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79th Independence Day

Kashmir Rail Link To Boost Trade: President

» 'Op Sindoor A Landmark In Fight Against Terrorism'

» Says Economy In Pink Of Health, Inflation Under Control

Observer News Service

New Delhi: Hailing the inauguration of the rail link in Kashmir as a major accomplishment, President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday said rail connectivity with the Valley will boost trade and tourism in the region and open new economic possibilities.

In her address to the nation on the eve of 79th Independence Day, Murmu said the engineering marvel in Kashmir is a historic milestone for the country.

"The Railways has innovated and introduced new types of trains and coaches equipped with latest technologies. The inauguration of the rail link in Kashmir Valley is a major



accomplishment. Rail connectivity with the Valley will boost trade and tourism in the region and open new economic possibilities. This engineering marvel in Kashmir is a historic milestone for our country," she said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June inaugurated the world's highest | [More on P11](#)



Democracy Has Become Stronger In J&K:LG Grooms People On I-Day, Says New Red Line Against Terror

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday extended his greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the occasion of the 79th Independence Day, paying homage to freedom fighters, founding fathers, and | [More on P11](#)

Kishtwar Cloudburst Wreaks Havoc: Over 50 Dead, 200 Missing



Observer News Service

Srinagar: A massive cloudburst led to flash floods in a remote mountain village in Kishtwar district on Thursday, killing at least 50 people, injuring hundreds and trapping

many more.

As night fell over Chositi village, rescuers worked frantically and pulled out 167 people from under mounds of rubble. Of these, 38 are in a serious condition, officials said. The death | [More on P11](#)

President, PM, Top Leaders Condole Tragedy

President of India, Droupadi Murmu Thursday condoled the loss of lives due to the cloudburst in Kishtwar while Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended his prayers with all the affected people. The President said that news of several deaths due to a cloudburst in Kishtwar is | [More on P10](#)

CM Cancels Tea Party, Cultural Events

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has cancelled 'At Home' tea party and cultural events during Independence Day celebrations on Friday following the loss of lives in a cloudburst in | [More on P11](#)

Rescue Teams Battle Mud & Debris to Find Survivors

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Shocking scenes of physical and psychological trauma unfolded on a massive scale in Chositi village, Kishtwar district, on Thursday as rescuers dug out mud-buried bodies and pulled the injured from slush and rocks after flash floods triggered by a devastating cloudburst.

At least 50 people, including two CISF personnel, have been confirmed

dead, officials said, warning the toll could rise with more feared trapped. Over 200 people are reported missing.

Blood-stained bodies, mud-filled lungs, shattered ribs, and wounds packed with stones tell the story of the catastrophic force that struck this foothill hamlet — a base camp for the annual Machail Yatra. Victims included pilgrims and security personnel. Army, police, and local volunteers | [More on P11](#)



Rescue Operation In Full Swing:LG

A rescue and relief operation is in full swing at the cloudburst-hit Chositi village in Kishtwar district, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said. He asserted that Home Minister Amit Shah has assured all possible assistance. | [More on P11](#)

1,000+ To Get Gallantry Awards; J&K Tops List

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Ministry of Home Affairs has announced the official list of recipients of medals for Police, Fire Services, Home Guard & Civil Defence, and Correctional Services on the occasion of Independence Day on Friday.

The honours include Gallantry Awards, the President's Medal for Distinguished Service, and the Medal for Meritorious Service.

This year, a total of 1,090 medals will be conferred, comprising 233 Gallantry Medals, 99 President's Medals for Distinguished Service, and 758 Medals for Meritorious Service.

In the Police category, 226 officers and personnel have been selected for the Gallantry Medal, 89 will be honoured with the President's Medal for Distinguished Service, and 635 will receive the Medal for Meritorious Service.

The highest number of Gallantry Medals has gone to personnel from Jammu and Kashmir, followed by members of the | [More on P11](#)

3 Officers Get CM's Award

The Government of Jammu and Kashmir has announced the Chief Minister's Award for Honesty, Integrity and Meritorious Public Service for 2025 in favour of three officers. The awardees include Shantmanu, Financial Commissioner (Additional Chief Secretary), Higher Education Department; Late Dr Raj Kumar Thapa, former | [More on P11](#)

PM Modi Remembers Horrors of Partition

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said Partition Horrors Remembrance Day, which is observed annually on August 14, is a reminder of people's enduring responsibility



to strengthen the bonds of harmony that hold the country together.

On this day, India remembers the upheaval and pain endured by countless people during that "tragic chapter of our history", PM Modi said in reference to the unspeakable suffering as millions were forced to leave their homes.

Lakhs of people are esti-

mated to have died in communal violence.

The PM said on X, "It is also a day to honour their grit... their ability to face unimaginable loss and still find the strength to start afresh. Many of those affected went on to rebuild their lives and achieve

remarkable milestones."

India observes #PartitionHorrorsRemembranceDay, remembering the upheaval and pain endured by countless people during that tragic chapter of our history. It is also a day to honour their grit...their ability to face unimaginable loss and still find the strength to start afresh....

Trump-Putin Meeting: Did Alaska Belong To Russia?

Associated Press

Moscow: Alaska, the US state that will host the meeting between Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump on Friday, is a source of imperial nostalgia and often less-than-serious territorial claims in Russia.

The territory that Russia sold to the United States in 1867 is now a symbol of the entwined history of the countries, whose relations have been severely damaged since Russia launched its offensive in Ukraine in 2022.

To some experts, the summit in Alaska evoked memories of the thaw between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War.

"It's a classically orchestrated summit, like in the era of detente," Russian political scientist Fyodor Lukyanov said on Telegram.

"Its symbolic significance is the absence of intermediaries: the powers, so to speak, decide for themselves," he added, saying that China is "not close" to Alaska and that Europe is "as far away as possible".

Fur trading hub

But beyond being a unique meeting place, Alaska also fuels Russian memories of the Tsarist empire, the historic predecessor of the Soviet Union.

"For Russia, Alaska symbolises the peak of an expansion," Alexander Baunov, senior fellow at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Centre, said

on the centre's website.

It was "when the Russian continental empire had, for the only time, succeeded in crossing an ocean like the European empires", Baunov said.

A Russian colony since the 18th century, Alaska was eventually sold to the United States for \$7.2 million in 1867 by Tsar Alexander II.

The remote territory was economically very difficult for the Russians to exploit and at the time its sale was welcomed by the Imperial Court as the country was struggling economically.

But the transaction later came to be seen as a regrettable bargain after what formerly was a fur trading hub turned out to house crucial natural resources: gold and oil.

'Our bears'

In recent years, the price at which Alaska was sold, considered by some to be ridiculously low, and the legal validity of the transaction have become regularly recurring debates in Russia.

In July 2022, in the midst of patriotic fervour in Russia and as tensions soared between Moscow and Washington following the offensive against Ukraine, the Alaska issue resurfaced.

The speaker of the Duma, the lower house of the Russian Parliament, Vyacheslav Volodin, spoke of "lands to be returned", describing Alaska as a "disputed territory".

Russia's authorities are apparently not interested in reclaiming it.



Millions Converge in Karbala to Mark Arbaeen

Trans Asia News

Najaf: Millions of Muslims from across the world have converged in the holy Iraqi city of Karbala to mark Arb'een, the 40th day after the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS), the third Imam and the grandson of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

They moved toward Karbala on foot from different directions and descended upon the shrine of Imam Hussein (AS) to commemorate the event.

Along the routes, thousands of Moukebs, or volunteer service stations, offer free food, water, medical care, and rest to pilgrims.

The Arb'een march is one of the largest annual religious congregations in the world, where the participants pay tribute to martyred imam, who is the all-time icon of fighting injustice, oppression, and despotism.

Imam Hussein (AS) and his 72 companions were martyred in the Battle of Karbala in southern Iraq in 680 AD while resisting the much larger army of the despot Umayyad ruler of the time, Yazid.

An estimated 25 million pilgrims are expected to at-

tend the Arb'een ceremonies in the Iraqi city of Karbala, the governor of the holy city announced.

Qassim al-Yassari made the remarks to al-Alam news network on Wednesday.

The official highlighted the province's extraordinary preparations, saying the expected figure was up from the roughly-22-million-strong pilgrims, who visited the city for last year's ceremonies.

He said the city began welcoming a steadily increasing number of pilgrims for the occasion since 2003, when it officially began hosting the events following the fall of the Arab country's former dictatorial regime.

Al-Yassari emphasized the comprehensive nature of preparations across infrastructural sectors, including transportation, municipal services, electricity, water, and security.

"These preparations are being implemented synergistically in all these areas," he said.

The official credited the success of the recent years to "the experience of the past ones and [contributions made by] our specialists in various provincial departments, espe-

cially managers, employees, and executive cadres."

On transportation, he reported progress in developing and reconstructing main roads from Karbala to the capital Baghdad, the city of Babil, and the holy city of Najaf, and constructing many major squares facilitating pilgrim transit.

Al-Yassari noted that public and private transport systems were fully operational, with private fleets transferring pilgrims between provinces and public fleets working under official oversight.

"In the Babil corridor, the Karbala Province has rented 400 buses to transport pilgrims," he said, adding that the Iraqi ministry of transport was responsible for the Baghdad route, while the country's Hajj and Pilgrimage Authority oversaw the Najaf route.

He further underlined the province's enlistment of proper and efficient municipal services so it can manage relevant operations throughout Arb'een's 15-day period.

According to al-Yassari, emergency water tanks have, meanwhile, been installed in all areas to ensure uninterrupted supply.

Floods, Landslides Bring India to Standstill

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: India is currently experiencing an active and widespread monsoon across various regions, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) shows the country has recorded normal rainfall so far this monsoon season, but the distribution is highly uneven across states.

A cloudburst was reported in Jammu and Kashmir's Chositi area of Kishtwar on Thursday. The extent of damage and any possible casualties are still being assessed by authorities.Rescue teams have been rushed to the spot.

On August 13, IMD forecast heavy to very heavy rainfall over the next seven days across states including Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kash-

mir, Northeast India, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh.

For Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, there's an orange alert, with Uttarakhand expected to experience heavy to very heavy downpours between August 10 and 14. Himachal Pradesh is expected to continue receiving heavy rain through August 11 to 14.

There's an orange alert for several districts of Odisha like Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Gajapati, Kandhamal, and Nabarangpur from August 12 to 14.

For Telangana, there are rainfall warnings in place until August 17, with heavy to very heavy rainfall expected at isolated places. For Telangana, rainfall is expected to

be accompanied by thunderstorms and gusty winds.

Between June 1 and August 10, the country recorded 539 mm of rain against a normal of 535.6 mm, about 1 per cent above the long-period average.

Of the 36 States and Union Territories for which the IMD provides figures, 25 are in the "normal" category (within 19 per cent of the long-period average), five are in the "deficient" (20 to 59 per cent below normal), five are in the "excess" category (20 to 59 per cent above normal) and one (Ladakh) is in the "large excess" category (more than 60 per cent above normal).

No state or union territory is in the cumulative "large deficient" category for the period. Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Bihar have recorded seasonal shortfalls, reports PTI.

Egypt Demands Clarification Over Netanyahu's 'Greater Israel' Vision

Al Mayadeen English

Cairo: Egypt's Foreign Ministry has strongly condemned recent statements by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu endorsing the so-called "Greater Israel" vision. The ministry described the remarks as a rejection of the

he expressed strong support for a territorial vision of "Greater Israel".

Former Knesset member Sharon Gal presented him with an amulet depicting a map of "the Promised Land," which includes not only occupied Palestinian territories, but also parts of Jordan,



"peace process" and demanded formal clarifications from Tel Aviv.

In a statement issued Wednesday, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry reaffirmed Cairo's commitment to regional peace and security, warning that Netanyahu's statements fuel instability and contradict international efforts to resolve the region's ongoing conflicts.

Netanyahu's comments were made during an August 12 interview with Israeli broadcaster i24News, where

Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt. Netanyahu said he felt "very much" connected to this map, calling his mission "historic and spiritual".

This is not the first time Netanyahu has used maps to promote expansionist narratives. In 2023 and 2024, he displayed controversial maps at the UN General Assembly excluding any Palestinian state, while portraying extended Israeli borders. Critics have said these presentations erase the two-state solution and elevate a vision of regional domination.

Gaza's Young Musicians Sing And Play In The Ruins Of War

Reuters

GAZA CITY: A boy's lilting song filled the tent in Gaza City, above an instrumental melody and backing singers' quiet harmonies, soft music that floated into streets these days more attuned to the deadly beat of bombs and bullets.

The young students were taking part in a lesson given on August 4 by teachers from the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, who have continued classes from displacement camps and shattered buildings even after Israel's bombardments forced them to abandon the school's main building in the city.

"When I play I feel like I'm flying away," said Rifan Al-Qassas, 15, who started learning the oud, an Arab lute, when she was nine. She hopes to one day play abroad.

"Music gives me hope and eases my fear," she said.

Al-Qassas hopes to one day play abroad, she said during a weekend class at the heavily shelled Gaza College, a school in Gaza City. Israel's

military again pounded parts of the city on August 12, with more than 120 people killed over the past few days, Gazan health authorities say.

