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CRPF Drops
Nishat Camp Plan;
NGT Closes PleaPetitioners Had Alleged Violation Of
Norms In Ecologically Sensitive Reserve

Ansar Hussain

New Delhi :The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has disposed of an environmental plea challenging a proposed Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) battalion camping site in Srinagar after authorities informed the tribunal that the project had been withdrawn.

The case was heard by the Principal Bench of the NGT, chaired by Justice Prakash Shrivastava along with Expert Member Dr A. Senthil Vel, in Original Application No. 496/2025 filed by Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah and others; their counsel, Advocate Saurabh



Sharma, told Kashmir Observer.

The applicants had raised objections to the proposed establishment of a battalion camping site for the 61st, 79th, 117th and 132nd CRPF battalions on 1,324 kanals (67 hectares) of prime land in the posh Brane-Nishat area of Srinagar district. They alleged that the project violated environmental norms.

During the | [More on P10](#)'43 High-Altitude CRPF Bases Set
Up After Pahalgam Attack'

The CRPF has created 43 temporary operating bases in the higher reaches of Jammu and Kashmir in the aftermath of the Pahalgam attack to search and eliminate terrorists who stay at high altitudes, security | [More on P10](#)

THE APPLICANTS HAD RAISED OBJECTIONS TO THE PROPOSED establishment of a battalion camping site on 1,324 kanals (67 hectares) of prime land in upscale Brane-Nishat area of Srinagar district. They alleged that the project violated environmental norms.

Ramazan Begins In J&K;
Markets Abuzz Across Valley

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The holy month of Ramazan commenced across Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday, with Muslims observing the first fast after the crescent moon was sighted the previous evening.

Grand Mufti of Jammu and Kashmir, Nasir-ul-Islam Faroogi, had announced the sighting on Wednesday after receiving verified reports from various districts of the Kashmir Valley and the Jammu region.

The declaration followed consultations with scholars representing different schools of Islamic thought in the Union Territory.

“The crescent has been



sighted. After consulting with my brothers from various schools of thought, it is declared that the holy month of Ramazan will commence tomorrow,” the Grand Mufti

had said.

With the announcement, mosques across the Valley and Jammu witnessed special prayers late Wednesday night, while markets remained

abuzz as people made last-minute purchases for Sehri and Iftar.

Religious leaders highlighted the spiritual importance of the month, urging the faithful to dedicate themselves to prayer, charity and self-discipline. The Grand Mufti called upon people to remember the underprivileged, stressing that serving humanity and helping the needy is central to the spirit of Ramazan.

Meanwhile, Markets across Kashmir were abuzz with a surge in last minute shopping for iftar and sehri essentials.

Commercial hubs in Srinagar, including Maharaj Bazar and adjoining areas, witnessed heavy footfall as families stocked | [More on P10](#)

J&K's Entry
Into Ranji Final

LG, CM Lead Applause

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir created history on Wednesday as the J&K cricket team entered the final of the Ranji Trophy for the first time, drawing praise from top political leadership in the Union Territory.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha congratulated the team in a message on X, describing the victory in the semi final as a golden chapter in J&K's sporting history. He said the entire Union Territory was proud of the players' achievement and expressed hope that the team would carry the winning momentum into the final.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also hailed the performance, crediting the players and support staff for their collective effort. Calling the feat historic, he said it reflects the growing | [More on P10](#)

J&K Debt At ₹1.37 Lakh Cr In FY25: CM
Says Ratio Falls To 48% As GSDP Expands

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir's total liabilities are projected at 1,37,067 crore in the financial year 2024-25, with the debt-to-GSDP ratio improving to 48 per cent as the Union Territory's economy expands, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said on Wednesday.

In a written reply to the Assembly, Omar defended



his government's fiscal

management strategy, stating that the increase in the Gross State Domestic Product has helped reduce the debt-to-GSDP ratio from 51 per cent in 2023-24 to 48 per cent in the current fiscal.

The GSDP for 2024-25 is estimated at 2,88,422 crore, reflecting significant economic expansion. Omar said this growth has moderated the relative | [More on P10](#)

Uproar In J&K Assembly
Over NLU Location

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir Assembly on Wednesday was adjourned for the day after noisy scenes erupted over alleged police action against students demanding the establishment of a National Law University in Jammu.

The uproar began while the House was discussing grants

related to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah. BJP legislators rose from their seats, raised slogans against the police action near the Civil Secretariat and demanded that the proposed NLU be set up in the Jammu region.

Holding pamphlets reading “NLU for Jammu”, the BJP members sought a statement from the government on the alleged use of force against protesting | [More on P10](#)

SHORTLISTING FOR
42 CIVIL JUDGES
25 Candidates
Move HC, Notice
Issued To JKPS

M Ahmad

Srinagar: The High Court of J&K and Ladakh has issued notice to the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission on a petition filed by 25 candidates challenging the recent shortlisting process for 42 posts of Civil Judge (Junior Division) in the Subordinate Judiciary.

A division bench of Justice Sindhu Sharma and Justice Shahzad Azeem issued the notice to JKPS which was waived off by Commission's standing counsel advocate Shah Amir.

The Court, after considering the urgency projected in view of the scheduled interviews, listed the matter for | [More on P10](#)

Shankaracharya Temple Will Be A
Spiritual Anchor For Millions: LGRs 31.51 Cr Project Launched In Katra; 50
Shops For Land Donor Families AnnouncedSMVDSB Targets Rs 50 Crore Annual Purchases
From SHGs; Gurukul Initiative Unveiled

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday laid the foundation stone for the long awaited Sri Shankaracharya Temple on the adjoining hillocks of the revered Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine in Katra.

The temple project, conceived decades ago in the 1960s, has finally taken concrete shape after sustained efforts. The total estimated expenditure of Rs 31.51 crore for the temple complex will be fully borne by the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board.

The project includes



construction of the main temple structure, a motorable access track, public utilities for pilgrims and 50 commercial shops within the complex. The shops will be allotted to families who donated land for the sacred cause.

An MoU was executed in 2025 between the Shrine Board and the concerned landowners, who consented to donate 41 kanals of land to facilitate construction of the temple, access track and amenities such as toilets and water points for yatri.

Addressing the gathering, the Lieutenant Governor described the temple as a transformative spiritual landmark.

“In the years ahead, the Sri Shankaracharya Temple will serve as a spiritual anchor for millions of devotees. It will be a living emblem of India's eternal culture, collective faith, resilience | [More on P10](#)

J&K Pays Pensions
For Former Ladakh
Legislators

Agencies

Jammu: The Jammu & Kashmir Government on Wednesday said it continues to pay pensions to former legislators elected from areas now part of the Union Territory of Ladakh, citing provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 and directives issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

In a written reply to a cut motion moved by Peoples Conference MLA Sajad Gani Lone regarding the reasons for payment of pensions to former MLAs from Ladakh, the Minister in-charge of Parliamentary Affairs stated: “The continuation of pensions for former legislators from Ladakh is | [More on P10](#)

A Kashmiri Brokerage Just Beat
Delhi & ChandigarhKashmir's growing investor base finds national
recognition through a local firm's top ranking.

Arshid Mehraj

Srinagar: When people talk about India's stock market surge, they usually mention Mumbai, Delhi or Bengaluru. Srinagar rarely makes that list.

But in January, a small brokerage firm from the valley silently moved to the top.

M I Securities, founded by financial educator Irshad Mushtaq and based in Srinagar, secured the number one position on the ACE Circle Leader Board for January 2026.

The ranking covers the entire North Region for Mirae Asset



Sharekhan, one of the country's largest brokerage networks.

In practical terms, that meant a Srinagar office outperformed competitors in Delhi, Chandigarh and other major northern cities.

The achievement did not

come overnight.

Irshad Mushtaq started M I Securities in the mid-2000s, when organized equity investing in Jammu and Kashmir was still limited. At the time, most savings in the valley flowed into land, | [More on P10](#)





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Government of Jammu and Kashmir
Department of Floriculture, Gardens & Parks
Civil Secretariat Jammu/Kashmir

Subject:- Compassionate appointment under Jammu & Kashmir Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme-2022.

