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A Mother's 2 Year Wait Ends On The Banks Of Jhelum

The body of the last missing victim from the 2024 Gandbal boat tragedy was recovered on Monday, ending a 21-month search



Syed Mohammad Burhan

Srinagar: Nearly two years after the Jhelum swallowed a small boat and several lives at Gandbal, the river finally yielded the last missing name.

On Monday, local residents recovered the body of Showkat Ahmad Sheikh from the banks near Lasjan, bringing a prolonged and painful search to a close.

For Sheikh's family, the recovery marked an end to a waiting that had stretched across seasons, rituals, and unanswered prayers.

His mother, Rehti Begum, 70, was often seen visiting the banks of the Jhelum every morning,

pleading for the safe return of her son. Locals recall her standing quietly by the river, offering prayers and refusing to give up, even as months turned into years. The tragedy had already taken another blow on the family, claiming the life of her grandson as well.

The grim turn in the search came only days earlier. During routine sand mining in the riverbed, workers stumbled upon a severed human foot. It was Sheikh's widow who confirmed the identity, recognising the shoe her husband had been wearing on the day of the accident.

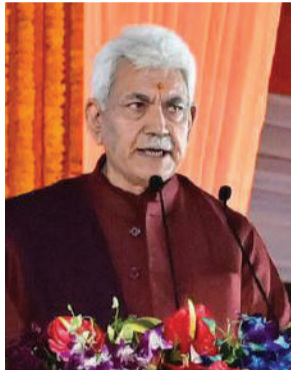
The tragedy dates back to April 16, 2024, when | [More on P6](#)

LG Gets Powers To Act Against Misleading Drug Ads

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: The Centre has empowered the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, along with the Lieutenant Governors or administrators of four other Union territories, to authorise officers to conduct searches and seize records related to misleading advertisements claiming magical properties or cures for serious diseases such as cancer and diabetes.

The move follows a recent gazette notification issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, delegating powers under the Drugs and Magic



Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954, to the Lieutenant Governors or administrators of Jammu and Kashmir, Lakshadweep, Chandigarh, Dadra and

Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, and Puducherry.

According to the notification, the administrators of these Union territories will exercise the powers of the state government under the Act, subject to the control of the President and until further orders. This allows them to authorise gazetted officers to enter and search premises, examine documents, and seize records connected with misleading or objectionable advertisements.

The Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act prohibits advertisements that make

false or exaggerated claims about drugs and medicinal substances, including Ayush medicines, in print, electronic, and digital media. The law bars promotion of drugs as cures for 54 specified diseases and disorders, including cancer, diabetes, obesity, and other serious conditions.

It also states that no person shall participate in the publication of any advertisement suggesting the use of a drug for the diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment, or prevention of diseases listed under the prohibited schedule of the Act.

Officials said the delegation of | [More on P6](#)

Healthcare Is Bedrock Of A Stable Society: LG

Observer News Service

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday said private investment in healthcare is a cornerstone of sustainable national progress and a lifeline for society. He described healthcare as the bedrock of a

stable, vibrant, and prosperous society, and urged industry leaders to focus on building world-class healthcare infrastructure to create long-term resilience.

Sinha on Monday laid the foundation stone for Meerz Health Care Hospital in Srinagar, a 180-bedded super speciality | [More on P6](#)

Kishtwar Encounter Paratrooper Killed, Hideout Busted

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: A paratrooper, who was critically injured in gunfight with terrorists, succumbed to his injuries on Monday, while the ongoing search operation uncovered a suspected terror hideout packed with rations for winter in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district, officials said.

The operation was launched in Sonnar village near Mandral-Singhpora in the Chatroo belt on Sunday, where an encounter broke out between the forces and terrorists in which eight soldiers sustained injured, primarily due to splinter from a sudden grenade attack.

The operation was suspended late Sunday | [More on P6](#)

LG Pays Tribute

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday paid homage to Havildar Gajendra Singh of the Indian Army's special forces, who was martyred during the ongoing anti-terror operation in Kishtwar district. | [More on P6](#)

Nitin Nabin Elected BJP President Unopposed

Youngest Ever To Get Top Party Post

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Five-time Bihar MLA Nitin Nabin was on Monday elected unopposed as the BJP national president, the youngest ever to occupy the top party post at a time when the saffron party seeks to further expand its footprint with key state elections around the corner.

Nabin, 45, emerged as the sole candidate for the post with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other senior BJP leaders filing nomination



papers in his support.

Nabin will be formally declared as BJP president on Tuesday signalling a generational shift in its top organizational leadership and a new era in the party,



A quiet afternoon in rural Kashmir, where children play cricket on a dry patch of farmland. KO Photo By Abid Bhat

Dry Spell To Ease?

MeT Forecasts Rain, Snowfall From Jan 22

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir is set to witness a significant change in weather conditions after a prolonged dry spell, with two Western Disturbances expected to affect the region in quick succession over the next few days, officials said.

The dry conditions have left Jammu and Kashmir reeling under a rainfall deficit of about 96 per cent so far this month, raising concerns over water availability, agriculture and horticulture.

According to an advisory issued by the Meteorological Centre, the first and more intense Western Disturbance is likely to impact the region and adjoining areas from January 22 to 24, with peak activity expected on January 23. A

second, comparatively moderate system is forecast for the night of January 26 to the forenoon of January 28, peaking on January 27.

Under the influence of these systems, widespread light to moderate rain and snowfall is expected across Jammu and Kashmir, with heavy precipitation at isolated places, particularly during the peak activity days, the advisory said.

The MeT department said the first system is most likely to cause heavy rainfall and snowfall over

the Pir Panjal range, including parts of the Chenab Valley in Jammu division, as well as the middle and higher reaches of south Kashmir. Areas likely to be affected include Anantnag, Pahalgam, Kulgam, Shopian, Pir Ki Gali, Gulmarg, Sonamarg-Zojila | [More on P6](#)

PM Meets UAE President, Sets USD 200 Bn Trade Target

Discuss Defence Pact, LNG Supply, AI & Nuclear Cooperation

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: India and the United Arab Emirates on Monday set a target of USD 200 billion in annual trade by 2032 and agreed to seal a strategic defence pact while boosting cooperation in energy, space and civil nuclear sectors with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan laying out a broad agenda to shore up ties.

Modi welcomed Al Nahyan at the Delhi airport with a hug and then they travelled together in the same vehicle to the prime minister's residence, where they held talks in the restricted as well as delegation-level formats.

"This has been a short, but extremely substantive visit," Foreign Secretary Vikram



Misri said at a media briefing after the UAE leader concluded his nearly three-and-a-half-hour visit that came amid increasing tensions in the Middle East and trade disruptions caused by Washington's policy on tariffs.

The two sides decided to explore a partnership in advanced nuclear technologies, including development of large nuclear reactors and small modular reactors, as well as cooperation in advanced reactor | [More on P6](#)

R-Day Security Intensify Surveillance Of Anti-national Elements: DGP

Agencies

Srinagar: Director General of Police Jammu and Kashmir, Nalin Prabhat Monday instructed officers to intensify surveillance of anti-national elements and enhance area domination in preparation for Republic Day-2026 celebrations.

Officials said that the DGP chaired a general security review meeting at the Conference Hall of PCR Kashmir, which was attended by senior officers of J&K Police, Intelligence agencies, Army, Central Armed Police Forces, and other key security officials.

It also said that the participants included Special DG Coordination, JD IB J&K/L, IG BSF Ftr. Hqrs, IGP Kashmir Zone, IG CRPF Srinagar, Additional Commissioner SB Srinagar, DIG SSB Srinagar, DIG Armed Kashmir, range DIGs of Kashmir Zone, DIG RPF | [More on P6](#)

CM Calls On Amit Shah, Discusses Key Issues



KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on Monday, with the two leaders discussing various issues related to the Union territory.

No official details of the meeting were disclosed. The Chief Minister's Office said in a post on X that Omar met the Home Minister to discuss

matters concerning Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting comes at a time of growing friction between the elected government of the Union territory and the Lieutenant Governor's administration. The Transaction of Business Rules, which define the division of powers between the elected government and the LG, are yet to be finalised.

The | [More on P6](#)

Shaaban Moon Not Sighted In J&K

Month To Begin Jan 21: Grand Mufti

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Grand Mufti Jammu and Kashmir, Mufti Nasir-ul-Islam Farooqi, on Monday evening said the Islamic month Shaaban 1447 AH will begin on January 21 (Wednesday).

Farooqi said there were no testimonies or credible reports regarding the sighting of the moon for the blessed month of Shaaban from any part of Jammu and Kashmir, and the month, preceding Ramadan, will begin on Wednesday.

The Grand Mufti further said that Shab-e-Baraat, observed on the intervening night of the 14th and 15th of Shaaban, will accordingly be observed on the night of February 4, 2026.

Farooqi said Shaaban holds great religious importance as it precedes the holy and blessed month of Ramadan. He said the month is meant | [More on P6](#)

Two Vehicles Collide in City, Three Injured

Observer News Service

Srinagar: At least three persons were injured in a head-on collision involving two vehicles near Gousia Colony Park in the Bemina area of Srinagar on Monday, officials said.

The impact of the collision was severe, with one of the vehicles ramming into a building wall, causing structural damage. A portion of the wall was smashed, leaving a large opening, while debris was scattered at the spot. The other vehicle suffered extensive frontal damage, and one of the vehicles was overturned following the crash.

According to KNT, locals rushed to the scene immediately after the accident and assisted in the rescue operation before informing the authorities. The injured persons were pulled out of the damaged vehicles and shifted to hospital for treatment. Hospital sources said all the injured are undergoing medical care and their condition is stable.

Police have taken cognizance of the incident and initiated proceedings to ascertain the circumstances leading to the head-on collision. Further details are awaited.

Three Flights Cancelled at Srinagar Airport After Delhi Airspace Closure

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Three flights have been cancelled at the Srinagar International Airport on Monday following the closure of the airspace in Delhi for Republic Day rehearsals and related security measures, officials said.

An airport official told KNO that three flights scheduled for today were cancelled due to airspace closure in Delhi, while rest of the flight are as per schedule.

Earlier, the Srinagar Airport authorities issued an advisory, informing travellers that some flights to and from Delhi had been cancelled by respective airlines, advising them to check the latest flight status before proceeding to the airport.

They said that normal flight operations are continuing smoothly apart from the few cancellations linked to the temporary restrictions at the Delhi Airport. Airspace in Delhi will remain shut daily from 10:20 AM to 12:45 PM for a period of six days, according to a government Notice to Airmen (NOTAM).