The conservatory was founded in the West Bank and had been a cultural lifeline for Gaza ever since it opened a branch there 13 years ago, teaching classical music along with popular genres, until Israel launched its war on the Mediterranean enclave in response to the October 7, 2023 Hamas attacks.

Before the fighting, Israel sometimes granted the best students exit permits to travel outside Gaza to play in the Palestine Youth Orchestra, the conservatory's touring ensemble. Others performed inside Gaza, giving concerts in both Arabic and Western traditions.

After 22 months of bombardment, some of the students are now dead, said Suhail Khoury, the conservatory's president, including 14-year-old violinist Lubna Alyaan, killed along with her family early in the war.

NEWS MAKERS

16 BSF Personnel Get Gallantry Medals For Operation Sindoor

PTI

New Delhi Sixteen Border Security Force (BSF) personnel have been awarded gallantry medals for displaying "conspicuous bravery" and "unmatched valour" during Operation Sindoor.

The paramilitary force is tasked with guarding the India-Pakistan border along the western flank of the country. "This Independence Day, 16 Brave Seema Praharis (border guards) are being awarded Gallantry Medals for their conspicuous bravery & unmatched valour, for being resolute & steadfast during the Ops Sindoor..."

"The medals are a testament to the Nation's faith & trust reposed in the India's First Line of Defence: The Border Security Force," the BSF said in a



social media post.

Among the medal winners are a deputy commandant-rank officer, two assistant commandants and an inspector. Under Operation Sindoor, India tar-

geted terrorist and military facilities in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir from May 7 to 10 in retaliation for the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed.

Man Beaten To Death By 10 Men For Chatting With Girl, Four Held

PTI

Mumbai :A 20-year-old man was allegedly beaten to death by 10 persons in Jalgaon district of Maharashtra after they spotted him chatting with a girl in Jalgaon district of Maharashtra, leading to the arrest of four individuals, police said on Wednesday.

Police suspect an old enmity led to the murder of Suleiman Khan, who was preparing for the police recruitment exam.

The four accused were produced before a local court, which remanded them in police custody even as a search for the mastermind of the crime is underway.

Khan, a resident of Betawad Khurd village, had gone to Jamner to fill the form for a police recruitment exam on Monday. He was chatting with a girl in a cafe when 10 individuals confronted him and started beating him, a police official said.

The attackers forced Khan to accompany them to his village, where he was assaulted with sticks and iron rods at the bus stand, he said.

When Khan's family members tried to break up the fight, they were also beaten up. Khan was rushed to a hospital, where doctors declared him dead, the official said.

The incident created tension in Jamner, leading to the deployment of a posse of police personnel in sensitive areas.

Khan's relatives and locals gathered at Jamner police station on Monday night, demanding the immediate arrest of the culprits and stringent action.

A case was registered under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) for kidnapping, rioting, and murder.

"Prima facie, an old enmity between two groups is the cause behind the incident. We are investigating the case from various angles," the official said.

'Incidents Like Pahalgam Cannot Be Ignored'

SC Seeks Centre's Reply On Plea For J&K Statehood

KO Web Desk

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Thursday sought a response from the Centre on a plea seeking the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, saying ground realities, including the recent Pahalgam incident cannot be ignored.

"You also have to take into consideration the ground realities... you cannot ignore what has happened in Pahalgam," CJI B R Gavai said when counsel including senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan sought an early hearing.

The bench also comprised Justice K Vinod Chandran.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, sought dismissal of the plea and said in the past too, the court had imposed costs on such pleas.

"Elections are held, my lords are aware of the peculiar position emerging from this part of the country and there are several considerations which go into decision-making," Mehta said.

The bench posted the plea, filed by academican Zahoor Ahmad Bhat and socio-political activist Ahmad Malik, for hearing after eight weeks.

Sankaranarayanan, appearing for Bhat, said it had been 21 months since that judgment was passed by the Constitution bench on issues including the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution. "There has been no movement partly because, my lords fairly trusted the Union when they made this statement before the court that they will implement the statehood," Sankaranarayanan said.

Referring to the judgment, he said the bench did not address the issue in view of the assurance given by the solicitor general that the statehood to Jammu and Kashmir will be restored.

Sankaranarayanan said the bench had merely directed that restoration of statehood at the earliest and did not set any timeline.

On December 11, 2023, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the revocation of Article 370,

which accorded a special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, even as it ordered that assembly elections be held in the union territory by September 2024 and its statehood be restored "at the earliest".

Last year, a plea was filed in the top court seeking directions to the Centre for the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir within two months.

"Delay in the restoration of statehood would cause serious reduction of democratically elected government in Jammu and Kashmir, causing a grave violation of the idea of federalism which forms part of the basic structure of the Constitution of India," Bhat's plea said.

The assembly elections and the Lok Sabha polls were conducted peacefully in Jammu and Kashmir without any incident of violence, disturbance or any security concerns being reported, it said.

"Therefore, there is no impediment of security concerns, violence or any other disturbances which would hinder or prevent the grant/restoration of the status of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir as had been assured by the Union of India in the present proceedings," the plea added.

The non-restoration of the status of statehood of Jammu and Kashmir, the plea said, would result in a lesser form of elected democratic government to the state, particularly given legislative assembly results were declared on October 8, 2024.

Despite the apex court's directions for the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir "at the earliest and as soon as possible", the Centre took no steps to provide any timeline for the implementation of such directions, it claimed.

"Jammu and Kashmir is being operated as a Union Territory for a period of almost five years now, which has caused many impediments and grave losses to the development of Jammu and Kashmir and has affected the democratic rights of its citizens," the plea added.

the council of ministers, and that the LG's office was not an extension of the government.

The affidavit was filed in response to a plea by Congress leader Ravinder Sharma challenging the constitutional validity of sections 15, 15-A and 15-B of the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act, which allow the LG to nominate five members to the assembly beyond its sanctioned strength.

As the division bench of Justice Sanjeev Kumar and Justice Rajesh Sekhri took up the matter, the petitioner sought time to file a rejoinder to the objections filed by the respondents. The court accepted the request and fixed the next hearing for September 26.

79th Independence Day: 3-tier Security In Place In J&K

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir is set to celebrate the 79th Independence Day under a three-tier security cover on Friday.

Officials said that the main official event in Kashmir will be held at Bakshi Stadium in Srinagar, while M A Stadium will host the central function in Jammu.

Celebrations are scheduled at all district and block headquarters, government offices, and educational institutions, they said, adding that public representatives, Deputy Commissioners, and members of Panchayati Raj Institutions will hoist the national flag at various administrative levels, including sub-districts, tehsils, and panchayats.

To ensure the smooth conduct of the events, authorities have implemented heightened security across the Union Territory.

A senior police officer said that both manpower and technology will be deployed to prevent any untoward incidents.

High-rise buildings around the main venues in Srinagar and Jammu have been secured by sharpshooters from the Police, CRPF and other forces, he said.

The officials said that these locations remain under constant observation, with drone surveillance being carried out to monitor the ground situation.

In Srinagar, detailed checks



and identity verifications are being conducted on roads and highways, the officials added.

Security forces are carrying out random frisking of commuters and vehicles. Similar arrangements have been made in Jammu, where multiple security layers are in place at key points.

Officials in Jammu said coordination between various security agencies is ongoing to maintain order. People have been urged to cooperate with security personnel for the safety of all.

Security has also been stepped up in border areas, particularly in North Kashmir sectors like Gurez, Uri, Karnah, and Tangdhar, as well as in the Sanderbani sector of Jammu.

Along the International Border in Jammu, BSF personnel are conducting regular patrols and using digital surveillance tools to maintain constant vigilance.

The officials said surveillance and patrolling along the Line of

Control (LoC) have been intensified. Forces remain on alert to respond to any infiltration attempts or ceasefire violations.

The Army has employed smart fencing and robotic surveillance systems in difficult terrains to ensure continuous monitoring.

Quadcopters and drones with night vision and high-resolution capabilities are being used to gather real-time intelligence.

Troops have access to bullet-proof and all-terrain vehicles for quick movement in mountainous regions.

Security personnel are also undergoing training exercises simulating potential threats to improve operational preparedness.

The officials have appealed to the public to participate in the Independence Day events and assured them that all necessary arrangements are in place for their safety. (KNO)

Flash Floods Hit Multiple Areas In Kashmir

MeT Forecasts More Rains, Landslides

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Flash floods occurred in several locations across Kashmir on Thursday, while intermittent light rains continued in other parts, including Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu & Kashmir. The ongoing rainfall has contributed to a dip in temperatures across the valley.

According to reports, flash floods affected areas such as Kawcherwan and Kangan, Gund, Sumbal, Frislan, and Batkoot in Pahalgam, Qazi Nallah in Karnah, Ichoo Nallah in Kokernag, and others.

Independent weather forecaster Faizan Arif Keng confirmed these incidents, saying a massive flash flood occurred in the Saspol area of Leh along the Srinagar-Leh National Highway.

The water level in Sheshnag Nallah and Betaab Valley exceeded the danger mark today, reaching 5.23 feet, which is above the critical level of 5.09 feet, raising concerns of potential flooding nearby.

Authorities have advised residents to stay away from rivers and streams as a precaution. Keng said that "nothing alarming" is currently happening, as the surge appears localised and is being monitored continuously.



He urged caution but assured there is no immediate threat.

Meteorological officials said that with vigilance and timely alerts, the situation remains under control. Water levels are under close watch, and rescue teams are on standby in case of emergencies, they said.

Rainfall persisted intermittently throughout the day in Srinagar and other parts of Kashmir. The IMD's detailed report states that Pahalgam received 33.6 mm of rain, Gulmarg recorded the highest with 47.2 mm by 5:30 PM. Srinagar saw 1.5 mm; Qazigund 0.4 mm; Kupwara 1.8 mm; and Kokernag 0.4 mm.

The weather forecast predicts light to moderate rain and thunderstorms across many areas of Jammu division until tomorrow, with isolated

heavy rainfall expected in Reasi, Udhampur, Jammu, Samba, Kathua, Doda, Kishtwar, Poonch, Rajouri, and Ramban. Some parts of Kashmir may experience brief, intense showers and gusty winds.

The IMD further forecasts generally hot and humid weather with brief showers on August 16, followed by continued light to moderate rain and thunderstorms in many places on August 17 and 18, with heavier rainfall in parts of Jammu division.

An official advisory warns of the possibility of heavy to very heavy rainfall, thunderstorms, landslides, mudslides, and shooting stones in vulnerable areas until tomorrow. Residents have been advised to stay away from water bodies, river embankments, and loose structures to avoid accidents.

HC Chides Govt For Not Holding Regular DPCs

Uphold CAT Order On Removing Director Family Welfare

M Ahmad

SRINAGAR: The failure of government to convene DPC on regular basis and make promotions in time has created a situation where not even a single candidate in the service is eligible to hold the post of Director Family Welfare, MCH & Immunization, J&K, the High Court of J&K and Ladakh has said.

The Court made the observations while upholding the Central Administrative Tribunal's order, underlining Dr Mushtaq Ahmad Rather could not have been assigned the additional charge of the post of Director, Family Welfare, MCH & Immunization, J&K.

The Tribunal had quashed the Government Order dated 23 December 2024 and had directed the Government to assign the charge of the post of Director, Family Welfare, MCH & Immunization J&K to the senior most and eligible member of the J&K Health & Family Welfare (Gazetted) Service.

"The petitioner (Dr Mushtaq Ahmad Rather), who belongs to a different service and does not fall in the feeding cadre to the post of Director in question, is absolutely not eligible to hold the post even in officiating capacity," a bench of Justice Sanjeev Kumar and Justice Sanjay Parihar said while dismissing Rather's plea against the CAT.

"We understand the difficulty respondent No.2 (Health and Medical Education Department) may be facing in posting an eligible person under the Rules as Director, Family Welfare, MCH & Immunization but that does not give absolute discretion to respondent No.2 to pick up any person from any service and impose it on the Health and Family Welfare (Gazetted) Service."

If for some reasons beyond the control of Health and Medical Education Department, the court said, the working of the office of Director, Family Welfare, MCH and Immunization is required to be carried out by giving temporary charge to an ineligible person, "it would be in the fitness of the things to pick up such person from within the service."

"We can visualize that this dif-

ficulty has arisen because of failure of respondent No.2 to convene the meetings of DPC/PSC for making regular promotions in different gazette cadres of the service periodically," the Bench said, adding, "This failure of respondent No.2 to convene DPC on regular basis and make promotions in time has created a situation where not even a single candidate in the service is eligible to hold the post of Director."

In such a situation, the court said, the Government may be justified in giving temporary charge of the post even to an ineligible person.

"We, however, fail to understand that when the Government has picked up an ineligible person to manage the post of Director, Family Welfare, MCH & Immunization, why it could not do so by picking up such person from within the service," the court said, adding, "May be on officiating posts, there are candidates including respondent No.1 (Dr. Poonam Sethi), who is holding the post of ADMO Labour/ Deputy Director (Schemes) since 2023. These officers like respondent No.1, who have now reached to the level of Deputy Director, have long experience of decades at their back to run the administration in different capacities in the department of Health and Family Welfare."