Reference No.:-

- Minutes of Meeting of Designated Committee vide No.FLORI/NGZ/48/2024-09 (CC No.7598458) dated 01.05.2025.
- O.M.No.GAD-RAS/36/2025-09-GAD(7657428) dated 14-11-2025 from the General Administration Department.
- Character and Antecedent verification report under Form No.143612, 143613, 143614 and 143615 received from Criminal Investigation Department, Jammu & Kashmir.

Government Order No. 07 -JK (FLORI) of 2026
Dated: 13-02-2026

In exercise of the powers conferred under Clause 3 of the Jammu and Kashmir Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme, 2022, sanction is hereby accorded to the temporary appointment of the following 04 (Four) candidates as Class-IV/MTS(Gardener) in the Pay Level: SL-1(14800-47100) in the Directorate of Floriculture, Kashmir in relaxation of prescribed age & qualification bar, as indicated against each:-

S.No.	Name of the applicant S/Shri	Cadre allotted	Relaxation granted
1	Fayaz Ahmad Bhat S/o Late Ghulam Ahmad Bhat R/o Qasba Lar, Tehsil Lar, District Ganderbal	Divisional	Qualification and Upper age.
2	Sameer Ahmad Dar S/o Late Ab. Gani Dar R/o Garcoora Tehsil & District Bandipora	Cadre, Kashmir	Qualification.
3	Qaiser Hussain Wani S/o Late Mohammad Hussain Wani R/o Old Hishat Srinagar, Tehsil Khanyar, District Srinagar		Qualification.
4	Juned Shafi S/o Late Mohammad Shafi Sheikh R/o Rajbagh, Tehsil Srinagar South, District Srinagar		Qualification.

The appointee(s) shall report to the Directorate of Floriculture, Kashmir within a period of twenty one (21) days from the date of issuance of this Government Order, failing which their appointments shall be deemed to have been cancelled ab-initio without any further notice.

The appointee(s) shall be allowed to join only after production of the following certificates/documents (in Original) to be verified separately by the Directorate of Floriculture, Kashmir:-

- Educational qualification issued by the Board/ recognized Institute.
- Matriculation/ Date of Birth Certificate issued by the any recognized Medical/Education Board.
- Domicile Certificate issued by the Competent Authority.
- Health Certificate from the concerned District Chief Medical Officer.
- All other relevant documents as required under Jammu and Kashmir Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme, 2022.

Besides above, the appointment of the above candidates is further be subject to the following conditions:-

- Each appointee shall give an undertaking in the shape of an affidavit to the effect that if on verification, his Qualification/Date of Birth/Reserved Category Certificate from the concerned issuing authorities is fake/forged, his appointment as MTS/Gardener, in the Directorate of Floriculture, Kashmir shall be deemed to have been cancelled ab-initio and the legal action as warranted under rules shall be initiated against him.

- Each appointee shall give an undertaking in the shape of an affidavit duly attested by the Judicial Magistrate 1st Class, to the effect that the applicant is unemployed as on date and none of the family member other than the applicant has taken benefit of compassionate appointment under J&K Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme-2022. In case, it turns out that the applicant is already appointed or the benefit of compassionate appointment under the Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme-2022 has been already extended to the family of the deceased, then the instant appointment shall be deemed to have been withdrawn ab-initio without any further notice.

- That if the appointee has taken loan for self-employment from DIC/Employment Department, to be ascertained from the District Industries Centre (DIC) and District Employment & Counseling Centre of the domicile District, he shall relinquish the proprietorship of unit/enterprise and also stakes, if any, in such self-employment unit/enterprise before joining the Government service. He shall be required to repay the entire loan liability, in suitable EMIs to be worked out by the DDO concerned

from his salary. DDO concerned shall obtain an affidavit from the concerned appointee(s) regarding both relinquishment of proprietorship and stakes, if any, in such a self-employment unit/enterprise and recovery to be made and also personally monitor its recovery.

- Each appointee shall furnish an undertaking (with e-Stamp) as per format at (Annexure-IV) of RAS Scheme 2022, duly attested by 1st Class Magistrate to the effect that he shall properly maintain the other family members who were dependent on the deceased employee in question and in case it is proved subsequently (at any time) that the family members are being neglected or are not being maintained properly by him, his appointment may be terminated forthwith.

- The salary of the appointee(s) shall not be drawn & disbursed to them unless satisfactory report in respect of the genuineness of their documents, certificate is received from the concerned issuing authority.

- The appointment of the candidates shall be governed by the "New Pension Scheme" as per SRO-400 of 2009 dated 24.12.2009.

- The appointee(s) shall be on probation for a period of 02 years.

- The Seniority Position of the appointee(s) shall be determined/assigned strictly on the basis of Relative Merit Points Scheme (RMPAS) scored by the applicant(s) in the en-block.

- The appointment of the above appointee(s) shall be subject to outcome of writ petition(s), if any, pending before competent Court of law.

By order of the Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sd/-
(Zubair Ahmad) JKAS
Commissioner/Secretary to the Government,
Department of Floriculture, Gardens & Parks.

No: FLORI-NGZ/48/2024-09 (7727691)

Dated: 13.02.2026

DIPK-11068/25
dated: 18-02-2026

युवा कार्यक्रम एवं खेल मंत्रालय

MINISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS & SPORTS

खेल विभाग / DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS

भारत सरकार / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

कक्षा संख्या 718-ए, शास्त्री भवन, नई दिल्ली-110001
Room No. 718-A, Shastri Bhawan,
New Delhi-110001

Filling up of the post of Secretary, Sports Authority of India (SAI) in the Pay Matrix (Level 14- Rs. 1,44,200-Rs. 2,18,200) on deputation basis.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports invites applications from eligible and willing officers for appointment to the post of Secretary, Sports Authority of India (SAI), an autonomous organization under the Department of Sports, on Deputation Basis in Pay Level-14 of the Pay Matrix (Rs. 1,44,200 - 2,18,200). The eligibility criteria, experience, and other conditions are as prescribed in the detailed vacancy circular dated 26.01.2025 available on the Ministry's website:

Applications in the prescribed proforma, duly forwarded through proper channel, along with complete and up-to-date APAR dossiers for the last five years, vigilance clearance, integrity certificate, cadre clearance, and statement of penalties (if any), must reach in the O/o Shri. Yogesh Kumar, Under Secretary to the Govt. of India, Room No. 718-A, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi-01 within the stipulated time. Advance copies may be submitted; however, they will be considered only after receipt of the application through proper channel. The last date for receipt of applications is on or before 27th February, 2026. For detailed eligibility conditions, prescribed application format, and other terms & conditions, applicants are advised to visit the official websites: <https://iyas.gov.in> or <https://iyas.gov.in/files/default/files/Circular%20dated%2026.01.2025.pdf>

cbc47103/12/0020/2526

(Under Secretary to the Government of India)
Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
New Delhi

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Bashir Ahmad Paswal, S/o Bir Mohd Paswal, R/o Tangmarg, Tehsil D.H. Pora, District Kulgam, UT of Jammu & Kashmir, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare as under:

That I am a permanent resident/domicile of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

That my correct and actual name is Bashir Ahmad Paswal, S/o Bir Mohd Paswal, and my correct Date of Birth is 28-10-1968.

That due to an inadvertent clerical error in my PAN Card bearing No. DMXPP2677C, my name has been wrongly mentioned as Bashir Ahmad Paswal S/o Mir Mohd Paswal and my Date of Birth has been incorrectly recorded as 20-07-1963.

That the names Bir Mohd Paswal and Mir Mohd Paswal refer to one and the same person, and the discrepancy has occurred due to a typographical/clerical mistake.

That the correct particulars are:

Name: Bashir Ahmad Paswal

Father's Name: Bir Mohd Paswal

Date of Birth: 28-10-1968

That this public notice is being issued for the purpose of rectification of the above-mentioned error in my PAN records and for general information.