Earlier, the Srinagar Airport authorities issued an advisory, informing travellers that some flights to and from Delhi had been cancelled by respective airlines, advising them to check the latest flight status before proceeding to the airport.

14th Annual Raising Day of SDRF Celebrated



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The 14th Annual Raising Day of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) was celebrated on Monday with great enthusiasm at the premises of SDRF 1st Battalion, Srinagar.

The occasion was marked by an impressive march past by contingents of SDRF, NDRF, and the Pipe Band.

Imtiyaz Hussain Mir, Director Civil Defence & SDRF Kashmir was Chief Guest on the occasion, who presided over the function and took over the Salute of the March Past. The function was also attended by Masroor Ahmad Mir, Commandant SDRF 1st Bn Srinagar, DySPs and other officers and officials of SDRF 1st Bn. Srinagar.

Addressing the gathering, the Director, Civil Defence & SDRF Kashmir, commended selfless services of SDRF towards the nation and its citizens and emphasised upon them to continue serving society with greater enthusiasm, zeal, and commitment in the future as well.

On the occasion, Commandant SDRF 1st Battalion Srinagar highlighted the role and achievements of the Battalion during the year 2025. He informed that the unit conducted 810 awareness camps, 103 mock exercises, and 123 rescue operations, during which 63,640 personnel, including 70 Apda Sakhis, students, and other stakeholders, were trained in disaster preparedness to act as first responders during emergencies.

The Commandant also highlighted the significant role played by SDRF during Shri Amarnathji Yatra-2025, wherein 5,613 pilgrims were provided pre-hospital medical treatment, 7,823 pilgrims received moral and psychological support, and 1,830 pilgrims were administered on-the-spot oxygen due to altitude-related breathing difficulties.

Gas Cylinder Leakage Leaves Four People Unconscious

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Four persons were rendered unconscious after a gas cylinder leakage was reported from the Saraf Kadal area of Nowhatta in Srinagar on Monday, officials said.

According to officials, the incident occurred due to leakage from a gas cylinder inside a residential premises, following which four individuals fell unconscious. All the affected persons were promptly evacuated from the spot and shifted to the SMHS Hospital for treatment.

They have been identified as Mohammad Yousuf, son of Abu Kalam, originally

a resident of Kolkata and presently staying at Saraf Kadal, aged about 16 years; Taron Das, son of Sobul Das, aged about 36 years; Alami, son of Noor Mohammad Khan, aged about 28 years; and Kamran Ahmad Khan, son of Manzoor Ahmad, aged about 19 years.

Hospital sources said the condition of all four is being monitored, while further details regarding their health status are awaited.

According to KNT, Police and other concerned departments have taken cognizance of the incident and are ascertaining the circumstances leading to the gas leakage.



Major Civic Upgrade for Srinagar before Republic Day: Div Com

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg Monday said that Srinagar is witnessing a major civic transformation under the Smart City Mission, with several infrastructure and public service projects nearing completion ahead of Republic Day celebrations.

Speaking to reporters in Srinagar, Garg said the historic Amira Kadal Bridge has been redeveloped as a pedestrian bridge under the Smart City project and will soon be dedicated to the public by the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

“Amira Kadal is one among the oldest bridges in Srinagar that has been redeveloped under the Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL). We have prepared it as a pedestrian bridge and the LG will dedicate it to the public soon,” Garg told reporters, as per KNO.

He said that the newly designed bridge will not only ease the public movement around Lal Chowk but will also emerge as a tourist attraction, similar to Zero Bridge and Habba Kadal, adding that it will bring additional tourist footfall that will be beneficial for the local businesses.

“Amira Kadal is one among the oldest bridges in Srinagar that has been redeveloped under the Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL). We have prepared it as a pedestrian bridge and the LG will dedicate it to the public soon,”

“Cyclists can now ride and morning walkers can enjoy a 4.5-km stretch of the riverfront. It’s a major addition to Srinagar’s urban lifestyle,” he added.

Highlighting the city’s Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC), Garg said it is now fully functional with 40 dedicated employees appointed by the divisional administration.

“The ICCC has been operational since February-15 with a 24x7 public helpline. So far, our team has responded to more than 250 citizen calls. Anyone, residents or

tourists can reach out for any civic issue,” he said.

On solid waste management, Garg said the SMC and the administration are working under the directions of the government and courts to resolve issues at the Achan dumping site.

Regarding smart city electric buses, he said that the service has received very good feedback from commuters.

“We are adding 100 more e-buses soon and developing new charging stations—one near the SuperMarket and another near Hazratbal to enhance route efficiency,” he said.

About the Republic Day celebrations, Garg said the main function will be held at Bakshi Stadium, where rehearsals are already underway.

“All arrangements have been completed. Our children are excited to take part in cultural programmes,” he said, adding that illumination of government buildings across Srinagar has begun to mark the national event.

Garg congratulated all stakeholders of Srinagar, saying that the Smart City initiatives, from public transport to urban aesthetics are set to redefine civic infrastructure and quality of life in the summer capital.

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

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- BIJBERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORE: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

HIJRI CALENDAR	PRAYERS	
	1447	FAJR
	ZUHR	12:42
	ASR	4: 11
	Magrib	5:52
	ISHA	7: 16

This Day In History

- 1265 - First English Parliament summoned other than by royal command (in this instance by Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester) meets in Westminster Hall
- 1667 - Treaty of Andrusovo ends 13 year war between Poland & Russia
- 1807 - Napoleon convenes great Sanhedrin, Paris
- 1921 - British submarine HMS K5 (which was unusually equipped with steam turbines) sinks with 57 crew during exercises in the Bay of Biscay
- 1921 - Dagestan ASSR forms in RSFSR
- 1925 - The Soviet and Japan sign a convention resuming relations: Russia agrees to limit revolutionary activity of the Third Communist International, while Japan agrees to leave the Sakhalin
- 1936 - Edward VIII succeeds British King George V
- 1941 - Chinese Communist leaders re-organize the New Fourth Army in defiance of Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek's order for it to be disbanded
- 1944 - RAF drops 2,300 ton of bombs on Berlin
- 1945 - Franklin D. Roosevelt sworn-in for an unprecedented (and never to be repeated) 4th term as US President.
- 1945 - The Hungarian Provisional Government concludes an armistice with the USSR, US, and Britain, agree to pay reparations and to join the war against Germany.

'We Pulled a Rose from the River': Excavators on Recovering Showkat's Body

Observer News Service

Srinagar: After 22 months of relentless hope, grief and prayers, the last missing victim of the 2024 Gandbal boat tragedy, Showkat Ahmad Sheikh was finally recovered from the Jhelum River.

The young men, who have worked along the river for years, recounted the moment with deep emotion. “When we brought the body ashore, it was like a rose lying in the water,” said one sand excavator.

Speaking to the media, the rescuers as per KNO said, “We felt like the body of Showkat was untouched by a storm. We returned the body like a lost child to his parents.”

“The river had taken so much from us,” another excavator said in his trembled voice. “But today, Allah returned him. For 22 months, the village prayed, hoped and waited. And today, we finally have closure.”

As the news spread, Gandbal was awash with grief. Villagers, relatives and volunteers gathered along the riverbanks and through the streets. Women wept openly, men bowed their heads in silent sorrow and children clung to their parents. Tears streamed freely as prayers mingled with the cold January air.

“For all these months, I kept assuring myself that he will come back to us,” said a Gandbal resident.

Another villager added, “For nearly two years, the river has been silent. Today, it has given us a voice again. We can mourn, we can heal.”

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Yasir Hussain Sheikh, son of Late Haji Ghulam Muhammad Sheikh, born on 01-01-1979, and resident of Hassanabad, Saidkadal, Rainawari, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from Yasir Hussain Sheikh to Sheikh Yasir. Henceforth, I shall be known as Sheikh Yasir for all purposes, including my passport and other official records. This notice is issued to the public to avoid any confusion in the future. If any person has conany objection to this change of name, they may notify the undersigned within seven (7) days from the date of publication of this notice. After that, no objection shall be entertained.

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رجسٹریشن نمبر: 11939

SCAN FOR LOCATION

Ashraf Medical Hall,
Alamgari Bazar, Srinagar

Monday, Wednesday & Friday
Timing: 6:00 P.M to 8:00 P.M

Ashraf Medical Hall,
Alamgari Bazar, Srinagar

For Appointments, Call
+91 9419005778

For Appointments, Call
+91 9419005778

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Legal Counsel: Tasaduq Khwaja
Switchboard: (0194) 2502327 | +91 1947969705
Editorial: (0194) 2502327
Email: editor@kashmirobserver.net

KO VIEW

Kashmir's Fragrant Future

One of the untapped potentials of Kashmir is its chance to become a leading destination for perfumers.

The valley has rich plant varieties, herbs, and flowers that can produce fragrances in high demand globally. This potential remains a work in progress, but the foundation is strong.

With the right investments, Kashmir could offer a new source of revenue, create employment for young people, and position itself as a hub for artisanal fragrances.

Crocus sativus, the saffron plant, grows across Pampore. Its threads contain aroma compounds such as crocin and safranal that form the base of high-quality perfumes. Kashmir saffron can fetch around 3.25 lakh per kilogram in international markets due to its superior fragrance and authenticity.

Rose, chameli, and other fragrant plants grow in fields and gardens throughout the valley, offering diverse raw materials that allow perfumers to experiment with complex scents.

Traditional distillation methods in Kashmir rely on hydro-distillation. Artisans combine petals, herbs, and spices with steam to extract essential oils.

These oils are then matured in carriers like almond or sandalwood, creating attars with depth and richness. This craft preserves centuries of knowledge while producing natural, plant-based fragrances that appeal to modern consumers.

Start-ups can capitalize on this heritage by integrating science with craft.

Plant breeding programs can develop varieties with higher aroma yield and climate adaptability. Controlled environment farming can stabilize production and improve quality. Combining these techniques with artisanal distillation creates opportunities for scalable, sustainable fragrance ventures.

The economic potential extends beyond farming and production. Start-ups can establish value chains connecting farmers, distillers, and international perfume markets. Most saffron and floral oils are sold locally or in raw form. Branding, quality assurance, and traceability can increase global visibility and revenue.

This model can also generate employment, particularly for young people interested in agribusiness, craft, and entrepreneurship.

Global demand for natural, botanical fragrances is growing steadily. Consumers increasingly seek perfumes with origin stories, natural ingredients, and artisanal touch.

Kashmir's mix of plant diversity, heritage craft, and emerging entrepreneurial energy positions it to meet this demand effectively.

CASH COURSE

Read This Before You Buy Anything

Valley's Tech Turn

A shift toward technology in money and work offers Kashmir a practical path to security, growth, and global connection.

