the 225-km Line of Control (LoC) and the 192-km International

Border (IB), while patrolling and area domination in the hinterland have also been reinforced.

Border grid security has been tightened, with all border roads under strict watch.

Security on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway (NH44) has also been bolstered, and drones are scanning sensitive stretches. Police have issued advisories in Rajouri and Poonch, urging public cooperation and requesting prompt reporting of any suspicious activity or objects.

The run-up to Independence Day has also [| More on P6](#)

## Skies Of J&K Shining With Tricolor: LG

◆ Flags Off Tiranga Yatra From Dal Lake

◆ 'India Avenged Pakistan Through Op Mahadev & Sindoor'

**Observer News Service**

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday said India exacted revenge for Pakistan's brutality through Operation Mahadev and Operation Sindoor, and that the "terrorist country" will have to pay "a very heavy price" if it sheds the blood of Indian citizens.

Sinha was speaking at 'Pedal for Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' rally organised by the BSF here ahead of the 79th Independence Day. He felicitated 79 cyclists -- 40 local youths and 39 BSF personnel -- who participated in the rally.

Earlier, the LG flagged off a 'Tiranga Yatra' from the Dal Lake here. He joined the yatra from the lake to the Botanical Garden.

Paying tributes to those killed in the "Pakistan-sponsored" terror attack in



Pahalgam on April 22, Sinha said through Operation Mahadev and Operation Sindoor, "we have exacted revenge for Pakistan's brutality".

"If the terrorist country, Pakistan, sheds the blood of our citizens, then it will have to pay a very heavy price," he warned. Lauding the brave jawans and [| More on P6](#)

### Tricolor A Symbol Of Our Identity & Pride: CM

**Observer News Service**

Srinagar: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday said citizens should try to take the national flag to greater heights and do their bit for upholding its dignity.

"It is not necessary that we need a large number of people to do something. All of us can do our bit to uphold the respect and dignity of the national flag," Omar said addressing



a Tiranga rally at the Nehru Memorial Botanical Garden, Chashma-i-Shahi [| More on P6](#)

“**FEW YEARS BACK, THE FLAG** Was Only Allowed on Govt Buildings, Now Every House Can Hoist It.”

“**FROM THE BANKS OF JHELMUM TO CHENAB** and from the peaks of Pir Panjal to Harmukh, the echo of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' can be heard everywhere.

### Parliament Passes New IT Bill

**Press Trust Of India**

New Delhi: Parliament on Tuesday passed the new Income Tax Bill, with the Rajya Sabha returning the legislation to the Lok Sabha.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman introduced the two money bills -- The Income Tax Bill, 2025, and The Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

The Rajya Sabha returned the legislation with a voice vote to the lower house.

The Income Tax Bill will replace the Income Tax Act, 1961.

Explaining the reasons for bringing the new income tax law, Sitharaman said some parts of the Income Tax Act, 1961, have become outdated and hence a new legislation was needed.

She stressed that the new income tax law aims to make the language simple and does not introduce any new rate.

Sitharaman also lashed out at the Opposition for not participating in the discussion on [| More on P6](#)

## 35 Yrs On, SIA Reopens Probe Into Murder Of KP Nurse

Raids Residences Of Former JKLF Members

**KO Wed Desk**

Srinagar: The probe into the murder of a Kashmiri Pandit woman 35 years ago during the outbreak of militancy has been reopened with the State Investigation Agency (SIA) carrying out raids on Tuesday at eight locations in central Kashmir linked to former members of the banned terrorist outfit JKLF.

Sarla Bhat, a nurse, went missing from her hostel at SKIMS Soura in April 1990 and was found dead in downtown Srinagar.

Officials said SIA, which recently took over the investigation of the case, conducted the raids at the residences of several persons who were formerly associated with the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) in connection with the murder.

Former JKLF leader Peer



Noorul Haq Shah alias Air Marshal was among those whose houses were searched by the sleuths of the SIA.

"The strategic searches which were conducted at eight locations throughout District Srinagar have resulted in the recovery of some incriminating evidence which will help in unearthing the whole terrorist conspiracy with an ultimate aim to deliver justice to the

victim and her family," the officials said.

The State Investigation Agency was constituted within the Jammu and Kashmir Police in November 2021 for speedy investigation and prosecution in terror-related cases as well as coordinating with central agencies.

In a post on X, Amit Malviya, who heads the BJP's information technology cell, said Bhat's killing remains one of [| More on P6](#)

### Kulgam Op Called Off After 12 Days

**Agencies**

Srinagar: The prolonged anti-terror operation in the Akhal forest area of south Kashmir's Kulgam district was officially called off on Tuesday, bringing to an end 12 days of one of the longest counter-terror operations in recent years.

An official said that the decision was taken after security forces, despite an exhaustive search through dense alpine forests and rugged terrain, found no fresh contact with the terrorists believed to have been hiding in the area.

"After continuous search and combing for nearly two weeks, and with no further movement detected, the operation was concluded this morning," he said.

The encounter began on August 1 after specific intelligence inputs suggested the presence of at least two to three heavily armed terrorists in the higher reaches of Kulgam. The initial contact led to a gunfight that spread over several days.

Two Army soldiers—Pritpal Singh and Harminder Singh—were killed, while at least ten others sustained injuries. One local terrorist [| More on P6](#)

### HC Warns Staff Over Uniform Violation

**KO Correspondent**

Srinagar: The High Court of J&K and Ladakh on Tuesday warned its staff, both gazetted and non-gazetted, of "disciplinary action" over the failure to wear prescribed uniform, underlining that attending the official duties in casual dress was causing great indiscipline and affects the well functioning of the Court.

"It has been observed that the officers/officials of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh do not wear the prescribed uniform and attend the office/official duties in casual dress which is causing great indiscipline and affects the well functioning of Hon'ble High Court," reads a circular issued by Registrar General (Officiating) M.K Sharma.

"Therefore, it is hereby impressed upon all the employees of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, whether Gazetted or Non-Gazetted (personal staff attached with the Officers) [| More on P6](#)

## Kashmir's Stray Dogs Face Legal Bite At Last

With dog attacks surging, Kashmir looks to a Supreme Court order as a chance to restore peace on its streets, balancing care for animals and people.

**Hidayat Bukhari**

Srinagar: In the early dawn of Srinagar's twisting alleys, a sudden bark breaks the fragile silence, sharp and urgent.

For Shabir Ahmad, a father living in the city's old neighbourhood, it signals an ever-present danger lurking just out of sight.

"Every morning," he says, "I would stand at our doorstep, watching and waiting. Only when the street seemed safe would I let my children walk out."

This daily ritual of vigilance is shared across Jammu & Kashmir, where stray dogs no longer wander alone but move in packs, their growls weaving a



tense, unspoken threat through markets, lanes, and alleys.

On August 11, 2025, a sliver of hope appeared when the

Supreme Court of India issued a landmark order for Delhi-NCR. It demanded the removal of stray dogs from public spaces



**IN 2025, JAMMU & KASHMIR RECORDED 55,312 DOG-BITE CASES, a rise of nearly 8 percent from the 51,027 cases reported in 2024.**

within eight weeks, relocating them to government shelters for sterilisation, vaccination, and humane care.

This order balanced public safety with animal welfare in

a way that many hope Kashmir can adopt.

For Jammu & Kashmir, where the stray dog crisis has reached alarming new heights, this ruling is a blueprint for urgent change.

The latest data paints a grim picture.

In 2025, Jammu & Kashmir recorded 55,312 dog-bite cases, a rise of nearly 8 percent from the 51,027 cases reported in 2024.

This amounts to about 425 bites per 100,000 people, a figure that starkly contrasts with Delhi's roughly 160 per 100,000 and Uttar Pradesh's 90 per 100,000.

The surge has been rapid and relentless, climbing from 22,110 bites in 2022 [| More on P6](#)

## Kashmir's Sozni Heartland To Get ₹10-Cr Tourism Boost

**Observer News Service**

Srinagar: The handicraft sector of Kashmir got a major boost on Tuesday as the Centre sanctioned a Craft Tourism Village en route to picturesque Doodhpathri in Budgam district at a cost of Rs 10 crore, an official said on Tuesday.

The sanction is accompanied by the release of the first instalment of the central share of Rs 4.50 crore by the Union Ministry of Textiles under the flagship National Handicrafts Development Programme's Infrastructure and Technology Support Scheme, the official spokesman said.

The project will be implemented by the Department of Handicrafts and Handloom,



Kashmir, and the funds shall be routed through the Central Cottage Industries Corporation of India.

"As many as 22 craftsmen from this Village of Awardees have distinguished themselves by winning many UT level and Shipul Guri Awards," he added.

En route to the famous tourist destinations of Doodhpathri and Tossamaidan, the Craft Tourism Village at Sonpah shall provide [| More on P6](#)



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## Rather Conducts Surprise Inspection Of Legislature Hostel

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Speaker, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather on Tuesday conducted surprise inspection of Legislature Hostel Srinagar to gather first-hand appraisal of all ongoing development and upgradation works at hostel for the facilitation of legislators.

Secretary Legislative Assembly, Manoj Kumar Pandita; Executive Engineers of various wings; senior officers of Legislative Assembly Secretariat and other concerned officers also accompanied the Speaker during the visit.

During the inspection, the Speaker toured various sections of the New Block of the hostel, assessing the pace and quality of civil works, infrastructure improvements and other facilities. He directed the concerned executing agencies to maintain high standards of workmanship and adhere strictly to the stipulated timelines. He stressed that public resources must be utilized efficiently and works executed in a manner that reflects both quality and durability.

The Speaker also directed the concerned executive agency to renovate the rooms damaged recently in fire incidents on

immediate basis. He also took strong notice of lackadaisical approach in construction of compound wall which was damaged during 2014 floods.

Later, the Speaker also chaired a brief meeting to review the functioning of the Legislature Hostel.

Speaking during the meeting, the Speaker instructed the management of the hostel to ensure proper upkeep, regular maintenance and modern amenities in the hostel to meet contemporary requirements of the legislators. “Legislators are the face of democracy and the public and they need necessary facilities with dignity they deserve”, he stated.

He also underlined that the improvements in functioning of the hostel will not only benefit the legislators but also uphold the dignity of the institution they serve.

Meanwhile, during the meeting, the Speaker also took stock of various issues of employees of Legislature Hostel. He directed the officers of the Assembly Secretariat for timely conduct of DPC meetings of eligible staff members. He also called upon the officers to maintain proper discipline in the hostel and ensure proper uniform code for the staff.