The petitioner (Dr Rather), the court said, is already holding the position in the Department of Medical Education and, therefore, "importing" him to the department of Health and Family Welfare smacks of an act of favouritism, the court said.

"We are well aware that ordinarily a person who himself is not eligible to hold the post cannot throw challenge to the appointment of another candidate," the court said, adding, "However, in a case where one ineligible person is ignored at the cost of another ineligible person without reasonable basis or rationale, ineligible person, who has been ignored, can raise his voice and approach the Court to find out the reasons for his/her exclusion and rue the inclusion of another ineligible candidate that, too, who does not even belong to the service."

"Har Ghar Tiranga" Campaign Held In NR Personnel Branch



Observer News Service

NEW DELHI: The "Har Ghar Tiranga" campaign was organised with enthusiasm in the Personnel Branch of Northern Railway, Head Office. On this occasion, all the officers and employees participated enthusiastically under the leadership of Principal Chief Personnel Officer Shri Sujit Kumar Mishra.

Highlighting the importance of the tricolour, Shri Mishra said that this campaign is not just a symbol-

ic event, but a powerful medium to awaken the spirit of patriotism within every Indian.

The office premises were decorated with the colours of the tricolour, and all the officers and employees expressed their loyalty and pride towards the country by holding the national flag in their hands.

This event was a symbol of Northern Railway's commitment and participation towards the nation, under the "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav".

Shia Association Defies Kashmir Grand Mufti Summons

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A fresh row has erupted in Kashmir after the J&K Shia Association, led by Molvi Imran Reza Ansari, outrightly rejected a summons issued by the Office of Kashmir's Grand Mufti, declaring that the body has no rightful authority over Shia religious matters.

The Association reaffirmed that it would not appear in any proceedings initiated by the Mufti's office, framing its refusal as a principled stance aimed at safeguarding core beliefs rather than an act of evasion.

The controversy began after remarks by Imran Reza Ansari drew strong public reaction and widespread social media debate. In response, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Uluma (MMU) – the umbrella body of major Sunni and Shia religious organisations in J&K – convened a meeting on July 15 to address the issue.

Chaired by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, the MMU unanimously reaffirmed that the sanctity of the Sahaba – the revered companions of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) – and the Ahl al-Bayt – the Prophet's noble family – is a foundational belief shared by all Muslims.



"Differences in theology must never become an excuse for disrespect," the Majlis said, warning that unity built on centuries of coexistence in Kashmir is a moral and religious obligation. The MMU welcomed the public stance of senior Shia clerics distancing themselves from Ansari's comments, emphasising that such views were personal and contrary to the guidance of top Shia Maraji, who forbid any disparagement of Sunni sacred figures.

To ensure accountability, the MMU resolved to constitute a panel under Grand Mufti Nasir-ul-Islam to summon Ansari for clarification on August 13 and to also question others accused of derogatory remarks

towards the Ahl al-Bayt.

However, cracks appeared soon after the MMU resolution. Three senior Shia leaders – Agha Syed Hassan Al-Moosvi, Agha Syed Muhammad Hadi Al-Moosvi, and Maulana Masroor Abbas Ansari – issued a joint statement rejecting a subsequent press conference by the Grand Mufti. They accused him of making a "unilateral" and "fabricated" statement that deviated from the council's joint resolution.

Reaffirming their commitment to the agreed position of mutual respect between sects, they cited edicts from Shia authorities prohibiting derogatory speech against Sunni sacred figures, particularly the Rightly Guided Caliphs. They also criticised what

they saw as the Mufti's endorsement of a historically controversial figure and stressed the need to protect Kashmir's centuries-old inter-sect harmony.

SHIA ASSOCIATION REFUSES SUMMONS

Against this backdrop, on Thursday the J&K Shia Association issued a defiant statement refusing to appear before the Grand Mufti's panel. The Association declared that the Mufti's office had "no rightful authority over Shia religious matters" and that its stance was rooted in the protection of its core beliefs, not in evasion.

The Association accused the Mufti's office of "selective engagement."

"What is even more troubling is the selective vocality of the Office of the Grand Mufti – prompt in addressing certain matters, yet conspicuously silent when Hazrat Abu Talib (a) was maligned from the pulpit. This inconsistency raises questions not merely of principle but of motive," it alleged.

The statement also expressed disappointment at the stance of senior Shia clerics Agha Syed Hassan Al-Moosvi and Agha Syed Hadi, who, it claimed, despite having the same beliefs, have on multiple occasions

aligned themselves with the Office of the Grand Mufti.

"Such alignment, in our view, risks undermining the very beliefs they are meant to uphold. While unity is noble in aspiration, it cannot be pursued by eroding the foundations of your own faith," the statement said.

The Association further hinted at the possibility of external ideological and political influences shaping certain religious positions, pointing to perceived alignments with a neighbouring country as an area warranting scrutiny.

"Given these patterns, one is compelled to inquire whether such actions are driven by external influences, particularly in light of the evident ideological inclinations and political leanings towards a neighbouring country. The possibility of such external orchestration cannot be dismissed without due scrutiny," it said.

Underscoring its position, the Association added: "Our responsibility is to safeguard the beliefs that define us. No political convenience or external pressure can compel us to dilute our faith. We will continue to stand firm against any attempt to undermine our religious identity."

MMU Panel Slams Imran Ansari for Dodging Clarification Meeting

SRINAGAR — A panel of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Uluma (MMU) Jammu & Kashmir has sharply criticised Molvi Imran Raza Ansari for failing to attend a meeting convened to seek clarification over his alleged offensive remarks about revered Islamic figures.

The panel, chaired by Grand Mufti Nasir-ul-Islam, said Imran Ansari's absence showed a lack of willingness to engage in dialogue and reinforced perceptions that his statements were deliberate and provocative.

The meeting, held on Wednesday, brought together prominent scholars including Mufti Nazir Ahmad Qasmi, Agha Syed Mohammad Hadi Al-Moosavi, Mufti Mohammad Yaqoob Baba Al-Madani, and Agha Mujtaba Al-Moosavi. It followed the MMU's July 16 decision to investigate remarks attributed to Imran Ansari and certain other preachers from the Ahl-e-Sunnat wal Jamaat, as well as derogatory social media posts targeting the Sahaba (RA) and the Ahl al-Bayt (AS).

Panel members expressed "deep disappointment" over Imran Ansari's refusal to attend despite a formal request, terming it "unbecoming of a public figure" and "especially inappropriate" for someone claiming religious responsibilities. They condemned his conduct and reaffirmed the MMU's uncompromising stance against any disrespect towards the Sahaba or Ahl al-Bayt, stressing that mutual respect and unity among Muslims in Jammu & Kashmir is a religious and moral obligation.

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KO VIEW

Silencing The Gaza Witnesses

The recent killing of five Al Jazeera journalists, including the widely known correspondent Anas al-Sharif, in an Israeli strike near Gaza City's Al-Shifa Hospital is more than another grim statistic in a war that has already claimed thousands of lives. It is a direct assault on the principle that journalists as civilians and chroniclers of truth must never be targeted. Israel insists al-Sharif was a Hamas operative posing as a journalist, but has yet to produce evidence that would withstand independent scrutiny. It has become the familiar pattern with Israel: accuse Hamas of sheltering among residential neighbourhoods to justify killing civilians. And to accuse journalists of being Hamas sympathisers to justify their killing. This is something that has also been highlighted by the Committee to Protect Journalists.

According to UNESCO, at least 62 journalists and media workers killed in the line of duty in Palestine, excluding deaths in circumstances unrelated to their work, while OHCHR reports that at least 242 Palestinian journalists have been killed in the same time frame.

Is the world doing anything about this? Yes, by issuing condemnation statements, calling for investigation and issuing calls for restraint. But actually doing little to avert daily massacres of innocent people including those of journalists and taking steps to bring to an end this horrible war. The result is that the war is grinding on, exacting daily toll on Palestinians who are living under famine-like conditions.

What is required is not just another temporary cease-fire, soon to be broken by the next provocation or retaliation, but a sustained, enforceable political effort to address the root causes of this endless conflict. We need a serious global effort to not only stop the war which will complete two years in next two months, but work actively towards a lasting resolution to lingering israel-palestine conflict. It also means holding Israel accountable for indiscriminate attacks, for violations of humanitarian law, and for systematic genocide of Palestinians and attempts to ethnically cleanse them from their land.

That said, the deaths of al-Sharif and his colleagues should force the global community to confront an uncomfortable reality: Journalists are dying not as collateral damage but in targeted strikes on clearly marked press sites. If this is allowed to pass without consequence, it will signal to every combatant in every future conflict that truth-telling is fair game. To merely mourn their deaths is to guarantee more will follow. The world therefore must act to not only to stop the current bloodshed, but to resolve the larger conflict that makes such tragedies inevitable.

CASH COURSE

Read This Before You Buy Anything

Restoring Trust in Kashmir's Economy

With honesty slipping from everyday transactions, Kashmir faces an urgent need to rebuild financial integrity through education, accountability, and ethical practices.

Irshad Mushtaq

Kashmir has long been celebrated for its culture of honesty and fairness. Traders, neighbors, and artisans operated on trust, and the region's reputation for integrity stretched far beyond its mountains and valleys.

Today, that legacy feels threatened. Misleading commitments, inflated charges, and exploitative deals have crept into daily life, from small repairs to larger institutional transactions.

Restoring trust demands education and engagement. Financial literacy can give Kashmiris the tools to navigate earnings, savings, and investments confidently. Small business owners can benefit from programs that teach ethical practices, smart planning, and long-term strategies for growth.

Investing in ethical practices is as important as investing in capital. Transparent business dealings strengthen both customer confidence and local economies. Community forums and discussions on financial ethics can clarify what constitutes fair practice and help align economic activity with cultural values.

For households, understanding compounding interest, budgeting, and responsible investing can turn modest savings into sustainable wealth.

Accountability is the keystone. Government transparency and private sector codes of ethics reinforce a culture where promises are honored, and deceit is unacceptable.

By embracing discipline, truth, and collective responsibility, Kashmir can rebuild the economic integrity that once defined it.

That is a cultural revival, one that can help Kashmir thrive economically while staying true to the values its people have long cherished.

The author is a Srinagar-based reputed financial advisor.

Pets Over Parents

The emotional devotion once reserved for parents increasingly flows toward pets in Kashmir, raising ethical and health concerns.



Rahila Ali

“Young Kashmiris face a choice that goes beyond preference. It is a moral decision, a cultural statement, and a health consideration. Pets bring joy, companionship, and warmth. Parents carry love that spans decades, sacrifice that shapes lives, and prayers that linger long after their children leave home.

A subtle but telling change has taken hold in many Kashmiri homes.

Young people lavish attention, time, and money on their dogs and cats. Pets sleep on plush bedding, enjoy specially prepared meals, receive grooming services, and even get veterinary care that rivals the attention given to humans.

Meanwhile, the parents who raised these children, the ones who endured sleepless nights, financial hardship, and endless sacrifices, sometimes live with loneliness, untreated ailments, or lack of emotional support.

Social media amplifies the trend.

Every picture of a pampered pet brings likes, admiration, and subtle social pressure. Caring for animals has become a badge of compassion, sometimes at the expense of the more demanding, less glamorous responsibility of nurturing one's own parents.

The psychology behind this shift is evident. Modern life in Kashmir isolates individuals, and pets provide unconditional companionship. They do not argue, complain, or question.

Parents, in contrast, require patience, empathy, and consistent attention, a labour of love that can feel heavier than the carefree affection of a four-legged friend.

Culturally and religiously, the implications are profound.

Islamic teachings place respect, service, and care for parents just after prayer in importance.

Neglecting parental care while indulging pets also contradicts centuries of Kashmiri family tradition and the moral framework that has long bound communities.

Pets cannot pray for you,

cannot bless your endeavours, cannot offer the wisdom and guidance embedded in parental love.

When society begins valuing animals over parents, it risks a moral erosion, replacing human obligations with superficial attachments.

The risks are not only ethical but physical.

Science confirms that while pets provide emotional comfort, they carry hidden dangers.

Dogs can harbour Toxocara canis, which may cause organ

is absolute.

Affection for pets, while rewarding, comes with responsibilities and limits. Parental love, in contrast, is limitless, enduring, and sacred.

Replacing those bonds with the fleeting joy of pet indulgence signals a troubling shift in Kashmir where familial bonds have historically been the backbone of community.

The comfort of an animal cannot substitute for the blessings, guidance, and emotional

“Research in the Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine notes that Bartonella henselae, the bacteria behind ‘cat scratch disease,’ can survive in cats long after treatment. Leptospira can persist in dogs’ kidneys despite antibiotics.

damage or vision problems in humans. Cats often carry Toxoplasma gondii, dangerous for pregnant women and immunocompromised individuals.

Vaccines and antibiotics help lower the risk, but they don't get rid of it completely. Germs can stick around, making some people long-term carriers. It's easy to get infected again from the environment, and using too many medicines can make germs resistant.

Research in the Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine notes that Bartonella henselae, the bacteria behind ‘cat scratch disease,’ can survive in cats long after treatment. Leptospira can persist in dogs’ kidneys despite antibiotics.