Irshad Mushtaq

Kashmir's relationship with money grew from its history. Farming, government jobs, and small trade shaped how families earned and saved. Cash at home, gold in cupboards, land in villages, and livestock in sheds felt safer than distant markets.

Political uncertainty and limited private industry strengthened this habit. Status spending by urban elites also played a role, as visible comfort often signaled success more than long-term planning.

The ideal future seemed clear: a government salary, inherited land, and savings kept close.

That world has changed. Educated youth face limited jobs while aspirations rise fast. Phones, cars, and elaborate weddings now define adulthood. Easy loans fill the gap between income and desire. Monthly EMIs consume cash flows, leaving little room for real investment. Families then lean on borrowing during emergencies, creating stress that old saving habits struggle to absorb.

Technology offers a different route. Digital payments now move huge sums through UPI and online banking even during harsh winters. A shopkeeper, artisan, or student can receive money instantly from anywhere. Phones act as personal banks, especially for women and people in remote areas. A technology mindset treats that device as a tool for earning, learning, investing, and building global links.

Financial planning also evolves with this shift. Goal-based investing, SIPs, and diversified portfolios replace single-asset comfort. Small monthly investments become possible through online KYC and transparent platforms. Local advisors help households follow clear rules instead of rumours.

Digital skills open new incomes. Freelancing, online stores, IT services, and content work allow young people to earn without leaving the valley. Data, apps, and calculators bring clarity to spending and debt decisions.

This moment matters. Digital access stands wide open, while economic pressure grows. Families that update their thinking now build income diversity, automated savings, and future-ready skills.

Kashmir's next chapter depends on turning technology into a daily habit of money and life.

The author is a Srinagar-based reputed financial advisor.

Kashmir's Digital Arrest Scam

A Srinagar couple's loss exposes how fear driven cyber scams thrive in Kashmir's digital rush and weak public awareness.

A phone rings in Srinagar, and an elderly couple answers, reassured by a voice that sounds official, polished, and convincing.

Within days, their lifetime savings of 48 lakh are gone, sent out in repeated transfers under pressure that never lets up.

This episode, now widely reported, reveals how cyber scams have tightened their grip on Jammu and Kashmir, feeding on fear, authority, and gaps in digital awareness.

The fraud began through WhatsApp video calls from people claiming senior positions in the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India.

The callers spoke with confidence and legal language, accusing the couple of links to money laundering and illegal financial flows through shell accounts. Screens flashed with forged documents carrying government logos, case numbers, and signatures.

Every detail looked convincing enough to silence doubt.

The callers warned of arrest, seizure of property, and frozen bank accounts. The pressure never eased.

Video calls continued for days, a tactic cyber investigators describe as virtual house arrest. The couple received strict instructions to stay connected, avoid relatives, neighbours, and police, and follow every step given on the call.

Isolation turned panic into obedience. One transfer followed another until 48 lakh moved into accounts controlled by the scammers.

When communication ended and no official action followed, reality surfaced.

The couple approached authorities, leading to a formal case and an investigation tracing call origins and fund movement. Police reiterated a simple truth that many people still miss.

There is no legal concept called digital arrest. No agency conducts investigations or financial verification through phone calls, video calls, or social media. And no officer asks for money, passwords, or one time passwords through a call.

This Srinagar case reflects a much larger pattern spreading through Kashmir.

Smartphones, online banking, and digital payments have entered daily life at speed. Cybercrime has followed even faster. What once felt like a distant urban issue now reaches homes in towns and villages throughout the valley.

Cyber police data shows financial fraud dominating complaints in the region.

Fake bank calls, phishing links, investment traps, online shopping fraud, job scams, and impersonation of government offices appear daily in police records.

Victims often lose large sums within hours. Realization arrives late, after money moves through layers of accounts designed to erase trails.

The so-called digital arrest scam alarms investigators because it relies more on psychology than technical skill.

Scammers borrow the authority of powerful institutions and mix it with fear of prison, public shame, and legal trouble. Rational thinking col-



lapses under constant pressure.

Cyber experts confirm that education and digital familiarity offer limited protection once fear takes control.

Kashmir's social realities deepen the risk. Digital usage has surged, while digital literacy grows unevenly. Senior citizens and first time online banking users often remain unfamiliar with evolving scam methods.

Many elderly residents live alone as children work or study outside the valley. Isolation becomes a tool that scammers exploit with precision.

Delayed reporting adds another layer of damage.

Shame, confusion, and fear of procedure keep many victims silent. Each hour of delay lowers recovery chances as funds move quickly through accounts, sometimes leaving the country within minutes.

Cybercrime officers stress that early reporting often allows banks to freeze suspect accounts before money disappears entirely.

Police units in Srinagar, Budgam, Kupwara, and Jammu report a steady rise in complaints over recent months. Timely action has helped freeze accounts and recover partial amounts in several cases. Recovery grows harder when transactions pass through complex digital routes involving multiple banks and telecom networks.

Law enforcement has stepped up its response as online scams spread into daily life. Cyber police stations have expanded staffing, officers have received specialized training, and coordination with banks, telecom providers, and national cyber agencies has improved.

Faster alerts and data sharing now form the backbone of cyber response in the valley.

Public warnings remain a constant part of official messaging.

Truth is, government agencies never carry out investigations through WhatsApp or video calls. Citizens should disconnect immediately from suspicious contact and report the incident without delay.

Authorities route victims to the National Cyber Crime Helpline at 1930 and the official cybercrime reporting

portal for rapid intervention.

But experts say policing alone cannot defeat cyber fraud. Families shape everyday protection. Regular conversations about online safety, especially with elderly members, lower vulnerability.

Simple habits matter, including verification of alarming claims with trusted relatives or local police before any action.

Fear driven scams lose power once isolation breaks.

Community engagement matters equally. Open discussion of fraud cases, responsible sharing of verified information, and removal of stigma around reporting can protect others from similar losses.

Cybercrime officials emphasize that blame rests with criminals who design narratives to exploit trust and authority. The scale of the threat is clear from national data.

The National Crime Records Bureau reports a sharp rise in cybercrime cases in recent years, with financial fraud forming the largest share.

The Reserve Bank of India and major banks continue issuing advisories as digital payments expand into every corner of daily life.

Kashmir mirrors this national trend while facing additional vulnerabilities tied to social structure and awareness gaps.

The Srinagar couple's loss of 48 lakh stands as a powerful signal. Cybercrime has moved from abstract warnings to personal devastation.

Each call, message, or video request carries potential risk in a digital environment shaped by speed and anonymity.

Safety now depends on knowledge, conversation, and swift reporting.

Digital convenience comes with the need for caution, and in Kashmir's connected future, staying aware is the best defense against a single call that can erase a lifetime of savings.

The author is a senior analyst and can be mailed at m.hanief@gmail.com.

Mohammad Hanief

Police units in Srinagar, Budgam, Kupwara, and Jammu report a steady rise in complaints over recent months. Timely action has helped freeze accounts and recover partial amounts in several cases. Recovery grows harder when transactions pass through complex digital routes involving multiple banks and telecom networks.

Letter to Editor

Time to Heal Pir Panjal Through Education

The Pir Panjal region has long waited for development and infrastructure that match its potential.

Despite sitting on a sensitive border and facing the pressures of politics, the region has not received the attention it deserves.

The absence of national-level institutions underscores this neglect and limits opportunities for local youth.

Jammu and its surrounding districts host major institutions such as the Indian Institute of Management, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, the Indian Institute of Technology, and Government Medical College. Kashmir also benefits from several prestigious educational centers.

Pir Panjal, however, remains without a single national-level institution. The people of Pir Panjal face unique

challenges. Frequent shelling and the proximity to the border have made access to basic services like healthcare and education difficult. Limited roads, schools, and healthcare facilities further reduce opportunities, making daily life a constant struggle.

The government has the chance to correct this imbalance.

The region deserves development and infrastructure that enable its residents to thrive. Establishing national-level institutions would provide meaningful opportunities for students and strengthen the local economy.

Rajouri offers an ideal location for a National Law University.

Situated at the heart of Jammu and Kashmir, with equal access from Jammu and Srinagar, the district provides both connectivity and a peaceful learning en-

vironment. Its scenic landscape adds to its appeal as a center of study.

An NLU in Rajouri would fill a critical gap in educational infrastructure. It would attract students, faculty, and staff, stimulate economic growth, and promote legal research that strengthens governance and public policy in the region.

Most importantly, it would allow students from Pir Panjal to pursue high-quality legal education without migrating to distant cities.

Government action can transform Pir Panjal. Prioritizing education and infrastructure development would unlock the potential of this region.

Political parties must unite to make this vision a reality and focus on establishing an NLU in Rajouri.

Efforts from government, academia,

and civil society should move forward without delay, with clear timelines and dedicated resources.

The institution should serve students from diverse backgrounds and emphasize excellence in legal education and research.

Pir Panjal has waited long enough. Establishing a National Law University in Rajouri would create balanced development, expand access to quality education, and stimulate economic growth, contributing to the broader progress of Jammu and Kashmir.

The people of Pir Panjal deserve nothing less.

Sincerely,

Sajjad Iqbal
Sajjadiqbal107@gmail.com

Saadat Hasan Manto and Kashmir

On Manto's 71st death anniversary, the author revisits his Kashmiri roots and the bold literature that continues to challenge, provoke, and move readers.

Arshid Mehraj

January 18 returns each year with a certain pull.

Some people walk to familiar vantage points in frontier hamlets, while readers in urban centres reach for thin paperbacks with creased pages.

Across these spaces, Saadat Hasan Manto lives in conversations and memories in Kashmir.

Though he passed away 71 years ago, on January 18, 1955, his words still bring scenes to life with fearless honesty that stays with the reader.

Manto's story begins far from the valley, but Kashmir sits at the center of his sense of self.

His family traced its roots to the region, part of a larger Kashmiri movement into Punjab during the nineteenth century. Some families left during the famine of 1833. Others moved earlier or later, seeking trade routes and livelihoods.

Manto grew up with these stories woven into daily life. Kashmir existed as inheritance, memory, and identity for him.

He embraced that identity openly, describing himself as a Kashmiri with pride and ease.

His writings carry references to Kashmiri culture, language, and food with natural familiarity. Even when distance shaped his life, the valley shaped his imagination.

He reached Banihal during his travels and saw towns like Kud, Batote, and Kishtwar. He observed beauty alongside hardship.

That partial journey sharpened his longing for the land his ancestors left behind.

This inherited bond shaped his view of Partition.

For Manto, 1947 unfolded as a human experience before it became a political chapter. He watched cities change, friendships fade, and loyalties shift under pressure.

