

'I Want To Be Ready': Kashmiris Face Retirement Reality

Over eight lakh pensioners in J&K are prompting people like Bashir Bhat to rethink retirement with savings and careful planning.

Irshad Mushtaq

Srinagar: Bashir Bhat wakes before dawn in Srinagar, weaving his delivery bike through narrow lanes and crowded markets.

At 42, he thinks about the future more than he used to.

Every month, he watches older men and women collect their pensions of about one thousand



five hundred rupees and wonders how he will manage when he can no longer work.

"I see people struggling to buy medicine or food," he says. "They get money every month, but it is not enough. I do not want to end up like that when I grow old."

Bashir's concern reflects a wider reality in Jammu and Kashmir today.

Over eight lakh people in the Union Territory receive monthly pensions through the government's social schemes.

About four and a half lakh live in Kashmir Division, and three and a half lakh in Jammu Division.

The government recently raised payments for those aged 60 to 79 to one thousand five hundred rupees | [More on P6](#)

Sub-Zero Temps Return To Kashmir

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Cold conditions returned to Kashmir after a brief respite as minimum temperatures across the valley dropped sharply below the freezing point due to clear night skies, officials said on Thursday.

The improvement in night temperatures witnessed earlier this week, following snowfall and rainfall accompanied by overcast skies, came to an end on Wednesday night. Weather stations across Kashmir reported sub-zero minimums as skies cleared.

The summer capital Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 2.2 degrees Celsius, nearly five degrees lower than Tuesday night when the mercury had settled at 3 degrees Celsius.

Central Kashmir's tourist resort Sonamarg was the coldest place in Jammu and Kashmir, recording a low | [More on P6](#)

India On Historic Economic Growth Path: LG

'Strong & Decisive Government Driving Aatmanirbhar Bharat'

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Highlighting India's rise as one of the world's fastest-growing economies, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday said the country is on a historic path of economic growth under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing a commemorative programme at Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya Inter College in Ghazipur, Sinha said the dreams of Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee were now being translated into reality. "India's emergence as the world's fastest-growing economy is a testament to this transformation," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor said that for the first time, the country was witnessing strong and decisive governance focused on self-reliance. He added that the revival of ancient culture, upliftment of the poorest sections of society and transformation of villages into centres of economic activity were bringing the ideals of these leaders to life.

Paying rich tributes to Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Atal Bihari Vajpayee on their birth anniversaries, Sinha said their ideals and vision for a developed



India, along with their message of social harmony, equality and justice, would continue to inspire generations. He described them as visionary architects of modern India.

This year marks the 164th birth anniversary of Madan Mohan Malaviya and the 101st birth anniversary of Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Highlighting Malaviya's contribution, Sinha said Mahamana played an unparalleled role in India's educational, cultural and industrial advancement and transformed modern education into a powerful driver of development. He recalled that Banaras Hindu University was established through public mobilisation and donations.

Drawing a parallel with present-day initiatives, the Lieutenant Governor said similar ideals were being followed through the use of Corporate Social | [More on P6](#)

BJP Proud Of Decision To Abrogate Art 370: PM Modi

» Says Move Fulfilled Long-standing Ideological Commitment » 'India Cannot Function With Two Flags and Two Constitutions'

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said the Bharatiya Janata Party was proud that its government got the opportunity to abrogate Article 370, describing the move as a decisive step in the party's governance legacy.

Modi made the remarks after inaugurating the Rashtra Prerna Sthal in Lucknow on the 101st birth anniversary of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

"The BJP is proud that our government had the opportunity to tear down the wall of Article 370," he said.

Termining the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019



as a matter of pride for the Bharatiya Janata Party and the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said the decision strengthened national unity and fulfilled a long-pending ideological commitment.

Modi said the BJP was proud that its government had the

opportunity to remove what he described as the "wall" of Article 370. "The country could not function with two flags and two constitutions," Modi said, adding that India was now firmly bound by a single constitutional framework and a shared sense of unity.

The prime minister said the ideological foundation for the move had been laid decades ago by Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mukherjee and carried forward by leaders such as Vajpayee and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya. He said preserving their ideas and legacy was essential to guide India's future development. Modi | [More on P6](#)

Decision Ended System Of Separate Laws & Symbols: Rajnath



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said the abrogation of Article 370 completed an unfinished task of national integration and fulfilled a long-cherished vision of Bharatiya Jana Sangh ideologue Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya. Addressing a gathering after the | [More on P6](#)

Kashmir Records 44% Rainfall Deficit

Seasonal precipitation in Jammu and Kashmir from October 1 to December 25 has remained markedly below normal in the Kashmir division, while Jammu division recorded near-normal rainfall, according to data released by the India Meteorological Department. As per IMD data, Kashmir valley recorded an average seasonal rainfall of 57.9 mm during the period, which is 43.9 per cent below the normal of 103.2 mm. | [More on P6](#)

End Reservation or Face Agitation, Ruhullah Tells Omar Seeks Govt Clarity for Students

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Estranged National Conference Lok Sabha MP Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi on Thursday warned of a protest if the government failed to inform students about the steps taken to address their concerns over the reservation policy. In a post on X, | [More on P6](#)

Fake Jobs, Land Allotment Scam

EOW Chargesheets DC Office Employee

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Economic Offences Wing of Crime Branch Kashmir has filed a chargesheet in a major fake jobs and land allotment scam, exposing a fraud that targeted unemployed youth and economically weaker residents in Srinagar.

Officials said the chargesheet in FIR No. 54/2023 has been submitted before the court of the 4th Additional Munsiff Judge, Srinagar, against Fouzia Afzal, daughter of Mohd Afzal Magray, a resident of Rehmatullah Colony, Sector-B, Fruit Mandi, Parimpora. The accused was working as a Class-IV employee in the office of the Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar.

According to investigators, the accused indulged in | [More on P6](#)

Churches In Kashmir Mark Christmas With Special Prayers

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Churches across Kashmir were adorned with lights and decorations as the Christian community in the valley celebrated Christmas on Thursday with religious fervour, offering special prayers for peace, prosperity and harmony among people.

The largest congregation was seen at the Holy Family Catholic Church, where devotees gathered in large numbers to mark the birth of Jesus Christ and participate in special prayer services.

The priest of the church, Father John Paul, said the



faithful prayed for peace and calm in Kashmir as well as across the country. He said special prayers were also offered for mutual support among people and for the creation of employment | [More on P6](#)

How A Kashmir Courtroom Argument Became A Police Matter

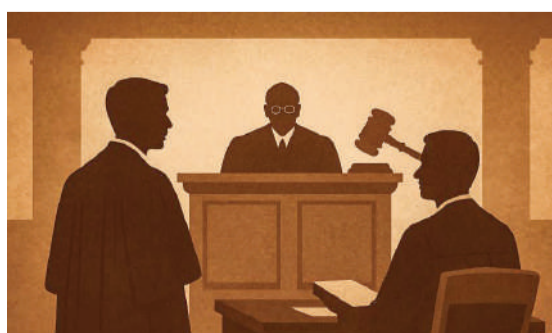
Advocate Arshid Bashir defended a fellow lawyer in a strange dispute that landed in the police station, prompting the High Court to step in.

Hamid Rather

Srinagar: Arshid Bashir leaned back in his office chair, staring at the file in front of him: FIR No. 164/2025.

His client, Parvaiz Ahmad Rather, was facing criminal charges.

Bashir has handled some of the biggest and strangest cases of his career in the High Court and Supreme Court. He has fought complex corporate disputes, high-profile matters, and cases that



made headlines. But this was different. It all began with a routine courtroom session in

Beerwah, Budgam. Rather, a lawyer himself, was cross-examining a prosecution witness.

During the questioning, he raised objections. The presiding judge overruled them. That should have ended the matter.

It did not. The Additional Public Prosecutor, irked by the objections being overruled, filed a complaint with the police.

A normal courtroom disagreement became FIR No. 164/2025 under sections 132 and 351 of the BNS.

Bashir, a lawyer from Sultanpora, Kandi, Baramulla, | [More on P6](#)



Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin): VB G RAM G (विकसित भारत-जी राम जी) Act, 2025

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AIIMS Rules Out COVID Vaccine Link to Sudden Deaths Among Youth

Press Trust Of India

A comprehensive, one-year autopsy-based observational study conducted at AIIMS-Delhi has found no evidence linking COVID-19 vaccination with sudden deaths among young adults, reaffirming the safety of Covid vaccines.

Sudden death in young adults is a significant concern requiring targeted public health strategies, the study said, underlying coronary artery disease remains the leading cause and that respiratory and unexplained deaths warrant further investigation.

The study, titled "Burden of Sudden Death in Young Adults: A One-Year Observational Study at a Tertiary Care Centre in India", has been published in the Indian Journal of Medical Research (IJMR), the flagship journal of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). The research involved a detailed evaluation of sudden death cases through verbal autopsy, post-mortem imaging, conventional autopsy, and histopathological examination, carried out by a multidisciplinary team of experts.

The study examined sudden deaths among adults aged 18-45 over a one-year period. No statistically significant association was found between COVID-19 vaccination status and sudden deaths in the young population, the study said.

Cardiovascular system-related causes constituted the most common cause of death in young, followed by respiratory-related causes and other non-cardiac conditions, the study said.

The COVID-19 illness history and vaccination status were found to be compa-



table between younger and older groups, with no causal link identified. The findings are consistent with global scientific evidence affirming the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines.

Dr Sudheer Arava, Professor at AIIMS, New Delhi, asserted that the publication of this study assumes particular significance in light of misleading claims and unverified reports suggesting a connection between COVID-19 vaccination and sudden deaths.

He highlighted that the findings do not support such claims and emphasised that scientific, evidence-based research must guide public understanding and discourse.

Health experts reiterated that sudden deaths in young individuals, while tragic, are often related to underlying, sometimes undiagnosed medical conditions, especially cardiovascular diseases, and require focused public health interventions such as early screening, lifestyle modification, and timely medical care.

Dr Arava added, "Citizens are advised to rely on credible scientific sources

and avoid misinformation that may undermine public confidence in proven public health interventions."

The cross-sectional study was conducted at the departments of Pathology and Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, AIIMS, Delhi, from May 2023 to April 2024, and cases meeting the definition of sudden death were included, excluding trauma, suicide, homicide, and drug abuse.