Vigilance, hygiene, and medical care help, but no cure

sustenance of parents.

Young Kashmiris face a choice that goes beyond preference. It is a moral decision, a cultural statement, and a health consideration.

Pets bring joy, companionship, and warmth. Parents carry love that spans decades, sacrifice that shapes lives, and prayers that linger long after their children leave home.

Science, culture, and faith converge on one truth: parents must come first.

The author can be reached at rahilaali951@gmail.com. Views expressed in this article are author's own and don't necessarily reflect KO's editorial policy.

Letter to Editor

Crossing Srinagar: The Daily Gamble of City Streets

Every morning on my way to the office, I see the same worrying sight. Patients and their attendants, sometimes with small children, dart across the Bypass near the Children's Hospital and JVC Bemina. With no zebra crossing or pedestrian signal, every step feels risky. Cars and bikes speed by, leaving almost no margin for error.

The government deserves credit for moving hospitals from crowded city centers to the outskirts. The idea makes sense. It eases congestion and gives hospitals more space.

On the roads, however, the reality is harsh. Unsafe streets, traffic bottlenecks, and missing basic safety measures make the journey to these hospitals dangerous. A modern building matters little if people risk their lives just to reach it.

Simple interventions could save lives: marked pedestrian crossings, working traffic signals, and strict speed limits. Public health facilities need safe access as much as they need good infrastructure.

Urban traffic planning cannot be reactive. Signposts, footpaths, traffic lights, and pedestrian subways should be standard, not optional. Policies must be guided by evidence, foresight, and accountability.

These measures are mandatory as Srinagar's streets are becoming increasingly hazardous. Weak enforcement, reckless driving, and absent pedestrian infrastructure turn the city into a hazard zone. Zebra crossings fade into the asphalt, parking is scarce, and enforcement sometimes encourages bribery instead of compliance. Fines alone won't change behaviour. Education,

infrastructure, and enforcement must work together.

Commercial drivers, especially tippers and Tata Mobile operators, need mandatory training. Underage driving is common, and risky two-wheeler stunts spike in winter. Restricting teenage riders during peak accident months could prevent injuries. Overloaded vehicles worsen congestion, damage roads, and endanger lives. Temporary suspension of licenses, rather than fines, may be more effective.

City roads are filling up faster than they can be expanded. Widening roads, building flyovers, enforcing one-way streets, and integrating modern public transport can ease pressure.

Schools, colleges, and government offices concentrated in central Srinagar should gradually shift to

suburban areas. During peak hours, traffic personnel near schools and colleges can make movement safer for students and parents.

Srinagar needs a holistic traffic plan. Urban planning, civic education, smart infrastructure, and strict enforcement must work together.

Moving from chaos to order is possible, but it requires effort from the government, civil society, and every road user.

Every pedestrian crossing, traffic light, and road sign matters. The city's streets should not be a daily gamble. They should be a promise of safety and shared responsibility.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sajad Hussain Deen
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August 15 Beyond the Red Fort

India marks its 79th Independence Day as a journey through history, built by the efforts of millions and grounded in the promise of 1947.

Mohammad Amin Mir

For decades, the day was marked by parades, speeches, and school drills. In recent years, something more organic has emerged.

The Tiranga rallies have spread from capital boulevards to the smallest lanes of our towns. They have shifted the flag from a thing you watch to a thing you carry.

This shift is especially striking in the valley. The Tricolour once appeared here mostly on government buildings or in moments of official ceremony. Today, it is winding its way through market streets, village squares, and river embankments.

Shopkeepers lean out of their shutters to wave. Children dart between groups with flag pins in their hands. In places where the flag once divided, it is becoming a meeting ground.

The rallies work because they lower the barriers to participation. You don't need to be a politician, a soldier, or a celebrity. You need a flag, a few friends, and the willingness to walk.

Farmers in Kupwara have marched past fields ready for harvest. Health workers of Pulwama have led lines of schoolchildren singing the anthem. Urban pensioners have walked alongside



young professionals on their way to work.

Every step says the same thing: this country belongs to all of us.

That sense of ownership is built into the flag's design. Saffron for courage and restraint. White for truth that shows every stain. Green for prosperity that doesn't strip the land. And at the center, the Ashoka Chakra, always turning, to remind us that a republic cannot stand still.

Beyond decorative choices, they are instructions for how to live together.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given these instructions new life. His push to bring the flag into every home and street through the

Har Ghar Tiranga campaign and similar efforts has made Independence Day less about watching and more about doing.

Social media has amplified the idea, but the real power lies in its simplicity: a flag in your hands, carried where you live.

This has made participation easier for Kashmiris who might once have stood apart.

The rallies also do something rare in today's politics: they bring generations together.

A grandmother in Baramulla, who still remembers the ration cards of the 1950s, can walk beside her grandson livestreaming the march.

Between them flows a story about what

freedom meant then and what it must mean now.

Women's self-help groups, teachers, and nurses often lead these rallies, echoing the long and often uncredited role women played in the freedom movement.

Spectacles matter most when they guide how we act. That's what makes the Tiranga rally a small lesson in discipline.

People walk in order, make space for elders and children, keep the streets clean. They follow the flag code, hoist it correctly, and treat it with care.

These acts seem minor until you remember



FARMERS IN KUPWARA HAVE MARCHED PAST FIELDS READY FOR HARVEST.

Health workers of Pulwama have led lines of schoolchildren singing the anthem. Urban pensioners have walked alongside young professionals on their way to work.

that democracy is built from exactly such habits: restraint, respect, and responsibility.

Skeptics ask why any of this matters in the age of AI, climate crisis, and geopolitical tension.

It matters because a country that cannot rally around a shared symbol will struggle to rally for anything else.

The green stripe is a reminder to grow without poisoning our rivers and air. The saffron asks us to put duty before privilege. The white dares us to tell the truth, even when it costs us.

On the morning of August 15, when the flag rises above the Red Fort, it pulls memory, duty, and hope into the sky.

And far from Delhi, perhaps on a hillside road in Shopian or through the crowded lanes of Anantnag, a Tiranga rally will be making its own slow way forward.

Children will lead with songs, elders will smile from the roadside, shopkeepers will step outside to clap.

For a moment, the noise of politics fades, replaced by the steady rhythm of marching feet.

Independence Day shows us both who we are and who we might become.

And that is the true spirit of the day.

- The author is a legal researcher and columnist who has covered land governance in Jammu & Kashmir for more than a decade.



ON THE MORNING OF AUGUST 15, WHEN THE FLAG RISES ABOVE THE RED FORT, it pulls memory, duty, and hope into the sky. And far from Delhi, perhaps on a hillside road in Shopian or through the crowded lanes of Anantnag, a Tiranga rally will be making its own slow way forward.

Plates and Stories

I still eat out, but now I check kitchens, ask hard questions, and put health first.



Basharat Ahmad

Like many Kashmiris, I love food with curiosity, nostalgia, and unapologetic indulgence.

Walking through Srinagar's old city, I still catch the smoky aroma of sizzling kebabs, the earthy scent of Goshtab simmering in copper pots, and the warm fragrance of freshly baked naan.

These streets are alive with food, each restaurant and stall a thread in the fabric of our culture and history.

For years, many young people turned to the food trade, drawn by the promise of steady work and an apparently easy path.

Then came delivery apps: a few taps, and a plate of biryani, a tray of kebabs, or fried fish would appear at your door.

We ate with ease, trusting that someone somewhere had ensured the food was safe.

Last week, that trust broke.

Social media was flooded with reports of frozen, spoiled, and substandard meat seized from Srinagar restaurants. Food safety authorities finally acted: raiding kitchens, questioning owners, and penalising eateries that ignored basic hygiene.

Seeing the faces behind these businesses, people we'd trusted, caught in the act of putting public health at risk was shocking.

It's easy to point fingers, but I can't help

thinking about the years before this week.

We relished the same restaurants, the same kebabs and Rista, the same frozen chicken and fish. How often did we pause to ask if it was safe?

Hospitals now report rising cases of food poisoning, stomach infections, and gut problems. The truth is, bacterial toxins grow slowly in improperly stored meat and fish.

For years, many of us have been eating food that might have harmed us.

Better late than never, I tell myself. This is a wake-up call for anyone who enjoys eating out.

Dining should still be a pleasure, but it comes with responsibility. Watch the kitchen, the counters, the cooks. Ask about ingredients, storage times, and refrigeration. Consumers in Kashmir, and everywhere, deserve this knowledge.

Processed foods carry the highest risk. Non-vegetarian dishes are often stored for days, sometimes weeks. If temperatures slip or storage is prolonged, a delicacy can quickly become dangerous.

Bacteria grow silently and relentlessly, causing everything from mild food poisoning to serious infections.

Our love for taste, convenience, and tradition has too often blinded us to this danger.

I've started eating differently now. I savor food with attention, tasting with both



I'VE STARTED EATING DIFFERENTLY NOW. I SAVOR FOOD WITH ATTENTION, tasting with both tongue and mind. Health has become a choice, not an expectation. Home-cooked meals are safer, yes, but even when eating out, vigilance makes a big difference.

tongue and mind. Health has become a choice, not an expectation. Home-cooked meals are safer, yes, but even when eating out, vigilance makes a big difference.

Our relationship with food is deeply cultural. Kashmir's bustling streets are alive with culinary heritage. Each bite carries memory, identity, and tradition.

We can preserve this joy, but only if we insist on cleanliness and quality.

Eating makes life richer, fuller, happier. But to truly enjoy it, we must also eat safely.

- The author can be reached at opbravoo3858@gmail.com.

Why Millions Still Walk for Hussain

Forty days after Ashura, the road to Karbala becomes a living testament to Hussain's stand.



Nasir Hussain

Some moments in history do not fade. They live on in memory, faith, and conscience.

The stand of Imam Hussain (A.S) on the plains of Karbala is one such moment.

It was a battle fought with moral conviction, spiritual clarity, and an unshakable refusal to accept oppression.

Forty days after Ashura, the day of that great tragedy, comes Arbadeen. It is a time when millions across the world pause to remember, mourn, and renew their pledge to the values Hussain lived and died for.

Arbadeen is a mirror we hold to ourselves.

When Imam Hussain declared, "I did not rise out of arrogance or rebellion, nor to spread corruption or tyranny. I only rose to seek reform in the nation of my grandfather (Prophet Muhammad)," he was laying down a timeless mission.

That mission, to restore justice, protect truth, and reform society, beats at the heart of Arbadeen.

Karbala cannot be locked away in the past. It is a living movement, one that still speaks to every generation. Hussain's choice to face certain death rather than submit to injustice carries a clear, unchanging message: bow to no tyrant, defend truth without fear, and remember that silence in the face of wrong is itself a form of betrayal.

On the battlefield, he became the living proof of the Quranic truth: "Truth has come, and falsehood has perished. Surely, falsehood

is bound to perish." (Surah Al-Isra, 17:81)

Each year, the Arbadeen pilgrimage draws the largest peaceful gathering on earth. The road to Karbala is long and demanding, yet it is walked with love, loyalty, and defiance against every attempt to erase Hussain's legacy.

It is a declaration without words: the followers of Hussain endure, and they will not bend.

Imam Hasan al-Askari (A.S) described the visitation of Arbadeen as one of the marks of a true believer. For many, it is the renewal of a spirit that guides their lives.

The urgency of Hussain's message has not dimmed. In a world clouded by moral confusion, systemic injustice, and the erosion of truth, Karbala calls on us to fight the battles within before confronting those outside.

It asks us to stand with the oppressed, to distinguish right from wrong, to live with knowledge and patience, and to understand that a dignified death outweighs a life spent in humiliation.

Arbadeen is not only the remembrance of a martyrdom. It is a call to live with conscience, to resist what is wrong, and to keep faith alive no matter the odds.

That is why the road to Karbala is never empty. Hussain still walks with those who refuse to bow.

- The author is a member of the Intizamia Committee, Masjid Imam Mahdi (A.S), Syed Merak Shah Colony.

Voice Tone, Clarity May Help Detect Early Laryngeal Cancer: Study

Press Trust Of India

Researchers have found that voice features in recordings -- such as tone, pitch and clarity -- could help detect early warning signs of cancer of the larynx (voice box). Findings published in the journal Frontiers in Digital Health could help in developing artificial intelligence (AI) models for detecting abnormalities, or 'lesions', in vocal folds from the sound of a voice -- lesions may be benign, but could also represent early stages of laryngeal cancer, the researchers said. Current diagnostic procedures, such as endoscopies and biopsies, are invasive, they added.

"Here we show that with this dataset (of voice recordings) we could use vocal biomarkers to distinguish voices from patients with vocal fold lesions from those without such lesions," said author Dr Phillip Jenkins, a postdoctoral fellow in clinical informatics at Oregon Health and Science University, US. The team analysed tone, pitch, volume, and clarity of over 12,500 voice recordings of 306 participants, taken from the publicly available 'Bridge2AI-Voice' dataset. "Among the overall sample, significant differences were identified in HNR (harmonic-to-noise ratio) and fundamental frequency between benign lesions and both healthy controls and laryngeal cancer," the authors



wrote. A 'harmonic-to-noise' ratio, or 'clarity', measures the amount of noise in a voice signal. While marked differences in voice features were found between men

having benign lesions in vocal folds, and those with laryngeal cancer, the researchers could not find distinct acoustic features among women's voices.

