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Food Safety Under Scanner

'Ajwa' Packaged Water Ban Triggers Fresh Alarm

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Food safety concerns in Jammu and Kashmir intensified on Saturday after the Food Safety Department imposed an immediate ban on the sale, storage and distribution of packaged drinking water brand 'Ajwa', following confirmation of bacterial contamination in a sample lifted from Srinagar.

Officials said the prohibition order was issued by the Designated Assistant Commissioner, Food Safety, Srinagar, declaring the product unsafe for human consumption. The packaged water is manufactured by M/s Saaf Pani, Khonmoh, Srinagar.

The sample was tested at the National Food Testing Laboratory, Ghaziabad, and the report dated November 25, 2025, confirmed the presence of E. coli and coliform bacteria, indicating possible faecal



contamination of the water.

Health officials warned that consumption of contaminated drinking water can lead to gastrointestinal illnesses, diarrhoea and vomiting, and in severe cases may cause serious complications, including kidney failure.

The ban will remain in force until further notice. All wholesalers, retailers and food business operators have been directed to immediately stop the sale of the | [More on P6](#)

Why Bottled Water Is Losing Its Purity Argument?

KO Web Desk

Growing mistrust of tap water has turned bottled water into a daily staple worldwide, even in countries where public water supplies are among the most rigorously tested. Aggressive marketing has | [More on P6](#)

THE TEST CONFIRMED THE PRESENCE of E. coli and coliform bacteria, indicating possible faecal contamination of the water.

Red Fort Car Blast Case

Qazigund Doctor Declared 'Proclaimed Offender'

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: An NIA court here declared Dr Muzaffar Ahmad Rather, an accused in the white collar terror module busted by Srinagar police in October that was behind the November 10 car blast near Delhi's Red Fort, a proclaimed offender under Section 84 of the BNSS.

The proclamation notice, issued by a special judge designated under the NIA Act last week, was pasted on the house of Rather at Qazigund on Saturday, officials said.

The court has directed Rather to be present before it on January 28, 2026, they said.

"Proclamation is hereby made that | [More on P6](#)

Created 800 MBBS Seats In 4 Yrs After Decades of Delay: LG

Says Accessible, Affordable Quality Healthcare Is Now a Reality in J&K

'Over 1,100 Pending Promotions Cleared at SKIMS In 5 Yrs'



Observer News Service

Srinagar: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday said Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed unprecedented

expansion in medical education and healthcare infrastructure over the past few years, asserting that accessible and affordable quality healthcare has become a | [More on P6](#)

Zero Tolerance To Terrorism In All Its Forms: LG

» Hands Over Appointment Letters To 39 NoKs Of Terror Victims

» 'Those Aiding Terrorists Will Pay A Very Heavy Price'

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday handed over appointment letters to 39 next of kin of terror victims from the Kashmir division,

reiterating the administration's policy of zero tolerance towards terrorism in all its forms.

Addressing the gathering, the Lieutenant Governor said the initiative marked a decisive step towards restoring justice, dignity and faith in the system for families who had suffered due to terrorism for decades.

"For these families, today the long wait for justice has ended. With concrete steps for rehabilitation, | [More on P6](#)

AFTER THE ABROGATION OF ARTICLE 370, terror victim families have found new courage and confidence and are now speaking against the terror ecosystem without fear.

Closure Of Tourist Spots Spreading Confusion Among Tourists: CM

Throws Open Asia's Longest Ski Drag Lift In Gulmarg

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Saturday said the Centre cannot claim normalcy in the Union Territory until tourist destinations closed after the Pahalgam terror attack earlier this year are reopened, calling for an immediate review of the decision to keep several key spots shut.

Speaking to reporters after inaugurating Asia's longest ski drag lift at Gulmarg, the Chief Minister said the continued closure of tourist destinations was creating confusion among visitors and sending mixed signals at a time when the government is projecting a revival of tourism.

"How long are you going to keep these destinations closed? On one hand, you tell the world that Jammu and



Kashmir has normalised. On the other, half of Gulmarg, half of Pahalgam and Doodhpathri remain closed. Until you open these destinations, how can you claim normalcy?" Omar said.

'Decision Not Ours, No Consultation'

Omar said the decision to close tourist destinations does

not lie with the elected government and that there was no consultation before such steps were taken. The elected government, he said, can only focus on building and improving tourism-related infrastructure.

"Unfortunately, when destinations are closed, there is no consultation with us. If I were sitting there, I would have opened everything by now," the Chief Minister said.

Several tourist spots were shut by the Lieutenant Governor's administration following the April 22 terror attack in Baisaran meadows in Pahalgam, in which 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed. While some destinations were later reopened in a phased manner, many continue to remain closed.

Omar said | [More on P6](#)

Fog Engulfs Valley; Snow Likely In Higher Reaches

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Dense fog enveloped Srinagar and several other parts of Kashmir on Saturday, even as overcast skies led to a marginal rise in minimum temperatures across the valley, providing slight relief from prevailing cold conditions, officials said.

Srinagar recorded a low of minus 2.9 degrees Celsius on Friday night, up from the previous night's minus 3.6 degrees Celsius. Despite the increase, the temperature remained 1.7 degrees below the seasonal average.

The Meteorological Department said thick fog was



Pulwama: **-4.2°C**
Shopian: **-3.7°C**
Srinagar: **-2.9°C**
Pahalgam: **-2.8°C**
Kupwara: **-2.4°C**
Qazigund: **-1.6°C**
Kokernag: **0.1°C**
Gulmarg: **1.6°C**

observed particularly in areas around water bodies, reducing visibility at several places across the valley. Qazigund in south Kashmir recorded a minimum of minus 1.6 degrees Celsius, while north Kashmir's Kupwara settled at minus | [More on P6](#)

Jhelum, Tributaries At Critically Low Levels

The prolonged dry spell in Kashmir has pushed several major water bodies to critically low levels, with key gauges at Sangam, Pampore, Lidder and Rambiyara recording negative flow readings. Chief Engineer, I&FC Kashmir, | [More on P6](#)

J&K Gets ₹350 Cr For SC, ST Healthcare Under NHM In 3 Yrs

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Centre has allocated more than ₹350 crore to Jammu and Kashmir under the National Health Mission for the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe components over the past three financial years, according to data tabled in the Lok Sabha.

As per the information, Jammu and Kashmir received ₹41.69 crore for the Scheduled Caste population and ₹14.45 crore for Scheduled Tribes during 2022-23. The allocation rose sharply in 2023-24, with ₹114.88 crore earmarked for SCs and ₹47.78 crore for STs.

For the ongoing 2024-25 financial year, the Centre has released ₹100.96 crore for SC components and ₹49.08 crore for ST components under the mission.

Officials said the funds are being utilised to strengthen healthcare delivery through Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, ambulance services, ASHA | [More on P6](#)



Fishermen use harpoons to catch fish in the waters of Anchar Lake, Srinagar, employing a traditional technique known as shadow fishing. KO Photo By Abid Bhat

When Does DDC Tenure End?

J&K Govt Seeks Legal Opinion

Agencies

Srinagar: In a significant development, the Jammu & Kashmir Government has sought a legal opinion to determine when the five-year term of District Development Councils (DDCs) began, a decision which will decide on the date of their dissolution.

Authoritative sources said that the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj has written to the Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs to clarify whether the DDCs tenure started the day members took oath or from the day the Councils were constituted.

The legal opinion would answer whether the DDCs expire on December 27, 2025 or survive until February 24, 2026.

While the DDC members were administered oath on December 28, 2020, the DDCs were constituted on February 25, 2021

The legal opinion would answer whether the DDCs expire on December 27, 2025 or survive until February 24, 2026.

As per Jammu & Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act- 1989, the term of District Development Council shall be five years except for holding common elections to all the tiers of the Panchayats simultaneously so that all the tiers have co-extensive terms in the district.

While the Act clearly stipulates that the term of Panchayats begins from the date of their constitution, no such clarity exists for DDCs.

It is also clear in law that there is a deadline for administering the oath to elected members.

According to the Act, the Deputy Commissioner must, within one week of the declaration of results, convene a meeting of the elected members for the purpose of administering their oath.

On October | [More on P6](#)



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2

Mosquito-Borne Diseases Perceived As Rapidly Escalating Threats To Humanity: Study

Press Trust of India

Mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue could be the most rapidly escalating threats to humanity, followed by tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, with climate change emerging as a primary driver of disease escalation, according to a survey of over 3,700 health professionals and researchers from across 151 countries. Socioeconomic inequality, which can impact one's access to healthcare, and antimicrobial resistance that can undermine treatments against wide-ranging infections may also contribute to disease escalation, said the participants, nearly 90 per cent of whom were based in low and middle-income countries. Climate change, poverty and drug resistance could be coming together to create an escalating health crisis that could become a "creeping catastrophe" if left unaddressed, findings published in the journal Scientific

Reports say.

"Whilst there remains the possibility of a new pathogen emerging anywhere in the world, our results reveal a consensus that the next pandemic might not be a sudden event but could creep up as a slowly-building humanitarian disaster, as the catastrophic burden of endemic diseases escalates and hits new, vulnerable communities across different geographies," authors from the UK's University of Oxford wrote.

Studies have shown that rising temperatures and changing rainfall patterns due to global warming is creating conditions conducive for mosquitoes to breed. Senior author Trudie Lang, director of The Global Health Network at University of Oxford's Nuffield Department of Medicine, said the study provides "evidence from communities experiencing these threats from climate change right now across the Global South, where disease burdens are



highest".

The regions are under-represented and not collectively voiced, but data and insights are grounded in lived experience and global diversity, Lang said. "Our research clearly demonstrates that the next major health emergency may not be a sudden new outbreak, but the steady worsening of the quiet diseases that shorten lives every day," the senior author said.

The researchers added that the risk of the health emergency will not present as a dramatic outbreak, but as a slow-unfolding humanitarian disaster where endemic diseases spread into new geographies — impacting health systems and economies. "Climate change is driving the spread of infectious diseases, and it's hitting hardest in communities least able to adapt," said Josie Golding, head of epidemics and epidemiology, infectious disease, Wellcome Trust, UK, which commissioned the research project. "Rising temperatures, floods, and droughts create ideal conditions for mosquitoes, ticks, and harmful bacteria to thrive, while extreme weather adds strain to already fragile health systems," Golding said. Urgent global climate action is needed, along with an investment in innovative solutions to prevent and treat infectious diseases — acting on both fronts is essential, Golding said.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified for the information of the general public that the name "Mohammad Shafi Shah" mentioned in the Driving license records is incorrect.

The correct name is: Mohd Shafi Shah.

Driving license No.: JK-0120100023385.

I am applying for correction in the official records. If anyone has any objection to the same, they may contact RTO office srinagar, within 7 days of publication of this notice. After that, no objection will be entertained.

Mob:-7006095900

media line

PUBLIC NOTICE

The name of my ward has been wrongly written in his/ her adhaar card as Mohamm Zooraz Instead of Mohammad Usman . Now I have applied for the correction of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned Adhaar Centre Jammu/Srinagar within Seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained..

Neelofar Jan
M/O Mohammad Usman
R/o Dugpora Tehsil Imamsahib Distt Shopian fko

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER BUDGAM

Subject:- Necessary Correction/change in address in data to the License No.JK-0420120014960 issued in favour of MUDASIR AKBAR Parentage MOHAMMAD AKBAR HAJAM Whereas an application has been recieved by one MUDASIR AKBAR Parentage MOHAMMAD AKBAR HAJAM wherein he claimed that the Name has been wrongly recorded in the records of Driving Licenses as MUSASIR AKBAR Parentage MOHD AKBAR Which needs to be changed as MUDASIR AKBAR Parentage MOHAMMAD AKBAR HAJAM. Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any in this regard shal reach in written in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office Budgam within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper.After expiry of stipulated time no objection will be entertained.

MCB Assistant Regional Transport officer
Budgam Kashmir

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have lost my passport bearing no: M2765625 on 09-12-2025 at Kunzer Market. Now I have applid for the duplicate of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the Regional Passport Office Srinagar within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Altat Ahmad
R/o Devbugh Katajan FKO
Cell: 8082225991

Government of Jammu and Kashmir Office of The Naib-Tehsildar Sariwarpora Executive Magistrate 1st Class. PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified for information of the general public that the Block Development Officer (BDO) Pattan has forwarded the case file for issuance of Death certificate Certificate in favour of Fatima Begum D/o Abdul Rashid Bhat R/o sariwarpora with whose father Ab Rashid Son of Abdullah Bhat died on 25.06.2000 Objections, if any, regarding the details furnished by the applicant may be submitted in writing in the office of the Naib Tehsildar, Sariwarpora within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice. If no objections are received within the stipulated time, the case shall be processed for issuance of the Death certificate as per rules in vogue.

Sd/-
fko Naib-Tehsildar Sariwarpora

PUBLIC NOTICE

My name has been wrongly written in my adhaar card as Mohd Qasim Gourse Instead of Mohammad Qasim Gors . Now I have applied for the correction of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned Adhaar Centre Jammu/Srinagar within Seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained..

