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One-Time Power Tariff Waiver

Speaker Admits PDP MLA's Resolution



Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Speaker of the J&K Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather, on Tuesday admitted a private resolution submitted by Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) MLA Mir Fayaz from Kupwara, seeking a one-time exemption of electricity tariff outstandings for consumers.

The resolution, aimed at providing relief to households burdened by rising

power costs and frequent billing disputes, proposes waiving all outstanding electricity dues in a single move. Following assembly rules, the resolution will now proceed to the ballot procedure in the upcoming session, where members will vote to decide whether it will be included in the assembly calendar for adoption or rejection.

Currently, in the 90-member J&K Assembly, the National | **More on P6**

Lone's Resolution On Statehood Disallowed

Agencies

In a development that could spark political debate, the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly Secretariat has disallowed a resolution submitted by Peoples Conference president Sajad Gani Lone seeking the restoration of statehood to the Union Territory, citing that the matter is sub-judice. Sources said that the resolution will not be subjected to the ballot scheduled | **More on P6**

THE RESOLUTION HAS BEEN disallowed on the grounds that the matter is sub-judice."

Flood Relief, Darbar Move In Focus

NC Hits Nagrota Campaign Trail

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (NC) on Tuesday formally launched its campaign for the upcoming Nagrota Assembly bypoll, seeking voter support based on its track record of flood relief, development, and inclusive governance under Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

The campaign was kicked off from Panj Garain, where key party leaders addressed

workers and supporters, urging them to connect with voters and highlight NC's vision of hope, progress, and stability. Bypolls in the Nagrota and Budgam assembly segments are scheduled to be held on November 11.

NC's Additional General Secretary Ajay Sadhotra underscored the party's hands-on approach during recent crises, particularly the floods that affected Jammu. "Omar sahib's personal | **More on P6**

Aga Mehmood Tops Wealth Chart In Budgam Bypoll



Among the prominent candidates who filed their nomination papers for the upcoming Budgam Assembly bypolls, National | **More on P6**

LBA Seeks Footage To Assist Violence Probe

Press Trust Of India

Leh: The Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA) on Tuesday sought photos and video clips of the September 24 violence that left four persons dead and several injured, saying such material is critical for the ongoing investigation and in the pursuit of justice.

The association, which is

part of the Leh Apex Body, also appealed to the community to hold weddings without music as a tribute to the slain persons.

The Centre, on October 17, moved to address a key demand of the LAB and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) by announcing a judicial inquiry headed by a retired Supreme Court judge into the September 24 clashes. | **More on P6**

Adopt Smart Tech To Counter 'Fabricated' Narrative: LG To Police

Says Entire Nation Recognises J&K Police's Mettle & Sacrifice

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Asserting that the entire country acknowledges the J&K Police's courage and unwavering resolve in maintaining peace and security, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday paid rich tributes to police martyrs during the Police Commemoration Day function held at the Police Memorial in Zewan, Srinagar.

In his address, the Lieutenant Governor described the J&K Police as an epitome of duty, discipline, loyalty, and selfless service, noting that the force has always prioritized the nation's



safety and citizens' welfare above personal interests.

"They have kept the Tricolor

flying high even at the cost of their own lives," Sinha said, expressing his deepest gratitude

to the brave personnel and their families for their sacrifices in upholding peace and the rule of law.

The LG lauded the "immense" contributions of the force and recalled the 1,614 personnel who laid down their lives in the line of duty. "Their sacrifices cannot be equated with money," he said, assuring that the administration remains committed to the welfare of their families.

Commending the force's role in combating terrorism, enforcing laws, and responding to crises such as recent natural calamities, Sinha said J&K Police have | **More on P6**

CM Pays Tributes to J&K Police Martyrs

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Tuesday led a solemn ceremony at the Police Martyrs Memorial in Zewan, paying homage to the police personnel who laid down their lives in the line of duty on the occasion of Police Commemoration Day. The ceremony was addressed by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, who graced the occasion as the Chief

Guest. Accompanied by Council of Ministers Sakina Itoo and Javid Ahmad Dar, along with Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, the Chief Minister offered floral tributes at the memorial in honor of the courage and supreme sacrifice of the martyrs. The commemoration ceremony was also attended by several Members of the Legislative | **More on P6**

JKSA Forms Panel On Reservation Policy

Urges Govt To Make Report Public

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir Students Association (JKSA) Tuesday conducted a comprehensive consultation with diverse stakeholders to discuss the reservation policy and the report submitted by the Cabinet Sub-Committee.

The meeting attended by representatives from various student associations including MBBS, Nursing and Agriculture graduates as well as community organizations and other stakeholders, aimed to deliberate on the critical aspects of the reservation policy and its implications for the region.

After extensive discussions, the stakeholders unanimously agreed to constitute a 10-member committee tasked with | **More on P6**

Jammu IGP: Foreign Terrorists in Forests Being Targeted Daily

Press Trust Of India

Jammu ~ Asserting that more than 100 anti-terrorist operations are being carried out on a daily basis across Jammu division, a top police officer on Tuesday said the presence of foreign terrorists in the dense forests is a major challenge and efforts are underway to neutralise them.

Inspector General of Police, Jammu Zone, Bhim Sen Tuti, said the terrorists and criminals are using new technology like drones in an attempt to break the security grid, but the security agencies are two steps ahead of them to maintain internal security.



He was speaking to media persons after leading a wreath-laying ceremony at Police Martyrs Memorial near Jammu railway station and

later at a function at Gulshan Ground in police headquarters to pay tributes to bravehearts who have sacrificed their lives for | **More on P6**

'Increase Checking at Vulnerable Points'

Kashmir's top cop on Tuesday directed officials to adopt proactive and coordinated measures to strengthen the security grid across the Valley. Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kashmir Zone, V K Birdi chaired a

high-level security review meeting at the Police Control Room in Srinagar, a police spokesperson said. The meeting was attended by senior officers from the Jammu and Kashmir Police, Central Armed Police | **More on P6**

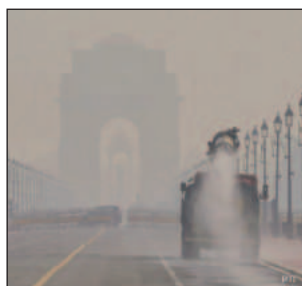
Delhi Suffers Worst Post-Diwali Air In 4 Yrs

Observer News Service

New Delhi: Delhi recorded its worst post-Diwali air quality in four years on Tuesday, with PM2.5 levels peaking at 675 micrograms per cubic metre late Monday night. The city was enveloped in a thick grey haze as pollution levels surged sharply following Diwali celebrations, while the BJP government blamed stubble burning in Punjab rather than firecrackers.

The city's 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) on Diwali reached 345, higher than last year's 330, and remained above 350 for several hours on Tuesday morning. Fine particulate matter (PM2.5), which can penetrate the respiratory system, posed serious health risks, particularly for children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing conditions.

Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa



downplayed the impact of green firecrackers, saying the AQI rose by only 11 points overnight despite the lifting of the ban. "Every religion has the right to celebrate its festivals," he said. Sirsa also accused the AAP government in Punjab of contributing to Delhi's toxic haze due to large-scale paddy stubble burning.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) criticized the Delhi government for failing to induce artificial rain and ensure compliance with Supreme Court guidelines, which allowed the use of | **More on P6**



Women Police personnel marching during the Police Commemoration Day event at Srinagar. KO Photo By Abid Bhat.

India Avenged Injustice With Op Sindoor: PM



Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday penned a letter to the citizens of the country on Deepavali, highlighting the successes of Operation Sindoor and the fight against Naxalism and asserting that Bharat has emerged as a symbol of stability at a time when the world is beset with crises.

The prime minister listed the decision to lower Goods and Services Tax rates among the historic achievements of his government and said that citizens are saving thousands of crores of rupees during the 'GST Bachat Utsav'.

He also urged citizens to adopt swadeshi to promote the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat', to respect all languages, prioritise health and embrace yoga.

"All these efforts will rapidly take us towards a Viksit Bharat," Modi said in his letter, which he wrote a day after he celebrated Diwali with Navy personnel onboard the indigenously built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant.

"I extend my heartfelt greetings to all of you on the auspicious occasion of Deepavali, a festival filled with energy and enthusiasm. This is the second Deepavali after the grand construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya," he said.

"Lord Shri Ram teaches us to uphold righteousness and also gives us the courage to fight injustice. We have seen a living example of this a few months ago during Operation Sindoor. During Operation Sindoor, Bharat not only upheld righteousness but also avenged injustice," the PM said.

He said that this Deepavali is particularly special because for the first time, lamps will be lit in many districts across the country, including remote areas.

"These are the districts where Naxalism and Maoist terrorism have been eradicated from the root. In recent times, we have seen many individuals abandoning the path of violence and joining the | **More on P6**

Zadibal on Path of Rapid Development: Tanvir

Observer News Service

Srinagar: National Conference (NC) Chief Spokesperson and MLA Zadibal, Tanvir Sadiq said that he is committed to transforming Zadibal into a model constituency within the next five years.

Sadiq said that nearly 90 percent of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) has already been released for various developmental projects across the area.

“I recently inaugurated a sports facility at Mir Behri Dal where a cricket pitch is being developed — the first such initiative in the area in 70 years. Similarly, upgradation work has been initiated at

Shaheed-e-Millat Stadium, and macadamization has been completed in most parts of the constituency,” he said.

The NC leader said he had promised his constituents that he would personally reach out to every household and address their concerns, filling the development gap left over the years.

“In the next one month, several new projects will be launched as the Chief Minister has major plans for Zadibal. I appeal to the people to extend their support and cooperation during this tenure. I assure them that Zadibal will soon emerge as a model constituency,” Sadiq added.

Sagar Approves ₹2.5 Cr for Development Works

Observer News Service

Srinagar: National Conference (NC) General Secretary and MLA Khanyar, Ali Muhammad Sagar chaired a meeting of Block Khanyar-B office bearers at the party headquarters, Nawa-i-Subah, Srinagar, to review ongoing and proposed developmental works in the constituency.