## Stadium Colony Natipora Residents Complain Of Water Paucity

Agencies

Srinagar: Residents of Stadium Colony in Natipora, Srinagar, on Tuesday complained that they have been facing acute water scarcity for the past one week, causing severe inconvenience to them.

Locals said KNO that despite repeated requests, the issue has not been resolved, forcing them to rely on alternative sources.

“We have to fetch water from neighbouring localities every day. It is exhausting, especially for the elderly,” said Abdul Majid, a resident of the area.

Another local, Shabnam

Jan, said they have been facing this problem for days now. “Without water, our daily life is completely disrupted. We have approached the authorities at the PHE office and also lodged a complaint on their grievance helpline, but nothing has happened yet,” she said.

When contacted, Public Health Engineering (PHE) officials said the water supply in the area was affected due to repairs of water reservoirs at a few locations. “The issue is being addressed and regular water supply to the area will be restored in two to three days,” an official said—(KNO)

## GMC Sgr Conducts Anti-Ragging Awareness Session

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar on Tuesday organised an awareness session on anti-ragging to mark Anti-Ragging Day as declared by the National Medical Commission (NMC).

The session was organised by the Department of Anatomy, GMC Srinagar.

## Youth Are The Present & Future Of Nation: Satish Sharma

Agencies

Srinagar: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Transport, and Information Technology, Satish Sharma, Tuesday highlighted the immense potential of youth in ensuring the transformation of the Nation.

He was addressing the students and faculty at the Viksit Bharat Yuva Connect Programme held at Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS).

Director SKIMS, Dr Ashraf Ganie, Additional Director, Zahoor Ahmad Mir, senior faculty members and students were present on the occasion.

Describing the programme as a vision for a “Viksit Bharat” — a developed India where youth play a central role in shaping the nation’s future — the Minister said since India has the largest per-

centage of youth as its population, we have to ensure that they are properly addressed and also curb the spread of substance abuse.

“Sports, education, technology and community engagement have been given unprecedented importance across the country, and we are ensuring the same focus in every corner of our Union Territory,” Sharma said. “Sports are not just about competition; they build discipline, unity, and responsibility among our youth.”

Commending SKIMS for promoting sports alongside its primary mission of healthcare, the Minister lauded its contribution to the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan. “Substance abuse destroys lives and futures. By encouraging healthy lifestyles and positive activities, institutions like SKIMS are making a real difference,” added the Minister. (KNS)



## CM Omar Visits Shalimar Garden To Take Stock Of Restoration Works

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday visited the historic Mughal Garden Shalimar to inspect the ongoing conservation works being undertaken with the assistance of JSW Foundation under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative.

The Chief Minister was accompanied by the Commissioner Secretary, Floriculture, Gardens & Parks, Director Floriculture Kashmir and representatives of the JSW Foundation.

During the visit, the Chief Minister inspected various key heritage monuments of the garden, including the Pink Pavilion, Rani Mahal, and Black Pavilion. Detailed briefings were given regarding the progress of restoration and conservation activities.

On-the-spot directions were issued to expedite the pace of work


“During the visit, the Chief Minister inspected various key heritage monuments of the garden, including the Pink Pavilion, Rani Mahal, and Black Pavilion. Detailed briefings were given regarding the progress of restoration and conservation activities.”


and ensure the timely completion of all identified pending tasks, while maintaining the essence of

heritage conservation.

Pertinently six Mughal Gardens of Kashmir, including Shalimar, are presently enlisted in UNESCO’s Tentative List of World Heritage Sites. The Department of Floriculture has undertaken restoration and conservation works to preserve the originality, authenticity, and cultural integrity of these heritage gardens for future generations.

The conservation works presently in progress focus on structural restoration, landscape development, preservation of architectural features, and enhancement of visitor amenities — all in harmony with the historical character of the site. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah appreciated the collaborative efforts of the Department and the JSW Foundation in safeguarding this invaluable heritage and stressed the need for sustained conservation measures.







### OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER

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  - 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	
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259</li> <li>ANANTNAG: 01932-228243</li> <li>BARAMULLA: 0194-102029</li> <li>BIJBHERA: 01932-228243</li> <li>PAMPORE: 01933-294132</li> <li>PATTAN: 01954-293507</li> <li>QAZIGUND: 01951-296153</li> </ul>	
HIGHWAY STATUS	
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sgr-Jammu highway - ( Open )</li> <li>Mughal Road - ( Open )</li> <li>Srinagar- Leh- (Open)</li> </ul>	

 <div> HIJRI CALENDAR </div> <div> 18 Safar 1447 </div>	PRAYERS	
	FAJR	4: 20
	ZUHR	12:37
	ASR	5: 24
	Magrib	7:24
	ISHA	8: 53

### This Day In History

- 1516 - The Treaty of Noyon between France and Spain is signed. Francis recognises Charles's claim to Naples, and Charles recognises Francis's claim to Milan.
- 1521- Spanish conquistadors under Hernán Cortés capture Aztec Emperor Cuauhtémoc in Tenochtitlan marking the end of the Aztec Empire
- 1642 - Dutch astronomer Christiaan Huygens discovers Martian south polar cap
- 1645- Sweden & Denmark sign Peace of Brömsebro
- 1695- Bombardment of Brussels begins by French army of Louis XIV, the Grand-Place and much of the city is destroyed during the Nine Years' War
- 1704- Battle of Blenheim (Second Battle of Höchstädt): A combined British, German and Dutch army led by John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, decisively beats the French and Bavarians
- 1784- British parliament accepts East India Company Act 1784, bringing the East India Company's rule in India under the control of the British Government.
- 1788- Prussia joins Anglo-Dutch alliance to form Triple Alliance to prevent spread of Russo-Swedish War of 1788-90
- 1792- Revolutionaries imprison French royals, including Marie Antoinette
- 1799- British fleet under Lord Seymour overthrows Suriname
- 1814- Anglo-Dutch Treaty: Cape of Good Hope formally ceded to the British and transporting of slaves prohibited
- 1864- Battle of Deep Bottom, Virginia (Strawberry Plains) & Fussell's Mill, Virginia
- 1868- Earthquakes kill 25,000 & causes \$300 million damages in Peru & Ecuador
- 1898- US forces under Admiral George Dewey capture Manila during Spanish–American War
- 1902- English cricket team beats Australia by one wicket in a famous victory at The Oval, in London
- 1906- Black soldiers accused of raiding Brownsville in Texas; despite support from local commanding officers, President Theodore Roosevelt orders dishonorable discharge for 167 soldiers; all cleared of wrongdoing 1972, 165 posthumously
- 1908- King Edward VII of Great Britain meets with Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria at Ischl; the King tries to persuade the Emperor to advise Germany against aggressive (anti-British) policies
- 1913- Invention of stainless steel by Harry Brearley of Sheffield, England
- 1913- Otto Witte, German acrobat and fantasist, is purportedly crowned King of Albania
- 1914- German army occupies forts at Liege
- 1917- A revolt in Catalonia, the province in northeast Spain that has long seen itself as independent
- 1923 - Turkish National Congress selects Mustafa Kemal Atatürk Pasja as President
- 1937 - Second Sino-Japanese War: Japanese forces begin the Battle of Shanghai, a conflict that will last 3 months and involve 1 million troops
- 1940 - Battle of Britain: Hermann Goering's "Adlertag" (Eagle Day) offensive happens, intending to destroy the Royal Air Force; 47-48 German aircraft shot down, the RAF loses 25 planes
- 1943 - Red army recaptures Spas-Demensk
- 1944 - British 8th Army occupies Florence
- 1944 - Allied generals Bernard Montgomery, Miles Dempsey and Omar Bradley discuss a future breakthrough in the European theatre during World War II
- 1951 - Great Britain & Iraq sign new oil contract
- 1953 - 4-5 million French go on strike against economizations
- 1959 - US Military satellite Discoverer 5 launched (into polar orbit)
- 1960 - USSR withdraws advisors from China
- 1961- Construction of the Berlin Wall begins in East Germany
- 1977 - 1st test glide of space shuttle
- 1984 - Morocco & Libya sign "Arabic-African Union" treaty
- 1989 - US space shuttle STS-28 lands
- 1996 - Microsoft releases Internet Explorer 3.0
- 2014 - Israeli and Palestinian cease fire agreed to on August 8 is extended for another 120 hours to provide time for further negotiations



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KO VIEW

Degrees To Nowhere

Bill Gates recently warned Gen Z that simply knowing how to use technology isn't enough to secure a job, and he was not speaking in the abstract. Around the world, the job market is shifting fast. Artificial intelligence and automation are erasing roles that once gave fresh graduates their first foothold in a career. And for Kashmir's young people, the disruption could be even more severe.

The uncomfortable truth is this: our educational curriculum has barely moved with the times. Students are still being trained for jobs that are disappearing, while the roles that are emerging require skills they've never been taught. Across sectors, from finance to customer service, entry-level work is being swallowed by AI.

This mismatch between what schools and colleges teach, and what the economy demands, is already fueling rampant unemployment around the world, and in the Valley too - albeit, it is not the only factor in Kashmir. Drying up of the government job opportunities and a stagnant, low growth private sector have also ensured fewer job opportunities for the educated youth. And the technological advancement is further queering the pitch. The numbers may vary, but the lived reality is visible: graduates with degrees in hand, sitting at home, waiting for government vacancies that never come. Private sector opportunities are scarce, and the few that do exist often demand digital, analytical, or creative skills alien to most of our classrooms.

Globally, the shift is forcing young people to adapt quickly as also the professionals who need to upskill to stay relevant to the job market. However, some roles built on human interaction, such as healthcare, teaching, and community work, are seeing a resurgence. These cannot be replaced wholesale by algorithms. But here in Kashmir, the absence of large-scale industry and the slow growth of new economic sectors limit even these options.

Going forward, we have to focus on bringing our youth up to speed with the new technology. And to that end, we need to urgently reform our education sector. With existing degrees, even if there is a vibrant private sector, the workforce cannot participate in its gains.

If we truly care about the future of Kashmiri youth, we must reimagine what education prepares them for. Not the past. Not the dreams of their parents. But the world that is already here, and the one that's fast approaching. To keep teaching the old ways is not just outdated. It is manufacturing future unemployment crises as the youth armed with existing degrees will struggle to find a place for themselves in the evolving economy.