Kashmir entered this moment early, drawn into a conflict that reshaped its future. Manto approached the region as a writer deeply attuned to human cost.

Teetwal Ka Kutta stands among his most iconic works on Kashmir.

The story centers on a stray dog wandering between Indian and Pakistani posts in a border village. Soldiers from both sides feed it for a while. Suspicion soon follows.

The animal becomes a target, caught between competing claims. The ending strikes with force and clarity.

Manto allows the scene to speak for itself. The dog reflects the fate of ordinary people living along contested lines.

Years later, the story resonates strongly in Teetwal itself.

Families divided by the Line of Control still gather when ceasefires hold. Relatives wave across a narrow stream. Greetings travel on the wind. Armed posts remain close, alert, and watchful. Movement requires care and caution.

In such moments, Manto's fiction mirrors lived experience with uncanny precision.

Manto explored the Kashmir imbroglio again in Akhri Salute.

The story follows two childhood friends, now stationed on opposite sides of a border. Their conversation flows easily. Memories rise, laughter slips through the tension, and then duty takes over, before a shot breaks the moment.

A question remains about the price paid for land and pride.

Manto leaves readers with the weight of that moment. The story captures friendship, conflict, and loss within a few pages.

This clarity defines Manto's writing.

He focused on people rather than positions. He examined how large decisions filtered down into daily lives.

Kashmir, in his work, appears as a place shaped by history but filled with personal stories. He recognized the region's complexity without flattening it into rallying cries.

His famous letter to Jawaharlal Nehru offers another window into this relationship.

Writing as a Kashmiri to another



ON HIS DEATH ANNIVERSARY, READING MANTO THROUGH THE KASHMIR LENS OFFERS FRESH INSIGHT. The valley still

reflects the themes he explored. His stories feel current because they engage with lived realities rather than distant history.

Kashmiri, Manto blended humour, warmth, and critique. He spoke of shared roots and shared cultural memory. He questioned policies affecting rivers and land with sharp insight.

The letter reads as a conversation between two people bound by origin and divided by power.

This exchange revealed Manto's refusal to accept easy divisions. Living in Pakistan at the time, he

addressed India's prime minister directly. He wrote from a place of cultural belonging rather than political alignment. That stance defined much of his work and public life.

Partition reshaped Manto's personal journey as well.

Bombay offered him creative energy, friendships, and success in cinema and journalism. Communal violence altered the city's atmosphere and relationships.

In January 1948, he moved to Lahore. The transition brought emotional strain. Pakistan greeted him as a powerful writer whose voice unsettled comfortable narratives.

His Partition stories from this period form the core of his legacy. Toba Tek Singh stands out for its stark simplicity.

Inmates in an asylum face relocation based on religion. Bishan Singh struggles to understand where his village belongs. He chooses the strip of land between the two new countries.

That space carries deep meaning in Kashmir, where borders cut through geography and memory alike.

Manto's writing faced repeated court cases for obscenity. These accusations overlooked his deeper aim.

He wrote with directness about desire, suffering, and hypocrisy to affirm shared humanity.

Prostitutes, prisoners, and outcasts filled his pages. He portrayed them with empathy and precision.

This approach unsettled both readers and authorities. His commitment to truth guided his pen.

Kashmir deepened this commitment.

Manto wrote tributes to Kashmiri poet Gulam Ahmad Mehjoor, praising those who remained rooted in the valley despite hardship.

He often thought about migration, balancing the pain of leaving with the effort of enduring.

These thoughts show up again and again in his essays and letters, always returning to questions of



MANTO OFFERS RECOGNITION AND CLARITY. He invites readers to see people first and power later. His work remains compelling because it speaks in a human voice, direct and lyrical.

home and responsibility.

His personal life reflected similar ties.

He married into a Kashmiri family. Kashmiri idioms and culinary references flowed naturally in his prose. He often wrote about food as memory and connection.

He once described being Kashmiri as another way of being beautiful, a line that carried affection and pride.

Manto passed away at the age of forty two, leaving behind a body of work that continues to speak with force.

His epitaph, written by himself, invites reflection on creation and storytelling.

He viewed writing as witness, a way to hold moments up to light.

—The author is a Srinagar-based storyteller.

Walking with Faith

Life in the valley is full of trials, but faith can turn challenges into strength.

G. H. Moon

I have often reflected on how life moves in waves.

Bright days follow dark ones, and joys come after sorrows.

I have learned that true wisdom comes from facing both with calm and balance.

I make sure that happiness does not sweep me off my feet, and I do not let setbacks pull me down.

Life, for me, is a place to do good, help others, and seek God's pleasure.

As the years pass, I notice how disappointments pile up. Dreams go unfulfilled, ambitions remain



WHEN I ALIGN MY ACTIONS WITH FAITH, I FIND PEACE, NURTURE HARMONY, and discover that hope, patience, and trust can guide me toward a brighter tomorrow.

incomplete, and relationships drift apart.

These are common experiences for all of us. But I have also learned that when I focus on my duties and place my trust in God, I can face challenges without feeling stuck or hopeless.

Every religion offers guidance for living well, but I find myself drawing most inspiration from Islam.

My faith has taught me how to treat my family, friends, and the wider community. It constantly re-

minds me to grow a little each day and become a better person.

The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said a true believer is one from whose hands and tongue no one suffers. I try to live by that simple, powerful advice. It shapes how I interact with my family, neighbours, and society.

I am inspired by the emphasis Islam places on forgiveness and humanity.

I have read stories of war-torn societies that found peace almost overnight when Islamic teachings were introduced. I am struck by accounts of a lone woman traveling safely across the desert because the people she met honoured justice and human value.

These examples remind me that a person in communion with God finds peace within and radiates it outward.

Sometimes, I wish I could write with the depth and power of great writers like Allama Rashidul-Kheri, whose Mousaveri Gham captures life in such vivid, awe-inspiring detail. Even the words of Persian poets keep me going, reminding me to hold on to hope. One of them wrote that even the darkest night carries the promise of a bright

dawn.

Misery and misfortune are never permanent. I have seen how people facing extreme poverty have suddenly found prosperity.

Nothing is impossible if we stay on the straight path that God has laid out for us.

I see the world today, torn by conflicts, extreme poverty, intolerance, and lack of respect. Humanity seems to have forgotten lessons our great teachers left us.

History urges me to keep striving and to hold hope. I know I cannot give up because God forbids hopelessness. I also know that He helps only those who act and persevere.

So I continue, step by step, trusting in God, acting with purpose, and facing life's challenges with courage.

I remind myself that life's trials are lessons.

When I align my actions with faith, I find peace, nurture harmony, and discover that hope, patience, and trust can guide me toward a brighter tomorrow.

—The author is from Baramulla, and can be reached at ghmooon32@gmail.com.

A Son's Sacrifice in Kashmir Heights

Witnessing cruelty at home, Aijaz Khan guided his mother to safety and built a life of perseverance and purpose in South Kashmir's forests.

Gowher Bhat

I reached Gadool, a small village high in Kokernag, on one bitterly cold noon. The air cut through layers of wool, and the village stood still, as if it were holding its breath.

Children here grow up fast. Life asks a lot from them, and they learn early how to keep moving forward.

About twenty years ago, Aijaz Khan was born into this hamlet, shaped from the start by its demanding life.

His boyhood diverged sharply from typical village life. While friends chased studies or carefree hours, Aijaz faced terror at home.

His father was cruel, and his anger often fell on his mother. Violence became part of daily life, and moments of calm grew rare and brief.

By fourteen, home no longer felt like a refuge. His mother carried wounds on her body and deep within herself. Aijaz watched, helpless, as the place that once protected him fell apart.

"I was still a child," he told me, "but I knew something was deeply wrong." Then came a moment that would change the course of his life.

Aijaz gathered his courage and spoke to his mother with care. He asked her to leave the marriage and build a new life if it could offer safety and security, even though he knew he would be left to face life alone.

"You deserve peace," he remembers telling her. "You should move forward with your life, and not stay only because of me."

That conversation stayed with him.

"If you stay just for my sake," he said, "you will slowly lose yourself. And when that happens, I lose you too."

His mother left and married again. Aijaz stayed behind



with his father. That choice cost him much of his childhood.

"People think freedom comes easily," Aijaz says softly. "Sometimes love means letting someone go so they can live."

Living alone with his father brought deep pain. The house felt empty and tense. Silence filled the rooms. School slowly faded as survival mattered more than books.

"Some evenings," he tells me, "I cried without a sound. That is how I learned to grieve in silence."

Sadness followed him everywhere. "I had no one to talk to," he says. "Every word at home led to anger. Silence felt safer."

During that time, the forest became his refuge.

Surrounded by Gadool's woods, Aijaz spent long hours among the trees. Some days he arrived before sunrise. Other days he stayed until the light faded. He would sit alone beneath tall branches and breathe deeply.

"The forest listened," he says. "The trees gave me space. The mountains accepted me without judgment."

He learned to steady himself through instinctive connection.

"I would place my hands on the tree bark," he recalls. "I felt calm move through me. It was as if the tree was telling me to

stay rooted and stand firm."

The forest became a source of healing.

"People often look for guidance from other humans," he says. "For me, the earth was my teacher. It gave me calm, showed me the beauty of stillness, and taught me that storms eventually give way to clear skies."

He feels this restoration came from something greater.

"I believe God saw that my spirit could grow among the trees rather than the crowds," he explains. "So He placed me in nature's care."

Little by little, change came. The pain remained, but its sharp edges softened. Anger lost its hold over him.

"Cruelty can make some people bitter," he reflects. "For others, it teaches kindness. I chose kindness."

"I saw how cruelty can destroy family bonds," he continues. "I promised myself I would never let it spread through me."

Denied the classroom, Aijaz turned to hands-on work. He learned to handle vehicles, worked as a helper in workshops, and took on small tasks that earned him honest pay.

He recalls telling himself in the mirror, "I will stand on my own, no matter what it takes."

Today, Aijaz manages his own resources. He draws plans for his home and dreams of marriage, guided

by a single, firm vow.

"My father's shadow will not shape who I become," he says.

Even with life's hardships, he feels no bitterness toward his mother's new life. Her happiness and family bring him a new sense and sensibility.

"Sometimes I cry alone," he admits. "But those tears remind me of my purpose."

That purpose is clear: his mother lives free from fear.

"When my actions bring peace to someone else," he says, "my struggles take on meaning."

In Gadool and the surrounding hills, Aijaz also helps young boys in trading seeds, especially those trading seeds, grains, and livestock. He guides them toward honest work and steady paths.

A young neighbour says, "He lifts our spirits every day. He tells us, my climb went through valleys, and yours can too."