Mohammad Qasim Gors
S/o Sai Mohammad Gors
R/o Zampathri Distt Shopiana fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

The name & DOB of my ward has been wrongly written in his/ her adhaar card as Tabish Ahmad Tantray , DOB 28-2-2017 instead of correct name Tabish Amin Tantray, DOB 28-3-2019. Now I have applied for the correction of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned Adhaar Centre Jammu/Srinagar within Seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained..

Mahajabeena Akhter
M/o Tabish Amin Tantray fko
R/o Nowpora Tehsil Distt Shopiant

PUBLIC NOTICE

My name has been wrongly written in my adhaar card as Basit Ahmad Dar Instead of Basit Bashir . Now I have applied for the correction of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned Adhaar Centre Jammu/Srinagar within Seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained..

Basit Bashir
S/O Bashir Ahmad Dar fko
R/o Diaroo Distt Shopian

PUBLIC NOTICE

My name has been wrongly written in my adhaar card as Rifat Iqbal Instead of Rifat Jan . Now I have applied for the correction of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned Adhaar Centre Jammu/Srinagar within Seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained..

Rifat Jan
W/O Mohammad Iqbal Wani fko
R/o Bongam

Department of Health and Medical Education Government Medical College Baramulla

Procurement Section

e-mail: principal-gmc@jk.gov.in / berjina.farooq@jk.gov.in 01952-238140
Short Term Quotations

Subject: Invitation of Quotations for RSO Renewal, Employee Addition in AERB Portal and Employer Change in Ellora Portal.

Sealed quotations are invited submitted on a ₹ 2/- (Rupees Two Only) Stamp Paper from eligible, experienced, and technically competent service agencies for carrying out regulatory facilitation work related to AERB compliance at Associated Hospital, GMC Baramulla. The work involves Renewal of Radiation Safety Officer details, Addition of Employees on AERB Portal, and Employer Change on Ellora Portal, as per the scope of work outlined below.

1. Scope of Work

a) Renewal of RSO Details in AERB Portal

- Verification and preparation of documents required for RSO renewal.
- Submission of renewal application as per AERB norms.
- Coordination with AERB until approval is granted.

b) Addition of Employees in AERB Portal

- Checking and verification of employee radiation documents.
- Uploading details and submitting the application for AERB approval.
- Follow-up with authorities until completion.

c) Employer Change in Ellora Portal

- Preparation of documentation for change of employer.
- Submission on Ellora Portal as per procedural guidelines.
- Liaison with AERB/Ellora Portal authorities for approval.

2. Submission of Quotations

1. Interested agencies shall submit sealed quotations superscribed "Quotation for AERB & Ellora Portal Regulatory Services – GMC Baramulla".
2. The quotation shall be addressed to:
The Procurement office, Government Medical College Baramulla, and deposited in the said office on or before 15/12/2025 up to 4:00 PM.
3. Quotations received after the stipulated time shall not be considered.

3. Financial Bid Format

Agencies shall quote rates strictly in the following format:

S. No.	Description of Service	Rate (₹)	Taxes (if any)	Total (₹)
1.	Renewal of RSO in AERB Portal			
2.	Addition of Employee in AERB Portal (per employee)			
3.	Employer Change in Ellora Portal (per case)			
Grand Total				

Rates shall be quoted clearly and without overwriting.

4. Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)

1. Each bidder shall submit an EMD of ₹5,000 (Rupees Five Thousand Only) in the form of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Chief Accounts Officer GMC Baramulla.
2. Quotations submitted without the requisite EMD shall be summarily rejected.
3. EMD of unsuccessful bidders shall be released after finalization of the contract.

5. Eligibility Criteria

Bidders must submit the following documents along with the quotation:

1. Valid Registration Certificate of the firm/agency.
2. PAN and GST Registration.
3. EMD of ₹ 5,000 in favor of Chief Accounts Officer GMC Baramulla.
4. Proof of experience in AERB Portal / Ellora Portal / RAIS regulatory work.
5. Work experience certificate(s) from Government institutions or recognized medical establishments (if available).
6. Undertaking that the bidder has not been blacklisted by any organisation.

6. Terms & Conditions

1. The quoted rates shall remain valid for one year from the date of finalization.
2. The agency shall ensure strict adherence to AERB guidelines and regulatory procedures.
3. Any deficiency in documentation requiring re-submission due to agency error shall be rectified without additional cost.
4. Taxes shall be charged as per applicable Government norms.
5. Payment shall be made only upon successful completion of assigned work and verification by the concerned department.
6. The agency shall maintain confidentiality of all institutional documents, employee data, and regulatory submissions.
7. The competent Authority reserves the right to reject or accept any quotation, wholly or partially, without assigning any reason.
8. In case of any dispute, the matter shall fall under the jurisdiction of competent courts within the UT of Jammu & Kashmir.
9. Work shall commence immediately after issuance of the Work Order.
10. The bidder shall be responsible for timely follow-up with AERB/Ellora authorities; delays due to portal issues or external verification will not be attributed to GMC Baramulla.

7. Opening of Quotations

The quotations shall be opened in the office of the undersigned on 16/12/2025 at 11:00 AM, in the chamber of the Principal GMC Baramulla.

No: GMCB/PO/2025-26/2949-53
DIPK-8966/25
DATED: 13-12-2025

Dr. (Prof) Majid Jahangir
Principal/Dean
Govt. Medical College
Baramulla

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have lost my passport bearing no: Passport number X9966652. Now I have applid for the duplicate of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the Regional Passport Office Srinagar within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.
Name:Mudasir Mushtaq lone
S/o: Mushtaq Ahmad Lone
Mothers Name: Zarefa Bagum
DOB:16/02/1998
Residence:Zaloora Sopore INF

PUBLIC NOTICE

The name of my ward has been wrongly written in his/ her adhaar card as Safoora Bilal D/O Bilal Ahmad Shah Instead of Afeefa Bilal D/o Bilal Ahmad Shah . Now I have applied for the correction of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned Adhaar Centre Jammu/Srinagar within Seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained..

Bilal Ahmad Shah
F/o Afeefa Bilal
R/o Chakoo Tehsil Hermain Distt Shopian fko

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU & KASHMIR DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & FARMERS WELFARE OFFICE OF THE MUSHROOM SPECIALIST, LALMANDI SRINAGAR

SHORT TENDER NOTICE

Sealed short tender affixed with Revenue Stamp worth ₹6, on behalf of the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor, UT of Jammu & Kashmir, is invited from registered authorized dealers/firms for the supply of the following items required for research trials of *P. eryngii* and *Cordyceps* mushroom culture and preparation of mushroom compost.

The Tenders must be deposited by hand in the tender box kept in the office up to 18-12-2025, 2:00 PM. Tenders received by post/courier shall be accepted only if received within the scheduled date and time. Tenders received after 2:00 PM on 18-12-2025 shall not be entertained. Tenders will be opened on 19-12-2025 at 12:30 PM by the committee to be constituted in presence of those tenderers who wish to remain present.

Items Required

S. No.	Name of Item	Quantity
1.	Stainless Steel Water Distillation Unit Capacity 2 litres per hr	01 No.
2.	Potato Dextrose Broth	500 ml
3.	Malt Extract Broth Base	500 ml
4.	Coco peat	15 qtls
5.	Poultry Manure	33 qtls

TERMS & CONDITIONS

1. If the last date of receipt of tenders happens to be a Gazette holiday, the next working day shall be treated as the last date.
2. Tenders must be neatly typed/ink-written. Cutting/overwriting disqualifies the tender. Rates must be written in words and figures and sealed with cello tape.
3. The committee reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reason.
4. Conditional tenders shall not be accepted.
5. Rates shall be inclusive of all taxes and FOR Agriculture Department, Lalmandi Srinagar.
6. The supplier shall ensure proper transportation and safe delivery. Any shortage/damage shall be borne by the supplier. Damaged/defective material must be lifted back at supplier's cost. Payment will be made only after verification and satisfactory completion.
7. The successful tenderer shall execute an agreement on Judicial Stamp Paper of ₹20 before issue of supply order.
8. Quantity may be increased or decreased at the time of issuing supply order.
9. GFR rules regarding government procurement shall apply.
10. These terms apply as per rules/law and extend to State/Central/Semi-Government/Autonomous Bodies.

Sd/-

Mushroom Specialist
Department of Agriculture,
Lalmandi Srinagar

DIPK-8969/25
DATED: 13-12-2025

MOHAMMADIA HIGH SCHOOL KUNZER, BARAMULLA

UDISE CODE: 01031100404

Email: mohammadiakunzer@gmail.com

Ref. No.: 2078/MHSK Dated: 12-12-2025

BONIFIDE CERTIFICATE

(To Whom It May Concern)

It is certified that BURHAN AHMAD DAR, Parentage REYAZ AHMAD DAR, Residence HARUBANI, is the student of this school of class 9th under Roll No. 15 and Admission No. 2078, Academic session 2024–2025.

His/Her date of birth as per school records is 25-10-2012 (Twenty Fifth Oct Two Thousand Twelve) Certified that the student is a bonifide student of this Institution and the particulars given above are correct as per the admission record of the school.

Hence, the Bonifide certificate is issued in favour of the applicant.

Principal/Headmaster
Mohammadia High School Kunzer
Kunzer (Gulmarg)

bmg



Rs 53 Lakh Land Deal Scam Uncovered in Srinagar

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Crime Branch Kashmir has filed a chargesheet before the Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate, Srinagar, in connection with a land sale fraud case involving alleged cheating and criminal conspiracy in Barthana area of the city.

The chargesheet has been filed in FIR No. 23/2025 against four accused namely Tariq Ahmad Hajam, son of Muhammad Ramzan Hajam; Ghulam Hassan Mir, son of Ghulam Rasool Mir; Muhammad Sultan Mir alias Sulla, son of Abdul Khaliq Mir; and Abdul Razaq Mir, son of Abdul Khaliq Mir. All the accused are inhabitants of Barthana Qamarwari, Srinagar.

According to the investigation, the case originated from a complaint alleging that the accused persons had obtained 53 lakh from the complainant and his father on the assurance of selling a piece of land. However, after receiving the full payment, the accused allegedly sold the same parcel of land to other parties and also transferred

portions of it in the names of their own family members.

The EOW investigation revealed that the accused acted in connivance and executed a planned conspiracy to cheat the complainant. The probe established that the amount was received for land measuring 2.09 kanals situated at Estate Barthana, Srinagar, but the transaction was never honoured as promised.

According to KNT, Investigators examined oral statements, revenue records, sale deeds, and other documentary evidence, which, according to officials, substantiated the allegations of deliberate fraud and misappropriation of money.

Based on the findings, offences under Sections 420 and 120-B of the Ranbir Penal Code have been invoked against the accused. With the filing of the chargesheet, the case has now entered the stage of judicial scrutiny and adjudication before the competent court.

Further proceedings in the matter will be determined by the court in accordance with law.

Srinagar Suffers Amidst Air Pollution

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Simply stepping outside in Srinagar on a polluted day may be doing the same harm as smoking several cigarettes, an independent weather expert, Faizan Arif said.

Arif while highlighting the growing public health risk posed by the city's deteriorating air quality said, "Current pollution levels in Srinagar mean residents are unknowingly inhaling air comparable to cigarette smoke."

"On an average day with present pollution levels, breathing Srinagar's air for 24 hours is roughly equal to smoking three to four cigarettes," he said.

He explained that this exposure adds up quickly. "That means nearly 25 cigarettes in a week and more than 100 cigarettes in a month, even for someone who has never smoked," he said, calling the situation alarming.

According to KNO, air quality data shows that fine particulate pollution, which can enter deep into the lungs, has remained consistently high in the city.

Srinagar's average Air Quality Index (AQI) has stayed in the 'poor' category, while pollution levels spiked further over the past 24 hours, with AQI touching 180 and fine dust concentrations rising sharply.

Arif clarified that the estimate is based on globally accepted scientific comparisons used to explain pollution exposure in simple terms.

"This does not mean people are literally smoking cigarettes, but the damage to the lungs and heart can be similar when pollution levels remain high," he said.

He cautioned that even short periods of severe pollution can have long-lasting health effects.

"High-pollution days leave an impact that cleaner days cannot completely undo. Repeated exposure increases the risk of breathing problems, heart disease, and other chronic illnesses," Arif said.

"Repeated exposure to polluted air can damage the lungs and strain the heart, even among non-smokers," said Dr Irfan Ahmad, a senior physician at a government hospital in Srinagar.



A bicycle vendor carries stacks of blankets through the chilly morning haze in Srinagar. KO Photo Abid Bhat

Ahead of Winter Snow, Srinagar Airport Conducts Preparedness Drill

Observer News Service

Srinagar: To ensure seamless flight operations during the upcoming winter and fog season, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) on Saturday conducted a comprehensive dry run and preparedness exercise at Srinagar International Airport to assess operational readiness under adverse weather conditions.