The meeting, attended by MLA Hazratbal and NC Vice President (Kashmir) Salman Ali Sagar, focused on key civic and developmental issues concerning the Harwan, Shalimar, Brane, Nishat, and Dalgate areas. Party representatives and local workers presented detailed reports highlighting challenges related to infrastructure development, water supply, drainage, and healthcare facilities.

During the deliberations, Sagar assured the

party cadre that all public grievances would be addressed in a time-bound manner. He underscored the need for stronger coordination, consistent follow-up, and accountability across departments to ensure effective governance and delivery on the ground.

To expedite local development, Sagar announced the release of 2.5 crore from the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) for immediate execution of priority works. The allocation will focus on improving basic amenities and public infrastructure in the identified areas.

Calling on party workers to strengthen grassroots engagement, Sagar emphasized proactive outreach and systematic redressal of public issues to reinforce people's trust in the democratic process.

Body of Bandsaw Mill Worker Still Untraceable

Agencies

Srinagar: A massive search operation entered its second day on Tuesday to trace the body of a man who jumped into the river Jhelum from the Zainakadal area of Srinagar on Monday.

Officials said that the missing person, identified as Rafiq Ahmed Ahangar, son of Muhammad Jamal and a resident of Mujahid Manzil, Dalal Mohalla in Srinagar, had been working at a local bandsaw mill in the area. Moments before the incident, Rafiq reportedly told his employer that he would

return in ten minutes. However, witnesses said he was later seen jumping into the river from the Zainakadal bridge.

Following the incident, police and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) personnel immediately launched a rescue operation, joined by local volunteers who tried to assist in tracing the man. Despite continuous efforts since Monday afternoon, the body remained untraceable till late Tuesday evening.

“Search teams are using boats and divers to scan the river,” said an official involved in the rescue effort.KNT



RISKY JOB: An Electrician Scales High-Tension Pole to Replace Power Lines in Srinagar on Tuesday. KO Photo Abid Bhat

Late-Night Fire Ravages 6 Homes, Shops in Fateh Kadal

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A fierce fire broke out late Monday night in the densely populated Bana Mohalla area of Fateh Kadal, Srinagar, destroying six residential-cum-commercial buildings and leaving multiple families homeless, officials said on Tuesday.

According to authorities, the emergency call late at night, prompting fire tenders from several stations to rush to the scene. After intense firefighting efforts, the blaze was finally brought under control, though the damage was extensive.

“Six buildings, mostly double and triple-storied, were completely gutted on the upper floors. The roofs, furniture, and household items were destroyed, while lower floors suffered severe heat and water damage,” an official said. “Teams from multiple fire stations worked tirelessly to prevent

“The lanes here are so narrow that moving around was almost impossible. Everyone was trying to help, using buckets and hoses to control the fire, while hearing the cries of women and children all around—it was a nightmarish scene.”

the fire from spreading further in this tightly packed area.”

Residents described chaotic scenes as the fire spread rapidly through the narrow lanes. “It was horrifying. The flames engulfed everything so fast. People were shouting, running, trying to save

children and the elderly. The sky looked red as fire and smoke rose,” said one affected resident.

Another local added, “The lanes here are so narrow that moving around was almost impossible. Everyone was trying to help, using buckets and hoses to control the fire, while hearing the cries of women and children all around—it was a nightmarish scene.”

Officials confirmed that no casualties were reported, but several families suffered substantial property losses. “We are carrying out a detailed damage assessment and urge all residents in the Old City to remain vigilant and follow basic fire safety protocols, especially in congested areas,” the official added.

The incident has once again highlighted the vulnerability of old city neighborhoods in Srinagar to fire hazards, given the close proximity of structures and limited access for emergency services. (with KNO Inputs)

Frequent Fire Incidents Leave Trail of Destruction in 2025

Agencies

Srinagar: Kashmir Valley has witnessed a disturbing rise in fire incidents this year, leaving behind a trail of destruction across residential, commercial and even forested areas. Officials say the frequency and intensity of fires in 2025 have once again exposed deep-rooted vulnerabilities linked to outdated infrastructure, narrow access lanes and unsafe heating practices during the harsh winter months.

In the first month of this year alone, the region reported 41 fire incidents, nine of them in Srinagar city. Authorities said that though precise loss figures for 2025 are still being compiled, the damage caused runs into several crores of rupees.

Most incidents have occurred in densely populated areas where wooden structures dominate, allowing flames to spread rapidly.


Among the major incidents this year was a massive blaze in Baramulla's Jalal Sahib area in March that gutted over 21 houses and rendered 33 families homeless. A similar fire in Anantnag's Kadipora area later destroyed more than 40 homes within hours. Srinagar city this year witnessed dozens of fire incidents and in most cases causes were attributed to the short circuit.

Officials from the Fire and Emergency Services Department said that while their teams respond promptly, challenges such as narrow lanes, congested urban layouts and parked vehicles often delay firefighting operations.

“Our men work tirelessly, but accessibility remains a serious problem in old Srinagar and other towns where buildings are closely packed,” an official said.


The Fire Department attributes the rising incidents to unsafe electric wiring, low-quality heating appliances and lack of fire safety awareness. “Most houses in the Valley are made of wood, and once a fire starts, it spreads uncontrollably unless checked immediately,” said an officer.

Civil society groups have called for an urgent fire-vulnerability audit of all urban areas and reinforcement of fire stations with better equipment. They have also urged the government to promote the use of fire-resistant materials in reconstruction projects. (KNT)




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

AIRPORTS
SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311




RAILWAYS




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

HIGHWAY STATUS



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



HIJRI
CALENDAR
28 Rabi-ul-Sani
1447

PRAYERS

FAJR	5: 19
ZUHR	12:16
ASR	4: 13
Magrib	5:55
ISHA	7: 14

This Day In History

- 362- The temple of Apollo at Daphne, outside of Antioch, is destroyed in a mysterious fire
- 794- Emperor Kanmu relocates Japanese capital to Heiankyo (now Kyoto).
- 1335- Ex-emperor Hanazono (95th Emperor of Japan) becomes a Zen priest
- 1383- The 1383-85 Crisis in Portugal: A period of civil war and disorder begins after King Fernando dies without a male heir to the Portuguese throne
- 1575- Foundation of Aguascalientes (one of 32 Federal Entities of Mexico)
- 1633- Battle of Liao-luo Bay: Dutch East India Company defeated by Chinese Ming naval forces in southern Fujian sea
- 1707- Scilly Naval Disaster: shipwreck of four Royal navy warships and loss of 1400 men during a storm off the Scilly Isles - will prompt 1714 British Act of Parliament competition to find longitude at sea
- 1708- Great Alliance occupies Rijssel
- 1721 - Tsar Peter the Great becomes "All-Russian Emperor"
- 1746 -Princeton University (NJ) received its charter
- 1797 -Andre-Jacques Garnerin makes 1st parachute descent from a balloon in Paris
- 1799 - Russia leaves second anti-French Coalition
- 1812 - Duke of Wellington seizes Burgos, Spain
- 1861 - 1st telegraph line linking West & East coasts completed
- 1862 --Battle at Old Fort Wayne, Indian Territory
- 1879 -Thomas Edison perfects carbonized cotton filament light bulb
- 1897 - World's first car dealer opens in London
- 1913 -Explosion at Dawson NM coal mine kills 263 mine workers
- 1928 - China expels all Russian instructors & civil servants
- 1946 - 2 British ships sink near Albania
- 1948 - Egyptian flagship King Farouk sunk by Israel
- 1953 - Laos gains full independence from France
- 1954 - West Germany joins North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- 1956 - Great Britain performs nuclear test at Maralinga Australia
- 1961 - 75,000 Flemings demand equal rights & Flemish language in Belgium
- 1962 - Cuban missile crisis: US President John F. Kennedy addresses TV about Russian missile bases in Cuba and imposes a naval blockade on Cuba, beginning the missile crisis
- 1964 - French philosopher and author Jean-Paul Sartre refuses Nobel prize
- 1964 - US performs underground nuclear test at Hattiesburg, Mississippi
- 1966 - USSR launches Luna 12 for orbit around Moon
- 1973 - Israeli troops reconquer mountain Hermon
- 1973 - Security Council Resolution 338-cease fire to Yom Kippur War
- 1975 - Soviet spacecraft Venera 9 soft-lands on Venus, becoming the first lander to return images from the surface of another planet
- 1975 - Turkish diplomat shot to death in Vienna
- 1975 - World Football League disbands after the Week 12 of their second season
- 1978 - Pope John Paul II is inaugurated as Pope
- 1981 - US national debt tops \$1 trillion
- 1981- USSR performs underground nuclear test
- 1989 - Red Khmer occupies Pailin in Cambodia
- 1992 - Space Shuttle STS 52 (Columbia 13) launches into space
- 1993 - Russian cosmonaut Aleksandr Serebrov makes record 9th space walk
- 1997 - Coldest World Series game Marlins vs Cleveland (38°F)
- 1997 - Compaq testifies Microsoft threaten to break Windows 95 agreement if they showcased a Netscape icon
- 2006 - Panama Canal expansion proposal is approved by 77.8% of voters in a National referendum held in Panama
- 2008 - India launches its first unmanned lunar mission Chandrayaan-1.

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KO VIEW

Winter Exodus

Every October, towns across Kashmir feel a little emptier. Streets that once buzzed with daily labourers, shopkeepers, and small traders slow down. By November, thousands of working families have already left for Jammu, Delhi, or Himachal Pradesh. They leave behind homes, neighbourhoods, and ways of life that have held the valley together for generations.

Migration has always been part of Kashmir’s economy. Families moved with the seasons or during political uncertainty. Today, the reasons feel sharper.

Prices of basic goods have gone up by nearly 25 percent in the last year. Jobs for young people without government positions are scarce. Daily wage work, small trades, and other informal jobs are barely enough to make ends meet.

The impact is visible everywhere. Markets see fewer shoppers, small businesses struggle, and schools face changing enrollments as families leave or split. Neighbourhoods lose the people who keep them alive. Kashmir streets feel silent, measured by who is still around to fill them.