An elder adds, "Many youths here struggle, but Aijaz turned his struggles into giving."

Another neighbour says softly, "Life could have broken him, and people would have felt sorry. Instead, it made him stronger. That strength earns our respect."

Aijaz never thinks of himself as a hero. He does not seek praise. His life reflects a small truth many in Kashmir know: strength often speaks softly, and sometimes it carries burdens that others let go of.

"Healing chooses warmth over cold," he says.

He looks toward the forests that once held his broken pieces, a faint smile touching his lips: "The branches helped me grow where no one else could."

—The author is a Pulwama-based educator.

IMF Raises India's GDP Growth Projection to 7.3% for FY26

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The IMF on Monday raised India's growth projection to 7.3 per cent for fiscal 2025-26, up 0.7 percentage point from its October forecast, on the back of better-than-expected performance of the economy.

The Washington-headquartered multilateral lending agency has also revised India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth forecast to 6.4 per cent for fiscal year 2026-27 beginning April 1, 2026, from its earlier estimate of 6.2 per cent.

"In India, growth is revised upward by 0.7 percentage point to 7.3 per cent for 2025 (fiscal FY26), reflecting the better-than-expected outturn in the third quarter of the year and strong momentum in the fourth quarter," it said in its World Economic Outlook (WEO) update.

Growth is projected to moderate to 6.4 per cent in 2026-27 and 2027-28 as cyclical and temporary factors wane, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said.

According to India's statistics ministry, GDP during April-September of 2025-26 registered a growth rate of 8 per cent, on the back of a robust 8.2 per cent



growth in July-September period.

The Indian economy is likely to expand by 7.4 per cent in the current fiscal, according to the First Advance Estimates released by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). The growth during 2024-25 fiscal was 6.5 per cent.

On inflation, IMF said it is expected to go back to near target levels after a marked decline in 2025 driven by subdued food prices.

The Reserve Bank has a target to maintain consumer price index (CPI) based headline inflation at 4 per cent, with a margin of 2 per cent on the either side.

The IMF update further said that the global growth is projected to remain resilient at 3.3 per

cent in 2026 and at 3.2 per cent in 2027.

The forecast marks a small upward revision for 2026 and no change for 2027 compared with that in the October 2025 WEO.

In emerging market and developing economies, growth is expected to continue to hover just above 4 per cent in 2026 and 2027.

Relative to the projection in October, growth in 2025 for China is revised upward by 0.2 percentage point to 5 per cent, the IMF said.

Global headline inflation is expected to decline from an estimated 4.1 per cent in 2025 to 3.8 per cent in 2026 and further to 3.4 per cent in 2027, it said.

Rescued Indore Beggar Turns Out To Be 'Millionaire'

Press Trust of India

Indore: Three houses, three autorickshaws and a chauffeur-driven car. One would think these belonged to a jeweller from Indore's Sarafa Bazaar, not a leprosy-afflicted man, who moves around inconspicuously on a wheeled board, seeking alms, but silently lending lakhs in the famed bullion market.

Officials in Indore were left stunned recently when an anti-beggar drive led them to a 50-year-old man who has reportedly amassed property worth several lakh rupees by seeking alms, but the episode took a new turn on Monday when a close relative of the beggar dismissed the administration's claim as false, saying they had some "misunderstanding".

Women and Child Development Department official Dinesh Mishra said a leprosy patient was rescued from the Sarafa area following information from local residents.

Mishra, the nodal officer for the begging eradication campaign, said, "We have learned that this man owns three pucca houses, including a three-storey building. In addition, he owns three auto-rickshaws that he rents out."

According to Mishra, the man also owns a car in which he



begs, and he has hired a driver for this purpose.

He explained, "This man, suffering from leprosy, begs from a wheeled cart."

According to Mishra, the man has been begging since 2021-22, and it has also been revealed that he has lent Rs 4 lakh to Rs 5 lakh to people in the bullion market, from which he charges daily interest.

The officer explained, "He earns Rs 1,000 to 2,000 per day from this interest. In addition, he receives Rs 400 to 500 daily in alms."

According to Mishra, the man has been placed at a shelter home.

As the "lakhpati" beggar became talk of the town and hogged media limelight, his nephew told reporters that the three-storey house, which the

were circulated as a beggar," he claimed.

District Magistrate Shivam Verma said Indore is a "beggar-free city," and upon receiving information about begging, campaigns are launched to rehabilitate destitute.

The administration has received preliminary information about the man's assets, and appropriate legal action will be taken after all facts are verified, Verma added.

The administration has imposed a legal ban on begging, giving alms, and even purchasing goods from beggars in Indore.

However, Rupali Jain, president of Pravesh, an NGO working to eradicate beggary, said the case of this leprosy-afflicted man should be viewed from a humanitarian perspective, claiming he did not amass his alleged wealth of millions of rupees by begging.

She explained that the man used to work as a mason a few years ago, but was unable to continue after suffering severe damage to his fingers and feet due to leprosy.

Facing social and family discrimination, he began begging at night near the famous Chaat Chowpatty, a popular night food market, in the Sarafa area, she said.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

A Mother's 2 Year

a boat carrying over a dozen people capsized in the Jhelum at Gandbal, near Lasjan. The river, swollen and unforgiving, claimed nine lives that day. Five passengers were rescued, while six bodies were recovered within hours of the accident. Two more were found soon after in a joint operation by the police and the Navy's Marine Commandos.

Sheikh was the only one who never came back.

For nearly 21 months, his absence lingered as an unresolved chapter. Search teams returned repeatedly to the river, joined by local volunteers who refused to let the missing man become just another statistic. Each effort ended without closure, even as time eroded hope.

With Monday's recovery, the Gandbal tragedy is finally complete on record. For those left behind, particularly a mother who returned to the river each day with folded hands, the loss remains unfinished, long after the Jhelum has flowed on.

LG Gets Powers

powers is intended to strengthen enforcement in Union territories by enabling swift action against misleading health-related claims, which can pose serious risks to public health and safety.

Healthcare Is Bedrock

facility aimed at strengthening medical infrastructure in the city and surrounding districts.

He congratulated the Meerz Group and extended best wishes to everyone associated with the project, expressing hope that the hospital would significantly enhance healthcare services in the region.

The foundation-laying ceremony was attended by Managing Director Meerz Group Farooq Mir, Chairperson J&K Waqf Board Dr Darakhshan Andrabi, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg, SSP Srinagar Dr GV Sundep Chakravarty, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Akshay Labroo, along with senior officials, medical professionals, and prominent citizens.

Paratrooper Killed,

night and resumed early Monday in the challenging terrain with thick vegetation and steep slopes, limiting visibility and movement, officials said.

In a post on X, the White Knight Corps said 'Operation Trashi-I' continues in Chatroo. "The cordon has been further tightened with search operations expanded. Troops of the corps, along with police and CRPF, remain deployed to dominate the area."

Multiple teams of the Army, police, and paramilitary forces, supported by drones and sniffer dogs, are combing the area while maintaining a tight security cordon to ensure that the terrorists do not escape, officials said.

They said search teams have busted a terrorist hideout and recovered a large quantity of food items including ration, utensils, gas cylinder and stove near the site of yesterday's gunfight.

A group of two to three terrorists allegedly affiliated with Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) are believed to be hiding in the area, officials said, adding the operation resumed with the first light of day and was ongoing when the last reports were received.

Meanwhile, one of the injured troopers, Havildar Gajendra Singh, died during treatment at a military hospital here during the intervening night of January 18 and 19, officials said.

"The General Officer Commanding, White Knight Corps and all ranks pay solemn tribute to Havildar Gajendra Singh of the Special Forces, who made the supreme sacrifice while gallantly executing a counter terrorism operation in the Singpora area during the ongoing

Operation Trashi-I.

"We honour his indomitable courage, valour and selfless devotion to duty and stand firmly with the bereaved family in this hour of profound grief," the Army said in a separate post on X.

Army's northern commander Lt Gen Pratik Sharma also paid homage to the braveheart, and said "his sacrifice and devotion will forever remain etched in our hearts".

Termining the action 'Operation Trashi-I', the Army's Jammu-based White Knight Corps, in a post on X on Sunday, said security forces came in contact with the terrorists in the general area Sonnar, northeast of Chatroo, during the search operation conducted as part of ongoing joint counter-terror exercises along with Jammu and Kashmir Police.

"Operations remain underway with additional forces inducted to reinforce the cordon, supported by close coordination with civil administration and security agencies," the Army said, commending the troops for their exceptional professionalism and resolve while responding to hostile fire under challenging terrain and conditions.

This marks the third encounter between security forces and terrorists in the Jammu region this year. Previous encounters occurred in the Kahog and Najote forests in the Billawar area of Kathua district on January 7 and 13, respectively.

On December 15 last year, a police officer was killed in an encounter with terrorists at Soan village in the Majalra area of Udhampur district. The terrorists managed to escape, taking advantage of thick foliage and darkness.

The encounters followed a major counter-terrorist operation launched in the forest belts of the Jammu region in December last year to flush out nearly three dozen holed-up terrorists.

Operations have been further intensified in the run-up to Republic Day to ensure peaceful celebrations, amid intelligence inputs about desperate attempts by Pakistan-based handlers to push more terrorists into the region, officials mentioned.

LG Pays Tribute

"I salute the supreme sacrifice of our braveheart Havildar Gajendra Singh. His supreme sacrifice will remain etched in our hearts. The entire nation stands in solidarity with the bereaved family of our martyr in this difficult hour," Sinha said.

One soldier was killed while seven others sustained injured in the encounter with terrorist in Chatroo belt of Kishtwar on Sunday.

Nitin Nabin Elected

which was founded in 1980, the same year he was born.

The low profile and unassuming Nabin, who resigned as the minister for law and justice, urban development and housing in the Bihar government after he was appointed working president of the BJP on December 14, will succeed J P Nadda. Nadda, who is the union health minister, has been at the helm of the party's affairs for an extended period since 2020.

"I hereby announce that only one name, that of Shri Nitin Nabin, has been proposed for the post of National President of Bharatiya Janata Party," K Laxman, the Returning Officer for presidential election, said in a statement.

Laxman said 37 sets of nomination papers were filed in favour of Nabin as the BJP national president and all nomination papers were found to be valid.

Prime Minister Modi was among the proposers of Nabin's candidature for the party post. Several senior BJP leaders including Nadda, and other union ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh and Nitin Gadkari were among the proposers.

Of the 37 sets of nomination papers, 36 were filed by state units of the party and one set was submitted by the BJP Parliamentary Party.

In a post on X, Laxman said, "Under the BJP's Sangathan Parv, the election process for the post of national president was conducted successfully in my capacity as national returning officer."