The exercise, held at 11:00 AM in the morning, involved joint participation from AAI departments, Airline Airport Managers (APMs), CISF, Ground Handling Agencies (GHAs), the Medical Inspection Unit and other key stakeholders.

As per the details obtained by KNO, the function focused on verifying infrastructure readiness, manpower efficiency and coordination mechanisms during fog, snow, and low-visibility operations.

The exercise tested the airport's terminal facilities, heating systems,

Special stress was laid on real-time communication between ATC, airlines, apron control and terminal operations to ensure smooth handling of potential flight delays, diversions and cancellations.

illumination, washroom maintenance and passenger comfort arrangements. The functionality of emergency response systems, CISF crowd management and inter-agency coordination protocols were also reviewed.

Special stress was laid on real-time communication between ATC,

airlines, apron control and terminal operations to ensure smooth handling of potential flight delays, diversions and cancellations.

The departments also assessed airside and landside coordination, checking the availability of winter equipment and manpower for snow clearance and passenger movement during disruptions.

Officials said that the dry run was successfully conducted, reaffirming the airport's preparedness for winter, fog, and snow operations. "All stakeholders have been directed to maintain a state of heightened readiness throughout the season," an official said, adding that observations from the exercise have been shared with respective agencies for rectification and follow-up.

Notably, periodic reviews and continuous monitoring, the AAI said, will continue to ensure sustained operational efficiency and passenger comfort during the challenging weather ahead.

Dept of Psychiatry, SKIMS Bemina Clinches First Prize at PGRP-2025

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Department of Psychiatry, Advanced Centre for Mental Health, SKIMS Medical College Hospital (MCH), Bemina, Srinagar, has brought laurels to the institution by securing First Prize in the Oral Presentation category at the Postgraduate Research Program Presentation (PGRP-2025) organised by SKIMS Deemed University at SKIMS Soura.

The award-winning presentation was delivered by Dr. Shagun Saini, who recently completed her postgraduate training, on her thesis titled "Clinical Severity, Psychiatric

Comorbidities and Psychosocial Profile of Treatment-Seeking Adolescent Patients with Deliberate Self-Harm." The research was conducted under the expert guidance of Dr. Abdul Majid, Professor & Head, Department of Psychiatry and Sub-Dean, SKIMS Medical College Bemina. The study addresses a rapidly increasing and clinically significant mental health concern, emphasising the need for deeper analysis and focused research to enhance patient care outcomes.

Dr. Shagun Saini was conferred the prestigious award by Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, Shri Manoj Sinha Ji, during a glittering held at SKICC, Cheshma

Shahi, Srinagar. The event was graced by eminent dignitaries including Prof. Vivek Lal, Director PGIMER Chandigarh; Prof. A. Ravinder Nath, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, Central University of Kashmir; Shri Anshul Garg, IAS, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; and Prof. Mohammad Ashraf Ganie, Director SKIMS.

According to KNS, Dr. Abdul Majid was also felicitated by Prof. (Dr.) Vivek Lal, Director PGIMER Chandigarh, in recognition of his significant contribution towards the successful organization of the poster exhibition involving multiple specialties and super-specialties of SKIMS and SKIMS Medical College Bemina during the event.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I Shabir Ahmad Dar want to change my Daughter's name in her Aadhar card bearing no 8550 1090 1053 from Humarah Shabir (old name) to Humaira shabir (new name). If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned centre within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

jvd

SAD DEMISE

With profound grief and sorrow, we inform about the sad demise of Ghulam Mohammad Kawa, S/o Late Mohammad Sultan Kawa, R/o Naid Kadal, Srinagar, who departed for his heavenly abode on 13th December 2025. May Allah shower His mercy upon the departed soul and grant him the highest place in Jannah. No congregational gathering will be observed. Mourning will be observed for three days only.

Bereaved Family



inf

SAD DEMISE

With profound grief and sorrow, we inform the passing of the wife of Late Ajaz Qayoom Shah, resident Jahangir Colony Baghat Barzullah Srinagar. She departed for her heavenly abode on December 12, 2025 (20 Jumada al-Thani 1447 AH)

May Allah, the Almighty, grant the departed soul eternal peace and the highest place in Jannat-ul-Firdous. Aameen.

The Fateh Khawani will be held on Monday, December 15, 2025, at 10:30 AM at Jamia Masjid Wazir Mohammed Khan Baghat Barzulla adjacent to Jahangir Colony Graveyard.

BEREAVED
Arshid Iqbal Shah
97977860055

PUBLIC NOTICE

I want to change the name on electricity bill bearing consumr ID No: 0203050000321 from Gh Mohammad Karcha S/o GhAhmad Karcha TO RAFIQ W/O FAYAZ AHMAD RUNG. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the office of the PDD Sub Division Nawa Pulwama within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Rafiq W/O Fayaz Ahmad Runga
R/O Nath Mohalla Parimpora Ghat Distt Srinagar

MZKO

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Mother's Name of my son hs been wrongly written in his school records as SAMIYA while her correct name is Saniya Zehra. Now I have applied for the correction of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in office of the Principal Fidous Educational Institute Zakura within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Jaffar Ali Sofi
F/o Rihen Ali Sofi
R/o Habbak Meerakshah Colony

inf

Government of UT of Jammu & Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, MECHANICAL IRRIGATION DIVISION BARAMULLA

Email: amitablman.721013@jk.gov.in

Corrigendum No 1 for this office E NIT No: 26 of 2025-26 Dated: 06-12-2025

Sub: - Extension of dates

In view of poor response, the extension of dates in respect of this Office e-NIT No. 26 of 2025-26 (Procurement of foldable beds shape for watch and ward staff of Divisional office and Store of Mechanical Irrigation Division office, Baramulla) dated: 06-12- 2025 having tender II) No. 2025_ IFC_297494_1, under no. MIDB/CC-02/2906-11 dated: 06-12-2025 is being given to ensure healthy competition and competitive bidding: -

1. Tender Submission date Ends	18/12/2025 upto 06.55 pm
2. Date of Opening	19/12/2025 at 01:00 pm, in the Office of the Executive Engineer Mechanical Irrigation Division Baramulla

All other terms/conditions and stipulations as contained in the eNIT shall remain unaltered/unmodified.

No. MIDB/CC-02/3032-37
DIPK-8982/25 DATED: 13/12/2025

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Mechanical Irrigation Division Baramulla



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

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



RAILWAYS

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



HIGHWAY STATUS



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



HIJRI
CALENDAR

22 Jumada al-Sani

1447

PRAYERS

FAJR 5: 58

ZUHR 12:25

ASR 3: 46

Magrib 5:27

ISHA 6: 52

This Day In History

- 557 - Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, is significantly damaged by a 6.4 magnitude earthquake
- 644 - Uthman ibn Affan (RA), companion of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), appointed 3rd Caliph of Islam
- 835 - Chinese Emperor Wenzong conspires with chancellor Li Xun and general Zheng Zhu to kill all the eunuchs, but the plot is foiled. Also known as the Sweet Dew Incident
- 867 - Adrian II begins his reign as Catholic Pope
- 872 - John VIII elected as Catholic Pope
- 1774 - First incident of American Revolution - 400 attack Fort William and Mary, New Hampshire
- 1812 - The French invasion of Russia, led by Napoleon, officially ends with the French having lost as many as 530,000 people
- 1814 - The Battle of Lake Borgne in Louisiana: British victory over the United States
- 1862 - Battle of Kinston, fought in Lenoir County, North Carolina begins (Goldsboro)
- 1864 - War of the Triple Alliance: Paraguay invades the Brazilian province of Mato Grosso
- 1900 - Birth of Quantum Physics: German Physicist Max Planck presents a theoretical derivation of his black-body radiation law
- 1900 - France and Italy sign a secret agreement by which Italy recognizes France's right to exploit Morocco in return for France's conceding her the same right in Tripoli.
- 1927 - Iraq gains independence from Britain, but British troops remain
- 1962 - Mariner 2 makes 1st US fly-by of another planet (Venus).
- 1967 - DNA created in a test tube.
- 1971 - The Pakistan Army executes over 200 of East Pakistan's intellectuals during the Bangladesh Liberation War.
- 1977 - Egyptian & Israeli representatives gather in Cairo for first formal peace conference.
- 1981 - Israel annexes Golan Heights (seized from Syria in war of 1967).
- 1999 - Flash floods in Venezuela after torrential rainfall results in the deaths of thousands of people and causes a total collapse in the state's infrastructure.
- 2003 - President George W. Bush announces the capture of Saddam Hussein.
- 2008 - President George W. Bush make his fourth and final trip to Iraq as president and is almost struck by two shoes thrown at him by Iraqi journalist Muntadhar al-Zaidi during a farewell conference in Baghdad.
- 2013- Venkatraman Ramakrishnan is named as one of the 25 Greatest Global Living Indians by NDTV Channel, India
- 2014- Shinz Abe and his ruling Liberal Democratic Party win re-election in Japan, retaining their two-thirds majority with coalition partner New K meit Party
- 2016- Amazon announces its 1st delivery by drone 2 km from their warehouse in the UK
- 2016- University of Toronto scientists present findings of the world's oldest water - 2 billion years old from a mine in Canada
- 2017- Suicide bomber kills at least 18 police officers at a training centre parade in Mogadishu, Somalia, Islamic group al-Shabab claim responsibility
- 2017- The Vatican announces it has rediscovered the lost last paintings of Raphael in Vatican Museum, painted in 1520
- 2017 - The Walt Disney Company buys most of 21st Century Fox for \$52.4 billion
- 2017 Train ploughs into a school bus cutting it in half, killing 4 children and injuring 20 near Perpignan, France
- 2018- Report by Reuters US pharmaceutical company Johnson & Johnson knew for decades their talc was contaminated with asbestos
- 2020- America begins its first COVID-19 vaccinations using the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine on the same day it records over 300,000 deaths
- 2020- Russia revealed to have been behind massive cyberattack on US government agencies and private companies since the Spring
- 2020- Total solar eclipse visible across southern Chile and Argentina

Trump’s Blueprint for a New American Era

How the 47th US President’s 2025 National Security Strategy Aims to Restore American Power, Sovereignty, and Global Influence



Wajahat Qazi

Notwithstanding the spin by America’s “mainstream media” on the United States National Security 2025 document released by the Trump administration, the US NSS 2025 is a compendium worth reading.

If at all there is something called a “top-down revolution”, the reversal of time and entrenched policies that created certain paradigms, then the contents of the US NSS 2025 correspond to that.

So, what is the US NSS 2025? What makes it different (or quasi-revolutionary)? What is its content, in the main?

The US NSS 2025 is a compendium of policy notes, reversals, and a review of post-Cold War paradigms that determined and defined United States foreign and domestic policy. Going by the appellation of “globalism,” post-Cold War US foreign policy, according to the US NSS 2025, led to an unfocused and diffuse foreign policy, detached from means and ends.

In other words, globalist premises crafted policy paradigms that dissipated American national interests, leading to “forever burdens” on the country.

In the main, this is what the US NSS 2025 seeks to reverse, creating a fresh and new crucible that puts America First.

This, naturally, calls for “paradigm-shattering” philosophies and, as a corollary, policies that lead to American national renewal.

By clear policy preferences, by implication, and by inference, the document calls for other states to adjust. How, then, does the document read, and what are its contents?

The US NSS 2025 reads as a fine and crisp document. It begins with an introductory note by the 47th President of the United States, Donald Trump. The US President flags alarms and achievements of his administration since he assumed office in 2024. Calling the document a roadmap, President Trump makes a call for American freedom, security, and greatness.

The US NSS 2025 then defines and describes American grand strategy, which it states “had lost focus.” Calling for a “realignment between means and ends,” the US NSS 2025 suggests a “pecking order of priorities” for the United States, defined by “evaluating, sorting, and prioritizing.”

Alluding to the elitism that defined post-Cold War US foreign policy, marked by a disconnect between Americans’ aspirations and the national interest, the document calls attention to “free trade”-defined globalism.

This, in the interstices of the two, sovereignty was denigrated and demeaned, and the American middle class was “hollowed out,” along with the country’s industrial base.

Employing a term from political economy, the document asserts that “America’s overstretch,” among other things, meant that “peripheral interests assumed centre stage.”

In this schema, interests morphed into an “irrelevant” mishmash. It was (and is) under the leadership of Donald Trump that a “course correction” is sought and made real.

While disavowing any labels (realism, hyper-realism, and so on) and ideological proclivities, the US NSS 2025 privileges sovereignty and its accoutrements, including “survival, security of the United States, and strong borders”, and meshes these with the natural rights of Americans (a throwback to the Grotian tradition and that of Thomas Paine?).

The document recognizes hard power as the bedrock of making sovereignty real and of making the economy central to it.

Contra perceptions and motivated commentary, the US NSS 2025 recognizes the importance of United States “soft power.” It historicizes America, calling for American “spiritual and cultural rejuvenation” and an unabashed “celebration of the country’s glories and its heroes.”