If any person has any objection to the above correction, the same may be conveyed to the concerned authorities within the stipulated period.

Place: D.H. Pora

Date: 18-02-2026

Deponent

Bashir Ahmad Paswal

FKO

Office Of The Naib Tehsildar Pattan

Sub.. issuance of registration order in respect of delayed birth..

PUBLIC NOTICE

The registrar birth EO MC pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Hooriya Jan D/o Irshad Hassan Dar R/o Hardu Shiva Tehsil Dangepora with verified date of birth 18/05/2021 occurred at SDH pattan in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

Sd

fko

Naib Tehsildar Pattan

Office Of Executive Magistrate 1st Class Zaingeer Bomai

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

Public Notice

This office has received a written application from Mohammad Ramzan Lone S/o Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Lone R/o Logripora

, Tehsil Zaingeer for issuance of Birth & Death certificate in favour of Ward(s) Namely

Daayim-ul-Islam Lone –

DOB: 03-04-2024

Junaid Ramzan

DOB: 16-03-2008

and as per document evidence produced by the applicant.

In this regard, if anyone has any objection, he/she may file the same before the undersigned within 07 days.

After that, no objection whatsoever will be entertained by this office.

Tehsildar
Executive Magistrate
Bomai

fko

NOTICE

I, Zareena Bano W/o Sajad Hussain Dar R/o Khushnagar, Zadalbal Srinagar, do hereby inform the general public that I had opened a Savings Account in J&K Bank, Alamgari Bazar branch bearing account numbers 0729040150000318 under the name Mis Zareena Akhter. I now intend to change my name from "Zareena Akhter" to "Zareena Bano" in the records of the said bank. If any person has any objection to this change, he/she may approach the concerned bank branch or the relevant authority within 7 (seven) days from the date of publication of this notice. After the expiry of the said period, no objection shall be entertained, and the change shall be deemed final.

Media Line Advt.

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER BUDGAM

Subject:- Necessary Correction/change in address in data to the License No.JK-0420160031744 issued in favour of MAN-ZOOR AHMAD PARRAY Parentage ABDUL GANI NAJAR Whereas an application has been received by one MANZOOR AHMAD PARRAY Parentage ABDUL GANI NAJAR wherein he claimed that the Name has been wrongly recorded in the records of Driving Licenses as MAZNOOR AHMAD PARRAY Parentage AB. REHMAN PARRAY Which needs to be changed as MANZOOR AHMAD PARRAY Parentage ABDUL GANI NAJAR.

Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any in this regard shall reach in written in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office Budgam within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper.After expiry of stipulated time no objection will be entertained.

Assistant Regional Transport officer

mcb

Budgam Kashmir

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified for the general information of the public that my name has been wrongly recorded in the records of Jammu & Kashmir Bank, Wuyan Branch. In my Savings Account and Credit Card, my name has been incorrectly mentioned as Mohammad Yaseen Sofi instead of my correct name M Yaseen Sofi.

I am applying to the concerned bank authorities for correction of the above error. If any person has any objection regarding the said correction, he/she may approach J&K Bank, Wuyan Branch within seven (7) days from the date of publication of this notice. After the expiry of the said period, no objection shall be entertained.

Mr. M Yaseen Sofi

S/o Farooq Ahmad Sofi

R/o Wuyan, Pampore

inf

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified for the information of the general public that the Registration Certificate (RC) of my vehicle bearing Registration No. JK13H2366, Make Tata Ace Gold Petrol BS-VI, Chassis No. MAT559005NVD20075, Engine No. 275MP-FI0ICXS35051, registered in the name of Bilal Ahmad Sofi S/o Farooq Ahmad Sofi R/o Wuyan, Pulwama, has been lost/ misplaced.

Despite my best efforts, the said RC could not be traced. I have applied for issuance of a duplicate Registration Certificate from the concerned authority.

If anybody finds the said document or has any objection regarding the issuance of duplicate RC, he/she may contact the undersigned or the concerned RTO within seven (7) days from the date of publication of this notice. After that, no claim or objection shall be entertained.

Bilal Ahmad Sofi

S/o Farooq Ahmad Sofi

R/o Wuyan, Pulwama

inf

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is informed to the General public that my daughter's name in her Aadhar Card bearing Aadhar No :-8505 5027 0617 has been wrongly mentioned as Haiza ishaq instead of Hyza Ishfaq D/O.Ishfaq Sultan Hajam. Now I am applying for its Correction as per Birth Certificate record bearing Reg No:- B-2023-1-00054-001344 . if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may contact the same in the office of the General Manager Ran-bir Govt Press Jammu within a period of seven days from the publication of this notice. No objection will be entertained after expiry of stipulated period.

Ishfaq Sultan Hajam

F/O. Hyza Ishfaq

R/O :- Astan Mohalla Langate

Tehsil :- Langate Distt : Kupwar. Pin Code:- 193302 J&kashmir

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Govt Examines Proposal for New Bridge near Convent School, GPO

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The proposal for construction of a new bridge near Convent School and General Post Office (GPO) in Srinagar is presently under examination with the Public Works (R&B) Department, the government informed the House here on Wednesday.

Replying to a question raised by MLA Sheikh Ahsan Ahmed regarding the status of the proposed bridge, the government, as per KNO, said that the pro-

posal is being examined by the department concerned.

The government further said that a Detailed Project Report (DPR) amounting to Rs 143.89 crore has been prepared for the "Construction of VOP/Bridge/Flyover from Convent Road (Joggers Park) to M.A. Link Road via Sherwani Road over River Jhelum" after conducting the requisite feasibility and technical surveys.

It added that the DPR has been submitted to the Finance Department for concurrence.

As Ramazan Commences, Fruit Prices 'Sky-Rocket'



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: As the holy month of Ramazan commenced, prices of fruit and other essential items witnessed a sharp hike in Srinagar markets.

Shoppers said that prices of several fruits are already touching the sky making it difficult for families to manage daily purchases. "I came to buy oranges and bananas, but the prices are too high even before Ramazan has started," said Jehangir Ahmad, of Srinagar.

Another local, Imran Ahmad, said fruits like guava, apples and mangoes have become expensive. "Every year prices rise before Ramazan, but this time it has started too early," he said.

Vendors however, blamed the hike on increased rates at the Mandi. "We are purchasing fruits at higher prices from the Mandi. Naturally, we have to sell them accordingly," said Waseem Sofi, a fruit seller.

"We are not overcharging, but the wholesale rates have gone up," he said.

Meanwhile, Bashir Ahmad Basheer, Chairman of the Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers and Dealers Union (KVFGDU) said that the wholesale prices at the Mandi are normal. "We regularly issue official rate lists of

fruits and vegetables. The prices are within the normal range and there is no unusual hike at the Mandi level," he said, adding that retailers should follow the issued list.

As per the official wholesale fruit price list issued on 18th, February and accessed by KNO, the rates were as: Mango Safeeda (15 pieces) Rs: 100-102; Mango Totapuri (per piece) Rs: 60; Banana First Class (per dozen) Rs: 72-85; Dragon Fruit (per tray) Rs: 600-750; Guava Pink (per kg) Rs: 76-100; Guava (per kg) Rs: 50-55; Papaya (25 kg) Rs: 1050-1200; Kinow (per kg) Rs: 72-83; Watermelon (per chest) Rs: 23-53; American Apple (half peti) Rs: 140-264; Red Glow Apple (per dozen) Rs: 125-100; Kiwi (per piece) —; Payne Apple Raja (per number) —; Melon Sun (per kg) —; Melon Bobby (per kg) —; Pomegranates (per kg) —; Green Grapes (per chest) —; Maharaji Apple (per dozen) Rs: 100-125; Orange Dana (per chest) Rs: 191-112; Extraordinary Delicious (per chest) Rs: 212; Orange 141 Dana (per dozen) Rs: 140-161; Orange 171 Dana (per dozen).

Moreover, the association has urged traders to strictly adhere to the official rate list to avoid undue burden on consumers ahead of Ramazan.