Verbal autopsy, which involved interaction with the close relatives and friends of the deceased regarding the circumstances of the death, previous medical history, including COVID-19 disease and vaccination, drug abuse, smoking and alcohol habits were noted in a standard proforma with proper informed consent. All the autopsies were conducted within 48 hours of death. Each case underwent whole-body imaging, autopsy, and histopathological examination. A multidisciplinary team comprising forensic experts, pathologists, radiologists, and clinicians determined the cause of death.

Comparative analysis was performed between sudden death in young adults

(18-45) and older adults (46-65). A total of 2,214 cases were received at the forensic mortuary during the study period, in which cases meeting the criteria of sudden death were 180. Among the total sudden deaths, sudden death in young (18-45) accounted for 57.2 per cent (103) and sudden death in old (46-65) accounted for 42.8 per cent (77).

The incidence of sudden death in young people among the total autopsied cases (2,214) accounted for 4.7 per cent.

The study cohort included 94 cases of sudden deaths in young and 68 cases of sudden deaths in old; the rest (18) were excluded due to extensive autolytic changes. The mean age of young cases was 33.6 years with a male-to-female ratio of 4.5:1, the study stated.

The study pointed out that the higher incidence of young coronary artery disease (CAD)-related deaths observed in the present study is particularly concerning and remains under-documented in the Indian context.

A study from Kerala also reported a substantial burden of CAD-related mortality in the younger population, which may be attributed to changes in work-life, stress, and dietary habits.

In older individuals, CAD is still the single most common cause of sudden death all over the world. Pneumonia and disseminated tuberculosis were the leading respiratory-related causes. "Despite numerous advancements in diagnostics and therapeutics of tuberculosis, it still remains the common cause of mortality in developing countries, emphasising the persistent gap between disease control efforts and ground-level outcomes," the study highlighted.

Study Reveals Brain Process That Measures Distance Travelled, Helps Navigate

Press Trust Of India

A study in mice has revealed how cells in the brain's hippocampus, important for both memory and navigation, help one track how far they have travelled -- the findings may help in understanding of the initial stages of Alzheimer's disease, where patients have trouble tracking distance and time.

Researchers from the US' Max Planck Florida Institute for Neuroscience trained mice to run a specific distance in a gray virtual reality environment with no visual landmarks in exchange for a reward. Since the environment lacked external cues, monitoring own movements was the only way the mice could judge how far they had travelled.

The team observed the electrical activity of neurons in the hippocampus as the mice performed the task.

"In this study, we removed as many sensory cues as possible to mimic situations such as moving in the dark. In these simplified conditions, we found that only a small number of hippocampal cells signalled a specific place or a specific time," Yingxue Wang, research group leader and senior author of the study published in the journal Nature Communications, said.

The observation made the team think what the rest of the neurons were doing, Wang said. Most neurons in the hippocampus were seen to follow one of two opposing patterns of activity -- in one group, activity sharply increased as soon the animal started moving, seemingly triggering the "distance-counting" process, while in another, activity decreased when a mouse started moving, and steadily increased as the mouse travelled further.

The two phases of distinct activity act as a neural code for distance, the researchers said. Both short and long distances could

be tracked in the brain by using neurons with different ramping speeds, they added.

"We have discovered that the brain encodes the elapsed distance or time needed to solve this task using neurons that show ramping activity patterns," lead researcher Raphael Heldman, a PhD student, said.

"This is the first time distance has been shown to be encoded in a way that differs from the well-known place-based coding in the hippocampus. These findings expand our understanding that the hippo-



campus is using multiple strategies -- ramping patterns in addition to the place-based coding -- to encode elapsed time and distance," Heldman said.

Disrupting the brain's working by manipulating the circuits involved in measuring distance resulted in the mice facing difficulty performing the task accurately, often searching for the reward in a wrong location, the researchers found. "These findings reveal parallel hippocampal circuits that initiate and maintain time or distance encoding," the authors wrote.

The results "provide insights into the neural computations supporting goal-directed navigation," they said.

Wang said, "Understanding how time and distance are encoded in the brain during path integration is especially important because this ability is one of the earliest to degrade in Alzheimer's disease. Patients report early symptoms of getting spatially disoriented in familiar surroundings or not knowing how they got to a particular place."

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 Mohammad Murtaza Bin Hamid (DOB: 15-10-2014) fko
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Water Leakage Triggers Road Safety Crisis in City Locality

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Inhabitants of Teli Mohalla in Awantabhan area of Srinagar have accused the Public Health Engineering Department of negligence over a long pending water pipeline leakage that has severely affected daily life during the ongoing harsh winter.

The inhabitants said continuous leakage from the pipeline has resulted in persistent water accumulation on the road, which freezes amid sub-zero temperatures, turning the stretch into a serious accident-prone zone. They alleged that despite repeated complaints over several weeks, the department failed to take effective measures to permanently stop the leakage.

According to KNT, officials

of the PHE Department dug up the road to trace the source of the leakage but could not locate it and left the road in a damaged condition. The broken surface has further worsened the situation, allowing water to collect and freeze repeatedly. "We repeatedly requested the concerned officials to repair the leakage and restore the road, but our pleas were ignored," the inhabitants said.

The affected road serves as a crucial link connecting the Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences and the Kashmir University, making the problem more serious.

The inhabitants have urged the concerned authorities to immediately plug the leakage, repair the damaged road, and ensure safety measures before any major accident occurs.

Court Orders Action on Blocked Access Road in Soura

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A local court has directed the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) and the Police to ensure compliance of an earlier court order restraining authorities from obstructing the access road leading to the residence of a Soura resident.

The order in possession of KNO was passed by the Court of Ist Civil Subordinate Judge/ Municipal Magistrate Srinagar while hearing an application filed by Farooq Ahmad Lone, of Soura, seeking implementation of an order dated June 9, 2023.

The applicant had approached the court, alleging that despite clear judicial directions, officials of SKIMS and other concerned authorities had wilfully violated the restraint order by

dumping construction material and blocking the gate and approach road leading to his house.

According to the plaintiff, the court had earlier restrained the concerned SKIMS authorities from closing the gate leading to the applicant's house except by adopting due process of law. However, it was alleged that despite having full knowledge of the order, the non-applicants blocked the access road on multiple occasions in November and December 2025, causing serious hardship and affecting the applicant's right of ingress and egress.

After hearing the counsel for the applicant and perusing the record, the court observed that preservation of the suit property was necessary, failing which the applicant's suit would become infructuous.

Man Found Dead in Houseboat

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A man from Pulwama district was found dead inside a houseboat in the Amira Kadal area of Srinagar on Thursday morning, officials said.

An official said that the body of the man was found inside a houseboat moored along the Jhelum River at Amira Kadal under mysterious circumstances.

He said police were informed immediately after the discovery, following which a team reached

the spot and took cognizance of the matter.

"The body has been taken for medico-legal formalities to ascertain the cause of death," the official said, identifying the deceased as Younis Nisar, a resident of Pulwama.

Meanwhile, officials said this was the second such incident reported in Srinagar within a few hours, as an unidentified man was found dead near LD Hospital earlier in the day. Investigations have been taken up—(KNO)



Christmas brings communities together at Holy Family Catholic Church. KO Photo Abid Bhat

Unvaccinated Pet Cats Fuel Rising Rabies Risk in Kashmir

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Kashmir is witnessing an alarming rise in cat bite cases, prompting health officials to call for a dedicated "cat census" and stricter enforcement of pet vaccination norms.

An official said that a significant share of anti-rabies resources is now being consumed by cat-related exposures.

A senior official at the Anti Rabies Clinic (ARC), SMHS Hospital, Srinagar, informed KNO that nearly 12,000 dog and cat bite cases have been reported at the clinic so far this year. Of these, over 6,500—more than half—are cat bite cases, surpassing dog bite incidents for the first time in recent years.

He revealed that the ARC spends around 40 lakh annually on anti-rabies treatment, and nearly 60 percent of this expenditure is now being used for managing cat bite cases alone, putting added pressure on an already stretched public health system.

"This trend is deeply concerning. Cat bite cases are consuming a considerable portion of our resources. It is time we think seriously about a cat census, just as we do for dogs," the official said.

Health experts attribute the surge largely to the increasing trend of keeping cats as pets after the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with widespread lack of awareness about vaccination and responsible pet care.

"Many people believe cats are harmless and cannot transmit ra-

bies, which is completely wrong. Cats can transmit rabies just like dogs if they are not vaccinated," another official said, adding that more than 50 per cent of animal bite patients visiting ARC now report cat exposure.

Veterinarians and doctors said that while pet ownership has grown steadily in Kashmir, basic animal healthcare norms—such as vaccination, deworming, and regular check-ups—are often ignored.

They said keeping a pet is not just about companionship, but one must be mentally and financially prepared to ensure proper feeding, shelter, hygiene, vaccination, and medical care. Unfortunately, many people adopt cats without understanding this responsibility, they said.

The doctors highlighted a critical gap in current practices: while cats should be vaccinated, cat owners and family members—especially in households where cats roam freely—often remain unvaccinated, increasing the risk of exposure.

"In Kashmir, we see that even when cats are vaccinated occasionally, the people handling them are not. Ideally, if a family keeps cats, especially multiple ones, preventive vaccination of frequent handlers should also be considered. That is rarely happening," an official said.

They stressed that unvaccinated pets, poor hygiene, irregular grooming, and neglect of dental care increase the risk of zoonotic diseases—those

that can spread from animals to humans

Experts recommended essential guidelines for safe and responsible cat care, including mandatory rabies vaccination, routine deworming, maintaining hygiene, regular grooming, avoiding provoking cats, and seeking immediate medical attention after bites or scratches. They also warned that cat scratches can transmit toxoplasmosis, particularly dangerous during pregnancy.

"While such cases are rare, awareness and cleanliness are crucial, especially for pregnant women," medical professionals said.

Health authorities reiterated that rabies is 100 percent fatal once symptoms appear, claiming around 59,000 lives globally each year—mostly in Africa and Asia. "Neglecting pet vaccination can have deadly consequences. Prevention is far cheaper and safer than post-exposure treatment," officials warned.

They urged the government to implement policy measures such as pet registration, vaccination drives, public awareness campaigns, and a comprehensive cat census to assess the population and allocate resources effectively.