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Read This Before You Buy Anything

The People's Rupees

Public funds in Kashmir should be more than numbers on paper. They should be felt in every home, school, and hospital.

Irshad Mushtaq

Every month, the government releases crores meant to feed families, keep streets safe, and heal the sick. On paper, it looks like a safety net. On the ground, it often feels like a sieve.

Salaries, perks, and large projects soak up huge sums, yet the outcomes don't always match the investment.

Part of the problem lies in weak oversight. In theory, audits should track every rupee to its destination. In practice, financial leaks and administrative drift let public money lose its way.

This gap is costly in Kashmir. Health facilities run short on staff or medicine. Roads crumble before their ribbon-cuttings fade. The "rotten meat" scandal showed how enforcement often wakes up only after public outrage.

Accountability is the backbone of public trust. That means regular, transparent audits across departments, clear chains of responsibility, and real consequences when duties are neglected.

Civil servants who work hard deserve recognition, but the system must push for results, not just effort. Citizens also have a role: asking questions, demanding audits, and tracking projects.

Respecting the budget is not just about balancing numbers. It is about honoring the idea that public resources belong to the people.

For Kashmir to move forward, the money must follow its promises, and the people must follow the money.

- The author is a Srinagar-based reputed financial advisor.

Send your write ups and feedback at  
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KASHMIR OBSERVER®  
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4

Beyond Optics

While Kashmir college campuses shine with manicured lawns and blooming flowers, their classrooms tell a different story.

Uzma Qadir Mir

The contrast between Kashmir's beautiful campuses and their crumbling classrooms is more than a striking irony. It reveals a systemic failure to prioritize substance over appearance and a disregard for the students these institutions exist to serve.

College campuses in Kashmir look like scenes straight out of a postcard. Tall trees shade the paths, flowers bloom everywhere, and the lawns are so neat they almost soothe your mind.

People who visit see this beauty and quickly assume the education inside is just as impressive.

But step into the classrooms, where knowledge is meant to take root, and you encounter a jarring disconnect.

Broken benches force students to share cramped spaces or sit on cold floors. Windows are cracked, letting in harsh winds in winter and scorching heat in summer.

Ceiling fans either don't work or rattle loudly, disrupting lessons rather than easing them. Dust coats blackboards, and dim lighting saps the room of any warmth.

These conditions are more than an inconvenience. They are barriers that chip away at students' capacity to learn and their sense of worth.

A Kashmir Observer report in early 2025 found that only 20 percent of colleges in Jammu and Kashmir have digital classrooms, while just 15 percent boast func-

tional science or computer labs.

The root cause is chronic underfunding: education receives a mere 2.3 percent of the state budget, leaving classrooms to languish as funds are stretched thin.

This neglect is dangerous in a world that demands digital fluency and innovation. Students here compete not only with peers across India but globally, yet their learning environment is frozen in time: stifling, dilapidated, and demoralizing.

Beyond the physical discomfort lies a deeper wound, one of dignity.

Imagine trying to focus when the room is unbearably hot or freezing cold, when seats are cracked and uneven, or when a stray dog wanders into your exam hall, causing panic and breaking concentration.

This happened during an internal examination in a Kashmir college, revealing just how poorly secured and maintained these spaces have become.

In another instance, students attending a college function were asked to clean dusty, torn seats themselves before sitting.

These moments don't just embarrass students, they show that the system doesn't really respect them and only cares about optics.

Students have had enough. In mid-2024, Central University of Kashmir students protested over "poor infrastructure." Their demands were simple: safe classrooms, clean facilities, modern learning tools. Their voices spotlighted a long-ignored crisis.

Why this gap between the picturesque and the practical?

Many institutions prioritize external beauty to impress officials, donors, and visiting dignitaries. Gardens and painted walls feature in brochures and annual reports. Classrooms do not.

This "show, don't solve" culture hides the harsh realities inside and sidelines the true mission of education.

The classrooms of the 21st century are evolving everywhere else. They are interactive spaces equipped with digital projectors, reliable internet, ergonomic seating, adequate lighting, and climate control. They accommodate students with disabilities through ramps and adjustable desks. They are clean, safe, and inspiring.

Kashmir colleges must catch up. Functional benches, working fans, and secure classrooms are essentials. Hygiene must become a priority, and stray animals must be kept out.

A welcoming environment is the first step toward reclaiming student pride and improving learning outcomes.

Studies consistently show that a well-maintained environment boosts academic performance and mental health. Conversely, broken, dusty rooms communicate neglect and signal to students that their education is not a priority.

For Kashmiri youth, already burdened by political instability and economic challenges, this is an additional, and unnecessary, barrier.

Change demands courage and accountability. Institutions should empower students to report infrastructure problems safely, through anonymous

channels or maintenance committees. Budgets must prioritize classrooms first, with transparent audits to ensure funds are spent properly. Regular inspections should include unannounced classroom visits, with authorities engaging directly with students.

Digital classrooms must no longer be a rarity. Training faculty in new tools and technology is crucial to modernizing teaching methods. Clean, well-lit, and comfortable classrooms should be part of colleges' mental health strategies.

Beyond government efforts, alumni, local nonprofits, and community members can contribute resources and volunteer time to rebuild learning spaces.

The contrast between Kashmir's beautiful campuses and their crumbling classrooms is more than a striking irony. It reveals a systemic failure to prioritize substance over appearance and a disregard for the students these institutions exist to serve.

Education happens inside classrooms every day. When students sit on sturdy benches, beneath working fans, in clean and safe rooms, they absorb the message that they matter.

And that message is the foundation of true education.

- The author is a graduate student of Economics. She can be reached at muzmaqadir@gmail.com. Views expressed in this article are author's own and don't necessarily reflect KO's editorial policy.

Imagine trying to focus when the room is unbearably hot or freezing cold, when seats are cracked and uneven, or when a stray dog wanders into your exam hall, causing panic and breaking concentration.

Letter to Editor

The Food Safety Reform Kashmir Needs Now

Kashmir has a rare opportunity to address its food safety crisis with more than quick fixes now.

The past fortnight's raids have revealed what many suspected: our systems for monitoring and safeguarding what we eat are broken. The challenge is not only to punish offenders but to create a structure that stops unsafe food from ever reaching our kitchens.

The first step is prevention, not reaction. That means enforcing cold chain documentation for every perishable consignment, with checks at multiple points before goods reach markets. Wholesale suppliers and cold storage owners should be licensed under stricter rules, with surprise audits built into the system. Without traceability, account-

ability becomes impossible.

Enforcement must also shift from sporadic raids to continuous monitoring. Mobile testing labs and on-the-spot inspections at entry points can make oversight routine rather than exceptional. When violations are found, naming offenders and making lab results public will create deterrence far stronger than fines alone.

Equally urgent is safe disposal. Seized food dumped in open fields or near water bodies does not vanish. It spreads the hazard. Scientific incineration, secure rendering or controlled landfills are the only ways to keep toxins out of soil and rivers. This is where municipal bodies, environmental agencies and food safety officials must work together, with clear protocols and budgets.

The public cannot be left out of this effort. Consumers should have easy access to information on how to check expiry dates, identify proper labelling and report unsafe supplies. A whistleblower hotline with legal protection would turn citizen vigilance into a formal defence against negligence. Media follow-up on prosecutions and lab testing outcomes can help keep food safety in public conversation.

The medical community also has a role that goes beyond treating cases of food poisoning. Kashmir's higher rates of gastric and gastrointestinal cancers compared to other regions deserve deeper study. Research on links between food adulteration and long-term illness could guide stronger regulation and public awareness campaigns.

Food safety is not a side issue in a place whose culture and economy are tied to its produce and hospitality. It is a measure of public health, social trust and governance.

The recent scandal should be treated as a turning point, a chance to replace reactive enforcement with a permanent, science-backed system of prevention.

If Kashmir takes that chance now, it can protect its people, restore trust in its markets and safeguard its reputation.

The food on our plates should be a source of strength, not a gamble with our health.

Sincerely,

Iffat Aurooj  
University of Delhi.



# The Hotel That Held Kashmir's Welcome

From royal guests to empty halls, Nedous Hotel now waits for its next chapter.

Syed Nissar H Gilani

On some evenings in Srinagar, when the Jhelum turns golden and the shadows lengthen, you can almost imagine the tongas once again.

The sound of hooves on the road, the creak of leather, and the dust lifting behind them take you back in time.

And if you follow that imagined sound past the Chinara trees, you might find yourself before the Nedous Hotel.

Its facade is faded now, but it still carries a certain poise, like an old aristocrat dressed for a party that never began.

The Nedous was born from a journey that began far from Kashmir, in a Croatian village called Rugasa. Michael Henery Nedou was a hotelier before he was a dreamer. Lahore was his first stage, a modest place on Masson's Road where bread baked in the mornings and the evenings were lit by oil lamps.

But it was the valley, with its pine-scented air and light that changed like silk, that drew him in.

In 1888, he built his first hotel in Gulmarg, high in the meadows where shepherds moved with their flocks and British officers escaped the summer heat.

Twelve years later, in Srinagar, he created something grander: a building with ninety-nine rooms, each with its own bath, rare for its time. The lawns were broad enough for cricket matches. The ballroom glittered with chandeliers, and the confectionery was whispered about from Delhi to Rawalpindi.

Travellers came not only for a bed but for a sense of arrival.

There was Francis Younghusband, the explorer, who stopped here in 1908 and noted there was no dak bungalow in the city, as if the Nedous itself was the measure of its hospitality.

There was Lord Mountbatten and Lady Edwina, who dined on a set of three hundred English plates brought



in for their visit. In the mornings, porters waited with ponies for those heading into the mountains, and in the evenings, the clink of billiard balls mingled with the strains of music from the dancing hall.

Nedou himself stayed. He married Mirjaan, a Gujarati woman from Gulmarg, and took the name Sheikh Ahmed Hussain. The couple's three children were woven into Kashmir's

Behind its shut doors, the Nedous still holds the scent of almond blossom, the laughter of garden parties, and the trace of perfume in a hallway after a woman has passed.

political and social tapestry.

When Hussain passed, his son Qadir Nedou took charge of the family estates. Of his two daughters, one, Begum Jahan, married Sheikh Abdullah. The other was simply known as Benji, a name that lingered in the valley's memory.

Qadir married Saleema Naqashbandi, the eldest daughter of Salam Shah Naqashbandi of Khanyar, then

Deputy Governor of Kashmir.