Government programs exist, including skill development, small-business loans, and employment schemes, but many families cannot access them. Low awareness, and limited reach mean help does not always arrive. Meanwhile, winters bring high heating costs, fewer jobs, and growing uncertainty. For many, moving becomes the only option.

This seasonal migration is changing the valley. The workforce that supports markets, schools, and communities is thinning. Every year, fewer people remain to sustain the neighbourhoods, and the economy feels the strain.

Kashmir needs practical support to keep its people at home. Affordable housing, winter relief, and better access to work can reduce the winter exodus.

Without action, every year the valley loses more families, leaving towns emptier and the social and economic fabric weaker.

CASH COURSE

Read This Before You Buy Anything

Investing the Kashmiri Way

From gold and real estate to mutual funds, patience and planning can help Kashmiri investors build lasting wealth amid market ups and downs.

Irshad Mushtaq

Investing often feels like an emotional roller coaster. The thrill of rising markets can turn into anxiety when prices fall. For investors in Kashmir, where financial awareness is growing fast, understanding how to stay steady through these swings can make all the difference between long-term success and costly mistakes.

Markets move in cycles. They rise, fall, and rise again. When prices dip, many people rush to sell, fearing deeper losses. But, history shows that patience often pays off.

Those who held on to gold between 2013 and 2018, when prices barely moved, were rewarded as it surged again after years of stagnation. The same is true for property in Kashmir. Over the past decade, land values in Srinagar and nearby towns have steadily appreciated, outpacing many other forms of investment.

Such patterns teach one thing: wealth creation takes time. Quick reactions rarely help. Instead, investors need to diversify, spreading their savings across real estate, mutual funds, equities, and gold, to reduce risk and build stability.

Professional advice also matters. Financial consultants can turn confusing data into actionable strategies and help investors avoid decisions based on emotion.

For Kashmiri investors, aiming for realistic long-term returns, say, around 12 to 18 percent annually, can ensure steady growth.

Investing is less about timing the market and more about time in the market. With patience, strategy, and expert guidance, Kashmir’s investors can transform uncertainty into opportunity, and build financial resilience for the future.

The author is a Srinagar-based reputed financial advisor.

Can Saffron Survive the Heat?

Erratic weather, urban sprawl, and rising temperatures are shrinking Kashmir’s saffron fields. Farmers now look to science to keep a centuries-old tradition alive.



Mohammad Hanief

“The challenges of 2025 are stark. Rising temperatures and erratic precipitation are expected to increase in intensity over the next decade. Conservation of soil, water, and biodiversity will become increasingly critical. Policies that promote climate-resilient agriculture, facilitate research, and encourage knowledge-sharing among farmers could determine whether saffron survives or fades from the Kashmir Valley.

The autumn harvest no longer brings the same comfort it once did in Kashmir’s saffron town. The fields that earlier bloomed like a crimson quilt have now thinned. Families for generations built their lives around this delicate flower that gave Kashmir its name: the land of red gold. Today, the yields tell a different story.

Production has slipped from around eight metric tons annually to less than three. The shift is a direct consequence of climate stress: unseasonal warmth, delayed monsoons, and winters that fail to deliver the chilling period saffron needs to flower. Even a few misaligned days of temperature or rainfall can erase months of painstaking labour.

Saffron is famously sensitive. The plant thrives within narrow climatic thresholds. Flowering requires cool autumn nights, moderate rainfall, and soil that remains neither too wet nor too dry. Rising temperatures in the last five years, coupled with erratic precipitation, have disrupted these delicate cycles.

Farmers recount years where flowers emerged unevenly, leaving entire plots unproductive. In 2025, the climate seems to conspire against tradition, turning a once-reliable harvest into a precarious gamble.

Urbanization compounds these climatic pressures. Pampore’s fields are gradually being encroached upon by roads, housing projects, brick kilns, and infrastructure development. Fertile farmland shrinks year by year, forcing families to cultivate smaller areas while maintaining the same labour-intensive practices. Soil erosion, declining water tables, and altered drainage patterns have worsened conditions. Every lost acre translates directly into lower output and reduced income.

Farmers are responding with innovation. Controlled indoor cultivation allows temperature, moisture, and nutrient supply to be monitored precisely, shielding plants from weather extremes. Aeroponic farming, which grows saffron in a mist environment without soil,

conserves water and reduces dependency on fragile land.

These approaches remain experimental, but early results are promising. Families who can afford the investment are seeing higher yields and more consistent quality.

Ecological threats have begun to influence outcomes as well.

Indian crested porcupines, once confined to forests, now raid saffron plots, feeding on corms and damaging flowers. Deforestation and habitat loss have driven wildlife into agricultural spaces, adding unexpected costs to already stretched budgets. Farmers spend more on fencing and pest control, increasing production costs while revenues dwindle.

Government programs have attempted to respond. In the last five years, initiatives have promoted modern farming techniques, offered subsidies for controlled cultivation, and trained farmers in soil and water conservation. Authorities have sought to protect farmland from encroachment and provide financial support for crop losses.

Despite these measures, adoption remains uneven. For many smallholders, the cost of technology, paired with traditional expectations of cultivation, presents a difficult choice.

The economic stakes are high. Saffron supports thousands of families and a network of local workers involved in drying, grading, packaging, and selling the spice. Reduced yields erode household incomes, threaten employment, and weaken Kashmir’s presence in global saffron markets.

The premium status of Kashmiri saffron, valued for its aroma, colour, and delicate flavour, means that even small reductions in quality can sharply affect prices and consumer confidence.

Cultural preservation adds another dimension. Saffron is woven into Kashmir’s identity. Its red stigmas flavour local dishes, medicinal remedies, and artisanal crafts. They appear in wedding rituals, festive dishes, and traditional remedies. Losing saffron would mean losing a living thread of cultural heritage. Protecting these fields is a fight for

identity, history, and tradition.

Farmers are increasingly blending tradition with science. Generational knowledge still guides planting, harvesting, and corm selection, but new techniques in water management, soil enrichment, and controlled environments are becoming essential.

Some are experimenting with crop rotation and diversification to reduce the risks of relying on a single season. Others are adopting drip irrigation and soil moisture monitoring to mitigate erratic rainfall.

These steps illustrate a growing awareness: climate change cannot be countered by instinct alone.

The challenges of 2025 are stark. Rising temperatures and erratic precipitation are expected to increase in intensity over the next decade. Conservation of soil, water, and biodiversity will become increasingly critical. Policies that promote climate-resilient agriculture, facilitate research, and encourage knowledge-sharing among farmers could determine whether saffron survives or fades from the Kashmir valley.

Saffron story today is a story of resilience under pressure. The determination of farmers, combined with scientific intervention and policy support, suggests that survival is possible.

Indoor cultivation, aeroponics, and careful ecological management are starting to supplement traditional practices, creating a hybrid model for a changing environment. Farmers are investing in the future, even as climatic uncertainty threatens each season.

Kashmir’s red gold stands at a crossroads. Preserving saffron means balancing tradition with innovation, economic incentives with ecological care, and local livelihoods with cultural heritage.

The next few years will determine whether this emblematic crop continues to thrive or slips into memory.

The author is a Srinagar-based analyst. He can be reached at m.hanief@gmail.com

Letter to Editor

Why Kashmir Needs Its Own Digital Detox Movement

Every morning in Kashmir, the first thing many of us reach for is not a prayer bead or a cup of nun chai, but our phones. We scroll through reels before sunrise and check notifications long after dark. The glow of the screen has replaced the rhythm of the day. What began as convenience has now turned into compulsion.

Technology has undoubtedly transformed life in the valley. Online education, remote work, and social media have connected Kashmir to the wider world like never before. But this digital embrace has a darker side.

From classrooms to shrines, weddings to wazwans, screens now mediate our most human moments. The

question is no longer whether we can live without technology, it’s whether we can live well with it.

According to a 2022 report by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, children under two should have no screen exposure. In Kashmir, however, phones have become pacifiers for toddlers and constant companions for teens. Parents often play YouTube cartoons to calm crying infants on buses and in markets, unaware that this habit may shape lifelong dependence.

Psychologists warn of rising “nomophobia”, the fear of being without a phone, and “phubbing,” when we ignore people around us to stare at our screens. Add to this the

Fear of Missing Out, and we have a society caught in what one might call digital anxiety.

Our collective addiction thrives on algorithms that reward outrage and “cringe content,” keeping us scrolling far longer than we intend.

Finland recently took a bold step back from this dependence, returning to printed textbooks after years of digital learning. Early results show improved attention spans and better academic outcomes.

Kashmiri educators could learn from that example. After all, digital literacy means knowing when to step away.

A digital detox need not be dramatic. It can begin with small acts: keeping the phone away at dinner,

designating tech-free zones at home, or spending an evening walking without earbuds.

As individuals, we owe it to ourselves and our children to model balance.

Technology is a gift, but its overuse can steal our time, sleep, and peace. In reclaiming even an hour of screen-free life, we may rediscover something precious: attention, presence, and the simple art of being human.

Sincerely,

Mohammad Asif Jan
mohdasiffjan@gmail.com

The Spinner Who Spun Hope for Kashmir

His farewell came without fanfare, but Parvez Rasool's journey from Bijbehara to the Indian team remains Kashmir's most enduring cricket story.

Younus Yousuf Ganie

In the mid-1990s, when most of south Kashmir evenings echoed with gunfire, a young boy in Bijbehara was chasing a ball made from rubber tape on a patch of cracked earth near the Jhelum.

For young Parvez Rasool, cricket was a way to carve joy out of the unease that filled the air.

Born in 1989 into a modest family, Parvez inherited both love and discipline for the game from his father, Ghulam Rasool, who had once represented Jammu and Kashmir in domestic cricket. The family lived simply, but cricket had a sacred place in their home.

On most mornings, Parvez would walk to the local ground with a borrowed bat and unrolled mat for a pitch, spending hours perfecting his flight and footwork. Those unstructured sessions by the riverbank built the foundation for a player who would one day represent the valley on the world stage.