It is possible that a larger dataset would reveal such differences, they said. Changes in the harmonic-to-noise ratio can be helpful in monitoring how lesions in vocal folds evolve over time and detecting laryngeal cancer at an early stage, at least in men, the researchers said. "Our results suggest that ethically sourced, large, multi-institutional datasets like Bridge2AI-Voice could soon help make our voice a practical biomarker for cancer risk in clinical care," said Dr Jenkins. The team is looking to train the AI model on larger datasets of voice recordings and test it among men and women.

NIT Rourkela Decodes Sugar Molecules, Protein Complex To Boost Bone Regeneration Tech

Press Trust Of India

Researchers at the National Institute of Technology (NIT), Rourkela have uncovered how natural sugar-like molecules in the human body can alter the behaviour of Bone Morphogenetic Protein-2 (BMP-2), a protein responsible for bone formation and repair, according to officials. Published in the prestigious journal Biochemistry, the findings of this research can be used for advanced treatments in bone and cartilage regeneration, improved implants and more effective protein-based medicines. According to Harekrushna Sahoo, Associate Professor, NIT, Rourkela, proteins carry out various functions in the human body -- from building tissues and supporting chemical reactions to acting as signals between cells. However, for the best productivity, they need to be folded or unfolded into precise three-dimensional shapes. Understanding why and how proteins unfold is a major goal in biology, with implications for medicine, biotechnology and drug delivery.

"In this context, BMP-2 plays a crucial role in forming bones and cartilage, healing injuries and guiding stem cells to become bone-forming cells. However, in the human body, this protein interacts with different Glycosaminoglycans (GAGs), special sugar-like molecules found in connective tissues and joint fluids," Sahoo said. The team observed that BMP-2 unfolded faster in the presence of Sulfated Hyaluronic Acid (SHA), a type of GAG, compared to regular Hyaluronic Acid or without additives. The researchers found that SHA binds directly to BMP-2 protein, gently altering its structure and making it unfold in a more controlled manner. "BMP-2 is a critical protein in humans that plays a fundamental role in osteogenesis and bone regeneration. Our study reveals how specific GAG-BMP-2 interactions influence unfolding dynamics and structural stability. These insights allow scaffold designs to actively preserve BMP-2's functional conformation, prolong bioactivity, lower dosage needs and reduce side effects. "Furthermore, the work offers a mechanistic basis for tailoring GAG functional group modifications to modulate protein structure and activity, guiding next-generation pharmaceutical formulation," he said.

Feeding Kids Can Be A Daily Battle. But You Wouldn't Know It Looking At Instagram

The Conversation

Many families find feeding children a constant challenge. A favourite food is suddenly refused, someone is grumpy after a long day, siblings fight at the table. But if parents and caregivers are turning to social media for advice, it may do more harm than good. Because here, feeding kids looks downright easy. Our new research found Instagram is flooded with highly polished content that can perpetuate unrealistic standards of mealtimes. This could be adding to the frustration and guilt many caregivers already face.

Our study We know parents face many pressures when it comes to feeding their kids, but little is known about how social media may be contributing to these pressures. To find out how family meals are portrayed on social media, we looked at a popular platform, Instagram. With about 2 billion users, Instagram proffers a seemingly endless carousel of images and videos related to food, cooking and eating. For our study, we downloaded the top 15 posts from the hashtags #familymeals, #familybreakfast, #familylunch and #familydinner every week for 14 weeks from February to May 2024, to analyse what was be-

ing posted.

Lots of 'meals on a plate' Unsurprisingly, most posts depicted food and drink, typically meals on a plate, the cooking process, or step-by-step recipe instructions. Many posts included "healthy foods" from the five core food groups. Interestingly, #familybreakfast contained the most "unhealthy foods", such as pancakes, waffles and big fry-ups. But few posts promoted realistic, everyday family meals. Most images depicted highly polished and staged kitchens, plated foods and mealtimes. To meet the ethics approval for our research, we are not able to publicly share the posts in our study. But below are images similar to those we found.

Where's the mess? It was rare to see posts with a toddler hanging off mum's leg while she cooked, or a kid getting cranky because they are hungry. We didn't see many kitchen benchtops with scattered ingredients, or plated food with sauce around the edges. In reality, family meals are often made in a rush, squeezed between daycare pickups, sports training, work and school. Caregivers often describe mealtimes as messy, chaotic and noisy. Image captions often contained reci-

pes described as "quick", "easy" or "family-friendly". However, there were few posts with families actually eating these meals together -- which makes us question how "easy" these meals might actually be. These "easy" recipe posts also assume life always goes to plan, kids help set the table and want to eat what has been prepared (sometimes a simple meal of baked beans on toast can still result in chaos). Few posts depicted people -- they were more about the "perfect" food. Where they did, it was usually a woman or mother. or fathers, and children were rarely depicted. The majority of family mealtime content was also posted by women and mothers. This messaging may further reinforce outdated gender roles and division of food-related labour.

What do parents need to keep in mind?

Instagram may offer caregivers quick, easy and family-friendly meal ideas. But it's important to remember not everything you see on social media is real. Algorithms favour popular content, and as a visual platform, Instagram posts are often picture-perfect and aesthetically pleasing. Messy kitchens and chaotic mealtimes do not make for visually appealing content. So try not to compare your meals to the curated content and perfect dishes you see on social media. It is unlikely this is how a

family cooks or eats every day. Food content may also be professionally filmed or photographed. What works for one family may not work for yours. If you see a new recipe or idea, give it a try. But don't be discouraged if it doesn't work out. It can take up to ten exposures to a new food for a child to even agree to taste it, and some children are more adventurous eaters than others. Also remember, healthy meals don't need to be complicated. Look out for simple recipes with plenty of vegetables. Mealtimes also do not need to look perfect to be healthy and enjoyable.

Post about real life To promote more realistic, relatable social media content, we need to start posting it. Sharing images or videos of everyday dishes and family meals may support other parents to feel more comfortable and less guilty about their own mealtimes. We know many men and dads are involved in family mealtimes. Sharing these moments may also help other men feel more comfortable getting into the kitchen. Promoting gender diversity and real-life mealtimes on social media can help shift family mealtime norms, including easing some of the burden of feeding families that often falls on women and mothers.

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WPI Inflation Declines To 2-Year Low Of (-) 0.58% In July



Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- Wholesale price inflation declined to a 2-year low of (-) 0.58 per cent in July, as deflation in food and fuel kept WPI in the negative zone for the second consecutive month, government data released on Thursday showed.

Experts, however, projected WPI inflation to move back into positive territory in August, as base effects fade and seasonal price increases continue.

WPI-based inflation was 2.10 per cent in July last year, and (-) 0.13 per cent in June.

"Negative rate of inflation in July 2025 is primarily due to a decrease in prices of food articles, mineral oils, crude petroleum & natural gas, manufacture of basic metals, etc," the industry ministry said in a statement.

According to WPI data, deflation in food articles widened to 6.29 per cent in July, as against a deflation of 3.75 per cent in June, with vegetables witnessing a sharp drop.

Deflation in vegetables was 28.96 per cent in July, compared to 22.65 per cent in June.

Fuel and power saw a nega-

tive inflation or deflation of 2.43 per cent in July, as against 2.65 per cent in June.

In the case of manufactured products, inflation was higher at 2.05 per cent in July, as against 1.97 per cent in the month before.

Barclays in a research note said that July wholesale price inflation was driven by lower food and energy prices.

"The continued negative print in headline in year-on-year terms despite the month-on-month rise in wholesale prices is explained by base effects," Barclays said.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which takes into account retail inflation to decide on monetary policy, had kept benchmark policy rates unchanged at 5.5 per cent earlier this month. The retail inflation in July dropped to an 8-year low of 1.55 per cent.

ICRA Senior Economist Rahul Agrawal said the deflation in wholesale inflation was largely driven by the food segment, which witnessed a larger year-on-year contraction, led by vegetables, pulses, and eggs, meat & fish.

Tariffs On India Could Rise If Trump-Putin Talks Fail: US

Press Trust Of India

NEW YORK- US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has warned that the secondary tariffs on India could go up if "things don't go well" during talks between President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska on Friday.

Last week, Trump imposed tariffs totalling 50 per cent on India, including 25 per cent for Delhi's purchases of Russian oil, that will come into effect from August 27.

"I think everyone has been frustrated with President Putin. We expected that he would come to the table in a more fulsome way. It looks like he may be ready to negotiate. And we put secondary tariffs on the Indians for buying Russian oil. I could see, if things don't go well, then sanctions or secondary tariffs could go up," Bessent said in an interview with Bloomberg on Wednesday.

When asked about China, the main buyer of Russian crude, Bessent said he is "not going to get ahead of the President, but the President



is the best at creating leverage for himself, and he will make it clear to President Putin that all options are on the table".

On whether sanctions can go up or loosened, Bessent said, "Sanctions can go up, they can be loosened. They can have a definitive life. They can go on indefinitely. You know, there's this Russian shadow fleet of ships around the world that I think we could crack down on."

He said that even as Trump is meeting with Putin, the Europeans "need to join us" and need to be willing to "put on these secondary sanctions".

Bessent recalled that at the G7 meeting in Canada this year, he asked the leaders at the table whether they

were willing to put a 200 per cent secondary tariff on China. "And you know what, everybody wanted to see what kind of shoes they were wearing."

He added that Trump is committed to ending the bloodshed in the Ukraine war. "It's put up or shut up time. The President is creating his own leverage. We need the Europeans to come in and help create more leverage," Bessent said.

Responding to the tariffs, the Ministry of External Affairs has said that the targeting of India is unjustified and unreasonable. "Like any major economy, India will take all necessary measures to safeguard its national interests and economic security," it said.

No Pause On Russian Oil Imports, India Continues Imports Based On Economic Rationale

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- India has not halted oil purchases from Russia in response to the US President's tariff threat and continues to buy based solely on economic considerations, said AS Sahney, Chairman of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), the country's largest oil firm.

Purchase volumes may fluctuate monthly based on the discounts offered on Russian crude grades like Urals. While discounts had previously reached as high as USD 40 per barrel, they have narrowed to just USD 1.5 late last month, resulting in reduced offtake. Discounts have since widened to about USD 2.70.

However, India's intent to continue buying Russian oil remains unchanged.

India became the largest customer of Russian oil from 2022, after western countries shunned Russian oil and imposed sanctions on Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine.

Sahney said refiners like IOC buy crude oil from Russia purely on economic consideration and have not been asked to cut or boost purchase in response to US tariffs, he said.

"There is no pause," he said. Russian oil has continued to flow to Indian refiners in July as well as this month.

"We continue to buy, purely based on economic considerations, that is to say if the pricing and characteristics of the crude make sense in our scheme of processing, we



buy," he told reporters here.

"No special effort is being made to either increase or decrease (the import volumes). We are buying crude as per economic considerations," he said.

Imports from Russia made up for 22-23 per cent of all the crude oil that IOC refineries processed in the April-June period.

US President Donald Trump last week announced an additional 25 per cent tariff on US imports from India -- raising the overall duty to 50 per cent -- as a penalty for the country's continued imports of Russian oil. Since the steep tariffs are likely to hit the USD 40 billion of non-exempt exports that India does to the US, there has been chatter around stopping or curtailing oil imports from Russia.

"There are no sanctions on Russian crude," he said. "India has not done anything that violates any sanctions".

Separately, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) Director (Finance) Vetsa Ramakrishna Gupta on an in-

vestor call said the discounts have narrowed to USD 1.5 per barrel, and led to lower imports last month.

In the first quarter, Russian oil made up 34 per cent of BPCL's crude intake and the company hopes to return to a 30-35 per cent ratio as long as there are no sanctions, he said.

Before February 2022, Russian crude oil accounted for less than 1 per cent of India's total oil imports. However, after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, western nations shunned Russian energy, leading to Russian crude being available at discounted rates compared to global benchmarks.

Seizing the economic opportunity, India ramped up its purchases, significantly increasing its reliance on Russian oil to meet domestic energy needs. Russian crude oil now meets 30 per cent of the requirement.

Sahney said at no time was import of crude oil from Russia sanctioned and so India continued to purchase keeping in mind economic considerations.

J&K Bank Ties Up With Two Tricity Builders In Mohali



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR- As part of its focus on expanding retail business across key markets outside Jammu and Kashmir, J&K Bank has entered into tie-ups with two reputed builders of the Tricity region - Amayra Sky City and Amayra Trillium - both situated at prime locations in Kharar, Mohali.

The tie-up ceremonies were held at the Bank's Cluster Office (Mohali) in the presence of GM & Divisional Head (Jammu) Ashok Gupta, Zonal Head (Kathua) Suresh Choudhary and Cluster Head (Mohali) Vishal Pandoh, along with senior representatives of the builder groups.

Speaking on the occasion, Ashok Gupta said, "These collaborations are part of our business strategy to tap into

high-potential retail housing markets beyond J&K, offering customers convenient financing solutions on competitive terms. With prime projects like Amayra Sky City and Amayra Trillium, we aim to make homeownership in Tricity not just a dream, but an achievable reality for many."