Raised by an English stepmother, Saleema was a striking personality, fluent in both English and Kashmiri, and went on to write a book titled The Royal House.

When the second lease term for the hotel was about to end in 1978, Saleema used her close ties with her brother-in-law, Sheikh Abdullah, to secure a fresh lease for 114 kanals of land.

The new agreement included an unexpected clause: the property could be subleased to a reputed tourism company to promote the state's tourism.

Seeing an opportunity, Saleema brought in the ITC group, known for its luxury hotels, including the Sheraton in New Delhi.

Plans were drawn for restoration. For a moment, it seemed the ballroom might glow again.

Then 1988 came, and the plans were folded away. ITC handed the place to the security forces in Srinagar. The lawns turned to parade grounds, the windows to watch posts. The dancing hall slept through decades.

In 2002, there was talk of a return. Mufti Mohammad Sayeed came to the lawns as the "healing touch" chief minister. Yet the years went on, and no key turned in the old locks.

The forces have left now. The gates are closed, but no longer guarded. ITC still pays rent, as if the hotel were a guest on indefinite stay.

Behind its shut doors, the Nedous still holds the scent of almond blossom, the laughter of garden parties, and the trace of perfume in a hallway after a woman has passed.

It holds a Kashmir that believed hospitality was not only an industry, but a language, one spoken in porcelain and polished wood, in warm bread and fresh flowers in a room.

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## Red Scooty Halted

A simple gift meant to unlock freedom and trust became a story of love, control, and silent tensions on the streets of Kashmir.

Syed Majid Gilani

For over ten years, Yasir's grey Bajaj Chetak was a familiar sight on Srinagar roads.

It was with him through the ups and downs of everyday life, carrying him to work, family visits, busy markets, and back home. Rain or shine, the scooter was steady, just like a good friend you can always count on.

But years passed, and the scooter grew old. One day, Yasir sold it. He took the cash and tucked it away. This money was for something bigger, for both him and his wife, Neelofer.

It was 2011, and the city was changing. Scooties were still rare on Kashmir streets, especially women riding them. Yasir never cared about the unspoken rules that said women should stay inside or wait for someone to drive them around.

To him, love was trust and respect. It was about giving Neelofer space to move, and grow.

He saved money patiently, then one morning took Neelofer on a bus to Lalchowk. They walked to M/S Kashmir Motors. She didn't know why. Yasir's mind was made up. He wanted a bright blood-red TVS Scooty Pep+.

The choice was careful. It was light and easy to ride, perfect for her. The bright colour was meant to stand out. It was meant for her. Yasir would ride it too, when needed.

The price came to ₹42,000, paid fully in cash. When the smiling salesgirl handed over the keys, Yasir slipped her a ₹500 tip. It was a small celebration of a moment that felt larger than itself.

It was about giving Neelofer something no one else had given her: a chance to move freely, to claim her own space on the streets of Srinagar. It was a gift of trust.

They rode the scooty home together. Yasir drove, and Neelofer held his shoulder as they moved through the city. The noise and bustle fell away behind them. Ahead was something new.

A few days later, on a calm Sunday morning, Yasir took Neelofer to a wide, empty stretch in Eidgah. Her first riding lesson.

Step by step, he showed her how to balance, twist the throttle, and brake. She wobbled, but he stayed patient. When she hesitated, he urged her



What Yasir meant as guidance, Neelofer heard as pressure. His care felt like control. The lessons stopped. Yasir didn't press. He thought it was just nerves.

gently. "One more time," he said. "You're almost there."

She was close to tasting freedom, the thrill of the road under her feet. Yasir even planned to help her get a learner's license. But then something shifted.

What Yasir meant as guidance, Neelofer heard as pressure. His care felt like control. The lessons stopped. Yasir didn't press. He thought it was just nerves.

Weeks went by, and the scooty sat

mostly unused by her. Yasir rode it more.

One day he asked softly, "You don't want to ride anymore?"

She shrugged and said, "I never really asked for it."

The words settled deep. Yasir stayed silent.

The scooty, bought with hope and love, had become a silent reminder of something broken.

It was ego, creeping in, slowly pulling them apart.

Now the scooty sat in the courtyard, bright and unused. Yasir washed it sometimes, took it out on the roads. But Neelofer never took the seat again.

He still drives her around. She rides behind him, calm and content. But the freedom the scooty promised never fully arrived.

Maybe it wasn't about the scooty at all. Perhaps, it was about feeling trapped by instructions that felt like orders. Or maybe, it was about the stubbornness that sometimes blocks trust.

The blood-red Scooty Pep+ was never really about the road. It was about love and belief.

In the end, it was stopped, not by fear or distance, but by ego.

The author is a government officer by profession and a storyteller by passion. He can be reached at syedmajid6676@gmail.com.

## Kashmir's Hill of Faith and New Beginnings

More than a hill or a shrine, the elevated land is a living bond between generations, faith, and the breathtaking landscape of the valley.

Kaisar Ahmad Malla

I grew up hearing the call: "Walsa Baab Soebun Gasow." It means, simply, "Let's go to Baab Soubun."

For people in Magam and Beerwah, it's more than words. It's a call to peace, faith, and nature's embrace.

Baab Soubun is the shrine of Baba Hanef U Din Reshi, called Baab Sob by locals, resting atop Dares Hill.

For me, and many others, it's a place where the spiritual and the natural meet in perfect harmony.

Baab Sob was a devoted disciple of Hazrat Zain Ud Din Wali of Ashmuqam, who followed the revered Sheikh Noor Ud Din Noorani.

Guided by his master, Baab Sob settled on the gentle hillock of Dares Hill in Rathsun Magam. He spent years in deep meditation, seeking closeness to the Divine. His presence made the hill sacred.

Today, his shrine draws those searching for solace, reflection, and a connection to something greater.

Dares Hill is easy to reach. Just 25 kilometres from Srinagar, it sits near Magam and Beerwah, connected by roads through Budgam, Radbugh, Chewdara, and Ohangam.

The main Budgam-Beerwah road curves along its slopes, offering a scenic passage that feels like entering a world apart. Villages lie cradled beneath the hill, their green fields and orchards stretching toward the horizon.

From the summit, the view unfolds

like a vast tapestry. Srinagar lies to the east, a shimmering jewel in the valley.

To the northwest, Baramulla and Bandedipora stretch wide, while the hills of Gulmarg stand proud beyond.

Further still, the rolling meadows of Tosamaidan and Doodhpathri beckon, and the Pir Panjal range rises in serene majesty, its snow-capped peaks steady and timeless.

Each season brings its own mood to Dares Hill. Spring wraps the hill in a fresh green coat, wildflowers nodding in the breeze like nature's prayer flags. The air smells of earth and saplings.

Summer turns the hill into a cool refuge. Pine and deodar scent the breeze as children run barefoot, elders watch distant snow.

Autumn burns gold and amber across the leaves, while sunsets spill molten light that makes the shrine glow in the fading day.

Winter crowns the hill with snow, muffling sound and deepening the sense of peace.

Dares Hill is part of the stories we carry from childhood. School trips brought us here, laughter blending with birdsong, the cool wind chasing away summer's heat.

Families still gather on the grass, spreading mats, sharing tea, watching the sun slip into shades of gold.

The hill also holds the hopes of new beginnings. Couples visit Baab Soubun after marriage, seeking its calm strength.

Standing here, with the world

stretched beneath them — villages, forests, mountains — they let the peace of the place settle in their hearts.

The wind seems to carry their dreams across the valleys. It's a reminder that life will have gentle slopes and steep climbs, but with faith and kindness, every step becomes lighter.

Local activist Riffat Abdullah's efforts have breathed new life into Dares Hill. His plantation drives have brought Himalayan blue pine, cedar, and silver fir to the slopes, enriching the air and the hill's beauty. The green canopy grows denser each year, making Baab Soubun a sanctuary for both spirit and earth.

Baab Soubun is a living symbol of harmony. Pilgrims seek peace here, couples find blessings, the young come for the joy of the breeze and the wide view. It shows how spirituality lives not just in prayer but in the deep connection with the world around us.

Standing at the top of Dares Hill, the cold breeze brushing my face, the valleys stretching endlessly before me, the shrine resting in calm grace behind — I feel a lightness. For a moment, life's worries fall away.

And so the phrase stays true: "Walsa Baab Soebun Gasow." Let's go to Baab Soubun. Not just to climb a hill, but to rise in spirit.

The author comes from Magam, Budgam. He can be reached at kaisarmalla94@gmail.com





## Cyber Safety In J&K

# 4,500 Devices Secured, 140 Websites Restored

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir's cyber security infrastructure has seen significant upgrades under the Union Territory's CyberSecurity Action Plan, with thousands of devices and government websites secured in recent months.

At a high-level review meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, officials detailed progress under the UT's Cyber Security Action Plan, aimed at countering emerging threats and safeguarding critical digital infrastructure.

So far, over 4,500 devices have been equipped with Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR) tools, while more than 2,300 devices now run on Unified Endpoint Management (UEM) systems. VPN access has been restricted to multi-factor authenticated users with geo-fencing to limit access within India.

On the website security audits, it was revealed that out of the 239 government websites, 140 have been restored following



mandatory CERT-In and OWASP-compliant audits, with web application firewalls deployed.

The administration is also merging departmental data centres into a centralized State Data Centre (SDC), expected to be completed within six months. The upgraded Jammu SDC will have capacity for 300 racks with Tier III/IV compliance and dedicated centres for real-time threat monitoring.

Standard protocols, unused domain rationalisation, IPv6

migration, USB security controls, and enhanced cyber hygiene campaigns are also being rolled out across departments. Awareness drives such as Cyber Jagroota workshops are underway to train employees in safe online practices.

Dulloo stressed there could be "no compromise" on securing IT infrastructure, directing all departments to fast-track pending measures to build a secure, modern, and resilient digital ecosystem in J&K.

## Institute Of Chartered Accountants Of India's Meet At Pahalgam True Morale-booster: CM

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Tuesday said the 445th Council Meeting of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) being held at Pahalgam was a true morale booster following the terror attack earlier this year.

The chief minister interacted with the members of the ICAI during the 445th Council Meeting being held at the picturesque tourist destination of Pahalgam in south Kashmir's Anantnag district.