Recognizing that America operates in a world of nation-states, the document roots for the “primacy of nation-states” and their national interests. It defines America’s core interests as a “stable, well-governed Western Hemisphere that undercuts mass migration to the United States.” (This the document labels as “the Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine.”)

The NSS 2025 then suggests “reversing and halting the damage done by foreign actors to the US economy.” It seeks to reassure European allies by stating that “the US will support the freedom and security of Europe and preserve the freedom of Europe’s civilizational self-confidence and Western identity.”

Regarding the Middle East, the document states that the US will prevent “an adversarial power from dominating the region - its oil supplies, chokepoints, and so on.” The document roots for developing and maintaining “US standards in AI, biotech, and quantum computing.”

The US NSS 2025 then lists the means that America has at its command to bring its national interests to fruition.

These include a political system that can adjust and correct itself when needed, a highly innovative and wealth-creating economy that gives the United States leverage over countries seeking access to it, large and liquid capital markets, a cutting-edge technology sector, strong and effective military power, a network of alliances across key strategic regions, a vast landmass protected by oceans, and deep reserves of soft power and social trust that live in and are carried by the American people.

The document merges the foreign with the domestic agenda of the Trump administration. It seeks to restore agency to the people of America by “reinstilling a culture of competence, rooting out DEI and other institutional maladies that hold the country back,” unleashing energy production, and re-shoring production in order to “re-industrialize America.”

This, in the document’s schema, will “support the American middle class and allow for control over supply chains.” It also roots for “tax cuts, deregulation,” making the country “a more business-friendly place for capital investment.”

The document further calls for investments in “emerging technologies, science, and crafting competitive advantage for the country.”



This is overlaid by maintaining a hard power lead “for future generations.”

In terms of a grand strategy, the US NSS 2025 re-emphasizes the “pragmatic focus” of the national interest and a foreign policy defined by meaningful “scope.” It does not call for an absolute American retreat from the world.

Recognizing the “spillover effect” of regional conflicts with nuclear under- and overtones, the document calls for “stopping these conflicts.”

The reference is made metaphorically as “a world on fire where wars come to American shores is bad for American interests.”

The US NSS 2025 makes a reference to “peace through strength,” a re-emphasis on the sovereignty of the nation-state.

By its very nature, the corollary of this is “non-intervention in the affairs of nation-states,” thereby respecting the “heterogeneity of the international system” and washing its hands of “social engineering.”

The document then roots for the “balance of power” among nations in a way that “no other nation threatens the United States’ national interests.”

From a domestic standpoint, the US NSS 2025 places the American worker on a pedestal and enjoins “fairness in interstate relations and world politics.”

In regional terms, the document calls for attention to America’s regional Western Hemisphere. The terms it employs for a robust engagement with the region are “enlist” and “expand.”

With respect to Asia, the call is for “leading from a position of strength.” Supporting and partnering with regional hegemons in the Western Hemisphere appears to be a strategy of choice.

The document suggests “rebalancing America’s relationship with China, prioritizing reciprocity and fairness,” insofar as the trading relationship is concerned.

Regarding military and security matters, the document calls for “robust deterrence in the Indo-Pacific and the South China Sea” and enjoins “burden sharing from Japan and South Korea.”

The document refers to America as the first partner of choice because of its openness,

transparency, trustworthiness, commitment to freedom and innovation, and free-market capitalism.

By calibrating these, America will deepen its engagement with the world.

With respect to the Middle East, the US NSS 2025 states that “the region has in the past assumed priority over other regions, primarily because of the region being an important supplier of energy, a Cold War arena for superpowers, and deep conflict with spillover consequences.”

But “given that two of the dynamics, energy and the morphing of superpower conflict into great power jockeying, have dissipated, America’s historic reason for focusing on the region will recede.”

The document then expresses a hope that the Middle East will “increasingly become a source and destination for international investment, in industries beyond oil and gas, including nuclear energy, AI, and defense technologies.”

It is with respect to Europe that critics like Thomas Friedman of The New York Times have inferred that the Trump administration is seeking a “civilizational conflict.”

But a mere perusal of the NSS 2025 suggests that this is not the case.

The document seeks proportion and balance with Europe by: one, undercutting the “democratic deficit”; two, addressing the labyrinthine European Union; and three, undercutting the “widening and deepening of NATO.”

All this adds up to a Union where the national will of its constituent states is respected, and sovereignty is not subsumed into a large, unaccountable behemoth.

References to the “welfare systems’ morass, migration, and so on”, even though inflated in the popular European imagination, are, to some extent, real.

The document seeks to “stabilize Europe’s relationship with Russia, burden sharing, and defense spending,” among other things.

It is in terms of Africa that the document disavows liberal pretensions in very strong terms. It states, “For far too long, American policy in Africa has focused on providing and, later on, spreading liberal ideology.”

The NSS 2025 suggests weaning Africa from aid dependence, managing conflicts, and “tran-

sitioning to a trade- and investment-focused relationship ... to develop a growth paradigm capable of harnessing Africa’s abundant natural resources and latent economic potential.”

The US NSS 2025 is a neat, crisp, and robust framework document that offers pointers into the Trump Administration’s national security strategy. It cannot be dismissed as a rhetorical, brusque, or off-hand document.

It is obvious that countries, national leaders, and security apparatuses of states across the world would have pored over it, rightly so. The document provides insight into the conceptual, strategic, and tactical thinking of the Trump administration.

Essentially, to cut to the marrow, the US NSS 2025 calls for and roots for American renewal, the restoration of sovereignty and agency to the American people, and the disavowal of the cardinal tenets of extreme liberalism-informed globalism.

This constitutes a challenge that essentially means a “roll back” to an era dominated by the nation-state, sovereignty, and its contents.

While it is not a compendium that roots for autarky or even the absolute withdrawal of America from the world, it clearly states an America First doctrine.

The document abhors intervention in other states, in the name of spreading democracy and freedom, and thereby social engineering.

Both, in the recent past, dissipated collective American energy, creating in the process a whole host of allied problems and issues for the country and its people (forever wars, for instance).

The US NSS 2025 neither seeks war nor conflict with other states. What it seeks is rebalancing in an idiom of fairness and genuine reciprocity.

Even though the document identifies China as a kind of peer competitor, it does not seek a large-scale militarized conflict with the country.

The tools for this rebalancing are tariffs and other features of American power.

All in all, the document is an indicator of what America will do over, at least, the next three years.

The country is in a restorative, adjustment mode, using its vast fund of power for its own vigor and greatness.

The only major omission in the document is the definition of America and Americanness.

But while this may amount to a mere quibble, the larger import of the NSS 2025 must not be lost on other nation-states of the world.

The document must be read in the correct light. The follow-up must take the form of adjustments that comport with both the retreat of American power, the redefinition of its national interests, and the employment of the “new” American posture and paradigm.

The time for this is now!

The author holds a Distinction in International Relations from the University of Aberdeen and combines scholarship with real-world engagement. He has worked in academia and media, including as Associate Editor at Kashmir Observer.

Still keep this photograph tucked away, its edges softened by time. It was taken in August 1979, and it was never meant for a family album.

The picture was for a passport, a very particular one.

The Haj passport issued then by the Indian foreign ministry came as a single-entry document, valid only for the duration of the pilgrimage. Its cover was brick red, the paper coarse and hard to the touch, a booklet that looked and felt provisional, as if it already knew it would soon be surrendered and disappear from use.

My father held that passport in his hands at the end of a long working life. He was a medical officer, known among colleagues for “putting a long innings” into public service, and retirement was due in December that year.

At 55, he decided this would be the moment to go to Mecca. The choice settled easily within the family. There was happiness, pride and a sense that the timing carried its own logic. His request for pre-retirement leave went through without delay.

The journey began in Bombay, as Mumbai was then called. From there, special Air India charter flights carried pilgrims to Jeddah. Many Kashmiri men travelled with sacks of rice, spices and utensils, preparing for weeks away from home. My father packed light, trusting the arrangements that came with the pilgrimage.

The aircraft were often wide-bodied Air Jumbos, staffed by crew members from Kashmir. Among them was Akbar Jan, the son of the well-known Dr Ali Jan, serving as chief air host.

I travelled with my father to see him off. We stayed at the Sabu Siddiq Mussafir Khana near Crawford Market, close to the Haj Committee office. Qazi Mohammad Amin, a former IAS officer and then secretary of the Haj Committee in Bombay, arranged a room for us.

Those days before departure unfolded through visits, paperwork and shared meals, held together by generosity from friends who treated my father’s journey as something that belonged to all of us.

One evening stands out clearly. Inspector Pednekar, posted at the Byculla railway police station, came himself to receive us. He later invited us to his flat in Andheri West for dinner.

Diwali was close, and the city glittered with lights strung across balconies and shopfronts. The laddoos he served that night still return to me with their sweetness intact, carrying the warmth of that home and the care behind the gesture.

Two days later, my wife and I joined Qazi Amin, Inspector Pednekar and other friends at Santa Cruz International Airport. Blessings were exchanged, hands clasped, prayers whispered. My father walked towards the aircraft holding the brick-red passport that would take him to the holy land.

In Jeddah, systems already set in place guided the pilgrims. Officials from the Jammu and Kashmir government handled the logistics on arrival. Each Kashmiri pilgrim flying that year had deposited Rs 11,000 in advance, covering the journey from Srinagar to Bombay and onward to Saudi Arabia.

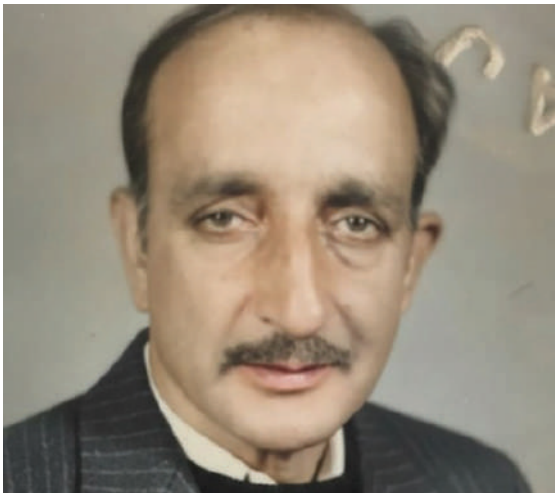
At the airport, each person received a draft of Rs 2,200, converted into Saudi riyals for immediate needs. The exchange rate stood at about three Indian rupees to one Saudi riyal. The process was efficient, designed to ease people into unfamiliar terrain.

My father completed the rites in Mecca amid the press of bodies and the heat around the Grand Mosque. His plan was

That Brick-Red Passport Photo

A family farewell in Bombay, a near miss in Mecca and the memories that travelled back to Srinagar with him.

Syed Nissar H. Gilani



to continue on to Medina. That decision placed him on the right side of history by the narrowest margin.

Insha and Unaiz: Caught in Kashmir's Marriage Maze

Through the stories of two unmarried adults, a portrait emerges of how tradition, anxiety and expectation collide in today's Kashmir.

Sheikh Arsh

The matchmaker steps into the house once again, adjusting her dupatta and letting out a tired breath, a small sign of how familiar this visit has become.

Insha knows what comes next. She reaches for clothes that signal tradition, aware that this visit, like so many before it, carries unspoken rules.

At 35, she finds herself caught in a system that measures her worth through narrow ideas of marriage-ability that still shape Kashmir's social life.

The tension rises in her chest as the conversation begins. Insha's frustration spills beyond the room and into a larger unease with customs that leave little space for choice.

Marriage here often arrives wrapped in authority, guided by elders, matchmakers and long-standing assumptions about how a woman should look, speak and live.

Four years earlier, the matchmaker had crossed a threshold that reached deeper than Insha's home.

Along with introductions came a list of instructions meant to improve her chances.

She remembers being told to control her laughter, limit her voice, and erase parts of herself from public view, including photographs on social media.

These changes were framed as guidance, presented with concern. "The list was supposed to make me more eligible," Insha says, repeating a word that now feels heavy with judgment.

The process stretched on, one proposal giving way to another, each ending under a different form of scrutiny.

Over time, the strain settled into her body and mind. Insha entered a severe depressive episode that required medical care. The treatment altered her physical health, including weight gain, which she says only reinforced the feeling of being disqualified.

Wedding prospects narrowed further as health became another mark against her.

Marriage remains a central marker of social stability, particularly for women, in Kashmir. Families often



weigh government employment against private jobs, inherited property against earned income, and appearance against ideas of respectability.

According to local studies and health professionals, delayed marriages have become more common over the past decade, driven by unemployment, prolonged education and economic uncertainty.

Social expectations, however, continue to demand early and ideal matches, creating pressure that many struggle to manage.

Insha encountered suitors who found her too modern and others who found her too plain.

Each rejection carried its own reasoning, leaving her suspended between competing ideals.

The process drained her family, who assessed proposals through the same measures that judged her. Conversations at home began to

circle around job titles, salaries and assets, reinforcing the sense that love and companionship had little place in the discussion.