"Responsible pet ownership is not just about animal welfare; it's a public health issue. Preventive care protects animals, saves public money, and most importantly, saves human lives," the officials said.

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- Sgr-Jammu highway - (Open)
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 HIJRI CALENDAR 05 Rajab 1447	PRAYERS		
	FAJR	6: 06	ZUHR
ASR	3: 50	Magrib	5:32
		ISHA	6: 57


This Day In History

- 268 - Saint Dionysius, Roman Pope (259-260), dies
- 795 - Leo III is elected to serve as Pope on the day his predecessor was buried and is consecrated the following day
- 1198 - French bishop Odo van Sully condemns Zottenfeest
- 1261 - John IV Lascaris of the restored Eastern Roman Empire is deposed and blinded by orders of his co-ruler Michael VIII Palaeologus.
- 1492 - Christopher Columbus' flagship the Santa Maria runs aground and sinks on the north coast of Hispaniola. The crew are left to found a colony as Columbus returns to Spain
- 1553 - Battle of Tucapel: Mapuche rebels under Lautaro defeats the Spanish conquistadors and exetutes the governor of Chile Pedro de Valdivia.
- 1741 - Astronomer Anders Celsius introduces Centigrade temperature scale
- 1745 - Prussia and Austria sign Treaty of Dresden giving much of Silesia to the Prussians
- 1758 - Return of Halley's comet 1st sighted by Johann Georg Palitzsch
- 1914- US Government protests British interference with American merchant ships at sea, on the same day Germans announce they will treat food as contraband, subject to seizure; weakens America's protest
- 1916- Joseph Joffre becomes marshal of France
- 1925 - The Communist Party of India is founded
- 1928 - World record 10th wicket stand 307 (Kippax / Hooker) NSW v Vic
- 1941 - Winston Churchill becomes first British Prime Minister to address a joint meeting of the US Congress, warning that Axis would "stop at nothing"
- 1943 - Earl Claus von Stauffenberg vain with bomb to Hitlers headquarter
- 1944 - Battle of Bastogne: US General Patton's 3rd Army repulses Germans
- 1966 - Maulana Karenga establishes Kwanzaa (1st fruits of harvest) holiday
- 1973 - 2 Skylab 3 astronauts walk in space for a record 7 hours
- 1973 - Soyuz 13 returns to Earth

Remembering

Prof Hamidi Kashmiri


on His Death Anniversary



1932-2018

Eminent Urdu and Kashmiri Poet, Critic and Educationist
&
Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Kashmir

Family and Friends



SAD DEMISE

With profound grief and sorrow we inform the sad demise of **Abdul Majeed Sheikh S/O Late Ghulam Mohi ud din Sheikh R/O HassanAbad Rainawari on 23 -12-25.**

May Allah grant him jannatul firdous.The congregational Fateh khani will be held on (Friday) 26-12-2025 at 8:00 AM at their ancestral graveyard HassanAbad near Imam Barah, followed by Fateh Khawani (Majlis) at Imam Bargah HassanAbad.

Note: Ladies are requested not to bring any kind of eatables.

BEREAVED
Zawar Mohammad Amin Sheikh (Brother)
Mohammad Yousuf Sheikh (Brother)
Abid Raza sheikh (Son)
Mohammad Shafi Ashraf (9541728229)

**OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE
1ST CLASS ZAINGEER BOMAI**

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

This office has received a written application from Farooq Ahmad Bhat S/o Abdul Khaliq Bhat R/O Wadoora , Tehsil Zaingeer for issuance of Birth & Death certificate in favour of Gousia Farooq who was Born on 25-08-2009 and as per document evidence produced by the applicant. In this regard, if anyone has any objection, he/she may file the same before the undersigned within 07 days. After that, no objection whatsoever will be entertained by this office.

Naib Tehsildar
Executive Magistrate
Bomai

fko

**OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE
1ST CLASS ZAINGEER BOMAI**

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

This office has received a written application from Zahida Begum W/o Fayaz Ahmad Bhat R/O Wadoora , Tehsil Zaingeer for issuance of Birth & Death certificate in favour of Humeesa Fayaz who was Born on 07-08-2009 and as per document evidence produced by the applicant. In this regard, if anyone has any objection, he/she may file the same before the undersigned within 07 days. After that, no objection whatsoever will be entertained by this office.

Naib Tehsildar
Executive Magistrate
Bomai

fko

KASHMIR OBSERVER™

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KO VIEW

Kashmir's Leather Opportunity

Kashmir sits on an economic resource that few people talk about enough.

Every year, the valley produces a large number of animal hides and skins because of its high meat consumption.

Around 3.5 million sheep and goat skins and over a million cattle hides enter the local market annually. These are high-quality materials prized for making trendy leather products.

But most of this raw material leaves Kashmir unprocessed. Local tanneries are few and small, so raw hides are often sold cheaply to other states. A single hide may sell for as little as 175 rupees, only to return months later as finished leather goods worth four times as much.

This means Kashmir is losing the value it could add by processing its own material.

Historically, Srinagar had thriving tanneries, especially in downtown areas. Over the years, these businesses have shrunk due to limited infrastructure, changing regulations, and a lack of coordinated support.

Today only a handful of small units remain, leaving the majority of the hides to be exported elsewhere.

The potential for growth is clear. Studies estimate that the leather sector in Kashmir could generate hundreds of crores in revenue if processing and manufacturing develop locally.

More importantly, it could create thousands of jobs for artisans and youth.

By keeping the value chain within the valley, Kashmir can turn raw hides into finished products, from jackets and bags to shoes, and sell them nationally and internationally.

Government programs are already promoting training in leather design and production. Women and young people are learning skills to make leather goods and run small businesses. If supported with better infrastructure, credit, and access to markets, these efforts could expand the industry significantly.

Environmental planning will be essential. Tanneries need to operate without harming water or air quality.

With the right support, Kashmir can turn hides into jobs and value. The materials, skills, and demand are already here. It is time to keep that value here.

CASH COURSE

Read This Before You Buy Anything

Confidence Builds Strength

Facing life's challenges means trusting yourself, staying informed, and making smart choices for a safer future.

Irshad Mushtaq

Life in Kashmir is full of beauty, but it can also be difficult. Stress, uncertainty, and financial pressures make it easy for people to be taken advantage of. When confidence is low, it is easier to fall into traps, whether financial or personal.

Many people know the feeling of being misled. Someone who offers sympathy can end up costing you money or time. Promises of financial help or easy job opportunities are often too good to be true.

The first step to avoiding these traps is building confidence in yourself. Knowing your own situation and trusting your judgment helps you stay safe.

Learning is a powerful tool. Understanding money matters, the law, or emotional health gives you strength. When you are confident, you can make decisions without being swayed by others.

Young people in Kashmir are the future, and learning these skills will help them and their communities.

Getting advice is important, but it must come from the right sources. Elders, professionals, and people who do not have a personal stake can guide you best. Thoughtful decisions protect you from unnecessary burdens and help you stay true to your values.

Trust may be shaky here, but it can grow. By learning, supporting each other, and taking careful steps, we can create a community that values understanding and honesty.

Life will not always be easy, but informed choices and steady effort can help protect both personal and community well-being.

The key is simple: trust yourself, keep learning, and make decisions wisely.

By doing this, Kashmiris can face challenges with confidence, build stronger bonds, and shape a safer, brighter future together.

The author is a Srinagar-based reputed financial advisor.

Political Recap 2025

The first full year after the landmark election reveals how old habits, unmet pledges, and public memory are shaping Kashmir's political future.

Raqif Makhdoomi

Jammu and Kashmir has seen many elections, but the one held in 2024 stood apart from all others.

That contest went beyond roads, power lines, or other public works. It carried the weight of memory, loss, and unfulfilled demands.

Every major party spoke in one voice on core political questions. They promised the return of Article 370, restoration of statehood, release of political detainees, and an end to the termination of employees.

For voters, this election was about regaining their voice, far beyond ordinary campaign talk.

People responded in large numbers. Many who had never stood in a polling line before came out to vote. The turnout turned the election into a national moment.

As the first election held after Jammu and Kashmir became a Union Territory, it carved a permanent place in the political record of India. When future generations speak of defining elections, 2024 in Jammu and Kashmir will stand among them.

The energy on the ground was unmistakable. Rallies drew crowds that had stayed away from politics for years. What surprised many observers was the choice voters made.

A large section backed the National Conference, a party that once symbolized public fatigue with elections.

This support majorly came from calculation, rather than from affection or nostalgia. Voters believed the party's manifesto and its sharp political message.

The National Conference framed the election as a verdict on August 5, 2019. It linked rival parties to the Bharatiya Janata Party and placed full responsibility for the abrogation of Article 370 on the BJP.

On the surface, the argument held ground. The decision was taken under a BJP-led government. But history rarely fits into neat boxes.

The events of 2019 had roots in earlier decades.

The Sheikh-Indira Accord of 1975 marked the start of a slow erosion of autonomy. That agreement, also known as the Kashmir Accord, tied regional leadership to New Delhi in ways that weakened constitutional safeguards over time.

Congress governments at the Centre and National Conference governments in the state carried out changes through amendments and executive decisions. The difference lay in method than intent.

Earlier governments softened their actions with careful language. The BJP acted in full public view. As the saying goes, the axe forgets, but the tree remembers.



“As the new year nears, the political future of Jammu and Kashmir remains unsettled. Public discontent might soften, or it might turn into steady determination. Should the patterns of 2025 continue, the National Conference risks facing tangible consequences at the ballot. The past teaches that the shape of coming events often emerges in advance, and in Kashmir, that outline is beginning to show.”

Farooq Abdullah once remarked that the Centre should have taken his party into confidence, suggesting cooperation was possible. History supports that view.

Sheikh Abdullah accepted similar compromises to regain power, and Farooq Abdullah himself signed the Rajiv-Farooq Accord to return as chief minister.

Power has often outweighed principle in Kashmir politics. While history shaped the backdrop, the central issue of the 2024 election was reservation policy.

Students and job seekers followed every promise closely. After the new government took office, expectations rose. A subcommittee was announced, but progress stalled. The matter lost importance after a protest led by Aga Ruhullah Mehdi outside the chief minister's residence.

That protest marked the beginning of a visible rift between Ruhullah and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

The divide soon became public. Ruhullah, a member of the party's working committee, was excluded from key meetings. Reports of a move to expel him surfaced before being blocked by internal opposition.