One hundred thirty members of the ICAI, including their families, are attending the four-day meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister expressed his gratitude to the ICAI for choosing Pahalgam as the venue for such a landmark event and reposing trust in the J-K government after the horrific incident at Baisaran on April 22.

Twenty-six people, including a Nepalese citizen, were killed in the incident.

"Your presence here is not just symbolic; it is a true morale booster for all of us in Jammu and Kashmir," the chief minister



said.

"It reflects your belief in this place, its resilience and its future. The fact that you have come here with your families sends a powerful message of confidence and support," he said.

The chief minister highlighted the long-standing contribution of the ICAI to nation-building and acknowledged the organisation's global presence.

He emphasised the importance of collaboration between the ICAI and the J-K government in promoting good governance, transparency, cost-efficient solutions and improved

accounting systems at the grassroots levels, including panchayats, urban local bodies and smart cities.

"Governments must make the best possible use of public funds. By tapping into your expertise and exposure to best practices across the country, we can adapt and implement solutions that improve services and quality of life for our people," he said.

Reflecting on the resilience of Pahalgam, Abdullah said that despite the tragic events earlier this year, the town successfully hosted the Amarnath Yatra, which saw over four lakh

pilgrims.

"Your visit here so soon after those difficult times is both encouraging and humbling," he added.

The chief minister invited the ICAI members to visit J-K again and explore its many attractions beyond Pahalgam, including Gulmarg, Sonamarg and Srinagar.

The chief minister told the ICAI members that their presence is a testament to the fact that spring always returns.

"I thank you for being part of that renewal for us and invite you to visit us time and again," he said.

Abdullah also released a report on 'From Policy to Profits: Amplifying MSME Revenues in J&K Through Targeted Government Initiatives'.

Speaking on the occasion, ICAI president Charanjot Singh Nanda appreciated the chief minister for his time to attend the event.

"Your presence has indeed given us a morale boost," he said.

He encouraged the members to contribute in all capacities to ensure the economic growth of J-K and the handholding of students from the Union Territory under various initiatives of the ICAI.

### CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

## How Food Vloggers

Kashmir's food influencer community.

The anger erupted after the Food Safety Department seized large quantities of substandard meat from restaurants and processing units across the valley.

Officials said the ristas, kebabs, and other products were unfit for consumption: stored at wrong temperatures, kept for too long, and in some cases visibly spoiled.

The raids confirmed rumours that had been circulating for months.

For many, the problem wasn't just the meat. It was how easily these places had passed as trustworthy in the first place.

In Kashmir's expanding café culture, food vloggers have become the industry's tastemakers. Their reels of steaming wazwan, burger towers, and latte art have helped small eateries find fame.

In the process, they became a bridge between restaurateurs and the public, one built on glossy visuals and a promise of good taste.

That bridge is now shaking.

"If you're going to make money showing us food," a comment read on one viral post, "you should also make sure that food is safe."

Some influencers have tried damage control. One female vlogger with a large local following released a video calling for calm: "We are saddened by the recent developments. We have already verified the restaurants we promoted. We should not troll the innocent."

Her plea failed to soften the anger.

Another vlogger with nearly 90,000 followers simply vanished, deleting her Instagram profile entirely.

Meanwhile, restaurants are scrambling to reassure customers. Some are posting behind-the-scenes videos of their kitchens, chefs in aprons pointing to thermometers and spotless counters. Others are displaying certificates prominently, hoping to prove they are in the clear.

The scandal has triggered a deeper conversation about the ethics of food influencing in Kashmir. In the absence of strong consumer watchdogs, influencers wielded outsized power over public opinion. But unlike official inspectors, they are not bound by regulations or standards.

Dr. Aijaz Ahmad, a food safety expert, says the gap is glaring.

"The government can't inspect every restaurant every week. That's why public trust is so critical," he said. "Influencers are not trained food inspectors. If they promote without verifying, they risk misleading people, even unintentionally."

Some in the influencer community agree that the culture needs to change.

A Srinagar-based vlogger, who asked not to be named, admitted that many creators accept free meals or paid promotions without thorough checks. "We focus on taste, presentation, and aesthetics. Safety is often assumed, not tested."

For now, the crackdown continues. Officials say they will carry out more surprise inspections in the coming months. Some restaurants have been temporarily shut down. Others face fines or loss of license.

The public's appetite for dining out has diminished, especially for meat-heavy dishes. In Srinagar's markets, butchers report a drop in sales. At the same time, there's a surge in home-cooked meals and calls for a return to locally sourced, traditionally prepared food.

"This is a wake-up call," says Bashir Ahmad, a retired schoolteacher browsing vegetables at the city's Hari Singh High Street. "We have to go back to knowing where our food comes from, like our parents did. A certificate on a wall is not enough."

In Kashmir's fast-growing food scene, trust was once served alongside every plate. Now, it will take more than a camera-ready kitchen to win it back.

## Formaldehyde In

as a human carcinogen.

Officials said that laboratory test results are pending, and currently, the presence of formaldehyde remains unconfirmed, with officials describing the reports as "market chatter" at this stage.

According to information, suppliers involved in the recent large-scale confiscation are allegedly suspected of using formaldehyde to prevent the meat from decomposing, raising serious health concerns.

In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Dr Tariq Trambooe expressed concern over the influx of "unregulated frozen meat coming from outside," warning that such meat may contain harmful preservatives like formaldehyde, posing a significant public health threat.

Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Kashmir, Smiti Sethi, said that samples are being collected from various parts of the valley and sent for laboratory analysis. "People are talking about formaldehyde, but until the reports arrive, we cannot confirm or rule out anything," she said. "Samples are being taken from across the valley, and we are awaiting the results."

This investigation follows one of the largest food safety crackdowns in recent years, during which over 11,000 kilograms of rotten meat were seized. Authorities have assured the public that inspections and raids will continue until markets are free from unsafe food products.

It is noteworthy that the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classifies formaldehyde as a carcinogen, heightening concerns over its potential use in food products. (KNO)

## Kulgam Op

was also killed in the initial exchange of fire. Sources said it appears the remaining terrorists managed to break the cordon.

The operation was marked by intermittent bursts of heavy gunfire as terrorists reportedly shifted positions deep within the forest cover. Security forces deployed drones, sniffer dogs, high-tech surveillance equipment, and attack helicopters to locate possible hideouts, but the thick vegetation and steep slopes made access extremely challenging. Large parts of the forest were cordoned off, with additional reinforcements rushed in from the Army, Jammu and Kashmir Police, CRPF, and elite Para (Special Forces).

A security official said that given the topography and the fact that the forest connects to higher ridges towards Pir Panjal, it is possible the terrorists managed to slip away during the operation.

The official said that while the encounter site has been cleared, surveillance in the area will remain tight to prevent any possible reappearance of terrorists.

Unlike urban encounters, terrorists in these cases often choose treacherous mountain and forest terrain, forcing prolonged gunfights and large-scale troop deployment.

As a result, troops often suffer casualties in such protracted operations, and flushing out terrorists from jungles requires sustained cordon and search in difficult terrain and dense forests.

## Skies Of J&K

officers of armed forces and Jammu Kashmir Police involved in Operation Mahadev, Singh said, "They took revenge for the barbaric terror attack in Pahalgam and safeguarded the dignity of the nation."

Sinha also urged people to remain cautious and vigilant against divisive elements trying to disrupt peace and social harmony.

Three senior Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) commanders, who were involved in the April 22 Pahalgam attack, were killed on the outskirts of Srinagar in a July 28 encounter code-named 'Operation Mahadev'.

The terror attack in Pahalgam's Baisaran meadow claimed 26 lives, mainly tourists. In retaliation for the attack, India targeted terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir under Operation Sindoor in May.

The LG congratulated the BSF, the country's first line of defence, for paying a befitting tribute to the brave soldiers and officers who have shown incredible valour, courage and sacrifice to maintain the unity and integrity of the nation.

He said the rally will also encourage the youth to join BSF, Army and police.

"The rally, passing through numerous towns and villages, inspired the young generation and reminded them about the vision of our founding fathers and their ideals of selfless service. It is a bounden duty of every citizen of J&K to pursue that path and build Jammu Kashmir of their dreams," he said.

From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, India is one. The hearts and souls of 140 crore Indians are united and we are a big family of 140 crore members, Sinha said.

"This spirit and bond of family must strengthen our unity. We must inculcate the spirit of nation first and every citizen must prioritise nation-building over personal interests," he said.

Addressing the Tiranga Yatra event, the LG paid tributes to the forefathers and bravehearts who laid down their lives to keep the tricolour flying high in its full glory.

He also felicitated Kargil war heroes and released a monograph in honour of the martyrs of Jammu Kashmir.

"Today is the day to celebrate the success of our great nation. However, we should also introspect about our duties and build on our successes. We must also resolve to build the edifice of modern and prosperous J&K on the foundation of sacrifices of our soldiers of Army, CAPFs and police," Sinha said.

He said it would be a blessing to be born again in India to serve the country.

"Tiranga is my dharma, my strength and my heartbeat. For the sake of duty, may we again and again take birth on this holy land," he said.

The LG said thousands of people proudly joined to honour the national flag, which symbolises unity, pride and shared identity.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Jammu Kashmir has entered a new era of inclusive development, he said.

"With love for the Ma Bharti in their hearts, the people of Jammu and Kashmir are marching ahead. This patriotic spirit is our greatest strength, which is paving the way for a peaceful and prosperous future of J&K and the nation," he said.

"The skies of Jammu and Kashmir are shining with the tricolour. From the banks of Jhelum to Chenab and from the peaks of Pir Panjal to Harmukh, the echo of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' can be heard everywhere.

"A new generation is rising, dedicated to the honour and glory of the tricolour. They have one resolve -- to live and die for Ma Bharti," Sinha told the gathering.

## Tricolour A Symbol

, Srinagar.

He urged the people to preserve and uphold the honour of the national flag, calling it a living symbol of India's identity, pride and the sacrifices of countless patriots.

Reflecting on the past, the Chief Minister recalled that there was a time when the national flag was only permitted to fly over government buildings, barred from being displayed in homes, workplaces, or private spaces. "This was the reality we lived in -- the flag belonged to the nation, yet it was absent from our personal lives," he said.

Highlighting the role of a single determined citizen who approached the courts and secured the right for every Indian to hoist the Tiranga at their homes, the Chief Minister said this change was proof that "even one individual, driven by the right intentions, can bring about lasting change."