Commissioner SMC Inspects EESL Lights Godown



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Faz Lul Haseeb, conducted a comprehensive inspection of the EESL lights godown to assess the quality standards and stock position of LED street lights being installed within the municipal limits under the Street Lighting Management Programme (SLMP).

The Commissioner was accompanied by the Executive Engineer (Electric) and other senior officials from the SMC Electrical Wing during the inspection. The team examined the technical specifications, storage conditions, and inventory records of the lighting materials to ensure strict compliance with approved standards.

Emphasizing robust quality control measures, the Commissioner directed the concerned officers to ensure that all LED lights conform to prescribed technical benchmarks to guarantee optimal illumination, enhanced public safety, and long-term durability. He also instructed officials to maintain proper stock registers and implement effective monitoring mechanisms to uphold transparency and accountability in procurement and installation processes.

The inspection underscores SMC's continued commitment to strengthening urban infrastructure, promoting energy efficiency, and delivering improved civic amenities to the residents of Srinagar under the SLMP.

Govt Pushes Multi-Crore Road Plan to Ease Congestion in City



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Government has undertaken several key road and corridor development projects to decongest traffic across downtown and arterial roads in Srinagar district, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary informed the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday.

Replying to a question raised by Legislator Tanvir Sadiq during the ongoing Budget Session 2026, the Deputy Chief Minister said that multiple projects are currently at various stages of execution to streamline traffic flow and address mounting congestion in the city.

He told the House that the works include development of the Nowshera-Soura (KZP Road), Saida Kadal-Ashaibagh (SMS Road), Devi Angan-Hawal Road, as well as corridor improvements at Alamgiri Bazar Chowk and Mirza Kamil Sahib (MK Sahib) Chowk.

The Deputy Chief Minister noted that the old alignments of roads in downtown Srinagar are increasingly unable to handle the surge in traffic caused by rapid urbanisation and expanding commercial activity, leading to heavy congestion during peak hours.

He said routine maintenance and necessary repairs are being carried out periodically to ensure road safety and trafficability. Preliminary assessments for widening and improvement of identified stretches have also been undertaken.

"Comprehensive widening in most cases entails substantial land acquisition, shifting of utilities and removal of encroachments, which requires close inter-departmental coordination," he said, adding that court litigations in certain stretches have also delayed the land acquisition process and impacted project progress.

Providing project-wise details, the Deputy Chief Minister said that structures near Nalbal Bridge forming part of the Nowshera-Soura (KZP Road) stretch have already been acquired. Acquisition of the remaining structures will be taken up after settlement or negotiation in the High Level Committee (HLC) and finalisation of pending court cases.

Regarding the Saida Kadal-Ashaibagh (SMS Road) stretch, he informed that a survey for widening over a length of approximately 1.75 kilometres is currently underway. The proposal envisages expansion of the carriageway from 7.50 metres to 21.00 metres. The Detailed Project Report (DPR) will be submitted after completion of survey and feasibility formalities.

The preliminary project report for widening and upgradation of the Devi Angan-Hawal Road has been prepared under the Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF) at an estimated cost of Rs

31.25 crore. Of this, Rs 30 crore is earmarked for land acquisition and utility shifting, while Rs 1.25 crore is allocated for development works over a stretch of 1.40 kilometres. The project will be taken up upon approval under the scheme and subject to availability of funds, he said.

The Deputy Chief Minister further informed that the Alamgiri Bazar Chowk project has been approved under the UT Sector 2025-26 for Rs 335 lakh, which includes acquisition of five structures and junction redesigning.

Similarly, the Mirza Kamil Sahib (MK Sahib) Chowk junction redesigning project has been sanctioned under the UT Sector 2025-26 at a cost of Rs 135 lakh.

He reiterated that the Government is cognisant of the persistent traffic congestion issues in downtown Srinagar and the urgent need to ensure smooth movement of ambulances, fire services and other emergency vehicles. Road upgradation and improvement works are being undertaken in a phased manner to minimise disruption.

"Improvement works such as resurfacing, strengthening, drainage correction and junction remodelling are being executed under regular R&B grants and other infrastructure development schemes," he added.

Supplementary questions were raised by Legislators Mubarak Gul and Shamim Firdous.



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

AIRPORTS

SHIEKH UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



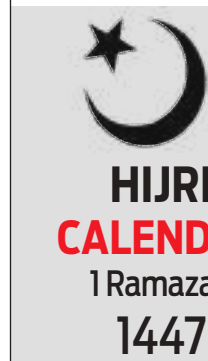
RAILWAYS

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



HIGHWAY STATUS

- Sgr-Jammu highway - (OPEN)
- Mughal Road - (CLOSED)
- Srinagar-Leh- (OPEN)



PRAYERS

FAJR	5:54
ZUHR	12:45
ASR	4:38
Magrib	6:20
ISHA	7:42

From KO Archives

- 197 - Lucius Septimius Severus' army beats Clodius Albinus at Lyon
- 356 - Emperor Constantius II shuts all heathen temples
- 607 - Boniface III begins his reign as Catholic Pope
- 842 - Medieval Iconoclastic Controversy ends as a council in Constantinople formally reinstates the veneration of icons in churches
- 1512 - French troops under Gaston de Foix occupy Brescia
- 1574 - Spanish troops plunder Krommenie, Wormerveer & Jisp, Netherlands
- 1634 - Battle of Smolensk: King Wladyslaw IV of Poland beats Russians [NS=Mar 1]
- 1674 - Netherlands & England sign Peace of Westminster (NYC becomes English).
- 1797 - One third of papal domain ceded to France
- 1819 - British explorer William Smith discovers the South Shetland Islands, and claims them in the name of King George III
- 1856 - Tin-type camera patented by Hamilton Smith, Gambier, Ohio
- 1878 - Thomas Edison is granted a patent for his gramophone (phonograph)
- 1920 - Netherlands joins League of Nations
- 1936 - Manuel Azaña becomes Prime Minister of Spain for the second time
- 1942 - Japanese troops land on Timor

From Medjool to Ajwa: Date Sellers Witness Surge

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: With the holy month of Ramazan beginning tomorrow, Srinagar's markets are buzzing as shoppers and vendors gear up for the festivities. Stalls are alive with a vibrant variety of dates, a staple for breaking the fast.

Traders, speaking to KNO said that this year's selection includes both locally grown dates and premium imports from multiple countries, ranging from sweet Medjool to nutrient-rich Ajwa.

"Compared to a few years back, shoppers now have far more choices. People are looking for both quality and variety, not just locally grown but imported dates as

well," said Rashid Ahmad, a vendor at Maharaji Bazar.

Popular markets such as Maharaji Bazar, Zaina Kadal, and Koker Bazar have seen heavy footfall in recent days.

Families are buying dates alongside dry fruits, beverages, and other essentials to ensure they have enough for Sehri (pre-dawn meal) and Iftar (breaking the fast).

"We come early to avoid the rush and pick the best dates for the family," said Ayesha Bhat, a local resident.

"Dates are not just about tradition; they are also nutritious and a good way to break the fast," added Imran, another shopper.

Mirwaiz Greets People on the Auspicious Arrival of Ramazan

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, has extended his heartfelt greetings to the people of Jammu & Kashmir and the Muslim Ummah worldwide on the blessed arrival of the holy month of Ramazan.

Mirwaiz expressed hope that the sacred month will inspire individuals and communities to renew their spiritual commitment, deepen their connection with the Almighty, and strive towards moral refinement and social responsibility.

He emphasized that Ramazan is not only a time for fasting and prayer, but also a period for self-accountability, compassion towards the underprivileged, and strengthening bonds of brotherhood and unity within society.

Mirwaiz prayed that Allah (SWT) grant peace, prosperity, and harmony to the people, accept their supplications, and bless the Ummah with guidance and steadfastness during this sacred month.



Epstein Built Web of Powerful Ties Across Middle East

Trans Asia News

DUBAI: The departure of the chief executive of Dubai port giant DP World is the biggest fallout in the Middle East from US Department of Justice documents which show that disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein tried to build a powerful network of political figures and business leaders across the region.