"By joining hands with trusted builders, we want to make it easier for families to own good quality homes at the right price, with quick loan approvals and affordable EMIs from the Bank", he further added.

The collaborations will enable customers to avail seamless home loan facilities from all branches of the Bank across its network for these projects, backed by quick and hassle-free approvals and very competitive interest rates.

Annual FASTag Pass Of ₹3,000 For Private Vehicles Goes Live From Today

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- The annual highway toll pass of Rs 3,000 for private cars, jeeps, and vans will be rolled out from Friday.

Ahead of the roll out, the government has opened the pre-booking window for FASTag-based annual passes that allow users to cross up to 200 highway toll booths on a single recharge of Rs 3,000 within a year.

A dedicated link for activation of the annual pass is available on the Rajmarg Yatra app.

The link would also be available on the official websites of National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH).

The annual pass will be applicable only for non-commercial private vehicles such as cars, jeeps, and vans. It will allow seamless travel across National Highways without the need for repeated recharging of FASTag cards for toll payments.

In closed tolling highways such as Delhi-Mumbai Expressway - where toll collec-

tion occurs exclusively at exit points - a single trip includes both entry and exit points. On the other hand, on open tolling routes like Delhi-Chandigarh, each toll plaza crossing would constitute a separate trip.

The pass can be recharged again once the 200-trip limit in a year is reached.

According to the MoRTH, those who already have a FASTag on their vehicles will not need to purchase a new FASTag.

The annual pass will be valid only at National Highway (NH) and National Expressway (NE) fee plazas.

At fee plazas on Expressways, State Highways (SH) managed by state governments or local bodies, the FASTag will operate as a regular one, and applicable user fee charges may apply.

FASTag - the electronic toll collection system - uses Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology to automatically deduct toll charges from a prepaid account linked to the vehicle. Over 10.1 crore FASTags were issued till December 1, 2024, according to the road transport ministry's 2024 year-end review.



Javid Dar Attends Virtual Meeting With Union Agri Minister

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR- Minister for Agriculture Production Department, Rural Development Department, and Panchayati Raj, Javid Ahmad Dar, today attended a virtual meeting with the Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

The meeting focused on crucial agricultural issues, including fertilizer availability, crop loss or damage and initiatives like Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan and National Mission of Natural Farming.

The Union Minister emphasized the importance of providing fertilizers to farmers in a timely manner, ensuring they don't suffer due to market shortages. Strict action will be taken against those involved in black marketing of fertilizers, seeds and pesticides, he added.

He asked the Principal Secretaries to motivate the farmers to adopt natural/organic farming practices. He also directed for collecting accurate data on crop damage through proper surveys to ensure timely compensation for farmers.

The Union Minister stressed that the approved fertilizer list will be published to inform the farmers about the substandard fertilizers. He invited all the Agricultural Ministers of States to participate in the upcoming Rabi Conference to be held at on September 15th and 16th, 2025.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary Agriculture Production Department, Shailendra Kumar, Director Agriculture Kashmir, Sartaj Ahmad Shah and other senior officers.

Stock Markets End Flat After Volatile Session

Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI- Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty ended flat in a highly volatile trade on Thursday as investors turned cautious ahead of the US-Russia talks on August 15.

Extending gains to the second day, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 57.75 points or 0.07 per cent to settle at 80,597.66. During the day, it rallied 211.27 points or 0.26 per cent to 80,751.18.

The 50-share NSE Nifty rose by 11.95 points or 0.05 per cent to 24,631.30.

Among Sensex firms, Eternal, Infosys, Asian Paints, HDFC Bank, Bajaj Finserv and Titan were the major gainers.

However, Tata Steel, Tech Mahindra, Adani Ports and Bharat Electronics were among the laggards.

The Trump-Putin meeting could have significant implications for energy markets, potentially leading to an easing of sanctions against Moscow.

"After a volatile weekly expiry-day session, Indian equities ended flat as investors traded cautiously ahead of the US-Russia summit. IT and pharma stocks advanced on the back of a softer US inflation data and dovish outlook. Banking and consumer durables also gained on hopes of a consumption-led recovery," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.59 per cent and midcap index dipped 0.18 per cent.

Gold Climbs ₹400 To ₹1,01,420, Silver Rallies ₹1,500

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- Gold prices climbed Rs 400 to Rs 1,01,420 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday on fresh buying by stockists in line with firm global trends, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity had settled at Rs 1,01,020 per 10 grams in the previous session.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity increased by Rs 400 to Rs 1,01,000 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Thursday. It had closed at Rs 1,00,600 per 10 grams on Wednesday.

In the national capital, silver prices rose by Rs 1,500 to Rs 1,13,500 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) on Thursday.

"Gold and silver prices rose after traders increased their bets on the US Federal Reserve for resuming interest rate cuts in the September meeting. While indications of a slowing labour market provided room for additional easing, the most recent US Consumer Price Index report allayed worries over tariff-driven inflation," Renisha Chainani, Head of Research at Augmont said.

On the global front, spot gold went up marginally to trade at USD 3,356.96 per ounce in New York.

"Gold extends gains to trade ahead of US Producer Price Index and jobless claims data.

"However, optimism over trade, as Washington and Beijing extended their tariff truce by 90 days, and upcoming talks between US, European, Ukrainian, and Russian leaders, could temper further upside," Kaynat Chainwala, AVP of Commodity Research at Kotak Securities, said.

Passenger Vehicle Dispatches Dip Marginally In July On Muted Demand

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- Passenger vehicle dispatches from companies to dealers in the domestic market declined marginally year-on-year in July, hit by muted demand, industry body SIAM said on Thursday.

Passenger vehicle wholesales stood at 3,41,510 units in July 2024.

"All vehicle segments posted stable performance in July 2025, though overall sentiments in the passenger vehicles segment have remained subdued," Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) Director General Rajesh Menon said in a statement.

Two-wheeler dispatches rose 9 per cent year-on-year to 15,67,267 units last month from 14,41,694 units in the year-ago period. Scooter sales stood at 6,43,169 units last month, an increase of 16 per cent as compared with 5,53,642 units in July 2024, SIAM said.

Motorcycle dispatches to dealers rose 5 per cent year-on-year to 8,90,107 units in July.

Mopeds saw a dip of 9 per cent year-on-year to 33,991 units last month, as against the same period last year.

Three-wheeler dispatches to dealers saw an increase of 17.5 per cent year-on-year to 69,403 units in July as compared with 59,073 units in the year-ago period.

"With the advent of the festive season beginning with Onam festivities in the latter part of August, the Indian auto industry remains cautiously optimistic for the demand momentum to pick up in the coming months," Menon noted.

Unbelievable How Gill Led India In England: Yuvraj Singh

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Former India batter Yuvraj Singh feels Shubman Gill's performance on the recent England tour was nothing short of unbelievable, especially considering the question marks over his batting in overseas conditions heading into the five Test series.

During the Anderson-Tendulkar Test series recently, Gill scored four centuries and finished as the leading run-scorer with 754 runs. The feat made him the first Asian batter to score 700-plus runs in a Test series in a SENA country, and helped the visitors draw the five-Test series 2-2.

Gill, 25, led a young side on the tough tour after three Test stalwarts -- Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and Ravichandran Ashwin -- quit the longest format in quick succession, leaving a vacuum in the side.

"There were a lot of question marks over his overseas record. The guy (Gill) became



the captain and scored four Test hundreds. It's just unbelievable that when you're given responsibility, how you take it," Yuvraj told ICC Digital on the sidelines of the '50 Days To Go' Women's Cricket World Cup event.

"So, very proud of them (In-

dian team). I certainly feel it's a win for us, although it's a drawn series, because it's a young team. And it's not easy to go and play well in England and prove yourself."

Despite being hit by injuries to wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh

Pant, Akash Deep and Arshdeep Singh, and their pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah playing only three games to manage his workload, India's determination was on show as they pulled off a thrilling six-run win in the fifth Test at Oval to level the series.

Yuvraj, who has mentored Gill, added that the Indian team took on the challenge head on even without the likes of Kohli and Rohit.

"It's just fantastic because I felt when you have a young team going to England, it's a lot of pressure. You're filling the boots of somebody like Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, it's not easy. The guys took it head-on."

He also praised the efforts of all-rounders Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar, whose marathon partnership helped India draw the fourth Test in Manchester.

"The moment in the tournament was when India drew the Test series. I've never seen, in a very long time, Washington and Jadeja got hundreds and drew a Test match," he said.

"That speaks volumes. Obviously Jadeja has been there for a long time. But I think Washington Sundar, as a youngster coming into the team, it was incredible to do what he did," added Yuvraj.

Selection Trials Held For Volleyball Players Going To China



Younis Paray

BUDGAM: While on one hand, local cricket tournaments are going on in Budgam district like the rest of the districts of the valley, the Youth Services and Sports Department is also organising tricolor rallies before Independence

Day. On the other hand, sports activities are also at their peak and under this link, DYSS selected the volleyball team of the district at Synthetic Turf Soibug and these children will get the opportunity to represent the Kashmir Valley after the first Inter-District and UT level. Selected players will have the opportunity to represent India in China.

On this occasion, Principal Higher Secondary Syed Zubair and Incharge Activity Budgam Ghulam Hassan Khanday inaugurated the volleyball match in presence of senior masters and players from all zones of the district participated.

A team of selectors was also assigned on duty by the Sports Department for the said 40 players, so that the district's good volleyball players should be selected. It should be noted that on this occasion, the children were urged to make every effort to play their best in volleyball to bring glory to the district and to fully utilize their minds and strategies to be selected for China.

Himachal-J&K Settle For Draw In Junior Hockey National



Press Trust of India

JALANDHAR: Chandigarh and Uttarakhand won their respective games while Himachal and Jammu and Kashmir settled for draws on the third day of the 15th Hockey India Junior Men National Championship Division 'B' here on Thursday.

The day began with the Division 'B'

match between Himachal and Jammu & Kashmir which ended in a 5-5 draw as both sides shared points.

In the second match of the day, Chandigarh enjoyed a narrow 4-3 win against Arunachal in their Division 'B' Pool A match.

In the final fixture of the day, Uttarakhand secured a dominant 8-1 win over Assam.

KHELO INDIA WATER SPORTS FESTIVAL

First-Ever Event's Mascot, Logo, Anthem Jerseys Launched



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Minister for Youth Services and Sports, Satish Sharma, and Member of Legislative Assembly Zaidib, Tanvir Sadiq, on Thursday released the logo, mascot, anthem, jingle and jerseys for the athletes and support staff, volunteers and officials of the first Khelo India Water Sports Festival 2025.

In a historic first, the Khelo India Water Sports Festival 2025 is being hosted by Jammu and Kashmir on the pristine water of the Dal Lake in Srinagar from August 21 to 23.

Himalayan Kingfisher inspires the vibrant mascot of the Khelo India Water Sports Festival 2025. Swift, fearless and at home on the water, it embodies the spirit of adventure, nature and competition on Dal Lake.

The Khelo India Water Sports Festival logo captures the essence of Kashmir, featuring a Shikara

gliding on Dal Lake, framed by snow-capped mountains and pine trees.

The anthem and jingles for the Khelo India Water Sports Festival 2025 celebrate the region's breathtaking beauty, youthful energy and spirit of sportsmanship. These blends Kashmiri, Urdu and Hindi verses to showcase Dal Lake's shimmering waters, the colourful stories cradled in Kashmir and the cultural charm of the region.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister, who also performed the host city activation of the event, said that the 800 athletes and hundreds of other visiting officials from 28 states and eight union territories, who would participate in the Khelo India Water Sports Festival would return as the brand ambassadors of Jammu and Kashmir. He said that hosting of the first-ever Khelo India Water Sports Festival will

go a long way in promoting not just sports but also tourism in Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking on the occasion, MLA Zaidib Tanvir Sadiq, said that hosting major event like Khelo India Water Sports Festival will help in uplifting the economy of the region, besides promoting sports and tourism.

Earlier, while briefing the dignitaries about the Khelo India Water Sports Festival, Commissioner Secretary Social Welfare and Youth Services and Sports, Sarmad Hafeez said the different stakeholders like the hoteliers, shikarawalas, travel agents and various departments had been roped in to make the event a success.

Secretary J&K Sports Council, Nuzhat Gul, presented the vote of thanks.

Pertinently, the maiden Khelo India Water Sports Festival, 2025, will be inaugurated in Dal Lake on August 21.

PM Invites Kho Kho Players For Aug 15 Celebrations

Prim Minister Narendra Modi has invited 30 of India's best Kho Kho players to be part of Independence day celebrations.

The Indian kabaddi team had won the World Cup in January this year.

Fifteen of these 30 players will be part of the player draft of the new season of Ultimate Kho Kho (UKK) beginning November 29..

Among those honoured are the World Cup-winning players Pratik Waikar, Ramji Kashyap, Sachin Bhargo, Suyash Gargate, Gowtham M K, Rokeson Khuman, Nikhil B, Pabani Sabar, Akash Balyan, Aditya Ganpule, Siva Reddy, Subramani, Mehul, Aniket Pote and Sumon Barman, whose performances have energised the sport's momentum at home and abroad. (PTI)

Indians Dominating Chess Like Never Before: President

India's global chess domination was lauded by President Droupadi Murmu in her address to the nation on Thursday, during which she also said that the country is on the cusp of "transformative changes" in the sporting arena.