This "transparent and democratic process" once again reflects the party's strong organisational values and its deep commitment to internal democracy, the BJP Rajya Sabha MP further said.

Laxman said the nomination process was completed in a "fully constitutional and transparent manner".

"With nationwide consensus, Nitin Nabin was the sole nominee. Heartiest congratulations and best wishes," he said in another post on X.

Nadda, senior ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Kiren Rijiju, Chief Ministers Yogi Adityanath, Nayab Saini, Pramod Sawant, Pema Khandu, Pushkar Singh Dhami were among those present on the occasion.

As the BJP seeks to further expand its influence in uncharted territories, the upcoming Assembly elections in the opposition-ruled states of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala as well as BJP-ruled Assam will come as a major test for Nabin, who was preferred to more seasoned leaders.

The elections will be an opportunity for Nabin, who rose through the ranks in the Bhartiya Janata Yuva Morcha, the youth wing of the BJP, to prove his mettle as organisational head of the BJP pyramid.

Laxman said according to the schedule, the nomination process was completed between 2 pm and 4 pm on Monday.

"In all, 37 sets of nomination papers were received in favour of Shri Nitin Nabin for the post of national president. On scrutiny, all sets of nomination papers were found to be duly filled out in the required format and were valid."

He said the election process was initiated after the election of 30 state presidents out of 36 states, well above the required number for completing a minimum of 50 per cent of the states.

He said the notification of the schedule of events was announced and the electoral roll was published on January 16, 2026.

Nabin took the political plunge in 2006 after the death of his father Nabin Kishore Prasad Sinha, who was a BJP MLA.

According to a party leader, Nabin, a Kayasth by caste, may be young but has a lot of experience in governance and working for the people and the organisation.

He impressed the BJP central leadership as the party co-in charge of the November 2023 Chhattisgarh Assembly elections, where BJP pulled off a surprise win by beating chief minister Bhupesh Baghel of the Congress.

In the Lok Sabha elections, he repeated the success formula. The BJP won 10 of the 11 seats in Chhattisgarh.

Born in Ranchi, now in Jharkhand, Nabin is married to Deepmala Shrivastava and the couple has a son and a daughter.

He has been known to win elections with huge margins, starting with the first bypoll he contested in 2006 which he won by nearly 60,000 votes. He won the latest one, earlier this year, by more than 51,000 votes.

Nabin is the latest link in the chain of BJP presidents -- Atal Behari Vajpayee became the first BJP president in 1980 and was succeeded by Lal Krishna Advani in 1986 who held the post for three terms.

Others who have held the position include Murl Manohar Joshi, Kushabhau Thakre, Bangaru Laxman, Jana Krishnamurthi, Venkaiah Naidu, Rajnath Singh (twice), Nitin Gadkari and Amit Shah.

MeT Forecasts

axis, Bandipora-Razdan Pass, Kupwara-Sadhna Pass, and the districts of Doda, Udhampur, Reasi, Kishtwar and Ramban.

Similar impacts, though of moderate to heavy intensity, are expected during the second system as well.

The advisory, shared with the Divisional Commissioners of Kashmir and Jammu for preparedness, warned of possible disruption to surface and air transport, including traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway and other major roads in middle and higher altitude areas. There is also a likelihood of landslides, mudslides and gusty winds ranging between 40 and 60 kmph at vulnerable locations.

In view of the forecast, travellers, tourists and transporters have been advised to plan their journeys carefully. Residents of snow-bound areas have been cautioned against venturing into avalanche-prone and steep zones, while farmers have been advised to suspend irrigation, fertiliser application and chemical spray operations during the period.

Officials said the upcoming spell of rain and snowfall is expected to bring much-needed relief from the prevailing dry conditions across Jammu and Kashmir.

Shaaban Moon

for spiritual preparation, increased worship, and seeking forgiveness.

Notably, Islamic scholars regard Shaaban as the month in which deeds are presented before Allah. It is reported that Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, observed frequent voluntary fasting during Shaaban and encouraged believers to engage in prayer, remembrance of Allah, and charity. (GNS)

CM Calls On

interaction also took place amid reports of Kashmiri shawl sellers being allegedly roughed up in different parts of the country, an issue that has triggered concern within the Union territory.

The upcoming budget session of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, scheduled to begin in February, is another key backdrop to the meeting. The Union Home Ministry acts as the nodal ministry for financial allocations to Union territories, including Jammu and Kashmir.

In the past, Omar has stated that while the Centre has been supportive in terms of funding and capital expenditure schemes, the relationship between his government and the LG's office has been strained. He has accused the LG administration of interfering in the functioning of departments that do not fall under security or law and order.

The Chief Minister has also alleged that the office of the J&K Chief Minister has been systematically weakened after the region's reorganisation into a Union territory. He has previously described the situation as administrative disempowerment, citing what he termed as interference by the LG's office in routine governance matters. SNS

Intensify Surveillance

Kashmir, district SSPs of Kashmir Zone, and representatives of traffic and railway security units.

"During the meeting, officers briefed the DGP on intelligence inputs, security measures, and preparedness plans for the Republic Day events across the Valley," the officials said, adding that key areas discussed included crowd management, traffic regulation, strategic deployment of forces, and protection of vulnerable targets.

DGP Prabhat assigned specific responsibilities to officers with strict instructions for precise execution of security protocols.

He emphasized the need for foolproof arrangements at all designated venues and directed district heads to closely monitor social media to prevent misinformation that could impact public safety.

The Traffic Wing was tasked with formulating an effective plan to ensure smooth movement of the public and protected persons.

Security arrangements along highways,

railway tracks, stations, and other critical locations were reviewed. SSP Security Kashmir was instructed to implement comprehensive measures at the main venue. (KNO)

PM Meets UAE

systems and nuclear power plant operations, he said.

A long-term agreement for the supply of 0.5 million metric tonnes of LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) annually was concluded by the two sides.

The UAE is India's second-largest supplier of LNG to India after Qatar.

Artificial Intelligence was identified as a priority area of cooperation and it was decided to collaborate on setting up a supercomputing cluster in India with the UAE partnership, Misri said, adding the Gulf nation will also look at investments for expanding data centre capacities in India.

The foreign secretary said the two sides also set a target of USD 200 billion in annual trade by 2032. The volume of two-way trade between the two sides was USD 84 billion in 2023-24.

The two sides also resolved to significantly expand their defence ties.

"A letter of intent was signed between the two sides to work towards concluding a framework agreement for a strategic defence partnership between India and the UAE," Misri said.

Another letter of intent was also signed for joint work in developing space infrastructure. Under this initiative, both sides will look to set up new launch complexes, satellite fabrication facilities, joint missions, space academy and training centres, the foreign secretary said.

A separate document was signed to facilitate the UAE's participation in the development of a special investment region in Gujarat's Dholera.

This initiative will look at the establishment of an international airport, a pilot training school, an MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul) facility, a greenfield port, a smart urban township, as well as projects related to railway connectivity and energy infrastructure, Misri added.

The discussions between Modi and Al Nahyan focused on cooperation in several new and emerging areas, including new opportunities for civil nuclear cooperation in the light of the passage of the Shanti Act in India.

An agreement on food safety was also signed. It will provide for cooperation in the food sector and encourage food products and other agricultural exports from India to the UAE.

It will benefit the farmers of India and contribute to food security in the UAE, the foreign secretary said.

Both sides will also explore the possibility of setting up a "data embassy", Misri said.

This is a relatively new concept, but there will be work done to see how these can be set up under mutually recognised sovereignty agreements, he noted.

The foreign secretary said the situation in Yemen, Gaza and Iran was discussed at the talks but declined to elaborate.

"All of these issues were discussed between the leaders. I cannot get into the details at this stage, but yes, both leaders had the opportunity to share their views and opinions in detail on these issues," he said.

Misri said Modi and Al Nahyan unequivocally condemned cross-border terrorism and held that the perpetrators, supporters and financiers of all acts of terrorism must be brought to justice.

The UAE president expressed his support for the success of India's chairmanship of the BRICS grouping this year.

There has been a significant upswing in bilateral trade and people-to-people ties after New Delhi and Abu Dhabi inked an ambitious comprehensive economic partnership agreement in 2022.

The UAE president was seen off at the airport by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

Doctors Warn of Surge in Thyroid Disorders Across Kashmir

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Thyroid disorders are emerging as one of the most commonly diagnosed endocrine problems in Kashmir, with doctors attributing the rising numbers to a combination of lifestyle changes, stress, autoimmune conditions and increased awareness leading to better detection.

According to doctors, thyroid disease is often a lifelong condition. They have called for sustained public awareness, regular screening and adoption of a healthy lifestyle to prevent complications.

The thyroid gland is a small, butterfly-shaped organ located at the base of the neck. It produces thyroid hormones that regulate the body's metabolism, influencing how the heart beats, how fast calories are burned, body temperature, digestion, brain function and even reproductive health.

"Thyroid hormones are essential for the normal functioning of almost all organs, including the heart, blood vessels, brain, liver and reproductive system. Even

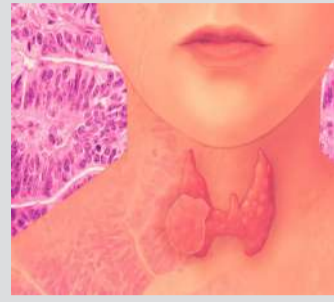
minor imbalances can affect overall health significantly," Dr Raouf Ahmad, an endocrinologist, explained.

Speaking to KNO, Dr Raouf said that hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid) is the most common thyroid disorder in Kashmir and is seen more frequently in women.

"Thyroid disorders can broadly be divided into structural and functional problems. Structurally, the gland may enlarge or develop nodules (goitre), sometimes with malignant transformation. Functionally, the gland may become underactive (hypothyroidism) or overactive (hyperthyroidism), producing too little or too much hormone," he said.

He said thyroid disease is often asymptomatic or presents with subtle and non-specific symptoms, making it easy to overlook.

Doctors said symptoms vary depending on whether the thyroid is underactive or overactive. They said that common symptoms of hypothyroidism include fatigue and lethargy,



weight gain, constipation, cold intolerance, hair fall, dry skin, depression and memory issues, and menstrual irregularities and infertility in women.

Common symptoms of hyperthyroidism, according to doctors, include anxiety and irritability, weight loss despite good appetite, heat intolerance, excessive sweating, hand tremors, palpitations, frequent bowel movements, and goitre or thyroid nodules.

"If your body makes too much thyroid hormone, it leads to hyperthyroidism. If it makes too little, it results in hypothyroidism. Both conditions are serious and require medical supervision," said Dr Javid Ahmad Reshie.