DP World announced on Friday that Sultan Ahmed Bin Sulayem had resigned as chief executive and chair.

The decision to act was taken after Bin Sulayem's name appeared in the Epstein files, two sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters, and as his relationship with the late convicted sex offender faced increasing scrutiny.

In their correspondence, Bin Sulayem discussed sexual relationships with women with whom Epstein helped him connect.

In an email dated November 9, 2007, Bin Sulayem told Epstein he had met one such woman in New York, whom he does not name and with whom he said he did not have sex. "Yes after several attempts for several months we managed to meet in NY," he

wrote, adding that there was a misunderstanding because "she wanted some BUSINESS! while i only wanted some PUSSYNESS!"

Dubai's ruler on Friday also issued a decree appointing a new chairman for Dubai's Ports, Customs and Free Zone Corporation, one of several roles Bin Sulayem held.

Reuters was able to independently review only some of the Epstein files relating to Bin Sulayem and was unable to ascertain what specifically led to his departure from DP World although the sources said, without providing further details, that it was related to the files.

Bin Sulayem did not respond to Reuters requests for comment on his departure. DP World declined to comment.

COOKING TOGETHER

In one email exchange, Epstein described Bin Sulayem as funny, trustworthy and a foodie. Epstein went on to say that Bin Sulayem, a Muslim, does not drink and prays five times a day.

An undated photograph that appears in an email and is publicly available shows Epstein cooking with Bin Sulayem and the two of them looking relaxed together. The full name of the person it was sent to by Epstein is not provided.

UK Lords Reeling from Epstein Bombshell



JILL LAWLESS

London- Fallout from the Jeffrey Epstein files has landed on the gilded wood and plush red benches of Britain's House of Lords.

Parliament's upper chamber is in the spotlight after former UK ambassador to Washington Peter Mandelson was forced to resign as a member of the Lords because of his friendship with the late sex offender.

The episode has emboldened critics who say the unelected house is antiquated, undemocratic and far too slow at punishing bad behaviour by its members. Supporters say the chamber of more than 850 members-for-life who sport the titles of "Lord" or "Lady" is an unwieldy but essential part of parliamentary democracy.

Almost everyone agrees it needs reform, but that task has eluded successive governments. "It's a mess," said Jenny Jones, one of two Green Party members of the Lords. "In spite of our being supposedly a modern democracy, we have a semi-feudal system."

Relic of the past

For most of its 700-year history,

the House of Lords was composed of noblemen — not women — who inherited their seats, alongside a smattering of bishops. In the 1950s, these were joined by "life peers" — retired politicians, civic leaders and other notables appointed by the government, among them the first female members of the Lords.

In 1999, the Labour government of then-Prime Minister Tony Blair evicted most of the more than 750 hereditary peers, though to avoid an aristocrats' rebellion, 92 were allowed to remain temporarily. A quarter-century on, Prime Minister Keir Starmer's current Labour government finally introduced legislation to oust the remaining "hereditaries," calling them an indefensible relic of the past.

The lords have put up a fight, forcing a compromise that will see some hereditary members allowed to stay by being "recycled" into life peers. "Hereditary peers actually work harder than average peers," said Charles Hay, the 16th Earl of Kinnoull, who leads the group of cross-bench, or non-party affiliated, peers in the Lords. "It means that you chuck out a lot of people who are actually being effective."



Russia, China Join Iran in High-stakes Hormuz Drills

Trans Asia News

Dubai – Russia, China and Iran are conducting joint naval exercises in and around the Strait of Hormuz, concentrating military assets at one of the world's most critical energy chokepoints in a coordinated display that highlights tightening strategic ties and raises concerns about regional escalation.

The drills, hosted by Iran under the banner of the recurring "Maritime Security Belt" exercises, are taking place as tensions simmer between Tehran and Washington. They coincide with separate large-scale manoeuvres by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) navy, which included live-fire missile tests and a temporary suspension of shipping traffic through parts of the strait.

Nikolai Patrushev, a senior adviser to Russian President Vladimir Putin, framed Moscow's participation as part of a wider geopolitical shift. In an interview with the Russian weekly Argumenty i Fakty, he said Russia is working with partners to build what he called a "multipolar world order on the oceans" to counter Western dominance. He pointed to expanding naval cooperation among BRICS-linked countries as a step toward securing trade routes he described as increasingly vulnerable.

Russia sent the Baltic Fleet corvette Stoikiy to Iran's Bandar Abbas port ahead of the exercises, while Chinese warships are operating alongside Iranian and Russian vessels across the Strait of Hormuz, the Sea of Oman and the northern Indian Ocean. Iranian officials say the purpose of the drills is to strengthen joint responses to threats against maritime security and to combat maritime terrorism.

Running in parallel is the IRGC's operation "Smart Control of the Strait of Hormuz", a two-day exercise designed to demonstrate what Iranian commanders call full-spectrum surveillance and rapid strike capability in the waterway. Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, head of the IRGC navy, said forces practised counterattacks using fast missile boats, drones and electronic warfare systems in scenarios simulating real combat conditions.

According to Iranian accounts, missile-launching vessels fired from inland and coastal positions, while drone units conducted reconnaissance and strike missions in jammed signal environments. Military observers said both fixed and moving targets were hit with precision. During one phase of the drill, maritime traffic was halted for several hours.

Tangsiri described Iran's

islands in the Persian Gulf as "impenetrable fortresses" and claimed the IRGC maintains continuous surveillance above and below the water's surface to safeguard the roughly 80 ships that pass through the strait daily. He also repeated Tehran's longstanding warning that it could close the Strait of Hormuz if ordered by senior leadership, saying Iran is ready to act at any time.

Public naval tracking data indicates the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group may be operating in the broader region, placing U.S. forces near the exercise zone and heightening the risk of close encounters between rival militaries.

The Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and carries a large share of global oil and gas exports, making any disruption a potential shock to energy markets. Analysts say the joint presence of Russian, Chinese and Iranian forces serves both as a political signal to Washington and as a practical rehearsal for coordinated control — or defence — of vital sea lanes.

Russia's energy minister, Sergey Tsivilyov, reinforced the diplomatic messaging by calling Iran a strategic partner in Moscow's foreign policy and praising expanding economic cooperation between the two countries.

Russia May Deploy Navy to Counter 'Western Piracy'

Trans Asia News

Moscow - Russia, will use its naval power if Western countries continue seizing ships tied to its merchant fleet, a senior Kremlin official has said.

Nikolai Patrushev, an aide to President Vladimir Putin and head of Russia's Maritime Board, said in an interview on Tuesday that the navy must be prepared to counter what he described as "Western piracy".

He warned that further interference with Russian-linked vessels could prompt a direct maritime response.

"If this situation cannot be resolved peacefully, the

navy will break any blockade and move to eliminate it," he said, adding, "Let us not forget that many vessels sail the seas under European flags. We, too, may take an interest in what they are carrying and where they are headed."

Patrushev stated that any attempt to impose a maritime blockade on Russia would violate international law. He also dismissed the European Union's use of the term "Shadow Fleet", saying it lacked legal standing.

"If we do not give them a strong resistance, then soon the British, the French and even the Baltics will become arrogant to such an extent that they will try to completely block our country's access

to the seas, at least in the Atlantic basin," he concluded.

In recent months, the majority of Russian merchant vessels have continued operating without disruption.

However, several ships believed to have Russian links have been boarded or detained by European authorities, including in France, Germany, Finland and Italy, both at ports and at sea.

On January 22, the French Navy boarded and detained a Russian oil tanker later identified as the Grinch.

The operation was publicised by French President Emmanuel Macron as a move aimed at limiting Moscow's ability to sustain its military campaign in Ukraine.

RSS Chief Pitches for 3 Children in Hindu Families

Press Trust Of India

Lucknow- RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Tuesday called for uniting and empowering the Hindu society, saying there is no threat but vigilance is necessary, and suggested that Hindu families should consider having at least three children.