Eighteen-year-old D Gukesh's triumph as the youngest world champion last year began a season of excellent results for India's chess prodigies with the likes of R Praggnanandhaa, Arjun Erigaisi, Vidith Gujarati, Koneru Humpy, Divya Deshmukh and R Vaishali delivering consistently strong performances in high pressure international events.

Deshmukh (19) became the youngest women's World Cup winner last month, beating Humpy in the final.

"Brimming with a new confidence, our youth are making a mark in sports and games. Chess, for example, is now dominated by India's youngsters like never before. We foresee transformative changes which will establish India as a global sporting power-house under the vision contained in the National Sports Policy 2025," the president said in her address.

"Our daughters are our pride. They are breaching barriers in every field, including in the areas of defence and security. Sports are among important indicators of excellence, empowerment and potential. A nineteen-year-old girl (Deshmukh) and a thirty-eight-year-old woman (Humpy) from India were the finalists in the FIDE Women's World Cup for chess championship," she said. (PTI)

Indian Racing Festival To Begin On Aug 16

The Indian Racing Festival (IRF), the country's premier motorsport championships, will kick off its new season at the Kari Motor Speedway here on Saturday.

The two-day season opener will feature the franchise-based Indian Racing League (IRL), the FIA-certified Formula 4 Indian Championship (F4 Indian) and the 28th JK Tyre FMSCI National Racing Championship's FLGB4 category. The five-weekend calendar will span multiple cities and select street circuits, aiming to bring top-tier racing closer to fans.

This year's IRL grid was finalised through the league's first-ever Drivers Draft in Mumbai, producing a mix of international racers, emerging Indian talent and female drivers competing on equal footing. The Wolf Racing GB08 cars used in the league, powered by Aprilia RSV4 1.0 engines, are capable of touching 290 km/h. (PTI)

Maxwell Sharpening Skills To Bowl In Powerplays



With an eye on next year's T20 World Cup in the Indian subcontinent, charismatic Australia all-rounder Glenn Maxwell is sharpening his spin-bowling skills to become more potent in the powerplay overs, given that he might need to bowl with the new ball on spinner-friendly pitches.

The 2026 T20 World Cup will be jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka with the spin-bowling all-rounder, if fully fit, likely to be a part of the Australian side as it aims to reclaim the trophy it last won in 2021.

Maxwell has been a regular in the Indian Premier League, donning several jerseys with his most successful stints coming for Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Punjab Kings, where he has shone as a devastating batter with the ability to turn the game decisively with the ball.

Despite his bowling prowess, Maxwell has bowled only five powerplay overs in total in the shortest format between the 2022 T20 World Cup and the ongoing home series against South Africa.

But the 36-year-old feels he could come in handy in powerplay overs during the T20 World Cup as the new ball grips the subcontinent's wickets better.

"I think in the subcontinent you might be able to get a little bit more out of it (wicket) as a spinner early on," Maxwell was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au.

"Especially that new ball, the hard seam, being able to grip on those dry surfaces. So it might be something we think about heading forward," he added. (PTI)

UEFA Rolls Out Banner In Support Of Children In War Zones

AP

UDINE: UEFA rolled out a banner with the message "Stop Killing Children. Stop Killing Civilians" ahead of the Super Cup between Paris Saint-Germain and Tottenham on Wednesday.

It was laid out in front of the teams before kickoff in the match at Stadio Friuli in Udine, Italy.

"The message is loud and clear," European soccer's governing body said in a post on X. "A banner. A call."

It comes a day after the UEFA Foundation for Children announced its latest initiative to help children affected by war in differ-



ent parts of the world — a partnership with Medecins du Monde, Medecins sans Frontières and Handicap International.

They are charities "providing vital humanitarian help for the children of Gaza," UEFA said in a press

release Tuesday. UEFA has supported projects regarding children affected in conflict zones in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Sudan, Syria, Yemen and Ukraine.

Tottenham Condemns Racist Abuse Of Mathys Tel After UEFA Super Cup

Real Madrid Signs Argentine Teenager Franco Mastantuono

AP

MADRID: Real Madrid signed Argentine teenage forward Franco Mastantuono to a six-year deal on Thursday.

The former River Plate player, who turned 18 on Thursday, underwent his medical and signed the contract alongside Madrid president Florentino Pérez.

"I promise I'll give everything I have for this shirt," Mastantuono said. "It has always been a dream of mine to play for the greatest club in the world."

Madrid had already reached a deal for his signing but had to wait until he



turned 18. The club reportedly paid 45 million euros (\$52.5 million).

Mastantuono was presented with a replica model of Santiago Bernabeu Stadium, a watch and a jersey with his name and number 30.

This offseason, Madrid

also signed young Spain central defender Dean Huijsen and England right back Trent Alexander-Arnold.

Madrid is in its first season under coach Xabi Alonso, who replaced Carlo Ancelotti. It is coming off a disappointing season by its high standards, losing the Spanish league title to Barcelona and failing to reach the final in the Club World Cup and the Champions League. It also lost all four clasicos against its Catalan rival.

It all led to a coaching change: Ancelotti took over Brazil and former player Alonso arrived as widely expected.

Any Misadventure
Will Have Painful
Consequences: India To Pak
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi: India on Thursday warned Pakistan not to continue with its "hateful" rhetoric against New Delhi saying any misadventure will have "painful consequences".

New Delhi's reaction came days after Pakistan Army Chief Asim Munir's nuclear threat against India as well as certain remarks by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

"We have seen reports regarding a continuing pattern of reckless, war-mongering and hateful comments from Pakistani leadership against India," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

"It is well known modus-operandi of the Pakistani leadership to whip up anti-India rhetoric time and again to hide their own failures."

"Pakistan would be well-advised to temper its rhetoric as any misadventure will have painful consequences as was demonstrated recently," he said.

ILLEGAL BETTING APP

ED Freezes Rs 110 Cr Worth Bank
Funds; Seizes 1,200 Credit Cards

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Funds worth Rs 110 crore kept in mule bank accounts have been frozen and 1,200 mule credit cards were seized following recent searches against the Indian operations of a Cyprus-based "illegal" online betting platform named Parimatch, the Enforcement Directorate said on Thursday.

Parimatch app, as per the federal probe agency, gained visibility in the country through "aggressive" marketing, including sponsorship of sports tournaments and partnerships with well-known celebrities. It is alleged to have cheated investors luring them with high returns and generating

more than Rs 3,000 crore in a year.

"They also set up Indian entities to run surrogate advertisements under the names 'Parimatch Sports' and 'Parimatch News'. Payments to these agencies were made via foreign inward remittances," the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said in a statement.

The agency had conducted searches at 17 locations in Mumbai, Noida, Jaipur, Surat, Madurai, Kanpur and Hyderabad on August 12 as part of a case registered under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) against the operations of Parimatch.

The ED case stems from an FIR filed by the cyber police station of Mumbai Police against parimatch.

com for "duping" users through online betting.

The agency said funds worth about Rs 110 crore kept in various bank accounts belonging to persons/entities used as mule accounts (bank accounts used for money laundering and similar criminal activities) and/or for "layering" purposes were frozen. More than 1,200 mule credit cards, found in a single premises during the searches, have also been seized, it said.

Describing the alleged modus operandi deployed by the betting platform, the ED said it routed users' fund through mule accounts using different strategies across the country.

In one case, it said, funds deposited by users into mule accounts were withdrawn in cash in a specific locality in Tamil Nadu. This cash was handed over to hawala operators, who used it to recharge virtual wallets of a UK-based company.

These wallets were used to buy cryptocurrency in the name of mule crypto accounts, which were actually operated by Parimatch agents, it alleged.

In western India, the ED said, Parimatch engaged services of domestic money transfer (DMT) agents. Funds collected in mule accounts controlled by these DMT agents were sent to Parimatch agents through payments made by mule credit cards.

KISHTWAR TRAGEDY

DHSJ Cancels All Leaves In
District For Health Staff

Agencies

Srinagar: In the wake of the recent cloudburst in Kishtwar district, the Directorate of Health Services Jammu has cancelled all leaves of staff posted in the district with immediate effect, directing them to report back to their respective places of posting.

According to an order issued by Director Health Services Jammu, Dr. Abdul Hamid Zargar, "No officer or official shall leave the station without prior permission from the Directorate."

The directive has been communicated to all Chief Medical Officers and Drawing and Disbursing Officers (DDOs) across the Jammu division. They have also been advised to keep all ambulances in ready mode to meet any eventuality arising from inclement weather conditions.

The order further emphasizes maintaining strict readiness of the health workforce and ensuring uninterrupted medical services in the affected areas.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Kashmir Rail

railway arch bridge over the Chenab river, along with the Anji Khad bridge, India's first cable-stayed bridge.

He also flagged off Vande Bharat trains to mark the completion of the 272-km Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project, which provides direct train connectivity to the Kashmir valley.

The first freight train also arrived in the Kashmir Valley on Saturday as the Northern Railway opened its Anantnag goods shed under its larger USBRL project for the movement of goods.

The president said business leaders, small and medium industries and traders have always exhibited a can-do spirit but what was needed was removing the bottlenecks in the path of wealth creation.

"That is so visible when it comes to infrastructure development over the past decade. We have expanded and strengthened the national highway network under the Bharatmala Pariyojana," Murmu said.

President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday lauded the nation's decisive response to Pahalgam terrorist attack in Kashmir, highlighting the success of Operation Sindoor and emphasising the country's unity and growing self-reliance in the defence sector.

The President condemned the "cowardly and utterly inhuman" killing of innocent citizens on holiday, asserting that the armed forces had demonstrated "strategic clarity and technical capability" by destroying terrorist infrastructure across the border.

She described Operation Sindoor as a landmark event in the global fight against terrorism, noting that India's armed forces "destroyed terrorist hubs across the border" with "steely resolve".

"I believe Operation Sindoor will go down in history as an example in humanity's fight against terrorism," she said.

The President stressed that the nation's unity was the most "befitting response" to those who sought to divide it.

She pointed to the multi-party delegations of MPs that reached out to various nations to explain India's position on cross-border terrorism, a move that showcased the country's collective resolve.

"...the world has taken note of India's stance, that we will not be the aggressor, but we will not hesitate to retaliate in defence of our citizens," she said.

The President also held up Operation Sindoor as a testament to the success of the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India) mission in the defence sector.

"The outcome has proved that we are on the right path. Our indigenous manufacturing has achieved the critical level that makes us self-sufficient in meeting many of our security requirements. These are landmark achievements in India's defence history since Independence," she said.

President Droupadi Murmu said India is well on the way to becoming a self-reliant nation and moving ahead with great confidence to be a developed economy by 2047.

"After the long years of foreign rule, India was in utter poverty at the time of Independence. But in the 78 years since then, we have made extraordinary progress in all fields. India is well on the way to becoming a self-reliant nation and is moving ahead with great confidence," the President said.

In the economic field, she said India's achievements are more noticeable with GDP growing at 6.5 per cent in the last fiscal, making the country the fastest growing among the major economies in the world.

"Even amid stress in the global economy, demand at home is pacing ahead. Inflation has remained under control. Exports are rising. All key indicators show the economy in the pink of health," Murmu said.

She attributed the achievements on the economic front to the carefully calibrated reforms, sagacious economic management, hard work and dedication of farmers.

"The all-round economic growth complemented by social sector initiatives has placed India well on the path of becoming a developed nation by 2047. With the nation marching ahead during the Amrit Kaal, I see all of us contributing to the best of our ability," she said.

Observing that a large number of people have been pulled out of poverty through good governance, the President said the government has been running a series of welfare initiatives for the poor and also for those who have risen above the poverty line, but are still vulnerable.

"Income inequality is reducing. Regional disparities are also disappearing," Murmu said, adding that states and regions known for

weak economic performance are now showing their true potential and catching up with front-runners.

Stressing that business leaders, small and medium industries and traders have always exhibited a "can-do spirit", she said, "what was needed was removing the bottleneck in the path of wealth creation. This is so visible when it comes to infrastructure development over the past decade".

She highlighted the expansion of the national highway network, and the introduction of new types of trains and coaches by the Indian railways.

In particular, she said the inauguration of the rail link in the Kashmir valley was a major accomplishment which will boost trade and tourism and open new economic policies. This engineering marvel in Kashmir is a historic milestone for India.

Democracy Has Become

martyrs, including those killed in the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack.

In his message, Sinha said, "On the sacred occasion of our 79th Independence Day, I convey my heartiest greetings and good wishes to all of you. This is a day we salute our tricolor and feel pride in watching it fly high in the sky. I also join every citizen in paying homage to all the freedom fighters and founding fathers of the nation, who made great sacrifices to realize the dream of an Independent India... The remembrance of their martyrdom will forever live on in our hearts."

He expressed deep sorrow over the recent cloudburst in Chashoti, Kishtwar, and offered condolences to the bereaved families, assuring that the administration was working with a "Whole of Government Approach" to control the situation and assist affected families.