He paid rich tribute to those who laid down their lives for the honour of the national flag, stating, "They gave up their present for the nation's future, stood alone if necessary, and believed their single act of courage could defend the dignity of our Tiranga."

Underscoring the need for the flag to remain a constant symbol of pride, not just during official functions, Omar Abdullah called on citizens to "raise it higher -- both physically and in the respect we give it -- inspired by the sacrifices of those who came before us."

Earlier in the day, the Chief Minister, along with Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha, led a vibrant Tiranga Rally from the picturesque lawns of the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC). Ministers Sakina Itoo, Javed Rana, and Javed Dar were also present, alongside senior civil and police officers.

The rally saw enthusiastic participation from people across all walks of life, including youth, students, and community members.

## HC Warns

of the Registry/staff of eCourts/I/T Section/Orderlies/Users/Drivers) that they shall maintain proper uniform as prescribed for their respective categories while attending office and during official duties."

Non-compliance with the prescribed uniform norms shall be viewed seriously and may invite

disciplinary action, the circular reads further. "Further, all Controlling Officers shall ensure strict adherence to these instructions by the staff under their control," the circular, which came into force with immediate effect, added.

## 35 Yrs On, SIA

the most chilling reminders of the atrocities that triggered the mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990.

"Armed militants abducted her from her workplace, took her to an unknown location, and subjected her to horrific torture. She was gang-raped, mutilated, and killed -- her body cut into pieces and dumped to instill terror.

"Her murder was not just a heinous crime but part of the targeted campaign of ethnic cleansing against Kashmiri Pandits, aimed at driving the Hindu minority out of the Valley," Malviya said. (PTI)

## Parliament Passes

important bills like the income tax law.

"I am shocked that the Opposition doesn't want to participate," she said.

Opposition parties staged a walkout in the Rajya Sabha, as they did in the Lok Sabha on Monday.

Opposition parties had agreed in the Business Advisory Committee to 16 hours of debate each in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on the Income Tax Bill, she pointed out.

She also expressed gratitude to the Select Committee of Parliament, which scrutinised the bill.

She further said a total of 75,000 person hours have gone into the drafting of the Bill.

## J&K Tightens

seen a wave of patriotic fervour, with Har Ghar Tiranga and Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav events lighting up schools, colleges, and government offices across all districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

The main Independence Day function in the Union Territory will be held at Bakshi Stadium, Srinagar, where Chief Minister Omar Abdullah will preside over and take the salute.

Similar programmes will also be held in Jammu and other district headquarters of J&K, where ministers and chairpersons of District Development Councils will lead the celebrations.

According to details, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary will preside over the main Independence Day function in Jammu, while Sakina Masood (Itoo), Minister for Health, Education, and Social Welfare, will lead the celebrations in Anantnag.

Similarly, Javed Ahmed Rana, Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, and Tribal Affairs, is scheduled to lead celebrations in Poonch, while Javid Ahmad Dar, holding portfolios of Agriculture, Rural Development, Cooperatives & Election, will also preside over the main function in Baramulla.

Satish Sharma, Minister for Food, Civil Supplies, Transport, IT, Youth Services, Sports, and Art & Culture, will lead the celebrations in Kathua.

According to details, chairperson of district development councils will take the salute at main functions in Kupwara, Bandipora, Ganderbal, Budgam, Shopian, Kulgam, Pulwama, Samba, Udhampur, Reasi, Rajouri, Doda, Ramban and Kishtwar.

As per official itinerary, Sub-Divisional Magistrates will preside over functions at respective sub-divisional headquarters, while Tehsildars or the senior-most civil officers will take salute at respective tehsil, block, and municipal headquarters -- as decided by the concerned Deputy Commissioner.

In Jammu, the main Independence Day event will be held at Maulana Azad Stadium, where Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary will unfurl the Tricolour and take the salute.

Meanwhile security forces have fortified Srinagar and other district headquarters across the Valley, with special focus on key entry points, as part of intensified measures ahead of Independence Day.

Officials said multiple checkpoints have been established, where random vehicle inspections and frisking operations are being carried out to block any attempt by subversive elements to infiltrate the city or disrupt public safety.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir, V.K. Birdi said that comprehensive security and

logistical arrangements are in place to ensure smooth and peaceful celebrations across the Valley.

He added that the forces are maintaining constant vigilance to safeguard both official events and public gatherings during the national festivities.

## MTP Cases See

access to MTP services across the country. This includes training medical officers, ensuring availability of equipment and drugs, and raising awareness, especially in rural areas.

Recent changes under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act, 2021, extended the gestational limit to 24 weeks for specific cases.

These legal reforms have been implemented across states and Union Territories and are linked to the rise in recorded terminations. (KNO)

## Kashmir's Sozni

a great window of opportunity to visiting tourists and art lovers for having a firsthand appraisal of the living crafts.

"Under the project, the Department shall develop aesthetic enhancements like designer gates, mural paintings, cultural and interactive zones including Live Craft Demos; common work spaces for Display-cum-Sale counters; infrastructure development, community facilities and access to market and branding," the spokesman said.

Highlighting the significance of Craft Tourism Villages for a Nature Destination like Kashmir, the spokesman said these works will transform Sonpah into a modern tourism hub while preserving its rich cultural and craft heritage.

## Kashmir's Stray

to over 34,000 in 2023, 51,000 in 2024, and now surpassing 55,000 in 2025.

Srinagar's Anti-Rabies Clinic remains overwhelmed due to this teething problem.

Between June 2024 and July 2025, it treated 14,527 bite victims, with over 7,000 suffering dog attacks, averaging nearly 1,200 cases per month.

Jammu's Government Medical College has reported more than 45,000 animal bite cases and 16 rabies deaths from 2019 to mid-2025.

Tragically, rabies claimed seven lives in the first half of 2025 alone, a rise that health officials warn signals an urgent public health emergency.

Behind these figures are faces etched by fear and trauma.

Farah Ali recalls the terrifying day when her youngest son was trapped by a pack near their home.

"Neighbours rushed out and saved him," she says, "but the fear never leaves us."

Veterinarians and animal welfare experts say Kashmir's stray dogs are uniquely fierce.

"The brutal winters act like a natural filter," explains Dr. Imran Malik, a veterinary specialist working in the region. "Only the strongest survive, forming tight, aggressive packs. They fiercely guard their limited food, often attacking humans who venture near."

Open garbage dumps, especially in urban and peri-urban areas, provide a constant food source that sustains these packs.

"Until waste management is drastically improved," Dr. Malik continues, "efforts to control the dog population are fighting against nature."

The Supreme Court's order offers a comprehensive, humane strategy: capture, vaccination, sterilisation, and shelter.

For Kashmir, this means coordinated dog population censuses, training municipal teams, expanding shelter capacity, and launching public education campaigns to change attitudes toward stray animals.

Local NGOs have long advocated for such coordinated action.

"The Supreme Court's order gives us a clear legal framework," says Suhail Kirmani, director of a Srinagar-based animal welfare body. "But success depends on political will, resources, and community involvement."

The human and economic costs of inaction are deep. Still, hope persists.

Shabir dreams of a day when children play freely in the streets, elders visit markets without fear, and tourists explore Kashmir's beauty without looking over their shoulders.

"This court order could be the turning point," he says. "But only if we act now."



## J&K's Forest Area Grows By Over 224 Sq Km: GoI

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu & Kashmir has recorded a notable increase in forest cover over the last four years, according to the latest India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023 released by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

The report, accessed by KNO, reveals that the region's forest area grew by 224.39 square kilometres, contributing to the country's overall forest cover expansion of 3,093.61 square kilometres between 2019 and 2023.

This increase is attributed to enhanced conservation efforts, afforestation drives, and improved forest management in the region.

J&K's forest cover now stands at 21,346.39 square kilometres, reinforcing its critical role in environmental balance and biodiversity preservation in northern India.

Alongside forest expansion, the government has also taken significant steps to promote urban green spaces through the Nagar Van Yojana.

Over the past three years, J&K has received approval for 38 Nagar Van projects, focusing on developing city forests and parks to enhance the green cover within urban areas.

The Ministry said these measures are part of a larger national strategy, including schemes like the National Mission for a Green India (GIM) and compensatory afforestation under CAMPA, aimed at sustainable forest management and climate change mitigation.

Further campaigns such as "EK Ped Maa Ke Naam #Plant4Mother," launched on World Environment Day 2024, encourage widespread community participation in plantation drives across the country, including J&K—(KNO)

## Nearly 99.7% Of Forest Rights Claims Disposed Of In J&K: Centre

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has released updated figures on the implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, showing notable progress in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) regarding the legal recognition of forest rights for tribal and forest-dwelling communities.

As of May 31, 2025, a total of 46,090 claims under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) have been filed in Jammu & Kashmir, comprising 33,233 individual claims and 12,857 community claims, the figures accessed reveal.

Of these, the government has distributed 6,020 titles (429 individual and 5,591 community titles), providing formal legal entitlements to forest land and

community resources.

Despite this progress, a substantial number of claims remain unresolved, with 39,924 applications still pending and only 146 claims rejected, indicating that the majority of claims await final verification and processing.

The Ministry continues to work closely with local authorities to expedite the disposal of pending claims.

The FRA safeguards the rights of forest dwellers by prohibiting evictions before rights are recognised and verified, ensuring protection for vulnerable tribal populations in J&K.

The Ministry has also issued joint advisories with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to prevent unlawful evictions and promote smooth implementation of the Act—(KNO)

## Har Ghar Tiranga Rallies Fill Kashmir With Colours Of Patriotism



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Kashmir's towns and villages turned into seas of saffron, white and green as thousands joined Har Ghar Tiranga rallies across all districts, marking the ongoing Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

From Budgam to Bandipora, students, locals, officials, police, CAPFs, and civil society members marched with the tricolour, sang patriotic songs, and pledged unity.

In Budgam, DC Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat and SSP Nikhil Borkar flagged off a rally from the Sports Stadium to Bahisht-e-Zehra Park, terming it a testament to the district's spirit. Ganderbal DC Jatin Kishore led a similar march from Mini Secretariat to Qamaria Ground, calling for mass participation in Independence Day events.

Pulwama's rally, led by DC

Dr. Basharat Qayoom and SSP P.D. Nitya, included tributes to martyrs, a bike march, cultural performances, and the Viksit Bharat pledge. Kupwara's DC Shrikant Balasaheb Suse, along with thousands, marched to the Martyr Memorial Regipora.