Then came the Budgam bypolls. The National Conference made repeated attempts to bring Ruhullah back to the campaign. He refused and remained in Germany. The absence cost the party dearly, leading to the loss of a traditional seat.

When Ruhullah returned, he addressed the public with force and clarity. He answered the charges against him and reminded party leaders how they once sought his support during campaigns. His words struck a chord with voters and unsettled the party leadership.

The speech made clear what many already believed. In several constituencies, people voted for the National Conference because they trusted Ruhullah's word beyond his party loyalty. He had assured voters their demands would be met, and that assurance brought mandate. For the National Conference-led government, 2025 became a year of self-inflicted wounds. Public faith weakened as promises stayed unfulfilled. Anger deepened when the government shifted its stand on smart meters. Omar Abdullah, once opposed to them, now backed their expansion. Many saw this reversal as a breach of trust. In politics, a spoken word carries weight, and broken words travel fast. At the same time, a change unfolded across Kashmir. People began to follow the Assembly closely. For years, legislative debates drew little, or no attention. In 2025, citizens tracked every session, question, and walkout. Disappointment sharpened scrutiny. When trust breaks, vigilance follows. As the new year nears, the political future of Jammu and Kashmir remains unsettled. Public discontent might soften, or it might turn into steady determination. Should the patterns of 2025 continue, the National Conference risks facing tangible consequences at the ballot. The past teaches that the shape of coming events often emerges in advance, and in Kashmir, that outline is beginning to show.

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When Will People Come Before Projects in Kashmir?

If you walk through Srinagar today, you'll notice what officials like to call signs of progress.

Buildings get fresh coats of paint. LED lights glow everywhere. Fountains, new crossings, and selfie-friendly spots pop up around the city.

They look nice in photos, but for many Kashmiris, they feel far removed from everyday life.

Kashmir still struggles with poverty, joblessness, weak healthcare, and poor infrastructure. In such a situation, development should begin with people and their basic needs.

Instead, large sums of public money continue to go into cosmetic beautification.

The renovated Lal Chowk Clock Tower stands as a symbol of this thinking. It carries history and meaning, but its shine does little for a family worrying about medical bills or a young graduate searching for work. Healthcare shows this gap most

clearly. District hospitals across the valley lack doctors, specialists, and essential equipment. Many cannot even run basic tests. When patients need advanced treatment, especially for cancer, they must travel to SKIMS, the only major cancer care centre for Kashmir and Ladakh.

For families from remote areas, the journey itself becomes a struggle. Travel costs, long stays, and emotional stress add to their suffering. Clean pavements and glowing lights cannot replace hospitals that actually work. The government has taken some positive steps. Roads have been widened, bridges built, hospitals refurbished, and Smart City projects launched. Drainage systems have improved in parts of Srinagar. Riverfronts and public spaces look better. Some remote areas now have electricity and internet access. These efforts matter and deserve acknowledgment. But they do not solve the deeper problems people face every day. Quality

healthcare, steady jobs, strong schools, and rural connectivity remain out of reach for many.

Unemployment makes this failure impossible to ignore. Thousands of educated young Kashmiris leave home each year for Gulf countries. They do not leave for adventure. They leave because they see no future here. Those who stay often take whatever work they can find.

Today, it is common to see highly educated people, even PhD holders, selling dry fruits or small goods on the roadside. When years of education end in survival work, something is deeply wrong with our development priorities.

Economic stress has also triggered a silent mental health crisis. Anxiety, depression, and emotional distress are rising, especially among young people. But mental health services remain limited and hard to access.

This pain does not appear in official reports or city designs, but it shapes daily life across the valley.

Rural Kashmir tells the same story. Many villages still depend on damaged roads that turn dangerous during winter. These roads decide whether someone reaches a hospital in time. Schools in many areas function without heating, laboratories, libraries, or modern learning tools. Children feel the impact early, long before they enter the job market.

Real development means hospitals that treat patients, schools that prepare children, roads that connect villages, and jobs that allow people to stay close to home.

Kashmir does not need more fountains, statues, or selfie points. It needs care, opportunity, and hope. Beautification can wait. People cannot.

Sincerely,

Suhail Gaznavi
suhailado13@gmail.com

When Debates About God Turn Competitive

Why televised arguments about faith often feed identity, ego, and adrenaline more than understanding.

Muntaha Amin

The debate between Javed Akhtar and Mufti Shamail is trending everywhere, sparking conversations across social media and living rooms alike. The buzz drew me in to watch the full discussion, titled Does God Exist?

As an observer, I wasn't just paying attention to the arguments. What struck me most was the way the exchange unfolded and the reactions it sparked.

What I want to reflect on is the nature of debates themselves, especially this style of presenting arguments and counter-arguments within a fixed time frame.

This way of sharing knowledge often feels self-defeating. It rarely seems like anyone truly gains anything meaningful from the exchange.

If you watch the audience closely, their cheering, laughter, smiles, and overall energy reveal a lot about how people react.

Every answer sparked an emotional response, whether applause or laughter. These reactions tapped into a deep sense of pride tied to identity, boosting the audience's ego no matter which side they supported.

It reminded me of the Zakir Naik debates that often aired on our television. Even through the screen, the energy of the auditorium was unmistakable.

The audience's reactions were intense, especially when Naik defended Islam or presented other



views as the opposing "other."

The pattern of emotion and excitement was clear. The debate felt more like a clash of identities and egos than a conversation aimed at personal growth, genuine understanding, or meaningful reflection.

It does not matter who won.

Knowledge should never be about victory. It grows slowly, like ideas that seep in over time and take root within us. True understanding is felt deeply, as something that touches every vein and bone.

Knowledge is not meant to be a spectacle of arguments, a show of intellectual power, or a way to boost the ego of any identity.

The debate about God, in many ways, felt like a classic sports match, like a cricket game between two rival teams. Each side carried its own identity and sense of pride.

When people watch a match, they already pick a side, whether a team, a nation, or an idea. Every ball, catch, or boundary sparks excitement, laughter, and adrenaline. Even small wins stir emotions, and just like in sports, both sides feel

the rush and passion.

Watching the talk show, especially the aftermath on social media, felt exactly like this.

Every answer from either side riled up the audience, tapping into their identities and beliefs.

Online, the debate quickly turned into a question of winning or losing rather than understanding or reflection.

The words used against Javed Akhtar, like "smashed," "cooked," "beaten," or "lost," were strikingly violent in meaning.

They showed that for many, this exchange of ideas was less about understanding and more about adrenaline, winning and losing, and making the other person feel small or defeated.

The irony is that this was sup-

posed to be a conversation about God. It should never have turned into a display of nationalistic, patriotic, or religio-cultural egos.

The discussion was about the ultimate reality of the universe, but it ended up feeling almost farcical.

Mufti Shamail's use of complicated academic language, without explaining it in simple, accessible terms, made it hard for the other side to engage.

It was as if God himself had been made inaccessible in the conversation, which only added to the irony.

It's also clear that this was a show on a YouTube channel, designed for maximum viewership.

Like sports matches, the audience's attention often depends on the emotional intensity and adrenaline of the content.



THE PROGRAM'S AIM WAS CLEARLY NOT TRUE KNOWLEDGE OR UNDERSTANDING.

Yet people watched and discussed it on social media as if the purpose was to understand God or convert someone's lifelong beliefs in a one-and-a-half-hour debate.

The program's aim was clearly not true knowledge or understanding. Yet people watched and discussed it on social media as if the purpose was to understand God or convert someone's lifelong beliefs in a one-and-a-half-hour debate.

That is a mistaken view of the show.

And it makes one wonder: when did God become something to defend with applause? When did belief turn into a scoreboard?

And most importantly, when did faith become about defeating, cooking, or smashing someone else?

— The author is a doctoral candidate at the Media Education Research Centre, University of Kashmir. She is also an independent filmmaker and a freelance media practitioner.



WHEN DID GOD BECOME SOMETHING TO DEFEND WITH APPLAUSE? When did belief turn into a scoreboard? And most importantly, when did faith become about defeating, cooking, or smashing someone else?

Our Schools Are Failing Students

I spent days speaking to students across schools. What I saw was a system that keeps moving children forward without teaching them the basics.

Mohammad Nadeem Parray

Over the past few days, I spent time with students from government and private schools. It began as a normal academic interaction. It soon turned into something deeply troubling.

Many students had only a surface idea of what they were supposed to be learning. Even more worrying, a large number did not understand basic concepts from earlier classes.

These are the building blocks of all learning. Without them, nothing else holds.

This problem was not limited to one school, one board, or one age group. I saw it everywhere.

When I asked simple questions, students hesitated, guessed, or stayed silent.

In maths and science, the gaps were clear. Basic calculations, simple formulas, and core ideas were missing. In many cases, they had never been understood at all.

Learning should build step by step. Each year depends on the last. What I saw instead was a system pushing students ahead without checking if the ground below was solid.

Children move from class to class without mastering the basics. Learning becomes about memorising answers to pass exams.

What disturbed me most was how normal this felt to many students.

Some said they study only before exams. Others depend on guidebooks or learn answers by heart. Many fear maths and science, simply because no one explained them properly. Curiosity has been replaced by fear and confusion.

Teaching methods play a big role



WE MUST FOCUS ON STRONG FOUNDATIONS, ESPECIALLY IN EARLY CLASSES. Teachers need support to teach for understanding. Assessments should find gaps. Parents must value learning over marks. Students must feel safe to ask questions.

here.

In many schools, teachers rush to finish the syllabus. There is little time to revise or clear doubts. Overcrowded classrooms make personal attention impossible. Weak students fall behind

silently, year after year.

Private schools are not free of blame. Good buildings and branding often hide weak learning. Parents are treated like customers. Marks matter more than knowledge.

This leads to shortcuts, rote learning, and heavy reliance on coaching centres.

Our exam-focused culture makes things worse. Students are trained to score. A memorised answer is praised

more than independent thinking. Questioning and curiosity are pushed aside.

Parents also struggle in the process and the overall projection of the learning. Some are too busy or unaware to track learning closely. Others focus only on marks.

When children fall behind, they are scolded instead of supported. This pushes them further away from learning.

The impact is serious, with far-reaching consequences.

Students carry these gaps into higher education and work. They struggle to think, solve problems, or reason clearly. Degrees lose meaning when understanding is missing.