By his late teens, Rasool's talent was unmistakable. He wasn't the smartest spinner or the most elegant batter, but there was a calm confidence in his game, an understanding of conditions and a sharp reading of batsmen. His off-spin was disciplined, almost mechanical in precision, but always probing. His batting, steady and intelligent, often lifted Jammu and Kashmir out of early collapses.

Bishen Singh Bedi, who had mentored several young cricketers from the valley, once described Rasool as "a complete cricketer with the heart of a fighter." Those words proved prophetic.

The 2012-13 Ranji Trophy season turned Rasool from a promising youngster into a national name. Leading the team in both batting and bowling, he scored over 500 runs and claimed 33 wickets. That season, he was everywhere: opening spells with

control, breaking partnerships in the middle overs, and anchoring innings under pressure.

For a player from a state rarely discussed in cricketing circles, it was a statement year.

Then came the turning point. In February 2013, playing against Australia A, Rasool spun magic in Chennai, claiming seven wickets and dismissing Steven Smith, Ed Cowan, and Matthew Wade. That performance caught national selectors' attention.

When he was named in India's squad for the Zimbabwe tour later that year, the news electrified the valley. For once, Kashmir's headlines were about something other than strife and situation. Streets that usually emptied at dusk buzzed with talk of "our Parvez."

Rasool didn't get to play in Zimbabwe, but the call-up itself was history. He became the first cricketer from Jammu and Kashmir to be part of the Indian national team.

When Rasool finally made his international debut against Bangladesh in 2014, millions in Kashmir watched with pride and anxiety. His debut was solid. He bowled economically, took a wicket, and handled the moment with composure.

But, his journey at the highest level didn't unfold as many had hoped. He played only one ODI and one T20I. His international career ended as abruptly as it had begun.

In hindsight, the problem wasn't performance alone.

Indian cricket had an abundance of spinners, and Rasool's style, accuracy over trickery, struggled to stand out. He was too steady for the role of a mystery spinner and too restrained for a full-time all-rounder.

But those who followed his career know he never really got the long run he deserved.

For players from smaller states, the Indian Premier League is often the ultimate validation. Rasool's



entry into the IPL came through the Pune Warriors India, where he shared a dressing room with MS Dhoni. Later stints with Royal Challengers Bangalore and Sunrisers Hyderabad brought exposure, but limited opportunities. Still, those brief appearances mattered.

In the IPL dugouts, Rasool learned from legends, watching how Dhoni read games, Kohli planned innings, and overseas pros trained.

For the first time, a player from Kashmir was rubbing shoulders with the biggest names in world cricket. It was about bridging the gap between the valley's isolation and the professional ecosystem of Indian cricket.

Rasool's story can't be reduced to statistics. It unfolded against a backdrop of confinement and curbed movement, conditions few other Indian cricketers had to face. Training camps were disrupted by security situations. Travel to matches meant crossing checkpoints. Facilities were basic, nets scarce, and sponsorships nonexistent.

That he rose through all of this made him an emblem of what was possible. His leadership of the Jammu and Kashmir Ranji side remains the most successful phase in the team's history.

Under his captaincy, in 2014, J&K defeated 40-time Ranji champions Mumbai in a stunning upset that

shook domestic cricket.

Rasool was later honoured with the Lala Amarnath Award for Best Allrounder twice, for the 2013-14 and 2017-18 seasons, a recognition that placed him among India's finest domestic performers.

Now, as he moves into mentoring and coaching, Rasool continues to shape Kashmir's cricketing culture. He's helping establish local academies and guiding young players who grew up idolizing him. Cricketers like Abid Mushtaq, Auqib Nabi, and Mujtaba Yousuf often cite Rasool's career as the reason they believed they could dream beyond Srinagar's Sher-i-Kashmir Stadium. His retirement was low-key, with



FROM THE DUSTY GROUNDS OF BIJBEHARA TO THE WORLD'S BIGGEST ARENAS, Rasool carried Kashmir's cricketing dream farther than anyone thought possible. His story is about what one man's persistence can mean to a place still searching for its fair chance.

little of the fanfare that national stars receive. Many in the valley felt he deserved more: a farewell that matched his contribution to the game.

Still, Rasool seems content building from the grassroots. He speaks of cricket as "a way to give the youth a sense of belonging," and that sentiment captures the essence of his journey.

— The author is a Research Scholar at the Department of History and Culture, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

The Kashmiri Saint Who Spoke in Knots

Centuries after his passing, Nund Reshi's Shruks still bind Kashmiris across faiths in a shared search for peace and purpose.



Sahil Manzoor Bhatti

He was born into a valley of changing faiths and restless hearts.

Hazrat Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Wali [R.A.], whom people lovingly called Nund Reshi, arrived at a time when Kashmir was learning to speak a new spiritual language. The air carried echoes of old temples and the call of the azaan. Between them stood a man who belonged to both: rooted in soil, open to sky.

They say he spent twelve years in a cave, far from the noise of kingdoms and trade. The cave, still damp with legends, was his world. He ate herbs, drank from springs, and turned silence into scripture.

His solitude was a dialogue with the invisible. From that stillness rose words that would hold a nation's conscience.

Kashmir, then, was transforming. Islam was spreading across its mountains and meadows, but old beliefs stayed in stones and songs. Nund Reshi did not preach through swords or sermons. His voice grew through poetry, the Shruks, short verses shaped like knots, each hiding a question inside. To read them is to untie oneself.

He wrote of the divine that breathes in everything:



TO SPEAK OF NUND RESHI IS TO SPEAK OF KASHMIR'S SOUL, its longing for oneness. His life was neither of conquest nor escape. It was a slow blooming of understanding, a belief that God lives not in marble domes or sacred texts alone, but in fields, forests, and the human heart.

He who is here, is also there;
He is the pawn, He is the chariot;
He is everything, unseen and unknown.

In another verse, he warned of hypocrisy that wears holy robes:

I saw a preacher eat beef today,
Complaining all greens were weed;

Eating sweet breads, burping away,
Telling the mosque it was the ogre's greed.

He spoke as a farmer might, not a scholar. His hands tilled the land of words:

He who sows,
Shall be the one to harvest too.

And then, a prophecy that feels painfully current:

Food will last only as long as the forests last.

Centuries have passed, but those lines echo each time a forest burns, or a stream runs dry in the valley he loved. His poetry reads like prayer

and warning at once, a simple faith in a complex world.

His shrine in Charar-e-Sharif still stands, its scent of incense mingling with mountain air. Pilgrims of every faith visit, whispering his Shruks, tying threads of hope to the latticed walls. In their eyes, there is no division of creed, only a search for peace.

To speak of Nund Reshi is to speak of Kashmir's soul, its longing for oneness. His life was neither of conquest nor escape. It was a slow blooming of understanding, a belief that God lives not in marble domes or sacred texts alone, but in fields, forests, and the human heart.

In his verses, the valley found its voice. And through his silence, it still listens.

— Based in Raiyar-Ich, Kashmir, the author explores the spiritual, cultural, and poetic traditions of the valley.

Digital Shadows in Valley

One photo, and thousands of cruel comments, Kashmiri youth are learning the hard way that online actions have real consequences.

Tawheed Parvaiz Bhat

Kashmir streets pulse with life, but its youth increasingly explore another world: the internet. Smartphones have become as essential as schoolbags, and social media feels like a town square stretched across continents.

Students share study notes, cultural traditions, and creative projects. They celebrate achievements and aspirations. But, alongside this digital promise lies a darker reality.

Cyberbullying, once a whisper, now echoes loudly, leaving emotional scars that reach far beyond screens.

Cyberbullying in Kashmir takes many forms. It can be the sudden spread of humiliating images, malicious rumours, fake profiles, or organized campaigns targeting someone for personal, social, or political reasons. Unlike traditional bullying, it is relentless.

A teenager can be harassed while at home, in school, or even during family gatherings. The permanence of digital content turns temporary shame into lasting trauma. Victims often experience anxiety, depression, withdrawal from social life, and in some cases, suicidal thoughts.

The problem is growing alongside internet penetration. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube have transformed ordinary students into content creators or influencers. Many use these spaces to educate, celebrate Kashmiri culture, or showcase talent. Others weaponize them, chasing followers and viral moments at the cost of dignity and truth. Social media can become a "bullying factory," where a single post destroys confidence built over years.

A recent incident highlights the consequences. A teenage girl in Kashmir, appearing with her teacher at an educational event by Physics Wallah, became the target of widespread online harassment. Within hours, photos and videos were circulated with cruel jokes, baseless allegations, and degrading comments. Her academic dreams, her NEET aspirations, were overshadowed by humiliation.

This incident reflects a societal failure to teach digital ethics and empathy. Behind every online profile is a human being with hopes and vulnerabilities. Our actions online have consequences in the real world.



CYBERBULLYING IS A TEST OF KASHMIR'S DIGITAL CONSCIENCE. Each viral meme, comment, or post can harm a life or lift it. For a generation growing up under complex social, political, and economic pressures, online cruelty chips away at confidence, creativity, and ambition.

India has legal frameworks to address cyberbullying. The Information Technology Act, 2000, and relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code cover identity theft, harassment, defamation, and privacy violations. Landmark judgments, like Shreya Singhal v. Union of India, have emphasized the need to tackle online abuse while safeguarding free expression.

Enforcement, however, remains uneven. Many youth remain unaware

of their rights or the consequences of harmful online behaviour.

The solution extends beyond law. Technology is neutral, morality shapes its use. Schools and colleges must embed digital ethics, consent, and emotional intelligence into curricula. Parents must guide their children with open discussions about online conduct. Communities must foster accountability, and social media companies must strengthen moderation systems. Reporting abuse should be normalized, not ignored.

Cyberbullying is a test of Kashmir's digital conscience. Each viral meme, comment, or post can harm a life or lift it. For a generation growing up under complex social, political, and economic pressures, online cruelty chips away at confidence, creativity, and ambition. Protecting youth requires a moral awakening alongside legislation. Social media should amplify ideas, talent, and culture, not shame, isolate, or degrade.