Addressing a social-harmony meeting at the Saraswati Shishu Mandir here, Bhagwat expressed concern over what he described as a declining Hindu population and said inducement or coercion-based religious conversions should be stopped.

He also emphasised accelerating efforts to bring people back to the Hindu-fold and ensuring their welfare.

"There is a need to unite and empower Hindus. There is no threat to us but vigilance is necessary," the Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh (RSS) chief said.

Raising concerns over infiltration, Bhagwat said infiltrators should be "detected, deleted and deported" and should not be provided employment.

He also said Hindu families should consider having at least three children, citing scientific opinions that societies with an average fertility rate of below three could disappear in the future.

Bhagwat said newly-married couples should be made aware of this and added that the purpose of marriage is to carry forward creation, not merely fulfilling one's own desires.

Bhagwat said a lack of harmony leads to discrimination and stressed that all citizens share one country and one motherland.

"The Sanatan thought is a philosophy of harmony," he said, adding that differences that have emerged over time must be addressed through understanding and practice.

Bhagwat said those who disagree should not be viewed as enemies and emphasised coordination over conflict.

He described "matrushakti" (women power) as the foundation of the household, saying women should not be seen as weak and should receive training in self-defence.

The RSS chief said the Indian tradition accords women a



revered place and values nurturing qualities over physical appearance.

Responding to a question on University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines, he said laws must be obeyed and if a law is flawed, there are constitutional ways to change it.

He said caste divisions should not become a cause of conflict and called for uplifting the disadvantaged with a sense of belonging.

Bhagwat said India would guide the world in the near future and that solutions to many global problems lie within the

Rs 640 Cr Cyber Fraud: SC Refuses Anticipatory Bail to CA

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to grant anticipatory bail to a chartered accountant in a money laundering investigation linked to a Rs 640 crore cyber fraud case.

A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and Augustine George Masih upheld the order of the Delhi High Court, which had denied pre-arrest bail to Bhaskar Yadav and directed him to surrender in 10 days.

The high court on February 2 dismissed anticipatory bail applications by Yadav and Ashok Kumar Sharma.

In the 22-page judgement, the high court had said there was an "intricate mesh of laundering of money", and the need expressed by the Enforcement Directorate to interrogate the two accused in custody was not unreasonable.

"The accused/applicants, being skilled professionals, have allegedly crafted laundering of proceeds of crime across multiple layers, and to unearth the same, I find substance in the submission of learned counsel for DoE (Directorate of Enforcement) that custodial interrogation is much required," the HC said.

"It is not a case of mere

dealing in cryptocurrency, which per se is not a crime in this country and the liability of the accused persons is confined to paying tax on the crypto transactions. The present cases exhibit a vast intricate mesh of movement of money, fraudulently extracted out of pocket of gullible investors, who appear to primarily belong to the middle class," it had added.

The high court had stated that individual liberty was sacrosanct, but it could not brush aside the requirement to carry out a meaningful interrogation and investigation in the larger interest of the country's economy.

It had noted there were fresh complaints of the accused allegedly assaulting the investigating officers, bribing the local police to settle cyber fraud complaints and destroying electronic evidence.

The money laundering probe stems from two FIRs filed by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police that were registered to probe charges of cyber fraud to the tune of Rs 640 crore generated through betting, gambling, part-time jobs and phishing scams, the ED has earlier said in a statement.

Branded Witch, Woman Set On Fire With Baby In Arms

Chaibasa, Feb 18 (PTI) A 32-year-old woman and her baby were allegedly set on fire in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district after she was branded a witch, police said on Wednesday. The incident happened at a village in the Kumardungi police station area late on Tuesday, and four people have been arrested, they said.

The woman's husband was also injured in the attack, but he managed to escape. He spent the night at a relative's place and reached the police station on Wednesday morning.

In his complaint, he alleged that he woke up in the middle of the night after hearing that

After the husband lodged the police complaint, he was admitted to the government hospital in Kumardungi. We have arrested four men named in the complaint. We are trying to identify the women who also took part in the crime, relying merely on superstition

some people were calling him and his wife.

When he went out, he saw

that around a dozen people had gathered, accusing his wife of practising witchcraft. Amid the commotion, the mob poured kerosene on his wife, who had their one-year-old baby in her arms, and set them on fire, according to the complaint.

They died on the spot, police said.

"After the husband lodged the police complaint, he was admitted to the government hospital in Kumardungi. We have arrested four men named in the complaint. We are trying to identify the women who also took part in the crime, relying merely on superstition," Jagannathpur SDPO Raphael Murmu told PTI.

Doctors Restore Vision of Blind Gyne in 'World's First'

Chennai, Feb 18 (PTI) Ophthalmologists at Dr Agarwal's Eye Hospital restored the vision of a 44-year-old Mumbai gynaecologist who was blind in both eyes, performing what they described as a "world-first" procedure, officials said on Wednesday.

The patient regained functional vision in her left eye immediately after a single procedure that combined the advanced 5F-ISHF intraocular lens implantation technique with optical penetrating keratoplasty and structural reconstruction, according to a hospital press release.

Optical penetrating keratoplasty is a full-thickness corneal transplant that replaces a damaged cornea with healthy donor tissue to restore vision.

The patient had suffered from 10 years of progressive vision loss caused by severe glaucoma and multiple intraocular pathologies.

Despite undergoing several previous surgeries, her condition had not responded to treatment until the recent intervention.

Dr Soosan Jacob, Director and Chief of the Dr Agarwal's Refractive and Cornea Foundation, who performed the surgery, said the immediate cause of vision loss was a malpositioned artificial lens in the left eye.

The faulty lens had been pressing against the iris and cornea, causing the anterior layers of the eye to fuse, she added.

The 5F-ISHF technique, developed by Dr Jacob, enables the secure placement of a new intraocular lens without stitches or large incisions by tucking the lens into the eye's structure.

Dr Ashvin Agarwal, Chief Clinical Officer, said the complexity of the case required extensive reconstruction of the distorted ocular anatomy to provide a durable, long-term solution.

Man Loses Rs 64 Lakh in Crypto 'Investment' Scam

Thane, Feb 18 (PTI) A 44-year-old man employed in the private sector was allegedly duped of around Rs 64 lakh in a cryptocurrency investment scam, which was executed through a fake platform, Thane Police said on Wednesday.

The victim made multiple transactions, totalling Rs 63.90 lakh in the last two months.

A police officer said the victim was contacted by a woman and individuals claiming to represent a cryptocurrency platform.

"They promised him higher returns and induced him to carry out 13 separate online transactions to different bank accounts provided by the purported customer care representatives of the fake platform," the officer said.

219 Ventilators Non-Functional in J&K Hospitals: Govt Tells House

Observer News Service

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Wednesday informed the House that out of 877 ventilators installed across hospitals in the Union Territory, 219 remain non-functional, highlighting gaps in critical care infrastructure.

Replying to a question of MLA Shamim Firdous, Health and Medical Education Department Minister Sakina Itoo, as per KNO said that 658 ventilators are functional while 219 are non-functional.

While giving institution-wise details, she said that in GMC Jammu and its associated hospital there are 320 ventilators, among which 209 are functional



and 111 are non-functional.

"In SMHS Srinagar, 08 ventilators are non-functional and in GMC Srinagar associated hos-

pitals excluding SMHS, 44 are non-functional," they said.

They said, in GMC Anantnag, just 10 out of 36 ventilators are

functional. GMC Baramulla has 2 non-functional ventilators, GMC Doda 10, GMC Kathua 2 and GMC Rajouri 3 are non-

IN SMHS SRINAGAR, 08 VENTILATORS ARE NON-FUNCTIONAL and in GMC Srinagar associated hospitals excluding SMHS, 44 are non-functional,"

functional," they said adding in GMC Udhampur and GMC Handwara, all 39 and 6 ventilators respectively are functional.

The government further said, in SKIMS and its associated hospitals, out of 53 ventilators, 40 are functioning while 13 are non-functional.