In Srinagar, Unaiz arrives home from work to find his mother waiting near the kitchen counter, worry etched across her face. He sets down his office bag and asks what is troubling her, though the answer feels familiar.

The matchmaker has returned with another list of prospects and another account of why nothing has worked.

Families have raised concerns about his job at a small private company, questioned the family's wealth, commented on his appearance, including his baldness. The pattern feels endless to Unaiz's mother.

The mother-son exchange has become part of daily life over the past two years. Unaiz listens, reassures

her and turns away, weighed down by a process that has stripped marriage of anticipation.

He tells her to leave the matter to Allah, a phrase that offers comfort while also marking his withdrawal. Years of being evaluated on income, status and looks have dulled his desire to engage.

Marriage, once imagined as a shared beginning, has come to feel like an administrative task.

Insha and Unaiz's stories show a tension many families in Kashmir face today.

Personal choices, ambitions, and emotional well-being often clash with expectations shaped by old ideas of security, family honour, and social standing.

Mental health experts say anxiety and depression are rising among young adults under these pressures, even as open conversations about well-being remain rare.

Each visit from a matchmaker sends the same message: adapt, tolerate, and follow the rules.

Years pass, confidence fades, and lives stay on hold, waiting for approval that may never come.

In these rooms, a question grows: can marriage in Kashmir value people for who they truly are, beyond checklists and conditions?

Meanwhile, Insha smooths her dupatta, straightens her posture, and practices a smile, bracing herself for the sudden knock that announces the next visit.

— Sheikh Arsh is a senior journalist and former Multimedia Lead at Kashmir Observer. She can be contacted at sheikharshoo@gmail.com.

MENTAL HEALTH EXPERTS SAY ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION ARE RISING AMONG YOUNG ADULTS UNDER THESE PRESSURES, EVEN AS OPEN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WELL-BEING REMAIN RARE.

Each visit from a matchmaker sends the same message: adapt, tolerate, and follow the rules. Years pass, confidence fades, and lives stay on hold, waiting for approval that may never come.

INSHA AND UNAIZ'S STORIES SHOW A TENSION MANY FAMILIES IN KASHMIR FACE TODAY. Personal choices, ambitions, and emotional well-being often clash with expectations shaped by old ideas of security, family honour, and social standing.

The Game Comes Back

The SonyLIV series traces how a football club becomes a bridge across memory, identity, and fear.

Fiza Masoodi

The first image in Real Kashmir Football Club lands with a familiar jolt.

A young man cycles toward a protest outside a wine shop. Slogans fill the air. The tension builds. He throws a grenade and panic breaks out.

Then the truth comes out. It's fake. People laugh, shake it off, and carry on.

In that quick shift, the series shows what it wants to say.

Kashmir lives with uncertainty, but it also lives with routine, humour, and people simply getting on with their day.

This SonyLIV series takes a different route from most stories set in the region. It steps away from postcard beauty and headline violence and settles into everyday spaces.

The show is inspired by the real-life founding of Real Kashmir Football Club by hotelier Sandeep Chattoo and journalist Shamim Meraj in 2016.

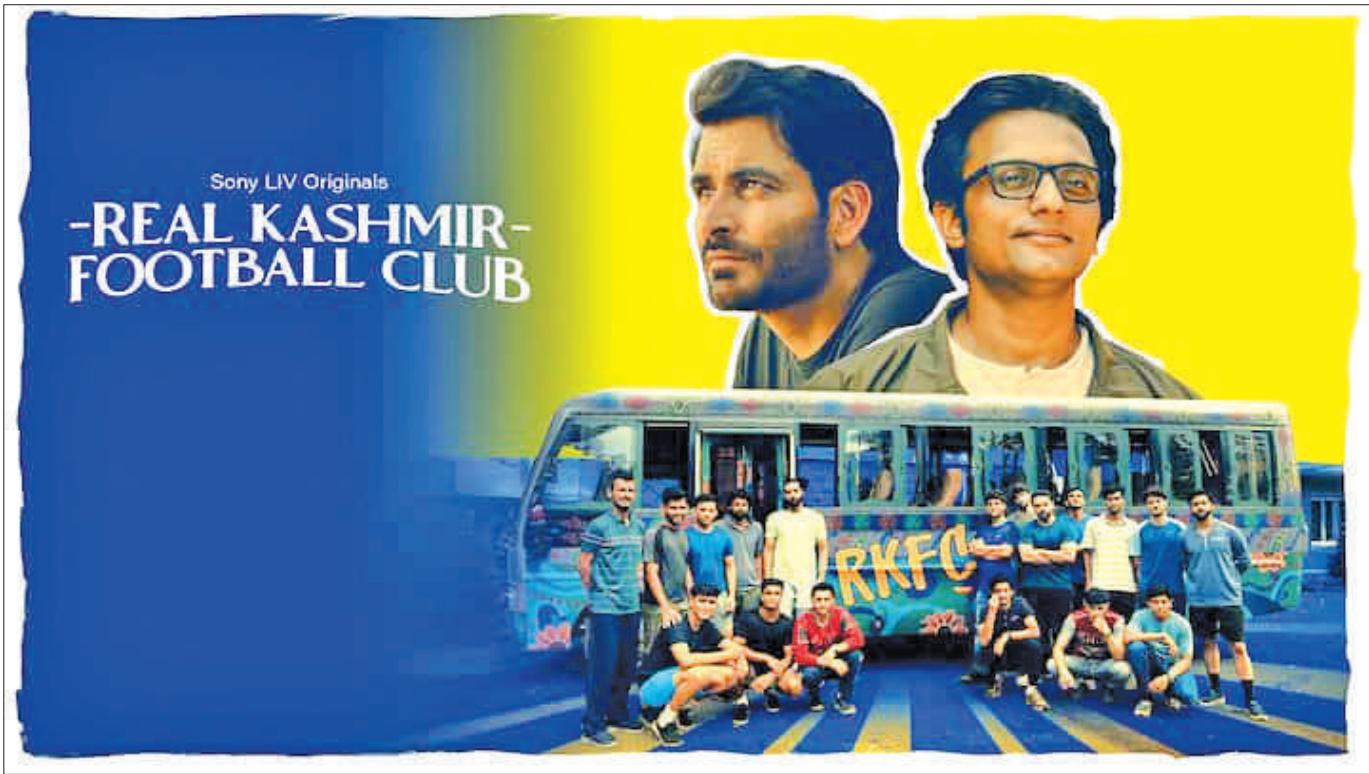
The real club started as a community initiative after the 2014 floods and eventually became the first professional football club from Jammu and Kashmir to play in the I-League.

The series shows how a football team became a reason for young people to gather, believe, and stay connected to the world around them.

At the center is Sohail Mir, played by Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub with tired honesty. Sohail is a journalist who no longer trusts his work to make a difference. Stories feel recycled, impact feels distant. Football reminds him of a time when public life in Kashmir felt open and shared.

Long before turmoil pushed games off the streets, football was something ordinary people watched and played after work. Sohail wants to bring that feeling back as a way to give young people purpose.

That idea leads him to Shirish Kemmu, a Kashmiri Pandit businessman played by Manav Kaul.



WHAT CARRIES THE SHOW THROUGH ARE THE PERFORMANCES. Ayyub brings moral impact without turning Sohail into a speech. Kaul avoids the trap of playing a savior and instead

gives Shirish silent depth. Muazzam Bhat's Mustafa feels etched by place and time, blending humour with weariness.

Shirish runs a liquor business and has lived with the memory of displacement and return. He is cautious, guarded, and unsure whether reopening old doors will invite new wounds. Kaul plays him with restraint, letting silences do much of the work.

When he finally agrees to support the club, the partnership feels practical rather than symbolic, built on shared uncertainty instead of grand ideals.

The team's first trials are among the show's strongest moments. A rundown Srinagar ground, a registration table

waiting, bibs lying unused as daylight fades. No one knows if anyone will show up. But slowly, boys arrive on foot and on bikes. Faces carry hope and doubt in equal measure.

When darkness sets in, scooter headlights become floodlights. The scene resists celebration. It stays with nerves, awkward smiles, and the sense that something small might be starting.

Around Sohail and Shirish, the series builds a group shaped by personal pressures. Dilshad balances work and football. Ru-

dra struggles with parents who worry more about status than joy. Amaan drifts between radical influence and the need for steady work and self-respect. Mustafa, the local coach played by Muazzam Bhat, carries authority and exhaustion in the same breath. His humour feels earned, shaped by years of watching talent slip away.

As the club grows, new tensions enter.

A gifted striker arrives with ego and expectation. A Scottish coach, Douglas, becomes an outside observer trying to

understand the valley. Through him, the show reveals both the heavy presence of security forces and the warmth of ordinary encounters.

When the team is asked to play a match inside a cantonment area, the players' discomfort says more than dialogue ever could about long histories of fear and control.

The writing benefits from deep listening. Screenwriter Simaab Hashmi spent years traveling to Kashmir, speaking with traders, footballers, and families. That work shows in small details: jokes shared over kahwa, arguments in tight living rooms, and parents torn between fear and pride.

Kashmir here is not reduced to scenery. It feels lived-in, shaped by habit as much as by loss.

One of the show's strengths lies in how it treats women. They are present as professionals and decision-makers, rather than background figures.

Sohail's wife Ghazal runs her

own boutique. Sameena teaches at a school and chooses to walk away from a marriage that would cost her independence. Shirish's wife Kaveri is a psychologist who runs a collective where women work, talk, and heal together.

These characters anchor families and communities while holding on to their own ambitions.

The direction stays restrained. The camera avoids flashy slow motion and heroic framing. Training montages appear late. Matches rarely turn into spectacle. The focus remains on getting to the ground, convincing parents, managing paperwork, and holding a team together.

That choice gives the series credibility, though it also limits its emotional payoff.

Conflicts sometimes resolve too neatly. Bureaucratic hurdles fall faster than they would in real life. The final match does not deliver the surge most sports dramas promise.

What carries the show through are the performances. Ayyub brings moral impact without turning Sohail into a speech. Kaul avoids the trap of playing a savior and instead gives Shirish silent depth. Muazzam Bhat's Mustafa feels etched by place and time, blending humour with weariness.

Among the younger cast, Abhishant Rana stands out as Amaan, capturing the pull of competing loyalties with ease.

Real Kashmir Football Club works best when watched slowly. It invites you back without tricks or suspense. The pleasure comes from spending time in its world. Football becomes less about winning and more about choosing a different way to move forward.

In a place often flattened into symbols, the series finds value in showing people trying, adjusting, and showing up again.

That steady approach is its real achievement.

— The author is a Srinagar-based scribe and startup founder.



REAL KASHMIR FOOTBALL CLUB WORKS BEST WHEN WATCHED SLOWLY. It invites you back without tricks or suspense. The pleasure comes from spending time in its world. Football becomes less about winning and more about choosing a different way to move forward.

Strenuous Efforts Underway To Address Concerns Of Migrant Population: CS

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: Strenuous efforts are being made by the administration to sort out the issues and concerns of the migrant population, a senior government official said on Saturday.

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo urged the migrant youth to avail the benefits of self-employment schemes.

Dulloo visited the mini-township Jagti, housing Kashmiri pandit migrants, in Nagrota area near here and inspected various

development works besides inaugurating vital projects.

He distributed sanction orders under various Social Security Schemes like Old Age Pension, Widow Pension and Disability Pension among about 125 migrant beneficiaries.

He also handed over allotment orders to the eligible migrant beneficiaries for 48 government shops and 12 residential quarters.

"Strenuous efforts are being made by the administration to sort out the issues and concerns of the migrant population. The



latest initiatives included maintenance of old and damaged residential quarters, proper sanitation by the Jammu Municipal Corporation and Transit accommodations in Kashmir," Dulloo

said.

Besides, he said issues of PM Package employees are also being addressed.

He said under the Mission Youth of JK government, several young people are given opportunities to become entrepreneurs.

The chief secretary urged the migrant youth to avail the benefits of self-employment schemes.

He directed the Employment Department to create maximum awareness among the migrant youth about the self-employment and entrepreneurship

schemes.

Dulloo also emphasized the importance of the historic moment of extending social sector schemes' benefits to the Kashmiri and Jammu migrants, who were earlier deprived of these benefits since the ration cards were non-digitized and not integrated with the national database.

He appealed to all the migrants to avail the benefits of various government schemes by getting their ration cards integrated on the national portal.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

'Ajwa' Packaged

product and submit details of existing stock within 48 hours. Officials said strict enforcement action will be taken under the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act against violators.

The action comes a day after food safety authorities banned a batch of Priyagold Butter Delite biscuits found to contain sulphite levels above permissible limits and launched a Valley-wide inspection drive to test eggs for banned drug residues, signalling heightened surveillance amid growing public health concerns.

Officials said enhanced monitoring and sampling of food items will continue across the Valley, reiterating that consumer safety remains the department's top priority.