As an educator, this is painful to see. Children are capable and curious by nature. When they fail to grasp basics, it is a failure of the system we all share responsibility for.

Change is still possible if we come out of the denial and face the reality.

We must focus on strong foundations, especially in early classes. Teachers need support to teach for understanding. Assessments should find gaps. Parents must value learning over marks. Students must feel safe to ask questions.

Education is about shaping thinking minds, rather than producing exam-passing machines.

What I saw should serve as a notice. If we do not fix the basics now, we risk raising a generation with certificates in hand and little understanding behind them.

Our future depends on what we choose to do next.

— The author is an educator and activist. He can be reached at meravisionmoomin@gmail.com.



EDUCATION IS ABOUT SHAPING THINKING MINDS, NOT EXAM-PASSING MACHINES. What I saw should serve as a warning. If we do not fix the basics now, we risk raising a generation with certificates in hand and little understanding behind them. Our future depends on what we choose to do next.

Surge in Fire Incidents

25 Blazes Reported Across Kashmir In 4 Days

Srinagar: As many as 25 fire incidents were reported across the Kashmir Valley over the last four days, from Sunday till Thursday morning, with firefighting teams successfully controlling all blazes and preventing loss of life, according to official data.

Officials said that at least 20 fire incidents were recorded across various districts of the Valley between Sunday and Wednesday, involving residential houses, cowsheds, temporary sheds and other structures. These incidents were reported from Srinagar, Sopore, Kupwara, Bandipora, Pulwama, Budgam, Kulgam and Ganderbal districts. Fire and Emergency Services teams responded promptly to all calls



and managed to contain the fires efficiently, limiting damage to property.

During the past 24 hours alone, five additional fire incidents were attended to by the Fire and Emergency Services across the Kashmir Division.

In Kalashpora area of Srinagar, a fire broke out in a

four storied commercial building, affecting a cable operating unit on the second floor and a wood carving unit on the third floor. Firefighters brought the blaze under control in time, preventing its spread to other floors and adjoining structures.

In Muqaam Shah Wali area of Drugmulla in Kupwara

district, one hamam room of a single storied residential house was damaged in a fire incident. Officials said swift action by fire personnel minimized losses.

Another incident was reported from Natipora area of Sangam in Anantnag district, where a single storied cowshed along with an attached store shed made of GCI sheets was affected by fire. The blaze was controlled before it could spread further.

In Dahama village of Vilgam area in Kupwara, a double storied room was involved in a fire incident. Firefighting teams successfully contained the fire, preventing extensive damage.

Shah To Inaugurate Anti-Terror Conference Today

Agencies

New Delhi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah will inaugurate 2-day 'Anti-Terror Conference' in New Delhi on Friday.

According to the details, the conference, shaped under PM Narendra Modi's vision of zero tolerance for terror, is being organized by the National Investigation Agency, Ministry of Home Affairs.

Notably, the annual conference has become a platform for brainstorming India's next-generation strategies to counter emerging threats. "The conference is a meeting point for operational forces; technical, legal, and forensic experts; and agencies engaged in counter terrorism for deliberations on issues impacting national security and threats emerging out of terrorism," said an official.

He said, "The key focus of the



conference is on developing synergies among various stakeholders by establishing formal and informal channels for coordinated action against the menace of terrorism in the spirit of 'Whole of the Government approach' and to present substantive inputs for future policy formulation."

"The deliberations and discussions in the two-day conference aim to share experiences and good practices across law enforcement agencies in addressing counter-terrorism (CT) issues and lessons from terror investigations," the official

said, adding, "The conference includes sessions on collecting evidence from foreign jurisdictions, digital forensics and data analysis in CT investigations, effective trial management, addressing radicalisation, espionage, and emerging hybrid threats to national security, among other topics related to terrorism."

Additionally, sessions on disrupting terror financing networks—tools, techniques, and case learnings—as well as creating future-ready CT strategies and building institutional capacities to address emerging national security issues have been incorporated."

The conference will be attended by senior police officers from States/UTs, officers from Central agencies/Departments dealing with issues related to Counter Terrorism and experts from related fields such as law, forensics, technology etc.(KNO)

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

'I Want To Be Ready

and for those above 80 to two thousand rupees per month. Pensions for people under 60 are one thousand two hundred fifty rupees.

These increases cover pensions for old age, widowhood, disability, and transgender beneficiaries.

But many pensioners still struggle to meet daily needs.

Haleema Zargar, 67, was at a stall in Bemina market buying apples. She said the monthly pension is not enough for basic expenses.

"I am grateful for the help," she said, "but the price of food and medicine has gone up so much. This money can only last a few days."

Government pensions once offered steady support for people who worked in public service.

A teacher, for example, might have retired with a monthly pension of fifty thousand rupees, enough for an annual income of six lakh rupees.

That allowed retirees to pay bills, cover medical expenses, and live comfortably.

But today, most workers outside government jobs must plan for themselves.

Financial experts stress the importance of starting early and saving consistently.

"Even small amounts can grow significantly over time," said Dr. Rafiq Shah, a Srinagar-based financial advisor. "The key is discipline, patience, and understanding compound interest."

To give an example, someone like the teacher mentioned above, who wants to receive 50,000 per month after retirement with a 10% return on investments, would need a total of about 60 lakh.

"Saving five hundred thirty rupees each month at a fifteen percent annual growth over thirty-five years could reach that goal," Dr. Shah said. "This shows how starting early and saving steadily can make a big difference in later life."

But many Kashmiri families still rely on informal savings or help from relatives. Many are not even aware of formal pension options.

"Structured schemes like the National Pension System (NPS) and Atal Pension Yojana (APY) are gaining attention," said Tabasum Qazi, a social welfare worker. "NPS allows individuals to invest regularly and withdraw in phases after retirement."

APY offers a guaranteed monthly pension of one thousand to five thousand rupees after age 60 depending on contributions during working years.

APY has millions of subscribers in India, while NPS manages over fourteen lakh crore rupees in investments, showing a growing interest in retirement planning.

Bashir has started setting aside small amounts every month. He also studies investment options like mutual funds and government-backed schemes.

"I want to make sure that when I stop working, I do not have to depend entirely on others," he said.

Many young Kashmiris are starting to take the same approach.

They understand that pensions help, but they may not be enough to live comfortably.

Experts recommend saving early, investing wisely, contributing regularly, and being patient. Bashir follows all four.

For him and many others, retirement planning is essential to build a secure financial future.

"I do not want to worry about life when I am too old to work," Bashir said. "I want to be ready."

Sub-Zero Temps

of minus 7.3 degrees Celsius. The area, along with other higher reaches, had received snowfall on Sunday and Monday.

North Kashmir's ski resort Gulmarg recorded a minimum of minus 5.4 degrees Celsius, followed by south Kashmir's Pahalgam at minus 4.4 degrees Celsius.

Qazigund recorded a low of minus 1.8 degrees Celsius, Kokernag minus 0.7 degrees Celsius and Kupwara minus 2 degrees Celsius, a drop of nearly four degrees compared to the previous night.

The Meteorological Department has forecast generally dry weather across Kashmir till December 28. Light snowfall at isolated higher reaches is likely on December 29, while there is a possibility of light rain in the plains and light snowfall in higher reaches between December 30 and January 1, particularly around New Year's Eve.

Kashmir Records

In contrast, Jammu division received 93.3 mm of rainfall, reflecting a deficit of 9.4 per cent against the normal 102.97 mm.

Weekly rainfall between December 19 and 25 showed sharp spatial variations across the Union Territory. In Kashmir, Bandipora recorded 47.7 mm of rainfall, which was 488 per cent above normal, while Kulgam and Shopian received comparatively lower rainfall of 7 mm and 5.3 mm respectively.

In Jammu division, Poonch witnessed heavy precipitation of 46 mm during the week, exceeding the normal 5.6 mm by 721 per cent. However, Kathua and Samba recorded no rainfall during the same period.

The department said most stations across Jammu division reported negative departures in weekly rainfall, ranging between 30 and 100 per cent. In Kashmir, departures varied significantly, from a marginal deficit of 1 per cent in Anantnag to surpluses of over 250 per cent in Kupwara.

Meanwhile, minimum temperatures across Jammu and Kashmir continued to remain below normal. In the Kashmir region, Sonamarg was the coldest at minus 7.3 degrees Celsius, followed by Gulmarg at minus 5.4 degrees Celsius and Pahalgam at minus 4.4 degrees Celsius. Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 2.2 degrees Celsius, while the Srinagar Airport dipped to minus 3.4 degrees Celsius.

Other areas in the valley, including Pulwama, Shopian, Kupwara, Anantnag and Baramulla, also recorded sub-zero minimum temperatures.

In Jammu region, Baderwah recorded the lowest minimum temperature at 0.3 degrees Celsius, while Rajouri registered 2.6 degrees Celsius and Samba 2.9 degrees Celsius. Jammu city recorded a minimum of 8.1 degrees Celsius, while Jammu Airport stood at 7.3 degrees Celsius.

In Ladakh, Leh recorded a minimum temperature of minus 10.2 degrees Celsius, Kargil minus 9.8 degrees Celsius and Nubra Valley minus 8.3 degrees Celsius, according to Kashmir Weather.

The Srinagar Meteorological office said no significant precipitation was reported in the past 24 hours and mainly dry weather is expected to prevail over the next 24 hours across Jammu and Kashmir.

"Isolated snowfall is forecast over higher reaches of Kashmir and scattered rain in some areas of the Jammu plains between December 31 and January 1, with improvement thereafter," the MeT office said.

The IMD advised residents and authorities, particularly in higher altitude regions, to remain vigilant as winter conditions persist, cautioning that temperatures in upper reaches are likely to fall further while plains may continue to remain largely dry with isolated instances of rain or fog affecting visibility.

BJP Proud Of

described the Rashtriya Prerna Sthal as a symbol of self-respect and service, dedicated to leaders whose thoughts shaped India's political and social journey. Referring to the towering statues at the complex, he said while the statues were tall, the inspiration they offered to the nation was even greater.

The prime minister noted that the land on which the memorial now stands had remained neglected for decades and was once a garbage dump. He congratulated those involved in transforming it into a national landmark, calling it a model for turning abandoned spaces into sites of collective inspiration.