Our task is collective. We must ensure that the internet reflects the values we hope to nurture in our children: respect, empathy, and responsibility. Every teenager deserves a cyberspace where learning, creativity, and dreams can flourish without fear.

Kashmir's digital landscape can be a place of empowerment, if compassion travels faster than cruelty. The choice lies with us.

— The author is a teacher and columnist focused on education, ethics, and emerging social challenges in the digital age.

Ayatollah Khamenei: ‘Iran’s Nukes Are Not US Business’

Agencies

Tehran: Iran has firmly rejected an offer of renewed talks from the United States, with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dismissing US President Donald Trump's claims that the Islamic Republic's nuclear facilities were destroyed in a June airstrike. In a statement, Khamenei accused Washington of "imposition and bullying", calling the outcome of any deal offered by Trump "predetermined".

Tehran and Washington had engaged in five rounds of indirect nuclear negotiations, which collapsed amid a 12-day air war in June, during which Israel and the US targeted Iranian nuclear sites.

"Trump says he is a dealmaker, but if a deal is accompanied by coercion and its outcome is predetermined, it is not a deal but an imposition and bullying," Iran leader wrote on X.

Trump had recently suggested to the Israeli parliament that Washington could negotiate a "peace deal" with Tehran following the Gaza ceasefire. In response, Ayatollah Khamenei said, "The US president proudly says they bombed and destroyed Iran's nuclear industry. Very well, keep dreaming! What does it have to do with America whether Iran has nuclear facilities or not? These interventions are inappropriate, wrong, and coercive."

Western powers accuse Iran of covertly pursuing a nuclear weapon, citing uranium enrichment programmes, while Tehran insists its nuclear activities are strictly for civilian energy purposes.

Khamenei also strongly rebuked Trump during a Monday meeting with hundreds of Iranian athletes and scientific Olympiad medallists, whom he hailed as "symbols of national power and growth". He emphasised that the youth of Iran "have the strength to stand on the peaks and draw the world's attention to the bright horizon of Iran."

He condemned Trump's rhetoric as an effort to "raise the spirit of the Zionists and make himself look powerful through lies about Iran, the region, and its people," adding, "If he is truly powerful, let him calm the millions of people in all US states who are chanting against him."

Expressing joy at meeting Iran's accomplished youth, the Leader said their victories carry extra value because "the enemy, through psychological warfare, seeks to make the nation hopeless and forgetful of its own abilities."

Highlighting Iran's military resilience, Ayatollah recalled the 1980s war against Iraq, noting the ingenuity and courage of Iranian youth. He also praised Iran's response to June's US-Israeli aggression,

describing missile strikes that struck deep into Israeli targets.

"These missiles were prepared and used by our armed forces and military industries, and they still have them. If necessary, they will use them again," he said.

Khamenei also addressed Trump's acknowledgement of the US role in Israel's attacks in Gaza, stating Washington is the main partner in the Zionist regime's crimes. He highlighted that the weapons used on civilians in Gaza were supplied by the US.

He further rejected Trump's claim of fighting terrorism, saying, "More than 20,000 children and infants were martyred in the Gaza war. Were they terrorists? The real terrorist is the US, which created Daesh, unleashed it on the region, and even today holds some of its members in a certain area for its own use."

"The US is a warmonger that fuels terrorism and ignites wars," Khamenei added, questioning the presence of American military bases across West Asia.

He stressed that West Asia belongs to its own people and that war and death in the region result from US presence. "The US is a warmonger that fuels terrorism and ignites wars. Otherwise, what is the purpose of all these US military bases in the region? What are you doing here? What connection does this region have to you?"

India Upgrades Mission in Kabul to Embassy



Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: India on Tuesday announced upgrading its technical mission in Kabul to the status of an embassy as part of broader efforts to deepen its bilateral engagement with Kabul.

The announcement came over a week-and-a-half after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said during his meeting with Afghan counterpart Amir Khan Muttaqi that India will upgrade its diplomatic presence in Kabul.

India had withdrawn its officials from its embassy in Kabul after the Taliban seized power in August 2021. In June 2022, India re-established its diplomatic presence in the Afghan capital by deploying a "technical team".

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the Indian embassy in Kabul will further augment India's contribution to Afghanistan's comprehensive development, humanitarian assistance, and capacity-building initiatives.

"In keeping with the decision announced during the recent visit of the Afghan foreign minister to India, the government is restoring the status of the technical mission of India in Kabul to that of the Embassy of India in Afghanistan with immediate effect," it said.

The MEA said the decision underscores India's resolve to deepen its bilateral engagement with the Afghan side in "all spheres of mutual interest".

"The Embassy of India in Kabul will further augment India's contribution to Afghanistan's comprehensive development, humanitarian assistance, and capacity-building initiatives, in keeping with the priorities and aspirations of Afghan society," it said in a statement.

The mission will be headed by a diplomat in the rank of Charge d'affaires, it is learnt.

Muttaqi was in India this month for six days that signalled a new approach in New Delhi's ties with Kabul though it has not yet recognised the Taliban set up.

The foreign minister of the Taliban set-up had said Afghanistan will not allow any elements to use its territory against New Delhi's interests.

Muttaqi told a select group of journalists that Kabul will also send diplomats to India as part of step-by-step efforts to improve the bilateral ties.

"We will not allow any (element) to threaten anyone else or use the territory of Afghanistan against others. Daesh is a challenge for the region and Afghanistan is at the frontlines of this struggle," he had said.

World Bank Estimates USD 216B Needed To Rebuild Syria

Agencies

Damascus:Rebuilding Syria after over a decade of civil war is expected to cost about USD 216 billion, the World Bank said in an assessment published on Tuesday. The cost is almost ten times Syria's 2024 gross domestic product.

Syria's civil war began in 2011 when mass protests against the government of then-President Bashar Assad were met with a brutal crackdown and spiralled into armed conflict. Assad was ousted in December in a lightning rebel offensive.

The conflict destroyed large swaths of the country and battered critical infrastructure, including its electrical grid.

The World Bank says the rebuilding may cost between USD 140 billion and USD 345 billion, but their "conservative best estimate" is USD 216 billion.

The World Bank estimates that rebuilding infrastructure will cost USD 82 billion. It estimated the cost of damages for residential buildings at USD 75 billion and USD 59 billion for non-residential structures.

The province of Aleppo and the Damascus countryside, where fierce battles took place, will require the most investment, according to the assessment.

"The challenges ahead are immense, but the World Bank stands ready to work alongside the Syrian people and the international community to support recovery and reconstruction," World Bank Middle East Director Jean-Christophe Carret said in a statement.

Despite reestablishing diplomatic relations with the West and signing investment deals worth billions of dollars with Gulf countries since Assad was ousted, the country is still struggling financially.

While the United States and Europe have lifted many of the sanctions imposed during the rule of the Assad dynasty, the impact on the ground has so far been limited.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Speaker Admits

Conference (NC) holds 42 seats, BJP 29, Congress 6, PDP 3, CPI(M) 1, Aam Aadmi Party 1, Peoples Conference 1, Awami Ittehad Party 1, and 6 independents. Congress has opted to support the Omar Abdullah-led NC government from outside without formally joining it.

Two assembly seats remain vacant: Nagrota in Jammu and Budgam in the Valley. The Nagrota seat fell vacant following the death of BJP legislator Devender Singh Rana on October 31, 2024; his daughter Devyani Rana has been nominated by BJP for the by-election. The Budgam seat became vacant after NC leader Omar Abdullah resigned to retain the Ganderbal seat, having won both in the 2024 elections. NC has nominated former minister Aga Syed Mehmoood for Budgam and Shamim Begum for Nagrota.

The Election Commission has announced that voting for the Nagrota and Budgam by-polls will take place on November 11.

Lone's Resolution

for October 22. "The resolution has been disallowed on the grounds that the matter is sub-judice," they said.

Under Rule 177 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the J&K Legislative Assembly, any resolution is considered inadmissible if it pertains to a matter currently under adjudication by a court anywhere in India.

Attempts to reach Sajad Lone for comment were unsuccessful.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court of India is actively hearing petitions on the same issue. On October 10, a five-judge bench led by Chief Justice B.R. Gavai granted the Union Government four weeks to respond to multiple pleas seeking a time-bound roadmap for restoring statehood to Jammu & Kashmir.

In a related development, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah recently stated that he is seriously considering joining the case as a petitioner. (KNO)

Flood Relief, Darbar

outreach and responsiveness reflected our deep-rooted commitment to every region and community," he said.

Jammu unit president Rattan Lal Gupta highlighted the restoration of the Darbar Move, describing it as a major economic lifeline for Jammu. Tracing its origins to 1872 under Maharaja Ranbir Singh, the Darbar Move involves the seasonal transfer of government offices between Srinagar and Jammu to escape extreme weather conditions. "The National Conference stands for secularism, regional balance, and pro-people governance. Our party brought the first people-centric budget and continues to champion the cause of the common man," Gupta added.

The party's Nagrota candidate, Shamim Begum, outlined her vision for the constituency. She recalled the transformative development witnessed in Nagrota under previous NC governments, citing upgraded road connectivity, improved healthcare infrastructure, and increased investment in education. "We will build on that legacy and ensure that Nagrota continues on the path of development and empowerment," she said.

Party leaders said the campaign will focus on engaging voters directly, highlighting the NC's achievements in governance, crisis management, and regional development, while emphasizing the party's commitment to the welfare of all communities in Jammu and Kashmir.

Aga Mehmoood

Conference (NC) candidate Aga Syed Mehmoood Al-Mousavi has emerged as the wealthiest, declaring a net worth of around

₹14.31 crore.

In contrast, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) nominee, Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi, reported the lowest assets, with just ₹2.37 lakh in bank deposits.

According to Aga Mehmoood's affidavit, his assets include ₹28.02 lakh in movable property and ₹23.58 lakh for his spouse, along with immovable assets worth ₹15 crore comprising agricultural, commercial, and residential properties in Budgam.