Why Bottled Water

framed bottled water as purer, healthier and more convenient. Scientific evidence, however, increasingly challenges this perception.

The idea of purity lies at the heart of bottled water's appeal, yet multiple studies suggest the product carries its own health and environmental risks. Research published in 2025 found high levels of bacterial contamination in water sold in refillable jugs and plastic bottles, raising concerns about safety standards in parts of the bottled water industry.

These findings reinforce earlier research indicating that in many regions, tap water is not only safe but often more strictly regulated than bottled alternatives.

Bottled water is regulated differently. It is treated as a packaged food product, tested less frequently, and manufacturers are generally not required to make detailed quality reports public.

Scientific studies have detected various contaminants in bottled water, including bacteria, chemical residues and microplastics. A 2024 study found tens of thousands of plastic particles per litre in some bottled products. Other research suggests bottled water may contain higher levels of microplastics than tap water, with potential links to inflammation, hormonal disruption and the accumulation of particles in human organs.

Plastic bottles themselves can leach chemicals into the water they contain. Substances such as antimony, phthalates and bisphenol analogues can migrate from plastic, particularly when bottles are exposed to heat during transport or storage. Some of these chemicals are known endocrine disruptors that may interfere with hormone systems. While the concentrations detected in bottled water are generally low, researchers remain concerned about the effects of long term, repeated exposure as global consumption continues to rise.

Bottled water is also not sterile. Once opened, microorganisms can multiply rapidly, especially if bottles are left in warm environments. Reusing single use bottles further increases the risk of bacterial contamination through contact with saliva and external surfaces.

Tap water, by contrast, often contains beneficial minerals. In some countries, fluoride is added to public supplies to reduce tooth decay. Bottled water varies widely in mineral content, and studies have found higher rates of dental caries among children who consume bottled water more frequently.

How green is your bottle?

Environmental costs add another layer to the debate. Around one million plastic bottles are purchased globally every minute. According to estimates by Danish water technology company Aquaporin, producing a litre of bottled water can require up to two thousand times more energy than supplying a litre of tap water. The average carbon footprint of bottled water is estimated at about eighty grams of carbon dioxide per litre when bottling, transport and cooling are included.

The bottled water industry also intersects with broader global water challenges. Climate change, pollution, urbanisation and population growth are placing increasing pressure on freshwater resources. Unesco estimates that more than two billion people currently live in areas facing high water stress.

In response, researchers are exploring decentralised alternatives. One such initiative, Solar2Water, aims to produce clean drinking water directly from the air using solar power. By generating water at the point of use, such systems reduce dependence on long pipelines, large treatment plants and single use plastics.

Bottled water remains essential during emergencies or in regions where tap water is unsafe. In most developed countries, however, it is neither cleaner nor safer than public supplies. As environmental pressures grow and trust in water systems fluctuates, understanding the real costs of bottled water has become increasingly important.

In most developed countries, public drinking water is subject to daily monitoring for bacteria, heavy metals and pesticides. In the United Kingdom, the Drinking Water Inspectorate publishes water quality data regularly. In the United States, suppliers must comply with Environmental Protection Agency regulations, while across Europe, standards are set under

the EU Drinking Water Directive. inputs from KNO

Created 800 MBBS

reality in the Union Territory.

Addressing the valedictory ceremony of the SKIMS Annual Festival Week in Srinagar, the Lieutenant Governor said it took nearly seven decades to create 500 MBBS seats in J&K, while 800 additional seats were created within just four years through focused reforms.

"We have brought transformative change to J&K's medical education and public health landscape in the last five years under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Sinha said, adding that long-standing issues such as the absence of government medical colleges and the dominance of unaffordable private institutions have been addressed.

The Lieutenant Governor said systemic reforms undertaken between 2020 and 2024 have made quality healthcare education more accessible across the region, benefiting students from economically weaker sections and remote areas.

Reiterating the government's commitment to inclusive healthcare, Sinha said special focus is being placed on ensuring affordable medical services for underprivileged populations and those living in far-flung regions of the Union Territory.

Calling upon the healthcare fraternity to work towards a people-centric system, the Lieutenant Governor said healthcare delivery must go beyond treatment of illness to include physical, mental and social well-being. He emphasised the need for strengthening research, innovation and multidisciplinary approaches in the sector.

The Lieutenant Governor also highlighted the transformation of Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences over the last four to five years. He said over 1,100 long-pending promotions were cleared, while around 1,300 paramedical and ministerial posts were revived and referred, including 120 faculty positions. Clearance was also given to more than 1,800 Departmental Promotion Committee cases, and additional non-gazetted and gazetted posts were referred to recruiting agencies.

Sinha said SKIMS is planning to establish future Centres of Excellence in transplant services, emergency and trauma care, neurosciences, cardiac sciences, renal medicine, pulmonary diseases, and endocrine and metabolic disorders.

During the event, the Lieutenant Governor inaugurated several projects at SKIMS, including an Emergency S.M.A.R.T Lab, ICU-VII, a heavy-duty lift and a new firefighting system. He also laid foundation stones for projects including a Centre for One Health, a 3 MLD sewage treatment plant, multi-level car parking, Attendat Inn Phase II and a shopping complex for hostels. New digital initiatives were also launched on the occasion.

Outlining a roadmap for healthcare transformation, Sinha said the government has identified five priority goals, including data-driven personalised care, robust auditing of patient treatment and outcomes, complete digitisation of medical records, decentralised healthcare delivery for remote areas, and stronger focus on preventive health and wellness.

The event was attended by Director SKIMS Prof Mohammad Ashraf Ganie, Director PGIMER Chandigarh Prof Vivek Lal, Vice Chancellor Central University of Kashmir Prof A Ravinder Nath, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg, IGP Kashmir V K Birdi, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Akshay Labroo, senior officials, medical professionals, faculty members, students and staff of SKIMS.

Zero Tolerance

we have restored their dignity and faith in the system," he said.

"Terrorism Destroyed Families, Silenced Generations"

Sinha said terrorism not only claimed innocent lives but also destroyed families, pushing them into years of silence, stigma, and poverty. "Behind every brutal killing by terrorists lies a story of a home that never recovered, of children who grew up without parents," he said.

Highlighting individual cases, Sinha said Pakeeza Riyaz of Anantnag, whose father Riyaz Ahmed Mir was killed in 1999, and Shaista of Hyderpora, Srinagar, whose father Abdul Rashid Ganai was murdered in 2000, received government job letters, ending their long struggle for justice and economic security.

"Ishtiyag Ahmad, son of BSF braveheart Altaf Hussain who was martyred in a terrorist encounter nearly 19 years ago, was also appointed, providing long-awaited support to a family that has endured immense hardship since the sacrifice," Sinha said.

He highlighted that justice was also delivered to the family of Dilawar Ganie and his son Fayaz Ganie of Qazigund, who were brutally murdered on February 4, 2000.

"Fayaz's young daughter Fozy lost two generations of support in a single day. The family has lived in fear and grief for the past 25 years."

The Lieutenant Governor further cited the

case of Abdul Aziz Dar, a Srinagar resident murdered by terrorists three decades ago, saying his family's prolonged search for justice had finally come to an end.

"Victims Now Speaking Without Fear"

Sinha said that after the abrogation of Article 370, terror victim families have found new courage and confidence and are now speaking against the terror ecosystem without fear.

"For generations, the system failed these victims by not giving their cases the priority they deserved. We are empowering victims' voices and ensuring they receive their dues and rights. We are also committed to swift and fair justice for perpetrators," he said.

He said the fight against terrorism must be undertaken collectively by society and urged citizens to remain resolute and patient in defeating the menace.

"OGWs Benefited While Victims Were Ignored"

"For a long time, the pain and trauma of these families were ignored. Real victims and true martyrs were hounded by elements within the terror ecosystem. On one hand, overground workers were appointed in government jobs, while on the other, the next of kin of terror victims were left to fend for themselves," Sinha said.

Reiterating the government's firm stance, the Lieutenant Governor said, "Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, our policy on terrorism is unequivocal. Zero tolerance to terrorism in all its forms. Every available resource will be used to make Jammu and Kashmir terrorism-free, and those providing sanctuary, safe haven or any support to terrorists will pay a very heavy price."

On the occasion, appointment letters were also handed over to 39 beneficiaries under the Compassionate Appointment Rules SRO-43 and the Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme.

According to officials, 156 family members of terror victims have been provided self-employment opportunities under schemes including Mission Yuva, the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme and the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme. He added that 17 encroachments have been removed from properties belonging to terror victim families.

He said 36 terror victim families have been identified for house reconstruction, with more to be included as the process continues. Reconstruction of houses destroyed due to Pakistani shelling in Uri and Karnah will begin in April.

Special DG Coordination PHQ S J M Gillani, Principal Secretary Home Chandraker Bharti, Commissioner Secretary GAD M Raju, Principal Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor Dr Mandeep K Bhandari, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg, IGP Kashmir V K Birdi, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Akshay Labroo, Chairman Save Youth Save Future Foundation Wajahat Farooq Bhat, senior officials, members of social organisations and families of terror victims were present at the event.

Parliament Attack Victims

Sinha paid tributes to those who were killed in a terror attack on the Parliament House in 2001, saying their heroism and selfless service to the nation will continue to inspire every Indian.

The attack on this day in 2001 was carried out by five armed terrorists. But personnel from the then Parliament Security Service, CRPF and Delhi Police foiled the attack, with no terrorist being able to enter the building.

"My sincere tributes to the brave martyrs who sacrificed their lives during the dastardly attack on our Parliament in 2001. Their heroism, courage and selfless service to the nation will continue to inspire every Indian," the LG said in a post on X.

Six Delhi Police personnel, two Parliament Security Service personnel, a gardener and a TV journalist were killed in the attack. All five terrorists were gunned down in the forecourt of the then Parliament building.

200 Suspected

the detained suspects are underway, they added.

Fog Engulfs Valley

2.4 degrees Celsius. Kokernag registered a low of 0.1 degrees Celsius, making it one of the few places where temperatures stayed above freezing.

Gulmarg also remained above the freezing point, recording a low of 1.6 degrees Celsius, up from zero degrees Celsius a day earlier.

Pahalgam logged a minimum of minus 2.8 degrees Celsius, improving from minus 4.6 degrees Celsius, officials said.

Pulwama was the coldest place in Jammu and Kashmir, recording a low of minus 4.2 degrees Celsius, followed by Shopian at minus 3.7 degrees Celsius.

The Meteorological Department has forecast very light snowfall at isolated higher reaches of north and central Kashmir from December 13 to 17. Weather is expected to remain partly to generally cloudy on December 18 and 19, with

light rain or snow likely at scattered places on December 20 and 21.

Shallow to moderate fog is likely to persist at many places across the valley over the coming days, the weather office added.

Kashmir is approaching Chillai Kalan, the 40 day harshest winter phase beginning December 21, when temperatures typically fall sharply and snowfall chances increase.

The valley has not witnessed any major wet spell so far this winter, with prolonged dry weather leading to an increase in seasonal ailments such as cough and common cold. Doctors have advised people, especially children and the elderly, to take precautions and stay indoors.

Jhelum, Tributaries

Showkat Hussain said the continued absence of significant rainfall since October has drastically reduced the discharge in the Jhelum and its tributaries. "At several points, including Sangam, Pampore, Liddar and Rambiyara, water levels have dipped below the zero mark, a sign of how severely the prolonged dry spell has impacted our river systems."

He said they are hopeful of a wet spell and the situation will change and a relief will come over.

As per updated data of Flood Control (I&FC) Department of December 13, the situation across major gauges stands as below as zero at multiple places.

River Jhelum: Sangam (21'/25') = -0.62 ft; Pampore (4.5/5.0) = -1.33 m; Munshi Bagh (18'/21') = 3.64 ft; Asham (14.0'/16.5') = 1.00 ft and Wullar Lake (1578.00) = 1573.72 m.

About tributaries the data says: Vishow Nallah at Khudwani (7.75/8.50) = 2.33 m; Rambiyara Nallah at Wachi (5.4/5.7) = -0.38 m; Liddar Nallah at Batkoot (1.5/1.65) = -0.65 m; Doodhganga Nallah at Barzulla (3.65/3.8) = 0.80 m and Sindh Nallah at Doderhama (3.65/3.9) = -0.02 m.

While a few gauges such as Munshi Bagh, Asham, Vishow and Doodhganga remain marginally above zero, all are showing significantly reduced discharge levels compared to the seasonal average.

The Chief Engineer also said that the department is continuously regulating flow at the Chattabal Weir to maintain a minimum downstream discharge. "If the dry weather persists, it could have implications for both irrigation and drinking water supply. However, we are hopeful that the upcoming wet spell will help restore the water balance," he added. (KNO)

Closure Of Tourist

Jammu and Kashmir had witnessed far worse security situations in the past, yet tourist destinations were never shut.

"When tourism restarted after 1996, the situation was far more difficult than it is today. Even then, destinations were not closed," he said.