Highlighting governance and welfare initiatives, Modi said the BJP-led NDA government had adopted Deendayal Upadhyaya's Antyodaya vision to ensure welfare benefits reached the poor without discrimination. He claimed the number of people covered under social security schemes had increased significantly since 2014.

He also spoke about development initiatives in Uttar Pradesh, saying the state's defence corridor would soon gain global recognition in defence manufacturing.

The Rashtriya Prerna Sthal, spread over about 65 acres and built at an estimated cost of around Rs 230 crore, features 65-foot-high bronze statues of Vajpayee, Syama Prasad Mukherjee and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya. It also houses a lotus-shaped, state-of-the-art museum showcasing their lives, ideas and contributions.

Modi was accompanied by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and other senior leaders. After the inauguration, the prime minister toured the museum and viewed exhibits highlighting key milestones in the lives of the leaders commemorated at the site.

Decision Ended System

inauguration of the Rashtriya Prerna Sthal by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Lucknow, Singh said the decision to remove the special constitutional provisions for Jammu and Kashmir was rooted in ideological foundations laid decades ago.

Singh said Upadhyaya had envisioned complete constitutional integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of the country and had made sacrifices for that cause. He said the abrogation of Article 370 marked a decisive step towards ensuring unity and equal constitutional rights for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Defence Minister said the move ended the system of separate laws and symbols, strengthening the idea of one nation governed by one Constitution.

Referring to other leaders associated with Jammu and Kashmir, Singh said Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mukherjee had played a key role in advocating full integration of the erstwhile state with India and had laid down his life for the cause. He said Prime Minister Modi carried forward that legacy by taking the final step in August 2019.

Singh said that since the abrogation of Article 370, Jammu and Kashmir had witnessed greater political stability, improved governance and an enhanced focus on development. He said the Centre's policies were aimed at ensuring inclusive growth, infrastructure development and social justice for the people of the region.

Recalling an anecdote about former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Singh said that when a Pakistani woman once expressed her wish to marry Vajpayee and asked for Kashmir as a gift, Vajpayee had replied that he would agree only if she gave him the whole of Pakistan as dowry.

The Defence Minister said the NDA government remained committed to the welfare of the poor and marginalised, drawing inspiration from Upadhyaya's concept of Antyodaya. He said welfare schemes were now reaching the grassroots in Jammu and Kashmir, improving access to housing, healthcare, employment and basic services.

Highlighting broader national developments, Singh said India's global standing had improved significantly under the Modi-led government and that the country was now being heard with seriousness on the international stage. He said India had emerged as one of the fastest-growing major economies.

The Rashtriya Prerna Sthal, spread over 65 acres and built at an estimated cost of around Rs 230 crore, is dedicated to leaders including Vajpayee, Mukherjee and Deendayal Upadhyaya. Singh said preserving their legacy and ideas was essential to guide future generations, adding that the ideals of national unity, social harmony and development espoused by these leaders continued to shape policy decisions, including those related to Jammu and Kashmir.

India On Historic

Responsibility for infrastructure development. He said that in Jammu and Kashmir, the administration had laid the foundation for more than 1,800 houses for families affected by Pakistani shelling during Operation Sindoor and recent natural disasters.

Paying tribute to Vajpayee, Singh said the former prime minister awakened India's inner strength and instilled a sense of self-esteem among Indians on the global stage. He said Vajpayee prioritised good governance and economic development, and his administrative reforms, emphasis on transparency, accountability and citizen-centric service delivery ensured inclusive and rapid growth.

Moving Towards Historic Growth Speaking at a commemoration event in Varanasi, where he paid tributes to noted socialist leader and former Banaras Hindu University Students' Union president Markandeya Singh, the Lieutenant Governor Sinha said the country was advancing towards new frontiers of knowledge, innovation and creativity to build strong intellectual capital.

"India is moving confidently towards historic

growth with clear objectives of sustainable development, capacity building and skill development, equal opportunity for all, to achieve the new frontiers of knowledge for innovations and creativity to build intellectual capital," Sinha said.

Earlier, paying tribute to Babu Markandeya Singh, the Lieutenant Governor recalled his role in guiding the youth and shaping public life. He described him as a leader who combined integrity in politics with a deep commitment to humanity and social justice.

Sinha said Markandeya Singh was a true disciple of Mahatma Mohan Malaviya and embodied his ideals of quality education, skill development and independent thinking, which he said were essential for socio-economic progress and the creation of a welfare state.

The Lieutenant Governor said leaders like Markandeya Singh continued to inspire the nation, particularly the youth, to actively contribute to nation-building and social transformation, adding that their values remained relevant as India charts its path towards inclusive and sustainable growth.

End Reservation

Ruhullah said he had neither forgotten nor abandoned the students and urged the government to directly engage with them and clearly communicate the measures and decisions taken to resolve the issue.

"I urge the government once again to talk to the students and apprise them of the steps and decisions taken to resolve the reservation matter," he said, adding that he would sit in protest on Sunday if the demand was not met.

The Srinagar MP said he would stand with the students and join them at the same location where a protest was held last year on December 23 outside the residence of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah at Gupkar.

"I will walk with them and sit with them this coming Sunday to ensure their voices are heard," Ruhullah said.

Last month, the lawmaker had asked the NC-led government to resolve the reservation issue before the conclusion of the Winter Session of Parliament, warning that he would join the students' agitation if no concrete action was taken. However, he was unable to reach Srinagar at that time due to flight disruptions.

Following last year's protest, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah had constituted a cabinet sub-committee to examine students' objections to the existing reservation policy in the Union Territory and submit its report within six months.

On October 16, Abdullah said the cabinet had accepted the sub-committee's report and that it was to be forwarded to the Lieutenant Governor for approval.

EOW Chargesheets

criminal misconduct by issuing forged allotment orders for shops and residential plots, besides fake appointment orders for government jobs. The forged documents carried fabricated signatures of the Additional Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar, along with a fake seal of the District Magistrate, Srinagar.

The probe revealed that Fouzia Afzal allegedly duped several victims of lakhs of rupees by promising shops at Jehangir Chowk, five-marla residential plots at Bemina, and appointments as Junior Assistants in different government departments. To make the fraud appear genuine, she provided victims with forged allotment letters and fabricated appointment documents.

Investigators further established that the accused acted in her private capacity after office hours, impersonating senior officials from multiple government offices, including the Deputy Commissioner's Office, Srinagar Municipal Corporation, and the Divisional Commissioner's Office, Kashmir.

EOW officials said the accused is a habitual offender, with multiple FIRs already registered against her at different police stations in Srinagar district. Several more complaints are currently under investigation by Crime Branch Kashmir.

Following the exposure of the scam, Fouzia Afzal was placed under suspension. A departmental inquiry has recommended her premature retirement under Article 226(2) of the J and K Service Conduct Rules, as per an inquiry report dated October 14, 2023.

The Economic Offences Wing said the investigation in the case has been completed and

established as proved, and the chargesheet has been filed for judicial adjudication.

Churches In Kashmir

opportunities, particularly for the youth in Kashmir.

"We prayed for peace and calm in Kashmir and the entire country. We also prayed that people support each other and that more employment opportunities are created for those who have fewer chances here," Father Paul told reporters.

Expressing disappointment over the absence of snowfall on Christmas, Father Paul said devotees had hoped for snow in the city and plains but remained thankful for the pleasant weather. "We were hoping for snowfall, but it did not happen. Still, we thank God for the lovely weather," he said.

He also called upon people to revive values of humanity, brotherhood and love, noting that rapid technological changes were impacting human relationships. Referring to the growing influence of Artificial Intelligence, Father Paul said people were gradually losing human sensitivity and emotional connections.

"We hope that on the occasion of Christmas, people awaken their feelings of humanity, brotherhood and love," he said.

Commenting on recent incidents of harassment against the Christian community in some parts of the country, Father Paul expressed hope that the situation would improve. He said prayers were offered for positive change and better times ahead.

He also welcomed the participation of members of the majority Muslim community in Christmas celebrations, saying that people of different faiths must work together for the betterment of humanity. "Our beliefs may be different, but our aim is the same, the welfare of people and humanity," he added.

Christmas prayers and celebrations were also held at other churches across the valley, including in Gulmarg and Baramulla, marking the festival in a spirit of peace and communal harmony.

Members of the local Christian community and people from other faiths participated in the celebrations at the 120-year-old historic church in Gulmarg.

Special prayers were offered at the church, and attendees shared moments of joy and peace.

The celebrations coincided with fresh snowfall in Gulmarg, adding to the picturesque setting and attracting tourists.

Senior officials from the Tourism Department were also present.

People from different religious backgrounds expressed happiness over participating in the event, saying the occasion gave them a sense of inner peace.

How A Kashmir

who regularly appears in the country's top courts, knew the case would need careful handling.

He paced his office, reviewing notes, thinking about how to explain to the High Court that this matter never should have gone to the police.

Together with co-counsel Asif Ahmad Bhat, he made the argument clearly and calmly.

"Any disagreement should have been handled by the judge," Bashir told Justice Sanjay Dhar. "If there was a problem, the Bar Council is the right place. Criminal charges were not needed."

The judge listened and agreed the petition had merit.

Justice Dhar paused the investigation and gave Rather a week to submit a certified copy of the FIR.

Notices went to the Union Territory of J&K and the Additional Public Prosecutor.

The next hearing is scheduled for February 27, 2026.

Even after the ruling, Bashir could feel the tension.

In a career filled with high-stakes cases, this one reminded him that even small courtroom moments can spiral unexpectedly.

For the local legal community, the case raises sharp questions: How far can disagreements go before they become misconduct? Which paths should lawyers take when disputes arise?

As the next hearing approaches, Srinagar's legal circles are watching closely.

The outcome could change how courtroom conflicts among lawyers are handled for years to come.

Sonamarg Attracts Over 4.17 Lakh Tourists Till November This Year

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Sonamarg, a major tourist destination in Kashmir, recorded a total of 417,091 tourists from January to November 2025, showing steady growth and consistent interest across seasons, official data reveals.

According to figures from the Tourist Police Post Sonamarg, the resort experienced a continuous influx of domestic, foreign, and local tourists throughout the year.

In January, around 55,934 tourists visited, including 53,676 domestic visitors, 1,114 foreigners, and 1,144 locals. February saw a slight increase with a total of 57,186 tourists—55,114 domestic, 2,019 foreigners, and 1,565 local visitors. March's footfall reached nearly 63,000 with 59,084 domestic tourists, 1,120 foreigners, and 2,749 locals.