In Kulgam, DC Athar Aamir Khan led a spirited rally through the town, while Shopian hosted one of its largest-ever marches with over 10,000 participants, followed by a patriotic concert at Aglar Fruit Mandi.

Bandipora's Gurez Valley saw multiple rallies and creative contests involving youth, reinforcing the campaign's message of unity and national pride.

Across the Valley, streets echoed with slogans of Jai Hind and the flutter of the tricolour, as the campaign inspired citizens to hoist the flag at homes, offices, and institutions ahead of Independence Day.wv

## Over 15,000 J&K Tribal Students Receive Post-Matric Scholarships: GoI

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu & Kashmir has made a notable stride in the implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, according to the latest data released by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

As of May 31, 2025, a total of 6,020 forest rights titles have been distributed in the region, comprising 429 individual and 5,591 community titles.

Although exact forest land area figures remain unreported, this marks significant recognition of tribal and forest dwellers' rights in the Union Territory.

In education, Jammu & Kashmir's tribal students have also benefited from government scholarship schemes.

The post-matric scholarship program supported 15,309 tribal students in the academic year 2024-25, a substantial increase from 10,430 in 2022-23.

Meanwhile, the pre-matric scholarship scheme assisted 8,371 tribal students in 2024-25, nearly doubling the number from 4,689 in 2022-23.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs continues to monitor the effective utilization of funds allocated under the Tribal Sub-Plan and emphasizes timely recognition of forest rights and enhanced educational support for tribal communities—(KNO)

## LG Felicitates Officers Of SASB, Admin For Successful Conduct Of Amarnath Yatra-2025

Congratulates People Of J&K For Making Holy Pilgrimage Such A Rich Spiritual Experience For Devotees



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday felicitated the officers of Amarnath Shrine Board, Administration, J&K Police, Army, CAPFs, BRO, service providers, medical professionals, members of Non-Governmental Organisations, and other stakeholders for the successful conduct of Amarnath Yatra-2025.

At a felicitation ceremony held at Raj Bhawan Auditorium, the Lieutenant Governor congratulated the people of J&K for making holy pilgrimage a rich spiritual experience for devotees.

"More than 4.14 Lakh devotees from across the country and the globe paid obeisance to Baba Barfani. Their enthusiasm and devotion and successful holy pilgrimage was a befitting reply to the enemy's design of destabilising peace in J&K UT," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor expressed gratitude to the officers, civil society groups, Swachhagrahis, sanitation workers, volunteers, ponywalas, pithuwalas, Disaster Response Forces, Army, Police and Security personnel, media fraternity and all the stakeholders for their collective and coordinated efforts during the Yatra.

He also lauded the dedication and commitment of intelligence agencies, and all the officials engaged in Yatra duty who diligently made the journey of pilgrims safe and convenient.

Their incredible team spirit and hard work has ensured a safe, hassle-free and spiritually enriching Yatra that will be

celebrated and remembered for years, he said.

"Amarnath Yatra is a confluence of humanity and faith. Every pilgrim is now a brand ambassador for Jammu Kashmir," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor asked the officials to analyze and apply the experiences and lessons learned from this year's pilgrimage, and take up the works on priority for better experience of the pilgrims in future.

He also expressed gratitude to the Government of India for the continuous support and guidance for the successful conduct of the Yatra.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor paid homage to the innocent civilians killed by Pakistan-Sponsored Terrorists in Pahalgam.

This year, comprehensive arrangements were put in place on both Yatra Tracks. To ensure the health and well-being of pilgrims, a comprehensive medical support system was established. Two 100-bed hospitals at the base camps, and a dedicated team of 1,222 medical professionals worked around the clock to provide health care services to pilgrims. Along the Yatra route, over 90 medical facilities provided a combined capacity of 560 clinical beds, and 26 dedicated oxygen booths were also set up. For emergency response, a fleet of 45 ambulances, including 9 equipped for critical care, was deployed.

Several groundbreaking safety measures were introduced this year. For the first time, emergency communication systems were installed at

seven key points on the Yatra track, successfully resolving nearly 100 distress calls. Real-time health screening was also arranged for pilgrims. There has been a 9% reduction in natural deaths compared to previous years.

A pre-paid system has been successfully implemented, with 1.84 lakh pilgrims utilizing services like palanquins and ponies through this facility. The system has created a transparent and efficient process, effectively curbing overcharging and providing prompt resolution for any complaints.

Amarnath Shrine Board, in collaboration with the Rural Sanitation Department, adopted a zero-landfill approach to protect the environment. This initiative involved installing 7,000 toilets and engaging 6,500 'Swachhagrahis' who diligently worked to maintain cleanliness during the holy pilgrimage.

Considerable improvements have been made to the yatra routes between 2022 and 2024. In a major upgrade, most of the tracks on the Baltal and Chandanwari routes leading to the holy cave have been widened to 12 feet. Installation of safety hand railings, along with disciplined track inspection, repair, and maintenance has been done for the first time.

An RFID-based tracking system was introduced for all registered pilgrims and service providers, enabling real-time monitoring of the routes and preventing unauthorized access.

Pilgrim safety was ensured through continuous, 24x7 monitoring of the yatra route through a live feed system.

**MORE THAN 4.14 LAKH DEVOTEES FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY** and the globe paid obeisance to Baba Barfani. Their enthusiasm and devotion and successful holy pilgrimage was a befitting reply to the enemy's design of destabilising peace in J&K UT,"

## CS Reviews Progress Of Holistic Agriculture Development Programme

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo on Tuesday conducted an extensive review of the progress, impact, and implementation status of all 29 schemes under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) across the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, Agriculture Production Department (APD); Managing Director, J&K Bank; Managing Director, HADP; Deputy Commissioners; and Heads of Departments from the Agriculture sector.

During the review, the Chief Secretary took detailed stock of district-wise achievements, urging the concerned departments and Deputy Commissioners to maintain momentum and avoid any slackness that could jeopardize the gains made so far. He directed the MD, HADP to maintain close coordination with HoDs and DCs to ensure timely achievement of annual targets.

He observed that the five-year HADP has the potential to transform J&K's agriculture and horticulture sectors into sustainable, reliable, and highly profitable ventures, thereby enhancing farmer incomes, generating youth employment, and unlocking the region's full agri-horti potential. He stressed the need for a "whole-of-government" approach to



achieve the ambitious goals within stipulated timelines.

Providing an update on the programme's progress, Principal Secretary, APD, Shailendra Kumar revealed that a substantial increase in farmer participation had been registered recently. Since the last review in January 2025, farmer registrations have surged by 35% to over 3.01 lakh, while total applications have risen by 33% to 4.92 lakh. Of these, 3.48 lakh applications have been approved marking a 24% increase, he added.

Highlighting key schemes attracting the highest farmer engagement, MD HADP, Sandeep Kumar informed the meeting that the Farm Mechanization and Automation initiative leads with 74,448 approvals, modernizing agricultural practices across the UT. The Fodder Resource Development component has secured 36,129 approvals, while the Vegetable/Exotic Vegetable Promotion scheme has garnered 33,202 approvals reflecting the growing interest in high-value crops, he revealed.

## CS Reviews Cyber Security Measures

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo on Tuesday chaired a meeting to review the Cyber Security Action Plan for J&K, aimed at strengthening the UT's defense against the emerging cyber threats and ensuring the protection of critical digital infrastructure.

The meeting was attended by Secretary, IT Department; CEO, JaKeGA; State Informatics Officer, NIC; senior officers from civil administration and police and other departmental representatives.

The review formed part of the government's regular follow-up on security measures being implemented to safeguard the digital assets of the administration, protect sensitive data and promote cyber hygiene across the departments.

## Number Of J&K Govt schools Decline By 19% Since 2019: GoI

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed the steep decline in the number of government schools, with an 18.9% reduction recorded between 2019-20 and 2023-24.

The number of schools fell from 23,165 in 2019-20 to 18,785 in 2023-24, a net loss of 4,380 schools, according to data shared in the Lok Sabha by Union Minister of State for Education Jayant Chaudhary, a copy of which lies with Kashmir Observer.

This decline in J&K is the largest in percentage terms among all states and Union Territories, reflecting a significant contraction in public educational infrastructure over the last five years.

Other states also witnessed school closures, with Madhya

Pradesh losing 6,920 schools, Odisha 4,589, Assam 2,149 and West Bengal 1,149. While these states had larger absolute losses, their percentage declines were less steep compared to Jammu and Kashmir.

In contrast, Bihar and Rajasthan showed growth in government schools, adding 5,510 and 2,573 schools respectively over the same period. Among southern states, Tamil Nadu and Telangana saw modest increases, with 93 and 21 additional government schools respectively.

Kerala reported a 4.1% decline, with 205 government schools closing between 2019-20 and 2023-24, dropping from 5,014 to 4,809 schools. The sharpest annual fall in Kerala was noted post-Covid between 2021-22 and 2022-23.

## Awareness Programme On 'International Youth Day' Held

Observer News Service

**PULWAMA:** District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Pulwama on Tuesday organized an awareness programme on "International Youth Day" in ADR Centre District Court Complex Pulwama.

This year the theme for International Youth Day was 'Local Youth Actions for the SDGs and Beyond' highlights the unique role of youth in translating global ambitions into community-driven realities.

The programme was organised under the chairmanship of Malik Shabir Ahmad, Chairman DLSA (Pr.District& Sessions Judge), Pulwama and under the supervision of Mudasar Farooq Secretary DLSA Pulwama.

On the occasion, Mehraj-ud-din Wani, Chief LADC Pulwama

delivered a brief lecture to the participants on the problems faced by the youth of our country like unemployment, drug abuse etc and how these problems can be addressed and solved. He also threw light on the insights into the life of Swami Vivekananda and relevance of his ideology in the present times.

The main purpose of the day was to draw attention to a given set of cultural and legal issues surrounding youth.

Furthermore, Asst. LADC Pulwama also spoke on the occasion. Staff members of DLSA Pulwama, LADCs & PLVs of District Pulwama also participated in the said programme.

Moreover, a similar programme was also organized at TLSC Awantipora in collaboration with Hajahad Public Higher Secondary School Awantipora.

## Committee On Public Accounts Visits Healthcare Institutions

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** The Committee on Public Accounts (PAC) under the Chairmanship of MLA Sham Lal Sharma on Tuesday inspected various healthcare institutions in Jammu city to assess the infrastructural facilities and overall medicare being provided to the people there.