He said several causes behind the growing burden of thyroid disease in Kashmir include autoimmune disorders, chronic stress, iodine imbalance, genetic predisposition and hormonal changes.

According to Dr Reshie, diet plays an important role in thyroid health. He advised adequate intake of iodine through iodised salt, but avoiding excessive consumption, including selenium, zinc and iron-rich foods like nuts, seeds, eggs and green vegetables.

He warned against excessive intake of processed foods and junk food and called for avoiding unnecessary supplements without medical advice.

Doctors further said that thyroid disease during pregnancy requires special attention. If a mother has untreated or poorly controlled thyroid disease, especially hypothyroidism, it can increase the risk of miscarriage, preterm birth, low birth weight and impaired brain development of the baby, they said. However, with proper diagnosis and treatment, most women with thyroid

disease can have a healthy pregnancy and baby.

Doctors explained that the Thyroid Stimulating Hormone (TSH) test is the most commonly used screening tool. They said high TSH usually indicates an underactive thyroid, while low TSH suggests an overactive gland, though there are exceptions. Self-interpretation should be avoided, they warned.

According to doctors, every adult should get thyroid tests once every three years, and those with a family history or symptoms should get tested annually.

Thyroid disease is usually a lifelong condition requiring continuous monitoring and often daily medication. Early diagnosis, adherence to medication, stress management, regular exercise and a healthy diet can help patients live a normal life.

Doctors urged the health authorities to intensify public education campaigns. They encouraged people not to ignore symptoms, especially women, who are disproportionately affected by thyroid disorders.

Retired Employee Booked in Migrant Relief Scam

SRINAGAR: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) Kashmir of Crime Branch J&K has filed a charge sheet against a retired PHE Department employee for allegedly posing as a migrant and fraudulently availing relief worth rupees 18.3 lakh, officials said here.

They said the investigations revealed that the accused had unlawfully registered himself and his family as migrants despite being in active government service, thereby drawing benefits he was not entitled to.

According to a statement issued to Kashmir Observer, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) Kashmir of Crime Branch J&K has produced a charge sheet against Mohd Hussain Shah residence of Syedapora, Shopian, presently residing at Nunar Kavabagh Ganderbal, a retired employee of the Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department, Ganderbal Division, before the Hon'ble Court of 19-Electricity Magistrate, Jammu. The charge sheet pertains to allegations of unlawfully registering as a migrant along with family members and fraudulently obtaining migrant relief amounting to Rs 18,30,265.

The statement reads, acting on a written complaint brought to its notice, this Investigation Agency examined allegations that the accused, who served in the PHE Department, had dishonestly availed migrant relief in cash by illegal means. It was alleged that the accused had unlawfully registered himself as a migrant along with his family members, despite being in active government service during the relevant period, thereby rendering him ineligible for such benefits.

"A thorough investigation was subsequently carried out by the EOW, during which it was prima facie established that the accused had deliberately misrepresented his employment status and suppressed material facts to secure migrant registration. The investigation further revealed that the accused continued to avail migrant relief benefits despite being ineligible, causing wrongful loss to the Government exchequer and corresponding wrongful gain to himself."

It reads, on the strength of material evidence collected during the investigation, it was established that the acts of omission and commission on the part of the accused constitute an offence punishable under Section 420 RPC. The evidence on record clearly substantiates the allegations levelled against him. (Observer News Service)

JKPSC Rejects Candidature of Three Aspirants for Lecturer Posts

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission has rejected the candidature of three aspirants for the post of Lecturer Education in the School Education Department after finding deficiencies and invalidity in the documents submitted by them.

According to an official notice issued by the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission, the candidates had earlier been directed through a notice dated December 23, 2025, to submit deficient or valid documents within seven days, failing which their candidature was liable to be rejected without any further notice.

The candidates whose candidature has been rejected include Abdul Majid, Om Parkash, and Amir Iqbal. The notice said that while Abdul Majid and Om Parkash submitted documents in response to the earlier notice, Amir Iqbal failed to submit the requisite document within the stipulated time.

Upon scrutiny, the Commission found that the certificates submitted by Abdul Majid and Om Parkash were either not valid or were not within the cut off date prescribed in the advertisement notification for the post.

In the case of Amir Iqbal, the Commission noted that he did not produce the EWS category certificate in the prescribed format under the Reservation Rules of the Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory.

The notice further stated that Om Parkash also failed to submit a valid EWS category certificate in the prescribed format. In Abdul Majid's case, the Commission observed that the first ST category certificate submitted by him was issued on April 8, 2024 and was conditional for appointments in posts of the Government of India. Another ST category certificate produced by him was issued on December 25, 2025, which was after the cut off date, rendering it invalid for consideration.

In view of these deficiencies, the Commission said the candidature of all three candidates stands rejected for the post of Lecturer Education in the School Education Department.

According to KNT, the notice has been issued by the JKPSC office at Resham Ghar Colony, Bakshi Nagar, Jammu, with copies forwarded to concerned authorities for information.

Recruitment Row

JKSSB Junior Assistant Candidates Allege Breach of Original Criteria

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A controversy has erupted over the recruitment process for the post of Junior Assistant advertised by the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) last year, with candidates alleging that the Board has arbitrarily altered the examination sequence in violation of the original advertisement and established legal guidelines.

As per the initial notification, the recruitment process for Junior Assistants clearly stipulated that the skill test (typing test) would be conducted before the written examination. However, JKSSB later announced through its tentative calendar that the written examination would be held first, followed by the skill test—triggering strong resentment among aspirants.

Candidates, speaking to KNO said the sudden change in the selection procedure is not only unfair but also contrary to the terms and conditions laid down in the original advertisement. Once an advertisement is issued, the recruitment process must strictly adhere to the notified criteria and sequence, they added.

"The Board collected an additional fee of around ₹150 from every candidate, specifically for the skill test. If the written exam is to be conducted first, then why was this fee taken from all applicants?"

test defeats the very purpose of prescribing typing proficiency as an essential qualification. In their submissions, candidates said that any deviation from the conditions laid down in Advertisement Notice No. 08 of 2025 dated 27.09.2025 would be illegal. They contend that the revised examination sequence violates not only the advertisement but also binding judicial precedents.

The candidates said they have already submitted formal representations to the concerned authorities, seeking restoration of the original selection sequence. However, these representations are yet to be disposed of. They have now sought the urgent intervention of higher authorities, urging JKSSB to strictly adhere to the original advertisement and Supreme Court guidelines.

The candidates have demanded the immediate roll-back of the revised examination schedule, clarification on the collection of skill test fees, refund or adjustment of fees if the skill test is not conducted as the first stage and timely disposal of pending representations.

The aspirants said the credibility and transparency of the recruitment process remain under a cloud in these conditions, with many fearing that such changes could adversely affect thousands of candidates who applied in good faith.

As per the advertisement, candidates applying for the post of Junior Assistant are required to possess typing knowledge with a minimum speed of 35 words per minute. Only those candidates who achieve 90% accuracy or above and a minimum typing speed of 35 wpm are to be considered qualified for the next stage(s) of the recruitment process.

Candidates argue that conducting the written examination before filtering candidates through the mandatory skill

J&K Woman Officer To Command All-Male CRPF Marching Contingent On Republic Day



Observer News Service

New Delhi, Jan 19: Simran Bala, a 26-year-old CRPF Assistant Commandant hailing from Jammu and Kashmir, will lead an all-male contingent of her force during the Republic Day parade at Kartavya Path in Delhi on January 26, officials said on Monday.

While there have been instances when women Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) officers commanded various Republic Day contingents, this is the first time that a lady officer will command a party of more than 140 male personnel during the annual national event, the officials said.

Bala hails from Rajouri in Jammu and Kashmir and is the first female from the district to join the country's largest paramilitary force in the officer rank.

The about 3.25 lakh personnel-strong CRPF is the country's top internal security force, with its three main theatres of combat being anti-Naxal operations, counter-terrorist offensives in Jammu and Kashmir, and counter-insurgency duties in the Northeast.

Bala is a graduate in political science from the Government College for Women in Jammu's Gandhinagar, officials said.

She was commissioned into the

force in April 2025 and her first posting was in the 'Bastariya' battalion in Chattisgarh, tasked to undertake anti-Naxal operations, they said.

She was accorded the award for the best officer in training and public speaking subjects during her skilling at the CRPF academy in Gurugram after she qualified the CAPF Assistant Commandants exam conducted by the UPSC.

The annual Republic Day parade showcases India's military power and cultural diversity as it ambles down the Kartavya Path from Raisina Hill to Red Fort via India Gate on January 26.

A joint team of women 'dare devils' from the CRPF and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), riding Enfield Bullet bikes, will also be part of the parade.

The female personnel of these two forces have done this feat at the Republic Day in 2020 as well.

According to PTI, the Central Industrial Security Force will have a marching and band contingent while the Border Security Force will be represented by its famed camel-mounted troops and band teams.

A joint tableau prepared by the National Disaster Response Force and the Bureau of Police Research and Development is also expected to be part of the Union Home Ministry's float during the event.

Ancient Fossil Sites in Anantnag to be Preserved for Geo-Tourism Growth



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Hidden traces of ancient life in Anantnag's forests are being brought under protection, as authorities begin preservation of three fossil sites to support scientific research and promote geo-tourism in south Kashmir, officials said on Monday.

An official said that to conserve geological heritage, the J&K Forest Department, Anantnag Division, in collaboration with the Geological Survey of India (GSI), is developing and preserving three fossil sites in south Kashmir's Anantnag district for research and tourism purposes.

He said that two of the iden-

tified fossil sites—Halsidar and Sashkudan Kapran—fall under the Forest Range Verinag. "These sites have been scientifically identified by the Geological Survey of India and hold immense importance for geological research," he said.

The official further said that the Geological Survey of India has also identified a 260-million-year-old fossil geo-site at Maswati Narsanger in the Laroo area of the Kokernag forest range.

The development and conservation of these fossil sites are being undertaken by the J&K Forest Department, Anantnag Division, with technical support from the Geological Survey of India.

The initiative, the official said, is aimed at protecting rare fossil wealth, promoting scientific research, and boosting geo-tourism, while creating awareness about Kashmir's rich geological past.

Speaking to KNO, Yasir Amin, Range Officer Verinag, said the two fossil sites located in the Verinag range have already been preserved as they lie within forest areas. "Fencing, signboards, and Dots and Don'ts have been installed at these sites," he said.

He said the preservation efforts will facilitate research activities. "Students and researchers can visit these sites, as fossil specimens are available there," he added.