He said while the Centre has been supportive, the problem lies in the prolonged closure of tourist spots, which needs to be reviewed either at the Centre or Assembly level to restore clarity and confidence among tourists.

Despite challenges such as the Pahalgam attack, floods, the Delhi blast and an accidental explosion in Nowgam, Omar said the government has continued its efforts to strengthen tourism.

"Places like Gulmarg and Pahalgam today compete not only with destinations within the country but globally. Indian tourists travel all over the world, and in such circumstances, it is imperative to keep improving our infrastructure," he said.

17 Crore Projects Dedicated at Gulmarg

Earlier in the day, the Chief Minister dedicated a series of major tourism infrastructure projects worth over Rs 17 crore to the public at Gulmarg and adjoining areas, marking a significant step towards strengthening Jammu and Kashmir's winter tourism ecosystem.

He inaugurated Asia's longest ski drag lift, measuring 726 metres, at Kongdoori, built at a cost of Rs 3.65 crore. He also inaugurated conservation works of a water body at Kongdoori costing Rs 0.90 crore and a rotating conference hall at Apharwat, constructed by the Jammu and Kashmir Cable Car Corporation at a cost of Rs 0.86 crore.

The Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for fencing of the Gulmarg Golf Course, a Rs 4.77 crore project aimed at protecting one of the region's iconic tourism assets. Through online inaugurations and foundation ceremonies, he also dedicated projects including the office building of the Gulmarg Development Authority, reconstruction of Hut No. 2, construction of the Devri path along the Alambal roadside and development of a dedicated car parking facility.

He also inaugurated the Integrated Skiing Training and Adventure Tourism Centre at Gulmarg and launched integrated ski training courses to strengthen professional winter sports infrastructure. The projects were executed by the Gulmarg Development Authority and the Jammu and Kashmir Cable Car Corporation.

"These initiatives are not just infrastructure

additions but strategic investments that will create year-round tourism opportunities, generate employment for local youth and elevate Gulmarg to international standards," Omar said, adding that the vision is to make Gulmarg a global hub for winter sports while preserving its fragile ecology.

Jammu and Kashmir's tourism sector will get an investment of about Rs 5,500 crore under an externally funded budget, Omar said.

"We will do whatever we can for Gulmarg and other tourism destinations. It will perhaps be for the first time that under an externally funded project, tourism sector will get an exclusive investment of about Rs 5,500 crore," he said while addressing an event in Gulmarg in north Kashmir.

Snowfall, Statehood and Power Cuts

Expressing concern over the absence of snowfall so far this winter, Omar said tourists are eagerly waiting for snow. "Everyone asks whether it has snowed. We say not yet, and they ask us to inform them when it does," he said.

On the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood, the Chief Minister quipped, "Let it snow first, then we will talk about statehood."

Responding to queries on winter power cuts, Omar said outages were sometimes unavoidable due to maintenance and revenue constraints, urging people to use electricity judiciously. He said unmeted consumption and inadequate revenue collection have made regular load shedding a compulsion.

Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, MLA Gulmarg Farooq Ahmad Shah, MLA Zaidal Tanvir Sadiq, Deputy Commissioner Baramulla Minga Sherpa, Director Tourism and Managing Director JKCCS Syed Qamar Sajad, senior officers, tourism stakeholders and prominent tourism players were present on the occasion.

Qazigund Doctor

Dr Muzaffar Ahmad Rather is required to appear before this court on 28.01.2026 at 10 am sharp to answer the complaint," the court order read.

Rather, whose brother Dr Adeel Ahmad Rather was arrested in Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh earlier, is believed to be in Afghanistan.

The entire module was busted after Srinagar police began an investigation into the pasting of posters that threatened police and security forces on walls in Bunpora, Nowgam, in mid-October.

The trail led the investigators to the Al Falah University in Faridabad, Haryana, where Dr Muzaffar Ganaie and Dr Shaheen Sayeed were arrested, and 2,900 kg of explosive material was seized in November.

Investigators believe a core trio of doctors -- Dr Ganaie, Dr Umar Nabi (the driver of the explosives-laden car that blew up near the Red Fort, killing 15), and Muzaffar Rather -- were running the module.

Section 84 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) deals with the procedure for declaring a person a 'proclaimed offender' when he/she absconds to avoid a warrant, requiring public proclamation through local reading, posting on their home/village, affixing to the court, and potential newspaper publication.

J&K Gets ₹350 Cr for

workers, free diagnostics and free drug distribution. The allocation also supports maternal and child health programmes and immunisation services under the NHM.

The Ministry informed Parliament that Jammu and Kashmir has also been included in national-level tribal health initiatives such as the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission and PM-JANMAN, aimed at improving healthcare access in remote and tribal belts, including districts like Rajouri and Kupwara.

Under the Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY scheme, millions of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families across the country, including those in Jammu and Kashmir, have been issued Ayushman cards, providing health insurance coverage of up to 5 lakh per family annually.

The government further said that allocations under the Development Action Plan for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes continue to be closely monitored to address healthcare gaps and improve service delivery in backward and tribal regions.

J&K Govt Seeks

16, 2020, the Union Government amended the Jammu & Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act-1989 to provide for setting up of District Development Councils.

The law was amended through an executive order by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) invoking the powers vested with it under Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act-2019.

Each DDC comprises 14 elected members. With J&K having 20 districts, the total strength of elected DDC members is 280.

In the first-ever DDC election held in November- December 2020, the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) won 110 seats, while the BJP emerged as the single largest party by getting 75 seats. (KNO)

‘Aaj Hamara Dard Kisine Samjha’:

Terror Victims’ Families Find Voice, Dignity After Decades

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: It wasn't a usual government function. At Srinagar's Lok Bhavan Auditorium on Saturday, silence often spoke louder than words.

Eyes filled with tears and hands trembled as they recalled memories of lost fathers, husbands and brothers. Victims of terror whose families had waited years, even decades, to be heard. Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, handing over appointment letters to the next of kin of terror victims, called it a "tribute to their sacrifice". At Lok Bawan, families took turns to speak; the hall turned into a space of collective grief and long-delayed dignity.

Among the packed hall was Amir Nazir Lala, who lost his father when he was just four years old. "I was just four years old when my father was killed in the main market," he said, his voice trembling, as per KNO.

"My mother struggled beyond limits... for 25 long years, we received no justice, no help. Today, LG Sahab has given us dignity and our rightful place. For the first time, it feels like someone truly listened to our pain," he said.

For another lady, Shaista Akhtar from Srinagar, whose father was killed 20 years ago, the appointment letter was more than employment as it was an acknowledgement.



"No one ever helped us. Our file just kept moving from one office to another. But LG Sahab felt our pain; he understood what we went through. May Allah keep you blessed, you have become a healer of hearts," she said, tears streaming down her face.

Among many more stories of pain was Mohammad Ashraf Lone, from south Kashmir's Anantnag, who spoke of his brother's killing in 1999.

"From then until 2025, no one ever understood our pain. No one asked about us, and we were never treated with dignity. Today, LG Sahab has restored that dignity. For the first time, we feel that we, too, belong to this country," he said, his voice breaking midway. Masrat Nelofer, another lady

from Baramulla, who lost her husband in a terror attack while he was running a rehabilitation centre, said she spent years knocking on doors for help.

"We went from one office to another, but no one was there to listen. Our files just kept moving from one table to the next. When we met LG Sahab, he said, 'Don't worry, we will take action.' Today, that promise has been fulfilled," she said, clutching her appointment letter tightly.

Meanwhile, inside the hall, sobs broke out quietly. Mothers wept; some fathers held their children close, others stared blankly among the audience rows. A few young men tried to hide their tears, but the pain was too raw to contain.

Young Woman Credits LG for Finally ‘Understanding Her Pain’

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: After Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's event for next of kin (NoKs) of terror victims concluded at Lok Bhavan in Srinagar, a young woman stood outside the hall clutching her appointment letter tightly. Pakiza Riyaz, from south Kashmir's Anantnag district was there in memory of her grandmother, who raised her from infancy.

Pakiza's voice quivered as she spoke to KNO expressing her happiness upon receiving the appointment.

"We have struggled a lot to reach this point. My father was martyred when I was just six months old. Since then, only my grandmother and I have been together. She became my mother, my father, my everything," she said, her words soft but laden with emotion.

She recounted that her grandmother was the sole breadwinner, surviving on a small pension after her husband passed away years ago. "There were days when we didn't even have enough money

for food or clothes," Pakiza said. "But my grandmother never let me feel alone. She hid her pain, worked tirelessly, and made sure I could go to school. Every time I fell, she lifted me. Every time I lost hope, she gave me courage."

For years, the duo went from one office to another - filing applications, meeting officials, and waiting for someone to listen. "We went to the Secretariat, the DC office, countless times," she said. "No one did anything for us. No one even looked at us properly. Only LG Sinha understood our pain."

Her voice broke as she remembered her grandmother. "Today, this letter is not just for me; it's for my grandmother. She has suffered enough. LG Sinha gave us respect, recognition, and the peace we waited 25 years for," she added.

Earlier inside the hall, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha described the initiative as "a tribute to the courage and resilience of families who faced the worst of terror but never lost faith"

Army Tightens Winter Vigil Along LoC in Jammu



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Indian Army has intensified patrols in the higher reaches of the Jammu region to prevent infiltration and maintain constant vigil over sensitive areas along the Line of Control (LoC) even as there has been absence of heavy snowfall.

Officials told KNO that the Army has strengthened its presence along high ridges, dense forests, and mountain passes - regions that usually become inaccessible after heavy snowfall.

"The lack of snow this season could potentially be exploited by terrorists attempting to infiltrate these areas. In districts

like Rajouri and Poonch, there are several mountain caves where infiltrators often hide after crossing the border," they said.

According to officials, this is part of the Army's winter security plan. During the cold season, fog, mist, and reduced civilian movement can create favourable conditions for terrorist activity," they said.

They said that as weather office has forecast snowfall in the coming days, the Army is monitoring key routes and traditional infiltration corridors to ensure that no terrorist group is able to set up hideouts.

"Patrolling has been stepped up in dense for-

ests and regions around the Line of Control. Soldiers equipped with snow gear and modern surveillance tools are conducting round-the-clock patrols," they said.

The officials said the Army has already stocked up on essential winter supplies and enhanced surveillance through drones and sensors. "Joint operations are being carried out in coordination with the Jammu and Kashmir Police".

They added that the effort is being made to ensure there is no loophole in security during winter and that terrorists do not get any opportunity to infiltrate into the higher mountain regions.

GMC Anantnag Begins Cochlear Implant Surgeries

Observer News Service

ANANTNAG: In a major milestone for tertiary healthcare in South Kashmir, the Government Medical College (GMC) Anantnag has successfully started cochlear implant surgeries, offering renewed hope to children born with severe to profound hearing loss. The latest procedure, the third such surgery at the institution, was performed by the Department of ENT, marking a significant step toward advanced hearing rehabilitation in the region.

Speaking to KNO, Dr Aamir Yousuf, Head of the Department of ENT at GMC Anantnag, said the initiative is aimed primarily at children with congenital deafness, who often suffer lifelong consequences due to delayed diagnosis and lack of access to specialised care.

"We have recently started cochlear implant surgeries at GMC Anantnag, and today, the third case was successfully operated upon. These surgeries are mainly for children with congenital deafness. It is a very rewarding surgery because it can completely change a child's life," Dr Aamir said.

He explained that cochlear implants are particularly crucial for children in whom conventional hearing aids fail to provide benefit. Unlike hearing aids, cochlear implants bypass damaged parts of the inner ear and directly stimulate the auditory nerve, allowing sound signals to reach the brain.

"Many children in our society suffer from congenital deaf-mutism, but unfortunately, diagnosis is often delayed. Early detection and timely implantation—ideally before the age of three—can help these children develop near-normal speech and language skills," he said.

The doctor emphasised the importance of newborn and early childhood hearing screening, noting that hearing loss is not visible at birth and often goes unnoticed until speech delay becomes obvious.

While welcoming the start of cochlear implant services at GMC Anantnag, Dr Yousuf acknowledged that the high cost of implants remains a significant limitation for many families.

"The surgery itself is highly satisfying from a medical point of view,

but the implant is costly, and that becomes a major constraint. Many deserving children cannot undergo the procedure due to financial limitations," he said, adding that greater government support and awareness about existing schemes are urgently needed.

Healthcare experts say the availability of cochlear implant surgeries at GMC Anantnag will reduce the need for families to travel to far-off centres outside the region, easing both financial and emotional burdens. The move is being seen as a critical advancement in specialised ENT services in south Kashmir.

Doctors at the institution reiterated that cochlear implantation is not merely about restoring hearing but about restoring futures—enabling children to speak, learn, attend regular schools, and integrate fully into society.

With increasing awareness, early screening, and institutional support, medical professionals believe that many children who once lived in silence can now step into a world filled with sound, communication, and opportunity.