A businessman and former legislator with a Bachelor's degree in Arts, Aga Mehmoood also carries liabilities of ₹97.69 lakh and has reported an annual income of over ₹52 lakh from business, rentals, and pension, Daily Excelsior reported.

Following him is Mukhtar Ahmad Dar of the Jammu & Kashmir Apni Party, who declared total assets worth ₹9 crore and liabilities of ₹6.59 crore, giving him a net worth of approximately ₹2.37 crore. Dar, whose highest qualification is 10th standard, has declared an annual income of ₹13.55 lakh and one pending criminal case related to cheating.

Independent candidate Muntazir Mohi Ud Din, a former member of the Apni Party, declared movable assets worth ₹95,000 and immovable assets valued at ₹1.88 crore, mostly inherited. He has no liabilities and reports pension as his only source of income.

Another Independent, Nazir Ahmad Khan, a farmer and former DDC Chairman of Budgam, declared a net worth of ₹1.35 crore. His assets include ₹23.35 lakh in movable property and ₹1.12 crore in immovable assets. He reported no liabilities and income from horticulture and agriculture not assessable for tax.

Parvez Ahmad Mir of the Republican Party of India (A), an IT professional, declared a total net worth of ₹1.03 crore, including movable assets of ₹25.11 lakh and immovable property valued at over ₹1 crore. He reported an annual income of ₹5 lakh and holds a Bachelor's degree in Information Technology.

At the other end of the financial spectrum, Aga Syed Mohsin of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) reported a negative net worth of about ₹91,000, with liabilities of ₹2.46 lakh exceeding his assets. His movable assets stand at ₹1.55 lakh, and he earns an annual income of ₹4.27 lakh from farming. Mohsin also faces a pending criminal case involving assault on a public servant.

PDP's Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi, holding an LL.M degree, reported the least assets among the contestants, with only ₹2.37 lakh in bank deposits.

Deeba Khan of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) declared ₹30.95 lakh in movable assets, mostly jewellery, while her spouse reported ₹26.89 lakh. She holds a Master's degree in Political Science.

Adopt Smart Tech

been "at the forefront of operations on multiple fronts," adding that many officers have "no holidays, no festivals — their duty is only their kartavya."

He called upon the public and security agencies to stay vigilant against terrorism and its supporters. "Over the past five years, people of J&K have stood firmly against terrorism. We must ensure that terrorists and their supporters do not succeed in their nefarious designs," he said.

Highlighting recent reforms in the criminal justice system, the LG noted that India has moved away from colonial-era penal laws with the introduction of three new criminal justice codes focused on justice rather than punishment. He urged all five pillars of the justice system — police, prosecution, judiciary, forensics, and prisons — to work together to ensure

timely and fair justice.

Sinha also emphasized the need for innovation and smart technology in policing to tackle emerging challenges such as drug trafficking, misinformation, and cybercrime. "We must use modern tools to counter those spreading fabricated narratives," he said.

Reaffirming his administration's commitment to the welfare of police personnel and their families, the LG said several programs have been implemented to ensure that the families of martyrs live with comfort and dignity.

Earlier, DGP Nalin Prabhat read out the names of police martyrs who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty. The ceremony included the traditional reversal of arms and a two-minute silence in their honour. The Lieutenant Governor also visited a blood donation camp organized to mark the occasion.

CM Pays Tributes

Assembly, who joined in laying wreaths as a mark of respect to the fallen heroes.

Senior government functionaries and police officers were also present, including Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Director General of Police J&K Nalin Prabhat, Additional DGP (Armed) Anand Jain, and Principal Secretary, Home Department.

Following the wreath-laying ceremony, the Chief Minister, who was also Guest of Honour, visited a blood donation camp organized as part of the commemoration. He interacted with volunteers and appreciated their humanitarian spirit, commending their selfless service towards community welfare.

JKSA Forms

determining the future course of action. This committee comprises representatives from different associations, open merit and general category representatives, and key stakeholders to ensure inclusive representation and a balanced approach in addressing concerns surrounding the reservation policy.

The formation of the committee reflects the collective commitment to fostering dialogue, transparency, and consensus-building in resolving issues related to the reservation policy. The committee is mandated to review the sub-committee's report in detail, engage with government authorities, and propose actionable recommendations that align with the aspirations and rights of the students of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Association stated that the Cabinet Sub-Committee memo on the reservation issue is not what matters most, rather, the content of the report itself holds greater significance. It urged the government to make the report public to avoid confusion and apprehensions among students and to ensure clarity on the matter.

National Spokesperson of Association, Dr Zubair Reshi informed that the formed 10-member committee will hold talks with both the government and the Opposition on issues related to the reservation policy and the recruitment process.

It added that empowering young people to engage in open and constructive discussions strengthens democracy and builds trust between the administration and the younger generation.

Zubair added that, "Students are not seeking confrontation; they are seeking conversation. Allowing such platforms will send a strong message that the government stands for inclusivity, transparency, and participatory governance," it added.

The ten-member committee will commence its work immediately and is expected to present its feedback and recommendations within

the stipulated time frame following consultations with the government and other stakeholders. Further updates on the committee's progress and decisions will be shared with the public in due course.

India Avenged

mainstream of development, expressing faith in the Constitution of our country. This is a major achievement for the nation," Modi said. The prime minister said amid these historic achievements, the country has also embarked on next-generation reforms in recent days.

"On the first day of Navratri, lower GST rates were implemented. During this 'GST Bachat Utsav', citizens are saving thousands of crores of rupees," Modi said.

He said in a world going through multiple crises, Bharat has emerged as a symbol of both stability and sensitivity.

"We are also on track to become the third-largest economy in the world in the near future," he said.

The prime minister also underscored that the primary responsibility of the citizens is to fulfil their duties towards the nation.

Modi also urged citizens to adopt swadeshi and proudly say, "This is swadeshi."

"Let us promote the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat'. Let us respect all languages. Let us maintain cleanliness.

"Let us prioritise our health. Let us reduce the use of oil in our food by 10 per cent and embrace yoga. All these efforts will rapidly move us towards a Viksit Bharat," he said.

"Deepavali also teaches us that when one lamp lights another, its light doesn't diminish but it grows further. With the same spirit, let us light lamps of harmony, cooperation and positivity in our society and surroundings this Deepavali," the PM said.

Jammu IGP: Foreign

the country on the occasion of Police Commemoration Day.

The day is observed in commemoration of 10 valiant martyrs of the CRPF who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty on October 21, 1959. They laid down their lives in an ambush laid by heavily armed Chinese troops at Hot Springs, Ladakh, at an altitude of 4681 metres.

"For the past two years, foreign terrorists have been a major challenge (in Jammu). But we are strengthening our counter-terrorism and border protection grid. I hope that soon we will be able to deal with the foreign terrorists hiding in forest areas and neutralise them," the Jammu police chief said.

He said around 120 counter-terrorist operations are launched in the Jammu zone every day. "This is our daily duty; whether it is a speculative operation or a precise information-based operation, it is ongoing," he said, adding that fighting terrorism is an important part of their duties.

"The number of people who have been martyred fighting terrorism in the Jammu zone is just one part of our duty. Apart from this, we also perform other duties. For example, we should not forget those comrades who have been martyred after being run over while performing traffic duties or fighting criminals. Fighting terrorism is a prime duty, but there is a wide spectrum of duties. We salute all our brave comrades who have been martyred," Tuti said.

'Increase Checking

Forces, Army, and Intelligence agencies.

During the meeting, Birdi reviewed the prevailing security scenario and called for intensified efforts to prevent any potential threats. He emphasized proactive measures, including

enhanced night patrolling, increased checking at vulnerable points, and real-time intelligence sharing to ensure coordinated operations.

Stressing the need for sustained vigilance and effective area domination, the IGP urged officers to maintain robust inter-agency coordination and chalk out strategies to counter emerging security challenges.

The meeting concluded with a collective resolve to strengthen coordination, enhance vigilance, and ensure effective implementation of security measures to maintain peace and public order across the Valley.

Delhi Suffers

green firecrackers between 8 pm and 10 pm. Police registered over 100 cases for violations of firecracker rules and more than 50 cases for illegal sales.

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta praised the Diwali celebrations as "unique" and reaffirmed her government's commitment to tackling pollution. Home Minister Ashish Sood called late-night firecracker bursts "irresponsible" but noted they were not the sole cause of the spike in pollution.

Firecracker sales reportedly surged to around Rs 500 crore this Diwali, with traders noting a nearly 40% increase compared to last year. Delhi Fire Services recorded 269 emergency calls, a 15% decline from 318 last year, though hospitals treated over 250 burn cases, with Safdarjung Hospital reporting 129 cases—the highest in the country.

Opposition leaders, including Congress, called for sustained action against pollution, highlighting long-standing administrative gaps that continue to worsen air quality in the capital.

LBA Seeks Footage

According to a notification issued by the Union Home Ministry, the judicial probe, to be headed by Justice B S Chauhan, a former judge of the Supreme Court, is mandated to investigate the circumstances leading to the serious law and order situation, the police action and the resultant unfortunate deaths of four people, including a 1999 Kargil war veteran.

"Anyone present at the scene (on September 24), and who possesses photos or video footage of the incident, should come forward and submit the material to the LBA office.

"These visuals are considered critical for the ongoing investigation and pursuit of justice," the association appealed to the public, while assuring them the identity of anyone sharing such evidence would be kept strictly confidential.

The LBA also addressed the community about upcoming weddings and ceremonies, many of which are scheduled to take place in the coming days.

"While these events may continue as planned, people are strongly urged to avoid playing musical and traditional instruments such as the Daman and Surna, in solidarity with the victims (of violence)," the appeal said.

The LBA said those killed or injured in the incident made "sacrifices in support of Ladakh's demands, and respecting their memory is the collective responsibility of the community."

The widespread violence broke out during a shutdown called by a constituent of the apex body to advance talks with the Centre on the demands for statehood and safeguards under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

Both LAB and KDA, spearheading the agitation for the past five years, are scheduled to hold talks with a sub-committee of the Ministry of Home Affairs in Delhi on Wednesday. The talks were agreed upon by the two sides to end the nearly five-month-long deadlock.