Snow Carnival Held at Doodhpathri

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A Snow Carnival was organised at the scenic tourist destination of Doodhpathri on Wednesday, the second day after its reopening, nearly 10 months after it was closed following the Pahalgam attack in April 2025.

The reopening was announced by the Lieutenant Governor through his official X handle, after which the meadow was thrown open for tourists.

To mark the reopening and boost tourism, the Department of Tourism organised a Snow Carnival featuring several adventure and cultural activities, including Snowshoe Race, skiing, Snow Cricket, paragliding, cultural programs, and Snow Tug of War.

Hundreds of people participated in and witnessed the events, while thousands of tourists visited Doodhpathri in just two days since its reopening.

Speaking to KNO, Chief



Executive Officer (CEO) Doodhpathri, Riyaz Ahmad Beigh, said the response has been overwhelming.

"Thousands have visited Doodhpathri in just two days. We are confident that Doodhpathri will break its previous records of tourist footfall," he said.

Beigh said the destination offers multiple adventure activities, including skiing and drag lift facilities, making it an attractive alternative for winter tourism.

"As more tourists come here, it will also reduce the rush at Gulmarg, as people will divert to Doodhpathri. This will provide relief to

service providers and locals, helping them earn their livelihood," he said.

He further said that the department is planning to introduce ski courses to bring Doodhpathri prominently onto the ski resort map.

Beigh added that all stakeholders, particularly service providers, have been instructed to maintain cleanliness at the destination to ensure a positive experience for visitors.

The reopening of Doodhpathri and the organisation of the Snow Carnival are expected to further revive tourism and economic activity at the destination.

All Non-Municipal Villages in Budgam Under RDD Jurisdiction: Govt

Observer News Service

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Wednesday said that all villages in Budgam district, except those notified as municipal towns, fall under the jurisdiction of the Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department.

Replying to a question in the Legislative Assembly tabled by MLA Chadoora Ali Mohammad Dar regarding the administrative control of rural areas, the govern-

ment, as reported by KNO, said that sanitation and other rural development activities are being carried out in all villages through concerned Block Development Officers (BDOs).

It further stated that no formal complaint has been received regarding interference by the Urban Development Department through its local body units in rural areas. Any complaint received in the future shall be dealt with strictly, it said.

On the rationalisation of

jurisdictional boundaries, the government said that, via S.O. 53 dated February 27, 2025, boundaries of districts, tehsils, municipalities, towns, and revenue villages across the UT have been frozen with effect from July 1, 2025, till the completion of Census 2021.

It added that rationalisation may be initiated only after the de-freezing of boundaries and upon receipt of formal requests, in accordance with governing rules.

Ration Card Bifurcation Process on Hold since 2016: Govt

Observer News Service

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Wednesday informed the House that the process of bifurcation of ration cards has been put on hold.

Replying to a question tabled by MLA Zafar Ali Khatana regarding bifurcation of ration

cards, the government as per KNO said the bifurcation was put on hold vide Government Order No. 85-CAPD of 2016 dated May 4, 2016.

It further stated that the Administrative Department, through communication dated November 19, 2020, has advised that bifurcation of ration cards is

not permitted till revised ration ceilings are conveyed by the Government of India.

However, the reply said that the J&K administration is currently quantifying the approximate additional allocation required to cover bifurcation cases for taking up the matter with the Government of India.

Tenders for Mughal Road Tunnel Only After DPR, Clearances: Govt

Observer News Service

JAMMU: The Government on Wednesday informed the House that tenders for the proposed Mughal Road Tunnel (Pir-ki-Gali Tunnel) will be invited only after approval of the Detailed Project Report (DPR) and requisite statutory clearances.

Replying to a question raised by MLA Ch. Mohammad Akram regarding the construction of the Mughal Road Tunnel project, the Minister Incharge as per KNO, said the alignment proposal submitted by DPR Consultant M/s SMEC (India) Pvt. Ltd. was discussed in the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRT&H) on January 21, 2026.

The government said, the DPR Consultant shall commence preparation of the Detailed Project Report only after approval of the alignment by MoRT&H.

It further stated, that the invitation of tenders for the tunnel project shall be undertaken only after approval of the DPR by MoRT&H and after obtaining all requisite statutory clearances, including Forest, Wildlife and Land Acquisition clearances, as per rules.

EOW, Kashmir Conducts Raids in Shopian, Budgam

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Economic Offences Wing, Kashmir of Crime Branch J&K on Wednesday said to have arrested five employees of HDFC Bank in connection with a major financial fraud at its Shopian branch, officials said.

They said, acting on FIR No. 30/2025, they are carrying out searches across Shopian and Budgam districts as part of an ongoing investigation into the alleged large-scale embezzlement.

In a statement issued to Kashmir Observer, a spokesperson said the Economic Offences Wing (EOW), Kashmir of Crime Branch J&K is conducting searches in the districts of Shopian and Budgam in connection with case FIR No. 30/2025, registered under the relevant provisions



of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the IT Act at Police Station EOW Kashmir, Crime Branch J&K.

He said the matter came to light following a written complaint regarding large-scale financial fraud at Branch Unit Shopian of HDFC Bank. "In compliance with the directions of PHQ J&K, the case was transferred from Police Station Shopian to the Crime Branch J&K for comprehensive investigation."

The spokesperson said in connection with the case, five bank employees have

been arrested so far. The arrested employees are: Adil Ayoub Ganai, S/o Mohammad Ayoub Ganai, R/o Memendar, Shopian; A/P Hamza Colony, Baghat-e-Kanipora, Nowgam; Irfan Majeed Zargar, S/o Abdul Majeed Zargar, R/o Sheikh Mohalla, Bonigam, Shopian; Mubashir Hussain Sheikh, S/o Ghulam Mohammad Sheikh, R/o Karena, Kulgam; Zaid Manzoor, S/o Manzoor Ahmad Din, R/o Dagerpora, Khannabal, Anantnag and Javid Ahmad Bhat, S/o Abdul Rahim Bhat, R/o Below Rajpora, Pulwama."

"Searches are presently underway at multiple locations in Shopian and Budgam to collect material evidence in the case. The Economic Offences Wing, Kashmir will continue to pursue all lawful measures to safeguard financial integrity," said the spokesperson. (Observer News Service)

KCCI Delegation meets Union Govt Official

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Kashmir Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI) on Wednesday held a detailed meeting in New Delhi with Lokesh HD, Additional Director General of Foreign Trade, and Satya Raja, Joint DGFT, to deliberate on key export-related issues affecting the Kashmir region and to explore measures for strengthening the export ecosystem.

According to a statement issued to Kashmir Observer, during the meeting, discussions were also held regarding the implementation framework of the Export Promotion Mission (EPM), with the Directorate General of Foreign Trade serving as the nodal agency.

The KCCI delegation was represented by Executive Committee Members Muzaffar Majid Jan and Ashiq Hussain Shangglo, who presented a comprehensive review of the pre- and post-pandemic export scenario. The delegation informed the DGFT leadership that exports from the region has declined. Although the first quarter of the current financial year showed signs of resilience, the second quarter again recorded a dip, underlining the need for sustained and targeted policy support.

Bandipora Records 5.73 Sq Km Increase in Forest Cover

JAMMU: The Government of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday informed the House that Bandipora Forest Division has recorded an increase of 5.73 square kilometres in forest cover as per the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023.

Replying to a Question raised by MLA Nizam-ud-Din Bhat regarding deforestation activities, the Minister In-charge, Forest, Ecology & Environment Department, as per KNO said that Bandipora has a recorded forest area of 1,864 square kilometres comprising Himalayan moist temperate, dry temperate, sub-alpine and alpine forest types.

The government stated that forest cover is assessed at the national level and as per ISFR-2023, Bandipora district has witnessed an increase of 5.73 sq km in forest cover compared to the previous assessment.

"About the issue of unchecked deforestation, the government said that no systematic deforestation incidents have been reported from Bandipora district, adding that forest protection remains a core function of the department with continuous monitoring and enforcement on the ground."