April experienced the highest footfall of the year, with over 72,722 visitors—67,229 domestic, 1,434 foreigners, and 4,059 locals. May, however, saw



a decline, with just over 21,573 tourists—17,083 domestic, 486 foreigners, and 4,004 locals.

June's figures rose again to nearly 48,139, with 33,692 domestic, 281 foreigners, and 14,166 locals. July recorded close to 39,605 visitors—25,281

domestic, 159 foreigners, and 14,165 locals. August saw a decrease to roughly 32,139, including 12,124 domestic, 304 foreigners, and 19,711 locals.

September's numbers fell further to approximately 25,264, with nearly 6,945 domestic, 422

foreigners, and 17,897 locals. October recorded around 14,536 visitors—8,389 domestic, 391 foreigners, and 5,756 locals. November's footfall was just over 18,070, including 13,527 domestic, 459 foreigners, and 4,084 locals.

Officials told KNO that April

marked the peak of tourist visits, coinciding with the spring tourism rush, while summer months remained busy due to local and domestic travellers. Despite the seasonal slowdown in autumn, tourist arrivals remained steady into November.

President of the Beopar Mandal Association Sonamarg, Furkan Ahmad, said, "Tourism plays a vital role in Sonamarg's economy. The rising number of visitors has positively impacted hotels, transporters, and local traders, strengthening the overall market."

The recent snowfall has led to a noticeable increase in tourist arrivals. To promote winter tourism, the Department of Tourism has organised comprehensive arrangements, including adventure activities such as skiing and ice skating.

"Special programmes and winter sports events are scheduled for December 31 to provide visitors with a memorable experience," Basharat Hussain, a tourist officer, said—.

Tourism Festival Kicks Off in Pahalgam

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Pahalgam Development Authority (PDA), in collaboration with other stakeholders, has organised a tourism festival in the picturesque tourist town to "further boost tourism and project the place as a vibrant, all-season destination".

The festival, which began amid much enthusiasm, will continue till the end of this month.

Chief Executive Officer of PDA, Hilal Ahmad said the initiative is part of a broader strategy to diversify tourism activities and attract visitors throughout the year. "Our focus is to develop Pahalgam as an all-weather tourist destination. Through such festivals, we want to showcase the natural beauty, culture, adventure potential and hospitality of the region," he said.

Highlighting the sym-



bolic inauguration of the festival, the CEO said it was formally inaugurated by a six-year-old girl from Mumbai. "We deliberately chose a young child to inaugurate the event to send a strong message — tourists belong to us, and we belong to them. Pahalgam welcomes everyone with open arms," he said.

Ahmad lauded the role of residents, hoteliers, ponywalas, guides and other

stakeholders for their continued efforts in promoting tourism. "The people of Pahalgam deserve immense appreciation. They have been working tirelessly to promote tourism in the area and have always extended warm hospitality to visitors," he said, adding that community participation is key to sustainable tourism development.

The CEO further said

that the department is actively working on introducing snow sports in Betaab Valley to enhance winter tourism. "We are exploring the potential of snow-based activities so that tourists have more options during the winter months as well," he said.

Describing Pahalgam as a complete tourist package, Ahmad told KNO that the destination offers something for everyone. "Pahalgam has everything — breathtaking natural beauty, adventure, peace, culture and entertainment. It is a full package, and everyone must visit at least once to experience it," he added.

The ongoing Tourism Festival features a range of activities aimed at engaging visitors, promoting local culture and showcasing the tourism potential of the region, reinforcing Pahalgam's position as one of Kashmir's premier tourist destinations.

'Winter Festivities Planned to Boost Footfall'

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: As winter settles in following a fresh snowfall, the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department announced a series of upcoming promotional events and roadshows to boost tourist arrivals across the Valley.

Joint Director of Tourism, Kashmir, Wasim Raja, said that in collaboration with various stakeholders, the department will organise multiple activities and campaigns to sustain the current tourism momentum.

"Since the recent snowfall, we've observed a slight rise in tourist footfall, with hotels experiencing good occupancy. The response has been very encouraging," Raja told reporters in Srinagar during the Christmas Khewa Fest, a joint celebration hosted by

the Tourism Department, JKHARA, and KHBOA.

Raja, according to KNO further said, "Our upcoming months are packed with promotional events and roadshows across the country to maintain this flow and broaden our outreach."

The Joint Director highlighted the importance of festivals such as Christmas, Lohri, and New Year in fostering cultural unity. "This year, both locals and visitors celebrated Christmas together, reflecting our warmth and shared joy," he said.

Expressing his commitment, Raja said, "We are determined to keep the festive spirit alive and will work closely with all partners to ensure a steady influx of tourists through winter, spring, and summer. The media also plays a crucial role in promoting this vibrant spirit."

Repeated Bear Sightings Trigger Alert, Cages Installed

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Panic and concern gripped parts of Srinagar after a bear was spotted at two different locations over the last two days, prompting the Wildlife Department to issue an alert and step up monitoring efforts.

According to officials, the bear was sighted yesterday within the premises of Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences at Soura. The sighting caused a temporary alarm among staff and attendants, though no injuries or damage were reported. Wildlife teams were immediately informed and began tracking the animal's movement.

Today, the same bear was sighted again near the campus of the National Institute of Technology Srinagar, raising concerns about its movement through populated areas of the city. Officials believe the animal may be moving along green corridors and forest fringes close to residential and institutional zones.

The Wildlife Depart-

ment Jammu and Kashmir said that teams have been deployed in the affected areas and cages have been installed at different strategic locations to safely capture the bear. Officials said efforts are underway to tranquilise and relocate the animal to a suitable forest habitat once it is secured.

Advising people to remain cautious, the department urged inhabitants living near Soura, Hazratbal and adjoining areas to avoid venturing out unnecessarily during late evening and early morning hours. People were also advised not to chase, provoke or attempt to photograph the animal, and to immediately inform authorities if the bear is sighted again.

According to KNT, wildlife officials said such incidents tend to increase during winter months as bears descend towards lower areas in search of food. They said coordination with local police and district administration has been strengthened to ensure public safety until the situation is brought fully under control.

Admin Prepared to Deal with Winter Exigencies: Div Com

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg on Thursday said that the administration is fully prepared for the winter and that the matter is being monitored at the highest level with all departments instructed to activate winter preparedness plans.

Speaking with reporters, the Divisional Commissioner, per KNO said that the Chief Minister recently reviewed winter preparedness for both Jammu and Kashmir divisions.

He further said that district-level control rooms have been activated, while the divisional control room is functioning at the Integrated Command and Control Centre.

"The focus areas include snow clearance, swift restoration of power supply, timely replacement of transformers, adequate winter stocking of ration and LPG, availability of public helpline numbers, strengthening of health fa-



cilities and ensuring proper heating arrangements.

He said that higher reaches have already received snowfall and expressed confidence that the administration is fully prepared to minimise inconvenience to the public when plains experience the snowfall.

He also clarified that the exercise related to revision of stamp duty rates is a routine administrative process carried out every year, with the revised rates coming into force from January 1. "The meeting was held according to established norms and the rates will be notified shortly," he said.

'Viral video' of Cleric with Pigeon Inside Mosque Triggers Outrage

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Grand Mufti of Jammu and Kashmir, Mufti Nasir-ul-Islam, on Thursday criticized the actions of a cleric inside a mosque saying he disrespected Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and asked authorities to step in before things get worse.

Talking to KNO, the Grand Mufti said the actions of the individual were "unethical and a sign of ignorance", adding that mosques and sacred spaces must be respected.

Notably, the call comes

amid growing controversy triggered by a viral video circulating on social media that appears to show a man carrying a pigeon inside a mosque or near the pulpit area, sparking outrage across Kashmir.

Moreover, the footage has been widely shared on platforms including Facebook and Instagram.

"I expect immediate intervention from the administration and the Director General of Police so that law and order is maintained," the Grand Mufti said, urging authorities to act swiftly to prevent unrest.

Unidentified Man Found Dead Near LD Hospital

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: An unidentified man was found lying unconscious on the roadside near LD Hospital in Srinagar on Thursday morning and was later declared dead at the hospital, officials said. An official told KNO that a

police team brought the man, believed to be around 45 years old, to SMHS Hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead. "As per initial reports, the deceased was found lying on the roadside near LD Hospital," the official said, adding that his identity and the cause of death are being ascertained.

NC Opposes Apple Imports from New Zealand

The ruling National Conference on Thursday appealed to the Centre to review its decision to import apples under the new trade agreement with New Zealand, warning that such a move could seriously harm the Kashmiri apple industry.

In a statement, National Conference state spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar said the import of foreign apples in the past had adversely affected local growers and traders. He demanded that no tax exemption be given to imported apples under the new agreement and that a reasonable tax must be imposed to safeguard the interests of Kashmiri apple growers.

"Kashmiri apples are not only superior in taste but are also highly beneficial for health. No foreign apple can compete with the quality of Kashmiri produce," he said. According to PTI, Dar highlighted that a large section of Kashmir's population is directly or indirectly dependent on the apple industry, which has already suffered losses of around Rs 2,000 crore this year due to adverse weather conditions, road closures, and floods.

He urged the Centre to refrain from taking any decision that could further damage the fragile apple economy of Jammu and Kashmir. (Observer News Service)

IUST Concludes Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction

The Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) concluded a two-day capacity building workshop on "Disaster Risk Reduction in Urban Planning, Development and Monitoring: Building a Disaster-Resilient Jammu and Kashmir." The workshop was jointly organised by the Department of Architecture, Centre for Disaster Risk Reduction (CDRR), and the Department of Planning and Geomatics, IUST, in collaboration with the Department of Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (DMRRR), Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

The workshop featured technical presentations and interactive sessions by experts including Mr. Raj Bhagat Palanichamy (Senior Program Manager, Geo Analytics for Sustainable Cities and Transport, WRI India), Mr. Amir Ali Khan from the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), Mr. Gulzar Ahmad Dar, Joint Commissioner (Planning), Srinagar Municipal Corporation, and Mr. Sabzar Bashir, Senior Programme Associate, WRI India. The sessions focused on disaster-development linkages, risk-sensitive urban planning, infrastructure resilience and the integration of climate resilience into urban planning frameworks.