Sinha also lauded the armed forces, CAPFs, and J&K Police for ensuring peace in the UT and saluted the personnel involved in Operation Sindoor and Operation Mahadev. "India has drawn a new red line. Any act of terror will be considered as an act of war and we will give the enemy a fitting response," he said, adding that all must pledge to dismantle the terrorism ecosystem.

The LG extended felicitations to "farmers, workers, teachers, professionals, scientists, business communities, youth and Nari Shakti" for contributing to J&K's socio-economic growth. He hailed the patriotic fervour of the Har Ghar Tiranga campaign and said J&K had seen a strong development thrust over the past five years, emerging as "prosperous, peaceful, just, humane and treating all its citizens as equal."

Sinha said that Jammu Kashmir has received a strong development thrust in the past five years and we have built a Union Territory which is prosperous, peaceful, just, humane and treating all its citizens as equal. "Democracy has become stronger in the Union Territory. Today, Jammu Kashmir is on the move full of self-confidence and ready to contribute in nation building. We are marching together with just one identity as Indian and determined to serve Mother India till the last breath."

Highlighting achievements, he said Kashmir is now connected to India's rail network, industrial development has deepened, economic growth benefits have reached all sections, and "ease of living" has improved for both rural and urban populations. "The entire world is witnessing the transformation of Jammu Kashmir and it is my firm belief that with collective participation of people we will create a bright and peaceful Jammu Kashmir," he added.

Invoking Mahatma Gandhi's vision, Sinha said his efforts over the past five years were to build J&K as Gandhi dreamed—where the poorest feel a sense of belonging and responsibility in nation-building.

"Let all of us reaffirm our commitment to work shoulder to shoulder and build a Viksit Bharat. I appeal to all to contribute their fullest to this momentous task. With these words, I once again greet everyone on the occasion of Independence Day," he concluded.

Kishtwar Cloudburst

toll went up steadily as the day progressed and there were fears it could rise further.

Disaster struck Chositi, the last motorable village on the way to Machail Mata temple, between 12 noon and 1 pm. A large number of people had gathered there for the annual Machail yatra that began on July 25 and is scheduled to end on September 5. The 8.5 kilometre trek to the temple at 9,500-feet height begins from Chositi.

Chositi is about 90 kilometres from Kishtwar town. A 'langar' (community kitchen) packed with devotees bore the brunt of the cloudburst, which led to flash floods and washed away

several structures, including shops and a security outpost.

Videos showed torrents of muddy water, silt and rubble tearing through the steep slopes, destroying everything in the way. Houses folded over like pack of cards, rocks came tumbling down, blocking roads and rescue paths, the mudslide turning the verdant landscape to a grim brown-grey.

The fragile Himalayan slopes faced disaster just nine days after flash floods wreaked havoc in Dharali village of Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi district. Though only one person is confirmed dead, 68 people are still reported missing in the calamity that struck on August 5.

Immediately after news came in of the disaster, Kishtwar Deputy Commissioner Pankaj Kumar Sharma and senior officials mobilised rescue teams and headed towards the spot to personally supervise the operations.

A large-scale rescue operation was launched by NDRF, SDRF, police, Army and local volunteers, the authorities have mobilised more rescuers, including two fresh teams of NDRF from Jammu to speed up the rescue efforts, officials said.

Army Joins Rescue Operation
The Army was later called for the relief and rescue operation at the cloudburst-hit area.

"In the aftermath of a cloudburst at the Chisoti village in Kishtwar, troops of the White Knight swiftly mobilised for relief and rescue operations," a Jammu-based Army PRO said.

The efforts are centred on safeguarding lives and aiding survivors, the spokesperson said, adding that the search for the missing continues.

The Army said that relief stores, medical teams and rescue gear have been rushed to the site.

Over five columns of 60 personnel each, totalling 300 troops, and medical detachments of White Knight Corps are on the ground, working with police SDRF and other civilian agencies to save lives, the PRO added.

"Search for missing is underway with medical aid and support reaching affected families," the PRO said.

Army's White Knight Corps said efforts are on to safeguard lives and aid the survivors.

Union minister Jitendra Singh was among the first to indicate the magnitude of the tragedy.

"A massive cloudburst in Chositi area, which could result in substantial casualty. Administration has immediately swung into action, rescue team has left for the site," Union Minister Jitendra Singh said in an X post.

The annual yatra to the Machail Mata shrine was suspended following the tragedy as authorities mobilised all resources for rescue operations at Chositi.

Officials added that the flash floods hit several houses clustered together in the foothills.

President, PM

extremely tragic.

"The news of several deaths due to a cloudburst in Kishtwar, Jammu-Kashmir, is extremely tragic. I express my heartfelt condolences to the grieving families and pray for the success of relief and rescue operations," Murmu said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said his thoughts and prayers are with all those affected by the cloudburst in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district and asserted that every possible assistance will be provided to those in need.

In a post on X, Modi said, "My thoughts and prayers are with all those affected by the cloudburst and flooding in Kishtwar, Jammu and Kashmir. The situation is being monitored closely. Rescue and relief operations are underway."

"Every possible assistance will be provided to those in need," the prime minister said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday spoke to Lieutenant Governor and Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir to take stock of the situation following a massive cloudburst in Kishtwar and assured them all possible help needed by the people.

Shah also said that the local administration is conducting relief and rescue operations and teams of the National Disaster Response Force have rushed to the site.

"Spoke with the LG and Chief Minister of J&K on the cloudburst in Kishtwar district. The local administration is conducting relief and rescue operations. NDRF teams have promptly been rushed to the site," he wrote on 'X'.

The home minister said the central government is closely monitoring the situation and stand firmly with the people of Jammu and Kashmir through every situation. "Assured of all possible assistance to the people in need," he said.

Defense Minister Rajnath Singh expressed pain over the loss of lives. "Deeply pained by

the tragic loss of lives in the Kishtwar cloudburst, J&K. My heartfelt condolences to the families who have lost their loved ones. Praying for the speedy recovery of the injured," Rajnath wrote.

Leader of Opposition (LoP) in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi has termed the incident as "extremely tragic" and called on the administration to expedite operations while urging Congress workers to assist on the ground.

Former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Ghulam Nabi Azad urged the government to ensure urgent rescue and relief.

"Deeply saddened by the cloudburst in Chositi, Kishtwar. Heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families & prayers for the speedy recovery of the injured. Urge the govt to immediately carry out rescue & relief operations & ensure all possible assistance & treatment for those affected," Azad said.

PDP President, Mehbooba Mufti extended condolences to the bereaved families.

"Extremely tragic news coming from Padder, Kishtwar, where a massive cloudburst has claimed several lives. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and prayers for the departed souls. May God give strength and support to those affected in this difficult time," she wrote.

Leader of Opposition in Assembly and concerned MLA, Sunil Sharma said that he has spoken to the Lt Governor Manoj Sinha and Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh to assess the situation.

"Deeply distressed to learn about the devastating cloudburst in the Chositi area of Padder, which may lead to significant loss of life. I have just spoken with LG @manojsinha_ Ji and @DrJitendraSingh Ji to assess the situation. NDRF teams and helicopters are being mobilized to the site at the earliest. Efforts are underway to evaluate the damage and coordinate rescue and medical operations. I am en route to the location to personally oversee the response and ensure that all necessary measures are taken," Sunil Sharma wrote on X.

M Y Tarigami, CPI (M) leader and MLA Kulgam has expressed deep sorrow over the loss of lives.

Calling it a "deeply sad moment for all," Tarigami said the tragedy, which left several dead and many injured, demands an immediate and coordinated response. "The government should announce compensation for the deceased without delay, ensure proper treatment for the injured, and expedite rescue operations," he said.

Peoples Conference (PC) Chairman and MLA Handwara, Sajad Gani Lone in a post on X, has extended condolences to the bereaved families.

"Bad news coming in from Kishtawar sector. There has been a cloudburst and reportedly there are some fatalities. My condolences to the bereaved families. May they rest in peace," he wrote.

Apni Party President, Syed Altaf Bukhari expressed shock and said this is a tragedy beyond words.

"Shocked and deeply grieved by the news of at least 10 lives lost in a massive cloudburst in Chishoti village, Padder area of Kishtwar district. This is a tragedy beyond words. In this hour of unimaginable pain and sorrow, Apni Party stands in solidarity with all those who have lost their loved ones. May the Almighty grant them the strength to endure this immense loss, and may the departed souls rest in eternal peace," Altaf Bukhari wrote.

Rescue Teams

carried the injured on their backs for hours through mud-choked terrain to reach hospitals. Many survivors had no memory of the disaster, still dazed as they were treated.

"The catastrophe is widespread. You can see devastation, deaths, and injuries everywhere. It is the worst situation," said BJP leader and J&K Assembly Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma.

Families wept openly as they searched for missing loved ones. Sharma and Kishtwar MLA Shugan Parihar joined locals and security forces in lining up bodies on the roadside, covering them with white shrouds. Parihar was seen consoling grieving women and girls, while injured children were carried unconscious to hospitals, drips administered on the spot.

"It is unbearable. I cannot hold back my tears," Parihar said. "We are pleading for more ambulances. The situation is very bad here in the village battered by the cloudburst."

Hospitals were overwhelmed. Patients lay on floors as beds filled up, with medical staff rushing from across Padder and Kishtwar to Atholi Hospital. Injuries ranged from broken ribs and legs to suspected mud lodged deep in

throats and lungs.

Several victims are in a dangerous condition with broken ribs and legs, their injuries reflecting the sheer force of the cloudburst and subsequent landslides. "Most have severe injuries — some to the chest, some on the head, others on the legs," medical staff said. Health officials also suspected sand and mud lodged deep inside patients' throats, lungs, and wounds.

The disaster struck between 12 noon and 1 pm, when the pilgrimage camp was bustling. Flash floods, mudslides, and debris flows buried homes, shops, and vehicles. A security camp was swept away, and several vehicles at the bus stand — starting point for the 8.5-km trek to Machail Mata — were destroyed.

A temple in the centre of the flooded zone miraculously survived. But a langar (community kitchen) set up for devotees was obliterated. 'Hell Broke Out'

"We had just left the shop near the langar and walked a kilometre when hell broke out. The flood decimated everything. Within minutes, the langar disappeared," recalled a pilgrim from Jammu.

The floodwaters hurled massive trees into the village, scattering them over a 500-metre stretch. Health officials appealed for clothing for the injured, and locals — even nurses — brought garments from home.

DIG Doda-Kishtwar range Shridhar Patil confirmed rescue and relief operations were ongoing, urging people to remain calm and contact designated helplines for missing persons.

Chositi lies about 90 km from Kishtwar town, the last motorable point before the trek to Machail Mata shrine. The pilgrimage began on July 25 and was due to end on September 5.

This disaster comes just nine days after flash floods ravaged Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi district, where 68 people are still missing. (With inputs from PTI)

CM Cancels Tea

Kishtwar district.

A massive cloudburst struck Chositi village on Thursday, killing 50 people and trapping many more under debris, officials said.

"In light of the tragedy caused by the cloudburst in Kishtwar, I have taken the decision to cancel the 'At Home' tea party tomorrow (Friday) evening.

"We have also decided not to go ahead with the cultural events during the morning Independence Day celebrations. The formal events - speech, march past etc will go ahead as planned," the chief minister said in a post on X.

Omar is scheduled to take salute at the march past at Bakshi Stadium in Srinagar, the venue of the main Independence Day function in Jammu and Kashmir.

Rescue Operation

"Rescue & Relief Operations at Chashoti (Chositi) are in full swing. Men and machinery have been put at the site. Other teams have also been rushed," the LG said in an X post.

At least 50 people, including two CISF personnel, were killed and many feared trapped after a massive cloudburst struck the remote mountain village on Thursday, officials said. While 98 people have been rescued so far, the condition of 28 are said to be serious.

1,000+ To Get

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Border Security Force (BSF).

For the Fire Services, 62 awards have been announced, which include six Gallantry Medals, five President's Medals for Distinguished Service, and 51 Medals for Meritorious Service.

In the Home Guard and Civil Defence category, the honours will include one Gallantry Medal, three President's Medals for Distinguished Service, and 41 Medals for Meritorious Service.

For Correctional Services, two officers will be recognised with the President's Medal for Distinguished Service, while 31 will receive the Medal for Meritorious Service.



This annual recognition is a tribute to the bravery, dedication, and distinguished service of officers and personnel across states, union territories, and central armed police forces.

The medals will be presented as part of the Independence Day celebrations to acknowledge the exceptional contribution of these individuals in safeguarding law, order, and public safety in the country.

3 Officers Get

Additional District Development Commissioner, Rajouri; and Mahmood Ahmad Shah, Managing Director, Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited.

Each awardee will be honoured with a citation and a cash prize of Rs 51,000 on Independence Day.



Heartfelt greetings to all fellow citizens on 79th INDEPENDENCE DAY

“ If today the world thinks Bharat is ready to take a big leap, it has a powerful launchpad of 11 years behind it. - Narendra Modi ”

Live telecast of the Independence Day celebrations from the ramparts of the Red Fort on Doordarshan network from **6:30 AM onwards.**

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