Saffron Growers Begin Harvest Amid Fears of Declining Production

Agencies

SRINAGAR: As saffron growers in the Pampore area of south Kashmir's Pulwama district begin harvesting the world-famous spice, concerns are mounting over dwindling production despite timely rainfall this year.

Growers fear that if immediate steps are not taken, saffron cultivation in the region — known as the "saffron town of Kashmir" — may vanish completely within the next few years.

Growers said that production had fallen drastically last season, with only 30 to 40 per cent yield compared to normal years.

They attributed this decline to multiple factors, including changing weather patterns, lack of irrigation facilities, land conversion, and the unavailability of healthy saffron corms.

Abdul Ashiq Hussain, a saffron grower from Pampore, said that although rainfall arrived on time this season, it failed to significantly improve crop output.

"Last year, the saffron corm didn't grow properly due to a prolonged heatwave, and this year, despite rains, the plants didn't recover as there was a prolonged dry spell this year as well. The situation is worsening each year," he said.

He added that government interventions have remained



mostly on paper. "There is a spice park in Dusoo Pampore and GI tagging for Kashmiri saffron, but what's the use of such initiatives if production keeps falling? For the past 15 years, we've been hearing about the National Mission on Saffron, but on the ground, there are no functional irrigation facilities," Hussain said.

Another grower, Ghulam Rasool, warned that if urgent measures aren't taken, saffron cultivation in Pampore could disappear altogether by 2030. "Every year, production declines. The government must wake up from its deep slumber. Instead of indulging in blame games, there should be concrete steps to re-

MANY FARMERS HAVE NOW STARTED CULTIVATING mustard or shifted to horticulture due to consistent losses in saffron,"

vive this heritage crop, which is the pride of Kashmir," he said. Growers said that the main

obstacles facing the industry are the lack of irrigation infrastructure, the conversion of saffron fields into residential or commercial land, and the shortage of quality corms.

This year also on a large portion of saffron land, people have sown mustard and other crops as they are fed up with saffron cultivation now, they added.

"Many farmers have now started cultivating mustard or shifted to horticulture due to consistent losses in saffron," said another farmer from the Lethpora area. "If this trend continues, Pampore's saffron legacy will be just a memory."

The growers have appealed to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and the Agriculture Minister to address the crisis. They demanded restoration of traditional irrigation channels, regular monitoring of saffron fields, and measures to prevent illegal corm extraction.

Official records reveal a consistent decline in saffron production over the past two decades. The area under saffron cultivation shrank from 5,707 hectares in 1996-97 to just 2,387 hectares in 2019-2020, marking a 65 per cent drop.

Government data shows that production fell from 17,333 metric tonnes in 2021 to 14,870 MT in 2022, and marginally rose to

14,94 MT in 2023. However, last year's output has been reported to be only around 30 per cent of normal production. Growers expect similar production this year.

They said that due to repeated prolonged spells, corms have not grown well in the last few years, and there is a need for quality saffron corms to revive this crop.

While the National Mission on Saffron (NMS) has revived some fields through sprinkler irrigation systems and farmer awareness programs, experts caution that the impact remains limited. "The siphoning off of corms and poor land management practices continue to negate the gains achieved under the mission," said an agricultural scientist from SKUAST-K.

Pampore's saffron, known for its rich colour and aroma, has been a symbol of Kashmir's cultural and economic identity for centuries. However, with a changing climate, inadequate policy implementation, and shrinking cultivation areas, the livelihood of thousands of families dependent on this crop is at stake.

"Revival of saffron isn't just about saving a crop — it's about preserving a tradition, a culture, and an identity," said a group of worried growers. "If immediate and effective measures aren't taken now, by 2030, there may be no saffron left in Pampore."—(KNO)

Sopore Youth's Wedding Dreams Shattered by Fatal Accident

What should have been a joyful time preparing for marriage turned into grief for a Sopore family on Monday, after a tragic accident at the Municipal toll point claimed the life of 24-year-old Bilal Ahmad Wani.

Bilal, a resident of Saidpora Sopore, was on duty at the toll point along with his colleague Shahid Hiral when a speeding truck struck them. Bilal died on the spot, while Shahid sustained serious injuries, officials said.

According to KNO, residents highlighted the lack of basic safety measures at toll posts, including warning signs, reflective barricades, speed limits, and proper lighting, making workers vulnerable to fast-moving vehicles.

Bilal, the sole breadwinner of his family, leaves behind an ailing father, mother, and younger brother. His mother, speaking through her grief, said, "He worked day and night to support us. Now our world has come crashing down."

Locals demanded urgent reforms, including better safety signage, barricades, and police presence during night shifts. A case has been registered at Police Station Sopore, and investigations are ongoing. (Observer News Service)

Pulwama Residents Demand Upgradation of WSS

The residents of Rakh and Zahid Bagh villages in South Kashmir's Pulwama district have urged the authorities to upgrade the existing water supply scheme in the hamlets, saying that the current infrastructure is insufficient to meet the needs of the growing population.

Locals said that the water supply scheme catering to these villages was constructed nearly 12 years ago to serve around 250 households.

However, over the years, an additional village was brought under its ambit, significantly increasing the number of consumers.

"Initially, the scheme was meant to serve only 250 households, but today it caters to around 500 households spread across three villages. This has put an enormous strain on the existing system," said Ab Hameed, a resident of Zahid Bagh.

He added that while new households have recently been connected to the network, the water supply remains grossly inadequate. "Water comes for hardly half an hour in 24 hours and even then, the flow is very low," he said.

He suggested that the existing source should continue to serve Darbagh village—which falls in neighbouring Shopian district—while a new pumping station and separate source should be created exclusively for Zahid Bagh and Rakh villages. "This is the only way all households can get adequate and clean drinking water," he added.—(KNO)

Man Evading Arrest for 7 Years Arrested

Continuing its sustained crackdown on absconders and proclaimed offenders, J&K police on Tuesday said to have arrested a wanted accused who had been evading arrest for the past seven years in Kulgam.

The arrested individual has been identified as Mohammad Fareed Bajard son of Mohammad Qasim resident of Gundah Khawas, Rajouri, wanted in Case FIR No. 74/2018 under sections 323 and 354 RPC of Police Station Yaripora, a police spokesman said in a statement issued to Kashmir Observer.

The accused had been on the run since 2018 to evade arrest. Acting on specific intelligence, a Police team successfully traced and apprehended him after persistent efforts. Following completion of legal formalities, he was produced before the Court, police said.

Meanwhile, J&K Police reiterated its firm commitment to bringing absconders and proclaimed offenders to justice, ensuring that no one evading law remains beyond its reach. (Observer News Service)

JMC Conducts Draw of Lots for Allotment of Kiosks

In continuation of its ongoing efforts to modernize urban infrastructure and rehabilitate street vendors in a structured and transparent manner, the Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) organized a draw of lots for the allotment of newly constructed modern kiosks at Below Gummat Steps, Jammu.

Earlier, a total of 82 existing old kiosks located at the site were dismantled by the Corporation to pave the way for the development of a new and upgraded vending zone. The initiative was undertaken with the objective of providing improved, aesthetically designed, and hygienic kiosks to small traders and vendors operating in the area.

The newly constructed kiosks have been designed in three different standardized sizes — 4x10 ft, 6x10 ft, and 8x10 ft — to cater to the varied business requirements of vendors. Each kiosk has been constructed using modern building techniques to ensure durability, better ventilation, and uniformity in appearance, contributing to the city's visual appeal and organized vending environment.

The allotment process was carried out through a transparent draw of lots under the chairmanship of the JMC Commissioner in the presence of Joint Commissioner (Revenue & Enforcement), Joint Commissioner (Administration), Joint Commissioner (Works), Deputy Commissioner (S), Chief Accounts Officer, Deputy Legal Remembrance and Chief Revenue Officer.

The event witnessed the gracious presence of Member Legislative Assembly (MLA) Jammu (East) Yudhvir Sethi as the Chief Guest, who appreciated JMC's efforts to provide modernized vending facilities to eligible beneficiaries while maintaining fairness and transparency in the process.

The MLA commended the Corporation for aligning its initiatives with the principles of Smart City Development and promoting livelihood opportunities alongside urban aesthetics.

On the occasion, the Commissioner, JMC emphasized that the newly built kiosks represent a model of urban renewal aimed at balancing vendor welfare with city beautification. (Observer News Service)

LG Ladakh Pays Homage to Police Martyrs

Says Nation remains indebted to Brave Police Personnel for their supreme sacrifice



Observer News Service

LEH: The Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Kavinder Gupta, highlighted the pivotal role of the police force in nation-building and described it as a pillar of strength for society during the solemn observance of Police Commemoration Day at the Parade Ground, District Police Lines, Choglam-sar, Leh.

The Lieutenant Governor laid wreaths at the Police Memorial to pay tribute to the ten CRPF personnel who were martyred on October 21, 1959, at Hot Springs, Ladakh, during an encounter with the Chinese Army.

The event was attended by senior dignitaries, including Director General of Police, Ladakh, Dr. S.D. Singh Jamwal, IPS; Secretaries to the Administration; Deputy Commissioner Leh; SSP Leh; Heads of Departments; officers from paramilitary forces; and district police personnel.

Addressing the gathering, Kavinder Gupta lauded the courage, dedication, and selfless service of police personnel who laid down their lives to uphold peace,

law, and order. He specially remembered Inspector Tsewang Namgyal of Ladakh Police, who sacrificed his life in the line of duty over the past year.

He commended the Ladakh Police for their professionalism, discipline, and commitment in maintaining public safety and harmony in the challenging terrain of the Union Territory. The Lt Governor also met with the families of police martyrs, expressing deep gratitude for their immense sacrifice and assuring them of continued support from the Administration.

Kavinder Gupta further urged the youth of Ladakh to draw inspiration from the valour and dedication of police personnel and to contribute to nation-building with a spirit of service and patriotism.