Pertinently, the Committee had decided to conduct this two day on spot visit to various health institutions of Jammu division following examination of pending CAG paras pertaining to the Health Department in the meeting held at Assembly Secretariat last week.

The Committee visited GMC Jammu, Bone & Joint Hospital Jammu, Super Speciality Hospital Jammu, State Cancer Institute Jammu, Drug Controller Office J&K Jammu, Directorate of AYUSH Jammu and Ayushman Bharat.

Members of the Committee including Mubarik Gul, Nazir Ahmad Khan (Gurezi), Qaysar Jamshaid Lone, Altaf Ahmed Wani (Kalo), Javid Hassan Baig, Dr. Devinder Kumar Manyal, Sajad Shaheen and Muzaffar Iqbal Khan were also present during the visit.

The Committee, during its visit to Government Medical College Jammu, held a meeting with Dr. Syed Abid Rashid, Secretary Health and Medical Education, Principal, GMC, Dr. Ashutosh Gupta and other HoDs of GMC.

Principal GMC presented an overview of healthcare facilities available in the GMC, staff strength, laboratories, latest operation theaters and other utilities.

Later, Principal Government Dental College Jammu, HODs of different branches of GMC and its associate hospitals briefed the Committee about the working and issues being faced by them. They also highlighted other development activities of GMC and their associated hospitals.

The Chairman and the members of the PAC gave patient hearing to them and expressed their concern regarding shortage of staff in health institutions. The members also gave suggestions about further development and streamlining of health infrastructure in Jammu.

At Bone & Joint Hospital

Jammu, the Committee visited Spinal and Orthopedics wards and enquired about the facilities being extended to patients there. The concerned authorities apprised the Committee of working of the hospital.

At Super Speciality Hospital Jammu, the Committee inspected the Cath Lab and ICU.

At State Cancer Institute Jammu, the Committee visited and examined the Department of Nuclear Medicine PET-CT Scan Console Room and Department of Radiation Oncology and department of Medical physics (Brachytherapy).

During the inspections, the Chairman of the Committee and other members took stock of health infrastructure and medical facilities available in these hospitals. The Committee also examined developmental infrastructures in these health institutions.

At the Directorate of AYUSH Jammu, the Committee also held a meeting with the officers of Directorate of AYUSH and examined the working of the hospital. It had feedback on physical and financial achievements.

The Chairman and the members of PAC gave suggestions to further strengthen the AYUSH hospital.

Director AYUSH, Dr Nuzhat Bashir Shah also briefed about the activities of the hospital.

At Drug Controller Office Jammu, State Drug Controller, Lotika Khajuria briefed the Committee about the overview of statutory Drug Samples lifting and reported the details of drug samples lifted/declared NSQ or Misbranded during the last three financial years.

The Committee inspected HPLC technique which is used to separate the combination of drugs into their pure form. It visited the Combined Food & Drug Laboratory (Drug Testing Laboratory) and Micro Laboratory.

During the visit to SHA, Ayushman Bharat, PMJAY, the Committee expressed concern over the pending payments/liabilities in various cases under Ayushman Scheme.

The Chief Executive Officer, Ayushman Bharat displayed a presentation about the working of the prestigious scheme including its proper implementation, overall performance and number of beneficiaries covered under this scheme.



# Australia ODIs In Sight, Rohit Sharma Starts Training

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI: India ODI captain Rohit Sharma on Tuesday started training at a suburban Mumbai facility with former national assistant coach Abhishek Nayar amid clamour for a "youth only" policy in the 50-over format following the success of the inexperienced Test squad in England.

Rohit had taken a break from the game for a couple of months post the IPL as Indian men's team embarked on a difficult tour of England. He also announced his retirement from Test cricket ahead of the five Test series in England and is now a one format player. He was on a family holiday in England and came back last week.

Rohit posted an Instagram story from a gymnasium with his close

friend Nayar, who also at times doubles up as his personal coach.

Nayar, who has also worked the likes of Dinesh Karthik, KL Rahul, Rinku Singh and young KKR batter Angkrish Raghuvanshi, was India's assistant coach batting till Champions Trophy, following which he was sacked.

However, all those who have personally worked with Nayar have spoken about the changes he has brought in their games, including Rahul, who worked with him prior to the start of the England Test series where he scored 532 runs.

The picture is an indication that Rohit is not in a mood to throw in the towel yet and would like to still believe that he would be good enough to play in the 50 over World Cup in 2027, still 26 months from now.

The current national selection committee would want to ensure that a stable core is created for the 50 over set-up and with players who are available for the next two years.

A school of thought in the Indian team management is that Rohit should be offered a farewell series and that should be Australia with Shubman Gill being announced as the new 50-over skipper.

But how the selection committee and more so BCCI's influential office-bearers look at events is equally important.

Rohit is an ODI legend with 32 hundreds, third highest in the all time list after Virat Kohli (51) and Sachin Tendulkar (49).

For the record, Rohit was the 'Player of The Match' against New Zealand in the Champions Trophy final.



## CS Reviews Prep For Khelo India Water Sports Festival

Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo on Tuesday chaired a high-level meeting with senior officers from the civil administration and police to review preparedness for the maiden edition of the Khelo India Water Sports Festival 2025, scheduled to be held on the iconic Dal Lake from August 21 to 23.

Calling the event a unique opportunity to project Kashmir's multifaceted charm on a national platform, the Chief Secretary emphasised that the festival must be converted into a grand celebration of local tourism, handicrafts, art and culture.

The Chief Secretary noted that the timing of the festival coinciding with the peak tourist season in Srinagar has offered an ideal occasion to create lasting impressions on visiting athletes, officials and spectators. He asked the Youth Services & Sports Department to ensure flawless conduct so that the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports considers Srinagar as a regular venue for the festival in the years ahead. (Observer News Service)

## Late Goals Send Indian Navy FT Into Quarterfinals

Late strikes by Pintu Mahata and Sreyas V.G. ensured Indian Navy FT bounce back from a one-goal deficit to overcome local side TRAU FC 2-1 and book their spot in the quarterfinals of the 134th Durand Cup here on Tuesday.

TRAU took the lead in the 29th minute through Moirangthem Nelson Singh but the equaliser in the 87th minute by Pintu and the winning goal by Sreyas in the third minute of injury time ensured the Navy men finish on top of Group F with seven points ahead of Real Kashmir FC who finished their campaign with six points.

It was end to end action in the first quarter of the match with Indian Navy showing urgency and attacking with purpose. (PTI)

## PSG Signs Illia Zabarnyi From Bournemouth

Paris Saint-Germain signed Ukraine defender Illia Zabarnyi from Bournemouth on Tuesday for a reported 63 million euros (USD 76 million).

The 22-year-old center back joins the European champions after 2 1/2 years at Bournemouth, which has seen its defense ripped apart this offseason. Fellow center back Dean Huijsen has left for Real Madrid and left back Milos Kerkez signed for Liverpool.

Zabarnyi will compete for a place at the heart of the PSG defense with Marquinhos and Willian Pacheco.

"I'm very happy to join Paris Saint-Germain, the best club in the world, with the best project," Zabarnyi said.

"I am here to give everything I have on the pitch and I'm looking forward to making my debut and meeting the fans."

PSG plays Tottenham, the Europa League champion, in the UEFA Super Cup on Wednesday. (AP)

## District Budgam Carrom Championship 2025-26 Concludes At DPS



Observer News Service

BUDGAM: The District Budgam Carrom Championship 2025-26 concluded at Delhi Public School Budgam on Tuesday. The championship was organised by the District Budgam Carrom Association, under the aegis of the J&K Carrom Association, as part of the "My Youth My Pride" initiative of the J&K Sports Council.

The closing ceremony was attended by Mehfooz Aslam, Principal, DPS Budgam; Mudasir Khan, Gen-

eral Secretary, J&K Carrom Association; Abrar Nabi, Organising Secretary; and Bilal Ahmad, Head of Sports, DPS Budgam, along with other members of the association.

The dignitaries congratulated the winners and runners-up, encouraging them to excel at state and national-level tournaments. The association extended its thanks to the J&K Sports Council for its unwavering support.

The J&K Carrom Association reaffirmed its commitment to organising more

### RESULTS

#### SUB-JUNIOR BOYS

- 1st Place – Samir Lateif
- 2nd Place – Mohammad Rafil Sofi
- 3rd Place – Shariq Mushtaq

#### JUNIOR GIRLS

- 1st Place – Zaib Malik
- 2nd Place – Syeda Ayesha
- 3rd Place – Saffa Manzoor

#### JUNIOR BOYS

- 1st Place – Tawheed Nisar
- 2nd Place – Suhaib Mehraj
- 3rd Place – Aaban Shabir

#### SENIOR BOYS

- 1st Place – Umer Rashid Thakur
- 2nd Place – Munsiff Muneer
- 3rd Place – Abdul Basit

#### SENIOR GIRLS

- 1st Place – Qariya Ajaz
- 2nd Place – Fatima Irfan
- 3rd Place – Fareeha

tournaments across region, with continued backing from the J&K Sports Council, to nurture young sporting talent from the grass-roots level.

## DPS Srinagar Girls' Basketball Team Clinches Championship Title

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Delhi Public School Srinagar on Tuesday announced that its school basketball team emerged as champions at the prestigious Basketball Tournament hosted by Doon International School. The high-energy event saw participation from 11 top teams representing leading institutions from across the region.

The tournament journey for DPS Srinagar began with a commanding performance against Foundation World School. Demonstrating sharp coordination, swift passing, and solid defence, the team secured a decisive victory in their opening match. Riding on this momentum, the players went head-to-head with Kashmir Valley School (KV) in the second round. A dominant display of skill and strategy ensured another emphatic win, earning the



team a well-deserved place in the finals.

The championship clash against Mallinson School proved to be an electrifying encounter, marked by fast breaks, resolute defence, and nail-biting moments. With both teams pushing the limits, the game remained closely contested until the final buzzer. In the end, DPS Srinagar triumphed with a thrilling 28-24 victory, securing the coveted title.

Adding to the celebra-

tions, Noornain Shah of Class 10 was declared the Most Valuable Player of the tournament for her exceptional performance throughout the matches. In the final, Aisha Masarat of Class 10 was recognised as the Best Player of the Match for her outstanding contribution in sealing the win.

Chairman of DPS Srinagar, Vijay Dhar, and Principal Shafaq Afshan commended the team's efforts, and congratulated the champions.

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