The programme witnessed active participation from academicians, government officials, engineers, urban planners and students. Participants included officials from the Administrative Department of Planning, Srinagar Development Authority (SDA), Lake Conservation and Management Authority (LCMA), Rural Development Department (RDD) Kashmir, Urban Local Bodies (ULB) Kashmir and Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC). (Observer News Service)

Civil Defence Launches Training for Anganwadi Workers



Civil Defence Pulwama launched a five-day training programme for Poshan Project Supervisors and Anganwadi Workers at the ICDS Office here, aimed at strengthening disaster preparedness and emergency response at the grassroots level.

District Programme Officer Pulwama, Ms Bureeda Majeed, who was the chief guest, appreciated the initiative and underscored the importance of equipping frontline women workers with basic disaster management, first aid and life-saving skills to ensure the safety and well-being of women and children.

Divisional Warden Civil Defence Srinagar and President Medalist, Shri Rahi Riyaz Ahmed, highlighted the role of preparedness and safety awareness in empowering women and building resilient communities.

The training includes practical sessions on CPR, first aid, fire safety and emergency response, conducted by Civil Defence instructors Shri Ghulam Nabi, Shri Ghulam Rasool of SDRF, and Shri Abdul Rasheed of Civil Defence Pulwama. Shri Ghulam Rasool said such capacity-building efforts enhance community resilience and child safety.

Chief Development Project Officer Pulwama, Shri Mujeeb-ul-Haq, delivered the vote of thanks, assuring continued support from the ICDS department for similar programmes in the future. More than 70 participants attended the programme, reflecting strong coordination between Civil Defence Pulwama and ICDS in their joint effort to build safer and more resilient communities. (Observer News Service)

Pulwama Man Found Dead in Houseboat

A man from Pulwama district was found dead inside a houseboat in the Amira Kadal area of Srinagar on Thursday morning, officials said. An official said that the body of the man was found inside a houseboat moored along the Jhelum River at Amira Kadal under mysterious circumstances.

He said police were informed immediately after the discovery, following which a team reached the spot and took cognizance of the matter. "The body has been taken for medico-legal formalities to ascertain the cause of death," the official said, identifying the deceased as Younis Nisar, a resident of Pulwama.

Meanwhile, officials said this was the second such incident reported in Srinagar within a few hours, as an unidentified man was found dead near LD Hospital earlier in the day. Investigations have been taken up—(KNO)

Army Revises Social Media Guidelines

Observer News Service

JAMMU: The Indian Army has issued an internal directive revising its policy on the use of social media applications by personnel, underscoring the need for heightened operational security and responsible online conduct in an era of evolving cyber threats.

The guidelines, according to KNO disseminated through the Directorate General of Military Intelligence (DGMI), have come into immediate effect and exist-

ing rules stand updated.

This move reflects a balanced approach, allowing limited digital access while maintaining strict safeguards against potential breaches, misinformation, or exploitation.

For Instagram and Similar Platforms (including YouTube, X — formerly Twitter — and Quora), army personnel may access these apps solely for viewing and monitoring content. Passive participation is permitted to stay informed or gather general knowledge. No com-

ments, likes, posts, views, or any form of interaction are allowed.

Use of messaging Apps like Skype, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Signal are limited for exchange of unclassified information of a general nature, but strictly limited to known contacts. Users bear full responsibility for verifying the recipient's identity to prevent unintended leaks.

While use of LinkedIn is permitted only for professional purposes, such as uploading resumes or researching potential employ-

ers/employees.

The Army has reiterated warnings against using VPNs, torrent sites, cracked software, or anonymous proxies, citing associated security risks.

This policy builds on prior restrictions imposed in 2020, when personnel were directed to delete accounts on platforms like Facebook and Instagram amid concerns over honey-trapping and data leaks linked to foreign intelligence agencies.

The updated rules aim to enable

soldiers to remain digitally aware without compromising sensitive information.

Defence sources emphasized that the directive prioritizes vigilance, stating that the responsibility for secure and correct usage ultimately rests with individual users.

The Indian Army's official public information handle @adgpi has not yet posted about the update, but it aligns with ongoing efforts to counter misinformation and adapt to modern digital realities while safeguarding national security.

No ROOM FOR SPIN

Australia Fields Pace-Heavy Attack Against England

AP

MELBOURNE: Australia won't attempt to replace injured Nathan Lyon with another spin bowler for the fourth Ashes test against England and will go into Friday's start of the match with a 12-man, pace-heavy squad.

After Lyon suffered a long-term hamstring injury in the Ashes-clinching win in Adelaide and later underwent surgery, off-spinner Todd Murphy was called into the squad. But with the MCG pitch showing plenty of grass, Australia opted to leave Murphy out when it named its squad Thursday.

Captain Steve Smith will wait until the toss at the Melbourne Cricket Ground



on Friday before confirming a starting XI.

England lost each of the first three tests to allow Australia to retain the Ashes in just 11 days of on-field action.

It's unusual for an Australian team not to select a spinner at the MCG, a

place where Shane Warne and Lyon have had success.

"A lot of the wickets we're playing on at present are certainly more seam-friendly than spin-friendly," Smith said on Thursday.

"Last week (in Adelaide) was an anomaly; we saw

some rough and we saw Nathan come in to play big-time.

"It's a tricky one. You've just got to play what surface you're presented with, and this one out here looks like it's going to offer a fair bit of assistance for the seam bowlers."

Joining Lyon and captain Pat Cummins on the sidelines are Josh Inglis, with fast bowlers Jhye Richardson, Brendan Doggett and Michael Neser included.

Left-handed veteran Usman Khawaja was preferred to Inglis after making 82 and 40 in the third test in Adelaide. Richardson is in contention to play his first test in more than four years after a bad run of injuries.

Doggett and Neser played in the second test in

Brisbane, but were left out in Adelaide when Cummins and Lyon returned.

England named its team on Wednesday with the big news the loss of star bowler Jofra Archer for the rest of the series, including the fifth and final test starting Jan. 4 in Sydney.

Australia squad: Travis Head, Jake Weatherald, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith (captain), Usman Khawaja, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Michael Neser, Mitchell Starc, Jhye Richardson, Brendan Doggett, Scott Boland.

England team: Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Jacob Bethell, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Ben Stokes (captain), Jamie Smith, Will Jacks, Gus Atkinson, Brydon Carse, Josh Tongue.

Jahangir & Cox Take Dubai Capitals to Play-offs

Press Trust of India

DUBAI: Shayan Jahangir and Jordan Cox struck fifties to help defending champions Dubai Capitals advance to the play-offs with a six-wicket win over Sharjah Warriorz in the World ILT20 here.

Jahangir also impressed behind the stumps, getting dangerman Tom Kohler-Cadmore stumped-out, showcasing an all-round performance at the Dubai International Stadium on Wednesday.

Chasing 135, Dubai Capitals made light work of the target with an early blitz by Jahangir, and an unbeaten Jordan Cox (61 not out off 50 balls; 4x6, 1x6) finishing the job with ease.

Jahangir and Cox set up



a partnership of 76 runs off 63 balls after Capitals lost opening batter Sediqullah Atal with just 17 on board. It was Harmeet Singh who bowled him out, but it took the Warriorz a lifetime to find another breakthrough.

However, Sikandar Raza's over made up for the long wicket-less spells as he picked up two crucial back-to-back wickets -- that of half-centurion Jahangir

and Mohammad Nabi in the 14th over.

Taskin Ahmed packed off Leus Du Plooy (5 off 6) in the 17th over, but Jordan Cox broke no sweat to make the target in five balls to spare.

The Dubai Capitals' bowlers also did well, restricting the Warriorz total to a paltry 134/8 with Haider Ali and Waqar Salamkheil picking up two wickets each.

Zidane Reflects on Leaving France to Represent Algeria

Reuters

Luca Zidane, son of French World Cup-winner Zinedine, said his grandfather had supported him in switching international allegiance to Algeria, after playing for France at junior level.

Zinedine Zidane is widely regarded as one of the greatest French footballers, inspiring his country to their first World Cup victory in 1998 and scoring two goals in the 3-0 win over Brazil in the final in Paris.

The midfielder also guided them to the Euro 2000 trophy, achieving an unprecedented double for Les Bleus.

The decision to switch nationalities by Luca, who chose to avoid comparisons with his father from an early age by opting to play as a goalkeeper, came as a surprise, especially since he



made it at the age of 27.

He quickly became Algeria's first-choice keeper, and his father watched him play against Sudan in Vladimir Petkovic's side's opening Africa Cup of Nations Group E match on Wednesday, which they won 3-0.

Zidane was not tested much during the match, but he did make an important save from a dangerous chance that fell to Yaser Awad with the score at 1-0.

"When I think of Algeria, I remember my grandfather. Since childhood, we've had

this Algerian culture in the family," Zidane told BeIN Sports France. "I spoke to him before playing for the national team, and he was extremely happy about this step. Every time I receive an international call-up, he calls me and says that I made a great decision and that he is proud of me."

Father supported decision to switch

He said his father had also backed his decision. "He supported me," Luca said. "He said to me 'Be careful, this is your choice. I can give you advice, but in the end, the final decision will be yours'. From the moment the coach and the federation president reached out to me, it was clear that I wanted to go and represent my country. After that, I naturally spoke with my family, and they were all happy for me."

Proud dad Zinedine Zidane watches

AP

Rabat (Morocco): Great Frenchman Zinedine Zidane watched his goalkeeper son's safe hands as Algeria started its Africa Cup of Nations campaign with a 3-0 win over 10-man Sudan on Wednesday.

Riyad Mahrez scored twice, and the 20-year-old Ibrahim Maza scored his first international goal for Algeria, one of the tournament favourites, to move to the top of Group E.

Zidane, who was at the sweet-smelling Moulay El Hassan Stadium in Rabat to see his son Luca Zidane playing in the Algeria goal, was

feted by the crowd every time he was shown on the big screens.

Luca Zidane opted to represent his grandfather's country after getting the Fenec Foxes' invitation, and he's been given his chance to shine because of an injury to Alexandre Oukidja, who might have been expected to start otherwise.

Algeria wasted little time Wednesday with Mahrez sweeping in the opener in the second minute after unselfish play from Hicham Boudaoui to set him up.

Zidane was called into action shortly afterward to deny Yaser Awad on a break.

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