Police Arrest 3 Drug Peddlers, Contraband Substance Recovered

SRINAGAR: As part of its sustained efforts to eradicate the menace of drugs from society, Police have arrested three drug peddlers in South Kashmir's Shopian and Pulwama districts and recovered contraband substances from their possession.

According to a statement issued to Kashmir Observer, in Shopian, during routine naka checking by the police party of Police Post Wachi at Naghard Babbora, intercepted a vehicle (Swift car bearing registration No. JK13J-3347) with two persons onboard. They have been identified as Ishfaq Ahmad Koka & Inayat Ahmad Lone, both residents of Melhura Zainapora. During the search, Heroin-like substances weighing approximately 58 grams were recovered from their possession. The vehicle used in commission of the crime was also seized.

Meanwhile in Pulwama, a police party from Police Station Litter, intercepted a suspicious person at Nikloora, Pulwama identified as Abdul Rashid Sheikh son of Mohammad Ramzan Sheikh resident of Nikloora, Pulwama. During the search, one Charas Patri weighing 7,545 kg and Charas powder weighing 450 grams were recovered from his possession.

Accordingly, cases under relevant provisions of law have been registered at respective police stations and investigations have been initiated. (Observer News Service)

Mission YUVA Gains Momentum with 95% Panchayat Coverage

JAMMU: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo on Monday chaired a meeting of the Apex Committee of Mission YUVA, during which he reviewed the district-wise and panchayat-level performance of the flagship self-employment initiative across the Union Territory.

The meeting besides Additional Chief Secretary, Planning; Principal Secretary, Finance; Managing Director, J&K Bank; and Director, IIM Jammu was attended by Commissioner Secretary, Education; Secretary, Rural Development Department; Secretary in I&C Department; Managing Director, JKRLM, along with representatives from IIT Jammu, Universities, SKUAST, NABARD, and other key stakeholders.

Deputy Commissioners from all districts participated in the meeting through video conferencing.

Commending the Labour & Employment Department for its meticulous monitoring and data-driven analysis of the Mission's implementation, the Chief Secretary appreciated the innovative approach adopted to generate insightful performance indicators down to the Panchayat level across J&K. He emphasized that such analytical inputs must be effectively utilised for targeted interventions.

The Chief Secretary directed Deputy Commissioners to focus special attention on the weakest performing blocks, as identified in the department's analysis, and ensure corrective measures on priority. He also instructed them to ensure that the Single Business Development Units (SBDUs) and Block Hand Holding Desks (BHDs) in each district are fully operational by the end of the month, with adequate infrastructure, manpower, and empanelment of motivators. (Observer News Service)

CS Finalises Timelines for Implementation of EoDB reforms

JAMMU: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo on Monday chaired a high-level meeting of Administrative Secretaries to finalise timelines for implementation of the identified deregulation measures under the next phase of the Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) programme across the Union Territory.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary impressed upon all concerned departments to prepare their detailed action plans by the end of the current month and ensure that the entire implementation process is strictly completed within the next six months. He underscored that all procedural reforms, including amendments to relevant Acts, Rules, and Regulations, must be carried out within the stipulated time frame without deviation, as envisaged under this phase of compliance reduction and deregulation.

Highlighting the importance of timely execution, the Chief Secretary observed that effective implementation of these reforms is crucial to creating a business-friendly regulatory environment and strengthening investor confidence in Jammu and Kashmir. Providing an overview of the initiative, Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce, Vikramjit Singh, informed the meeting that the second phase of compliance reduction and deregulation, commonly referred to as Deregulation 2.0 or Phase-II of EoDB, is aligned with the national framework and is aimed at launching 30 new priority reform areas across seven key sectors in 2026. (Observer News Service)

T20 World Cup: Bangladesh Get Final Ultimatum From ICC

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: The ICC has asked the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to decide on its participation in the T20 World Cup in India by January 21 or "risk being replaced by another team" in the tournament beginning February 7.

Despite the back and forth between ICC and BCB, no solution has been found to the crisis that was triggered by the removal of Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman from the 2026 Indian Premier League from BCCI's instructions for unspecified "developments all around".

"The BCB officials have been told to decide on the participation by January 21. If they refuse to travel to India, then they should be ready to be replaced by another team as per rankings," said an ICC source.



Citing security concerns and national pride, the BCB has announced that its national team won't be travelling to India for its group games in Kolkata and Mumbai.

However, with the event schedule already finalised, the

ICC has shown reluctance to shift Bangladesh's games to co-host Sri Lanka, where the marquee India-Pakistan clash will be held as per the mutually agreed arrangement for ICC events till 2027.

In case Bangladesh continues

to be unyielding, the replacement team would most likely be Scotland-based on current rankings. Bangladesh are scheduled to play three leagues games in Kolkata and one in Mumbai.

The BCB has remained adamant on either a change of venue or a change of groups to facilitate its games in Sri Lanka. Bangladesh are currently placed in Group C along with the West Indies, Italy, England and Nepal.

In their last meeting with ICC officials in Dhaka, the BCB proposed that Bangladesh be swapped with Ireland in Group B alongside Sri Lanka, Australia, Oman and Zimbabwe.

Such a move would allow the team to be based completely in Sri Lanka for all its league engagements.

"...the possibility of moving

Bangladesh to a different group as a means of facilitating the matter with minimum logistical adjustments was discussed," the BCB had stated after the meeting on Saturday.

While the BCB considers it unsafe for its players to travel to India, the ICC's risk assessment report does not flag any specific or direct threat to the team if it participates in the tournament.

Bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh have deteriorated with the killings of Hindus in Bangladesh.

Former Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal and current Test skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto have cautioned against a very hard-line approach on the controversial subject, with the former saying that decisions taken today would have repercussions 10 years down the line.

Mané Rallies Senegal to Chaotic AFCON Final Win Over Morocco

AP

RABAT (MOROCCO): Though he didn't score a goal, Sadio Mané has emerged as the hero for Senegal's unlikely triumph over host Morocco in the Africa Cup of Nations final.

"We knew that today it was important to win this trophy. We all had it in our hearts to win it thanks to Sadio, and we saw what he did today, it's just incredible," Lamine Camara said.

The game was on the verge of being called off with furious Senegalese supporters trying to storm the field after a controversial penalty call in favour of the home team deep in stoppage time on Sunday, just minutes after Senegal had what seemed a perfectly good goal ruled out at the other end.

Stewards were fighting with supporters on the field and some of the Senegal players reacted angrily to comments from the Moroccan substitutes, leading to a melee between rival players on the sideline.

Senegal coach Pape Thiaw then led his players off, suggesting the game might be called off before the penalty could be taken. Fighting was continuing at the other end where a long line of police joined the stewards in holding the Senegal fans back.

Veteran French coach Claude Le Roy, who spoke with Mané on the sideline, reportedly told the two-time African Footballer of the Year it was better for the team to resume the game.

Mané evidently agreed as he got his teammates to return for Morocco's penalty so the game could resume after a 14-minute delay.

"We were in the locker room," Camara said. "He was the only one who came in shouting, shouting at us to get out there and finish the match. And well, in the end, he was right. We went out, we listened to him because if Sadio talks, everyone listens. We listened to him and in the end it went well for us."

Édouard Mendy, the Senegal goalkeeper, easily saved Brahim Díaz's weak attempt of a penalty with what was the last kick of the game.

It then went to extra time, where Pape Gueye scored the winner in the fourth minute by letting fly inside the top right corner.

"What we felt was a bit of injustice," Gueye said. "Before, we thought we should have had a goal and the referee didn't go to VAR. Sadio told us to come back on and we remobilized. Édouard then made the save, we stayed focused, got the goal and won the game."

Senegal had gone closer to scoring in the game with Mané a constant menace for the Moroccan defense, setting up chances for teammates. It took three defenders to stop Mané early on, and more to stop his progress before the half time break.

It was up to Mané to lead the side again in the absence of suspended captain Kalidou Koulibaly, who was missing his second final after the defeat to Algeria in the 2019 decider.

The 33-year-old Mané had said after scoring the winner in the semifinal against Egypt that this would be his last Africa Cup tournament. He has played six and now won two. Thiaw has already appealed for him to reverse his decision.

Gavaskar Furious: India's Weak Links Exposed in NZ Series

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Former captain Sunil Gavaskar says India's failure to make good starts cost them the ODI series against New Zealand and the team's batters should take a leaf out of Virat Kohli's book to understand how an innings should be paced while chasing difficult targets.

India went down in the third and final ODI in Indore by 41 runs to lose their first ever 50-over home series against New Zealand, continuing the trend of recent underwhelming results. Kohli top-scored with a 108-ball 124 but could not get a stable partner to steer the challenging chase of 338.

"Unless Virat Kohli got substantial support, it was



always going to be difficult, and he got very little of it. The real problem for India throughout the series has been the starts. As they say, well begun is half done," Gavaskar said on 'Amul Cricket Live' on JioStar.

"India never began well, and that's one of the main reasons they weren't able to chase these big scores," he pointed out.

India had lost half the side at 159, which severely

denied their chances.

"...when you lose someone in good form like KL Rahul, and you have Nitish Kumar Reddy, who hadn't really done justice to his ability until this innings of 53 runs and then Harshit Rana, someone you are never quite sure what you are going to get, it becomes an uphill climb. That's exactly what India found," Gavaskar explained.

The legendary former batter lauded Kohli for trying till the end and urged the others to emulate his mindset and consistency.

"The thing about him is that he's not tied down to an image. A lot of batters and bowlers are constrained by how they're perceived, and they feel they must live up to that image. Virat isn't like that," he said.

Spanish League

Barcelona's 11-Game Winning Run Ends in 2-1 Loss

AP

MADRID: Disallowed goals, hitting the woodwork five times, and great saves.

It was just too much for Barcelona to overcome on Sunday as it lost 2-1 to Real Sociedad in the Spanish league to see its 11-game winning streak come to an end.

Barcelona had three goals disallowed — as well as a penalty-kick call reversed by video review — in the first half alone. It had five attempts hit the woodwork, including an 84th-minute header by Jules Koundé from close range, and Sociedad goalkeeper Alex Remiro made a series of impressive saves.

"Disappointed, we created a lot of opportunities. The result does not reflect



our game," Barcelona coach Hansi Flick said. "Sometimes it's like that. At the end, there are some days you invest a lot of energy and at the end you are unlucky. I appreciate a lot what I saw."

The loss left the Catalan club one point ahead of second-place Real Madrid,

which beat Levante 2-0 at home on Saturday.

It was the second consecutive win for Sociedad, which moved to eighth place. "Three amazing points," said Remiro. He made one terrific close-range save off a header by Robert Lewandowski in the second half.

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