Govt to Aims to Restore Region's Top Tourism Spot: CM Advisor

Advisor to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Nasir Aslam Wani on Saturday said that Jammu and Kashmir has established itself as the adventure tourism capital of the country, offering limitless opportunities across skiing, mountaineering, trekking, rafting and other sports.

Speaking at an event in Gulmarg, Wani, as per KNO said that the government remains committed to promoting adventure tourism by expanding infrastructure and supporting stakeholders across the sector.

"Be it skiing, high-altitude trekking, river rafting, cycling or marathons, Jammu and Kashmir offers every adventure experience a traveler could seek," he said.

Highlighting the government's sustained focus on the tourism sector, Wani said several projects worth Rs 17 crore were inaugurated earlier at Gulmarg, showcasing the administration's drive to strengthen tourist infrastructure.

"Tourism is a priority sector for this government. Our effort is to expand its economic footprint so that local communities benefit directly through livelihood opportunities and enhanced infrastructure," he said.

He added that the ultimate goal was to restore Jammu and Kashmir's leading position in India's tourism map and ensure that the benefits of tourism reach the people at the grassroots level.

"We are confident that with consistent efforts over the next two to three years, we'll achieve our objective," Wani assured. (Observer News Service)

3 Arrested During CASO in Srinagar

Three persons were arrested during a Cordon and Search Operation (CASO) conducted by the Special Operations Group (SOG) of Srinagar Police along with Police Station Bemina at Dal Colony in the Bemina area of central Kashmir's Srinagar district on Saturday, sources said.

Police sources said that the operation was carried out, during which posters were recovered from the possession of the arrested persons.

In this regard, a case under Section 13 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) has been registered at Police Station Bemina, they said.

The arrested persons have been identified as Owais Mubarak Itoo, son of Mubarak Itoo, resident of Pandushan, Shopian; Hilal Ahmad Hajam, son of Abdul Razzaq Hajam; and Javid Ahmad Hajam, son of Mohammad Yousuf Hajam, both residents of Chadoora Brenwar, they added. Further investigation is underwa sources said. (KNC)

Sedentary Lifestyle Emerging as Major Cause of Constipation: Doctors

Doctors have cautioned that a low-fibre diet coupled with a sedentary lifestyle is a leading cause of constipation, a common yet often neglected digestive disorder that can significantly affect daily life if left untreated.

Medical experts explained that constipation is generally characterised by infrequent bowel movements—typically fewer than three per week—along with hard or dry stools, excessive straining, or a persistent feeling of incomplete evacuation. While occasional constipation is considered normal, chronic or long-term constipation can lead to serious health complications.

Speaking to KNO, Dr Gulzar Ahmad Wani, a general physician at DHSK, said dietary habits play a crucial role in bowel health. "Constipation often results from inadequate fibre intake, insufficient water consumption and excessive reliance on processed or refined foods. Fibre adds bulk to stool and helps it pass smoothly through the intestines," he said.

He added that lifestyle-related factors such as prolonged sitting, lack of physical activity, ignoring the natural urge to defecate, and high stress levels further slow down bowel movement. "Modern lifestyles, especially desk-bound jobs and irregular eating habits, have made constipation increasingly common across all age groups," he said.

Apart from lifestyle and dietary causes, several medical conditions can also contribute to constipation. These include irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), hypothyroidism, diabetes, neurological disorders, intestinal blockages and the presence of scar tissue in the digestive tract. Hormonal changes during pregnancy and natural ageing—due to slower metabolism and weakened bowel muscles—also increase the risk.

Doctors also pointed out that certain medications are known to cause or worsen constipation. These include strong painkillers, particularly opioid-based drugs, antidepressants, iron supplements and antacids containing calcium or aluminium. (Observer News Service)

4th National Lok Adalat 2025 Held in City

In a significant stride towards delivering timely and amicable justice, District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) in collaboration with the District Judiciary Srinagar organized the 4th National Lok Adalat 2025 at the District Court Complex Mominabad, Srinagar, and at the Court of the Additional Special Mobile Magistrate/ JMC Panthachowk.

The Lok Adalat was held under the guidance of Justice Sanjeev Kumar, Judge, High Court of J&K and Ladakh (Executive Chairman, J&K Legal Services Authority) and overall supervision of Haq Nawaz Zargar Principal District & Sessions Judge (Chairman, DLSA) Srinagar, and Shazia Tabasum, Member Secretary, J&K Legal Services Authority.

The Lok Adalat was inaugurated by the Principal District & Sessions Judge Srinagar, in presence of judicial officers, members of the bar, court staff and DLSA Staff.

During an interaction with the media, Adnan Sayeed, Spl. Judge Anti-corruption CBI Cases, Srinagar, emphasized that the National Lok Adalat provides an effective and economical platform for dispute resolution. He stated that it ensures a win-win situation where both parties get their concerns heard and settled amicably.

To facilitate the amicable settlement of cases, 13 benches were constituted, in which overall 62451 cases were taken up for settlement out of which 61767 cases were amicably settled and Rs. 86838275 was awarded as settlement amount.

The First Bench was presided over by Adnan Sayeed, Spl. Judge Anti Corruption CBI Cases Sgr and Fayaz Ahmad Qureshi, Presiding Officer, MACT, Court Srinagar in which 102 cases were taken out of which 50 cases were amicably settled and Rs. 31773953 was awarded as settlement amount. (Observer News Service)

SAGG Eco Village Wins Gold at TOFT Tourism Awards



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: SAGG Eco Village in Kashmir has won the Gold Award in the Sustainable Homestay category at the TOFT Wildlife & Nature Tourism Awards 2025, held at Bikaner House in New Delhi on Thursday.

The TOFT Awards, supported by Sanctuary Nature Foundation, Outlook Responsible Tourism and various state tourism boards, recognise conservation-led and commu-

nity-focused tourism initiatives across the Indian subcontinent.

The jury cited SAGG Eco Village's regenerative model of hospitality, which combines ecological land stewardship, cultural preservation and livelihood generation. The eco-village was described as Kashmir's first regenerative homestay, using traditional architecture, renewable energy and zero-waste practices while supporting land restoration and rural employment.

Founded in 2012 by ecological entrepreneur Fayaz Ahmad Dar, SAGG Eco Village focuses on low-impact natural construction, regenerative farming, community participation, and small-scale tourism rooted in local culture. The initiative offers farm stays, immersive rural experiences and regenerative learning programmes.

Speaking at the event, Dar said the award recognised years of work centred on Kashmir's land, culture and people, and highlighted the potential of tourism to support ecological restoration and community wellbeing.

The awards ceremony brought together policymakers, conservationists and tourism professionals, underscoring the growing emphasis on nature-positive and community-driven tourism models.



CRAFTSMEN PEEL BARK from freshly cut wicker sticks in a Ganderbal village, preparing them for Kangri making.

KO PHOTO, ABID BHAT

Fans Go On Rampage, Messi's Kolkata Tour Turns 'Messy'

Tapan Mohanta

KOLKATA: Lionel Messi's much-hyped visit to the Salt Lake Stadium here on Saturday lasted 22 minutes, just enough to underline everything that is wrong in Indian football and the state administration's mismanagement.

What was billed as a historic celebration of the game's greatest icon degenerated into a spectacular breakdown of planning, policing and priorities, as angry fans ran riot at the venue after failing to get even a glimpse of their favourite superstar from Argentina.

The chaos was almost ironic.

Messi's second visit to Kolkata -- part of a four-city India tour with Hyderabad, Mumbai and New Delhi to follow -- came against the backdrop of the Indian football team's alarming slide to 142nd in the latest FIFA rankings, its lowest since October 2016.

Arguably the greatest player of all time, Messi arrived just as the sport in the country hit rock bottom, with the domestic calendar in limbo and governance in disarray, and the events at the Salt Lake Stadium summed it up better than any ranking ever could.

What was meant to be a red-letter day for the City of Joy turned into a nightmare by noon.

About 50,000 spectators, many of whom had paid Rs 4,000 to Rs 12,000 -- and in some cases up to Rs 20,000 in the black market -- watched helplessly as a swarm of politicians, VVIPs, security personnel, and assorted hangers more interested in selfies than crowd control surrounded Messi.

The build-up had been electrifying with fans spending sleepless nights to catch his midnight arrival and then making a beeline to the stadium from early morning. The gates were opened at 8am.

Over 50,000 fans packed the stadium, chanting 'Messi, Messi' as former footballers from Mohun Bagan and Diamond Harbour FC -- all sporting No.10 jerseys -- played a 35-minute exhibition match.



At 11.30am, the GOAT arrived dressed in black, and stepped out of a white Audi to a thunderous applause, and the stadium literally shook. Messi was flanked by longtime Barcelona teammate Luis Suarez and Argentina World Cup winner Rodrigo De Paul.

Then it all began to unravel. Within minutes, Messi was surrounded by a bevy of politicians, police officers, VIPs and their aides, forming a human blockade that ensured the paying public saw everything except Messi.

Messi looked confused and bemused, gamely signing autographs for former players while attempting a slow circuit of the ground. The situation only worsened.

Promoter Satadru Dutta, his voice choking, repeatedly pleaded over the public address system: "Please leave him alone. Please vacate the ground."

The appeals fell on deaf ears as dignitaries continued to pile on, and Messi was virtually camouflaged amid a swarm of bodyguards and officials.

Ironically, the easiest way to locate him was by first spotting state sports minister Arup Biswas -- clad in a white kurta-pyjama

and Jawahar coat -- whose attire made him visible from afar.

As word spread that the 'Prince of Kolkata' Sourav Ganguly has arrived, tensions escalated further.

Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan, waiting outside near the Vivekananda statue, eventually abandoned his plans altogether.

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee who had already started from her residence for the venue had to make a U-turn and change her plans.

Messi was finally escorted out well before his scheduled one-hour stay, leaving the stadium after spending just 22 minutes, and all hell broke loose thereafter.

Angry fans stared with hurling bottles -- banned items in an otherwise sporting venue. It was baffling how they were allowed to enter with these objects, which also included food packets. Chairs were then ripped out and thrown.

Fibreglass seats lay smashed across the pitch and the synthetic track.

Two canopies erected for Messi and the chief minister's enclosure were torn apart, with attempts even made to set parts of them on fire before police intervened.

Gates were battered, the play-

ers' tunnel roof was hammered, and posters torn down.

Some spectators fled clutching broken chairs as trophies of disorder, resembling the political scenes of Bangladesh some months back.

The mayhem continued for nearly 90 minutes.

To their credit, the police showed remarkable restraint, repeatedly pleading with the crowd and resorting only to mild charges in what could easily have spiralled into a stampede.

"This is a complete failure," said Ajay Saha, who came with his 12-year-old son.

"Cold drinks cost Rs 150-200, water was Rs 200, and we didn't even see Messi. We spent a month's salary to watch football, not politicians taking selfies."

The scenes inevitably evoked Kolkata's darker sporting memories -- the 1996 cricket World Cup semifinal at Eden Gardens, abandoned amid fires and flying bottles, and the 1980 Kolkata Derby stampede, which claimed 16 lives.

Messi came and left. The GOAT's visit was meant to inspire. Instead, it served as a mirror reflecting a game, and an administration, in profound disarray. (PTI)

Salah Back in Liverpool After Talks with Slot



Agencies

LIVERPOOL: Mohamed Salah returned to Liverpool's squad for the Premier League match against Brighton on Saturday after holding talks with manager Arne Slot.

Salah was named as a substitute for the game at Anfield.

The Egypt forward's future was thrown into doubt last weekend when, in an explosive outburst to reporters, he said his relationship with Slot had

broken down after being dropped for three straight games and that he felt like "someone doesn't want me in the club."

Salah was then left at home when Liverpool traveled to Inter Milan for a Champions League match on Tuesday, with Slot saying he did not know if Salah would play again for the club.

Salah was an unused substitute for the 3-3 draw with Leeds last Saturday, after which he opened up

on his frustrations. Before that, he'd been an unused sub in a win at West Ham and came on at halftime of a home draw against Sunderland.

Salah is Liverpool's biggest star and also the club's record scorer in the Premier League. He has four league goals in 13 appearances this season.

He is due to head off to the Africa Cup of Nations next week and said last week he did not know what would happen while he was away. (AP)

National Cycle Polo Championships 2025-26 J&K Cycle Polo Association To Hold Trials

Observer New Service

SRINAGAR: The J&K Cycle Polo Association is set to organise selection trials for the 44th Junior Boys, 46th Senior Men, 28th Junior Girls and 26th Senior Women National Cycle Polo Championships 2025-26. The championships will be held in Ara, Bihar (boys), from 26th to 29th

December 2025 and Kaddapa, Andhra Pradesh, from 10th to 13th January 2026, respectively.

The selection trials will take place at Botvi Chavni Play Field, Srinagar, on 18 December 2025 at 10:30 AM. Players from all affiliated district units, as well as interested individuals, are invited to participate.

"Each player must bring the following documents for eligibility verification: two passport-size photographs, a photocopy of their Aadhaar card (age proof), and a physical fitness certificate," the association said in a press release.

For more information, please contact 7006095464.

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