In his address, DGP Ladakh, Dr. S.D. Singh Jamwal, IPS, paid homage to the martyrs and reaffirmed the Ladakh Police's steadfast dedication to the people of the Union Territory. He read out the names of police personnel martyred over the past year, including Inspector Tsewang Namgyal.

Gol Sanctions 36 Road Projects Worth ₹292 Cr for Baramulla

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Government of India has approved 36 road projects worth ₹292.33 crore under PMGSY-IV Batch-I (2025-26) for the Baramulla Parliamentary constituency, marking a major infrastructure boost for north Kashmir.

According to officials, the sanctioned projects will cover a total length of 136.69 kilometres, providing road connectivity to 41 habitations across the constituency.

Union Minister for Rural Development and Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, said the projects are aimed at strengthening rural infrastructure and accelerating socio-economic development in the region.

Welcoming the approval, Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) Chief Spokesperson Inam Un Nabi said the decision reflects how Engineer Rashid's developmental vision continues to influence progress in north Kashmir despite his incarceration.

He expressed gratitude to the Union Minister for the sanction and urged the Jammu and Kashmir administration to ensure timely and transparent implementation of the projects to benefit the people of the region.

Police Commemoration Day

J&K Police Pays Tribute to Fallen Heroes



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Police on Monday observed Police Commemoration Day across the Kashmir Valley, honoring the courage and sacrifice of officers who lost their lives in the line of duty.

The day's solemn observances included wreath-laying ceremonies, commemorative parades, and special tributes to martyrs, highlighting the enduring legacy of their bravery. In all districts, police personnel and civil authorities paid floral tributes and observed two minutes of silence in memory of the fallen. District officials also read out the national roll of honour of police personnel who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving the country. Gifts and support were extended to the Next of Kin (NoKs) of martyrs, accompanied by interactive sessions to address their concerns.

In Anantnag, the main event took place at the District Police Lines (DPL), with DIG SKR Javed Matoo (IPS) and SSP Anantnag Amrit Pal Singh (IPS) taking the salute. The function was attended by DC Anantnag Fakhruddin Hamid

(IAS), alongside officers from the Police, CRPF, civil administration, and families of martyrs.

Shopian witnessed a similar tribute at DPL Shopian, where SSP Mushtaq Ahmad Choudhary (JKPS) led the Commemoration Parade. Officers from the Police, CRPF, and Army joined martyrs' families in paying floral respects.

In Pulwama, SSP Tanushree (IPS) presided over the homage ceremony, laying wreaths and taking the salute. She also inaugurated the Police Martyrs' Memorial Kabaddi Tournament, an initiative aimed at promoting sportsmanship while commemorating the valour of fallen officers.

According to KINS, tribute events were also held across Kashmir districts. Officers, civil society members, and families of martyrs gathered at Martyrs' Memorials to honor the sacrifices made by the brave.

Police Commemoration Day stands as a solemn reminder of the dedication and selfless service of the Jammu and Kashmir Police, inspiring the force to continue its commitment to maintaining peace and security in the region.

Protests Erupt Over Deputy CM's Remarks on MP Aga Ruhullah

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Widespread protests erupted in Ichgam, Budgam, and other areas of central Kashmir on Tuesday following controversial remarks by Jammu and Kashmir Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary. A video circulating on social media reportedly captured Choudhary saying, "Who Agha? I don't know him, I know only Agha Mehmoode, who is our candidate for the Budgam by-elections."

The comments sparked outrage among local residents and supporters of National Conference MP Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi, who staged demonstrations demanding an apology, describing the Deputy CM's statement as "disrespectful" toward a senior political leader. Protesters were seen chanting slogans and holding rallies across multiple locations in Budgam.

Responding to the backlash, Deputy CM Choudhary sought to



clarify his remarks, stating they had been "misinterpreted" and taken out of context. Speaking to reporters in Srinagar, he said, "Yesterday's statement was not about Aga Ruhullah. There was a lot of rush, noise, and commotion at that time, which led to confusion over whom I was referring to."

He added that his comment pertained to the BJP candidate in the Budgam by-election, not MP Aga Ruhullah. "Someone asked me a question about Aga... the BJP candidate. I replied that I don't know that Aga. Aga Ruhullah Sahib is a respected MP and senior

leader of the National Conference. I know him personally and have even visited his house," Choudhary clarified.

According to KNO, the Deputy CM also criticized media outlets for allegedly distorting his statement to "increase TRPs," saying, "The media's job now seems to be to twist statements for headlines. I have nothing to do with that."

On the Budgam by-election, Choudhary expressed confidence in the National Conference's prospects, stating, "Budgam has always been a National Conference seat. Aga Ruhullah Sahib and Aga Mehmoode Sahib will work together to ensure victory for the party. Under Aga Ruhullah Sahib's leadership, we are confident that the NC candidate will win."

Despite the clarification, protests persisted across several areas in Budgam throughout Tuesday, with demonstrators demanding a public apology from the Deputy Chief Minister.

Deputy CM Says Remarks on MP Ruhullah Misinterpreted

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Chowdhary on Tuesday sought to clarify his recent comments, asserting that his statements had been misconstrued and were not aimed at Central Kashmir MP Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi.

The clarification comes after supporters of the National Conference leader staged protests in Bandipora and Budgam, accusing Chowdhary of making derogatory remarks against their leader. Demonstrators reportedly burned photographs of the Deputy Chief Minister and raised slogans demanding an apology.

Addressing the controversy, Chowdhary said, "During

my interaction yesterday in Budgam, there was considerable noise and disruption. My words were misunderstood. I was referring to a BJP candidate, not Aga Ruhullah."

He further stressed, "Aga Ruhullah is a respected leader and someone I know personally. My statement had nothing to do with him."

The Deputy Chief Minister also commented on the protests, stating, "I am aware of the demonstrations, but the truth is my remarks concerned another individual, a BJP candidate whom I do not even know personally."

Chowdhary's clarification seeks to ease tensions following the demonstrations while reaffirming his respect for the National Conference MP.

From 33rd To 8th, Atiqa Mir Delivers
Overtaking Masterclass In IAME Karting

Press Trust of India

DUBAI: Kashmiri racing sensation Atiqa Mir staged a remarkable recovery drive after a sudden technical issue pushed her to back of the grid, climbing as many as 25 spots to finish a creditable eighth in round three of the IAME Karting Championship here.

The 10-year-old, who is the first Indian to be backed by Formula 1, passed a melee of karts from 33rd on the grid for a top-10 finish. Atiqa's determined effort came after her memorable win in the RMC Championship last week.

Starting the final second on the grid, the Akcel GP driver was the favourite to win again but disaster struck when her kart did not start on the formation lap due to a technical issue.

Atiqa was forced to start the race from the pit lane but that did not de-



ter her steely spirit as she put up an overtaking exhibition.

"That felt like a win... I could have finished even higher but for a few unruly drivers. I was gutted obviously when my kart didn't start on the grid but I used that energy to move forward," said Atiqa.

On Saturday, Atiqa finished P4 in Round 2, narrowly missing out on the podium after setting the fastest lap in the final.

Asif Mir, Atiqa's father and India's first National Karting Champion, is a hard man to please but he too was mighty impressed with her daughter's dogged display.

"That was astonishing I couldn't believe the precision and pace she showed in overtaking, making all clean moves. One of her best performances ever in the kart. It's a pity what happened with her kart on the grid but that is motor racing," said Asif.

BCCI Gets Sri Lanka, Afghan
Support On Asia Cup Trophy Fiasco



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The deadlock over the Asia Cup trophy, which is yet to reach champions India, continues to be unresolved as the Asian Cricket Council's Pakistani head Mohsin Naqvi has refused to part with it despite a fresh missive from the BCCI, backed by boards of Afghanistan and Sri Lanka.

A top ACC source told PTI that Naqvi has insisted that a BCCI representative collect the trophy from him at the body's headquarters in Dubai but the Indian board has rejected that stance. The BCCI has reiterated that it will raise this matter in an ICC meeting next month.

"The BCCI secretary (Devajit Saikia), BCCI's ACC representative Rajeev Shukla and representatives of other

member boards including Sri Lanka Cricket and Afghanistan had written to the ACC president last week over handing the trophy to India," the ACC source said.

"But his response was that someone from BCCI should come to Dubai and take the trophy from him. So, that matter has still not moved. BCCI has made its stance clear that it won't be receiving the trophy from him. So, the matter will most likely be decided in the ICC meeting," he added.

The ICC is headed by former BCCI secretary Jay Shah. The trophy has been at the ACC headquarters after the Indian team refused to accept it from Naqvi at the presentation ceremony, prompting him to walk away with it in an unprecedented turn of events on September 28.

Shaheen Afridi Replaces Mohammad
Rizwan As Pakistan ODI Captain

Press Trust of India

KARACHI: Senior pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi will replace Mohammad Rizwan as the new ODI captain of Pakistan starting next month, the country's cricket board has announced amid speculation that the sudden change of guard was pushed by white-ball head coach Mike Hesson.

The Pakistan Cricket Board announced that Shaheen will lead Pakistan in the three-match ODI series against South Africa in Faisalabad from November 4-8. The decision, the board said, was taken at a meeting in Islamabad attended by the national selectors, advisory board members, and Hesson.

While the PCB has not cited any official reason for the switch, insiders believe Hesson's recommendation served as a "springboard" to make the change.

The 25-year-old Shaheen has played 66 ODIs and 92 T20Is for Pakistan besides also featuring in 32 Tests.

The wicketkeeper-batter captained Pakistan in



20 ODIs, winning nine and losing 11, a record that included a poor run in the ICC Champions Trophy and the subsequent series defeats in New Zealand and the West Indies.

There is also speculation that some officials in the cricket board were uneasy with Rizwan's "growing tendency to involve religion in dressing room discussions", something that also made some players uncomfortable.

Rizwan has had no qualms about expressing his faith even during cricket matches or in media interactions and according to Pakistan batsman, Imam ul Haq, he arranged special sermons in the team hotels and also urged players to pray five times a day.

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