They further informed that action under relevant forest laws has been taken against offenders. A total of 12 forest offence cases were registered, 26 culprits were booked and seizures including 1,498.86 cubic feet of timber and six vehicles were made. The government also said that for enhancement of green cover and rehabilitation of degraded forest areas, afforestation activities are being undertaken under approved schemes during the current financial year 2025-26. (Observer News Service)

Govt Weighs Age Limit Hike for J&K Civil Services

JAMMU: Jammu & Kashmir Government on Wednesday said that the issue to enhance the upper age limit for candidates appearing in the Jammu & Kashmir Combined Competitive Examination (JKCE) is under examination.

In response to cut motion of MLA Handwara Sajad Gani Lone, the Minister in-charge General Administration Department, as per KNO said that issue is under examination to assess its feasibility in light of the existing provisions of the Jammu & Kashmir Combined Competitive Examination 2018 Rules, overall service requirements, cadre management considerations, and comparative recruitment standards followed in other jurisdictions.

The Government said that prior to the issuance of SRO 103 of 2018, the upper age limit for appearing in the Combined Competitive Examination was 30 years for Open Merit candidates and 32 years for candidates belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and those holding a civil post in the state in a substantive capacity or having served in a temporary post continuously for at least three years. (Observer News Service)

ACB Arrests Girdawar for Demanding, Accepting Bribe

JAMMU: J&K Anti-Corruption Bureau on Wednesday arrested a Revenue Official while demanding and accepting Rs 10,000 bribe in Reasi.

In a statement issued to Kashmir Observer, an ACB spokesman said: "Accused public servant, Mohammad Saleem Bandy, Girdawar, Halqa Judda, Tehsil Arnas, District Reasi unlawfully demanded a bribe from the complainant in lieu of carrying out the demarcation of his ancestral land. It's an official duty the accused was legally obligated to perform without any monetary consideration. Unwilling to yield to the corrupt demand, the complainant approached the Anti-Corruption Bureau seeking legal action against the accused under the provisions of law."

"Upon receipt of the complaint, the ACB conducted a thorough discreet verification exercise, which corroborated the demand of bribe by the accused public servant. Based on the verified findings, FIR No. 04/2026 was formally registered at Police Station ACB Udhampur and a detailed investigation was initiated forthwith," he said, adding, "During the course of investigation, a specialized trap team headed by an officer of the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police (Dy SP) was constituted. The team successfully executed the trap operation, during which the accused was caught red-handed while demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹10,000 from the complainant in the presence of independent witnesses. The accused was arrested on the spot in strict adherence to due process of law, and the bribe money was recovered from his possession in the presence of the trap team witnesses." (Observer News Service)

3 Drug Peddlers Arrested in Pulwama, Shopian

SRINAGAR: Continuing its firm action against drug trafficking and substance abuse, Police have arrested three drug peddlers in separate operations in Pulwama & Shopian and seized substantial quantities of contraband substances from their possession.

According to a statement issued to Kashmir Observer, a Police party of PS Litter during naka checking intercepted a vehicle bearing registration No. JK13J-1331 at Gudoora Crossing. During the search, a carry bag containing approximately 750 grams of charas powder-like substance was recovered. The driver of the vehicle identified as Mudasir Ahmad Malik son of Ghulam Mohidin Malik resident of Tahab was arrested and the vehicle used in the commission of the offence has also been seized. In another operation, a naka party of PS Pulwama apprehended a drug peddler identified as Ferooz Ahmad Mir son of Gh Mohd Mir resident of Rakhi Shilwat Sumbal Bandipora, at Gudoora crossing. During the search, approximately 137.5 grams of heroin-like substance was recovered from his possession.

In Shopian, acting on specific information, Police Station Keller registered a case under FIR No. 06/2026 of NDPS Act and obtained a search warrant from competent authority. A team from Police Station Shopian accompanied by the Executive Magistrate, raided the house of Bashir Ahmad Dar resident of Vishroo Payeen Keller. During the search, 1,880Kgs of Charas and 8,570Kgs of Cannabis-like substance was seized and the accused was arrested on spot and further investigation has been initiated. (Observer News Service)

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified for the information of the general public and all concerned authorities that my name has been inadvertently recorded as Mohammad Ashraf Sofi bearing Driving Licence No. JK0520040023535, whereas my correct and actual name is Mohd Ashraf Sofi. Now I intend to correct this discrepancy, in this regard if anybody have any kind of objection he/she may file the same with ARTO Baramulla within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. No objection will be entertained afterwards.

Mohd Ashraf Sofi,
S/o Noor Ud Din Sofi, R/o Pattan, District Baramulla,

Dust Pollution in Khrew Major Health Concern: Health Dept tells House

Observer News Service

JAMMU: The Health and Medical Education (H&ME) Department said there is a growing public health risk posed by dust pollution in the Khrew area of Pulwama, attributing it largely to cement factories and limestone mining activities operating in the region.

As per KNO, replying to a question raised by MLA Hasnain Masoodi, the H&ME Minister Sakeena Itoo informed the House that the Department of Health Services is "acutely aware and deeply concerned" about the health challenges emerging from prolonged exposure to fine particulate matter.

She said inhalation of dust particles is a known medical risk factor and is being linked to a rise in respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular complications, and eye and

skin-related conditions among the exposed population of Khrew.

Recognising environmental pollution as a major determinant of public health, the department has proposed a comprehensive preventive and responsive strategy.

"Under enhanced surveillance and healthcare preparedness, public health institutions in the affected area—including the Sub-District Hospital and Primary Health Centres—have been directed to: systematically document pollution-related cases such as respiratory, allergic, and cardiovascular illnesses; ensure adequate stocks of essential medicines, nebulizers, and respiratory equipment; and conduct regular training for medical staff to manage pollution-induced health conditions," the minister informed the House.

She said the department will also intensify community aware-

ness and outreach through Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities. These will include advisories to minimise outdoor exposure during high-dust periods, promotion of protective measures such as N95 masks for vulnerable groups—including children and patients with pre-existing respiratory problems—and organisation of health camps focused on respiratory screening.

The minister said the department recognises that long-term relief requires action at the source of pollution. "It will coordinate with the Department of Environment, Forests and Ecology, Jammu and Kashmir and the Jammu and Kashmir Pollution Control Committee to share health impact data and push for: strict enforcement of dust-control measures such as water sprinkling, covered

transport of raw materials, development of green belts, and adoption of cleaner industrial technologies and proper environmental management plans," she said.

Additionally, the department plans to collect and analyse epidemiological data to understand long-term disease trends, which will guide future healthcare infrastructure planning and resource allocation in the region, Itoo said. She, however, clarified that no formal study has been conducted so far to establish a direct causal link between cement factory emissions and specific diseases. The statistical information currently available does not conclusively authenticate pollution as the cause.

Itoo shared the reported health figures from the area: Lung cancer: 2 cases; Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD): 80

cases; Bronchitis: 72 cases; and Asthma: 40 cases. "These cases cannot be conclusively attributed to industrial emissions," she said.

On the demand to upgrade Primary Health Centre Khrew to a higher-level facility, the minister said it is not feasible under IPHS-2022 norms and remains a policy decision.

She explained that the PHC currently caters to a population of around 35,000 and is located just 17 kilometres from AIIMS Awantipora and 11.5 kilometres from Sub-District Hospital Pampore.

"In view of the population criteria and the presence of nearby major health institutions, the creation of a Community Health Centre at Khrew is not justified," she said. "Sustainable public health requires concerted, cross-departmental efforts to effectively reduce environmental hazards."

KASHMIR OBSERVER®

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KO VIEW

Kashmir's
Fasting Wisdom

Ramzan in Kashmir acts as a public lesson in living with discipline. People fast to control their bodies, while good intentions guide their daily actions.

The feeling of hunger builds real empathy for those who face shortages all year. Prayer helps sharpen focus on personal habits, like how we speak and handle business.

Charity shifts from random kindness to a planned practice. Families calculate zakat, and youth groups organize donations for homes in need.

A grocer gives credit based on trust. A neighbour shares food before iftar. Community kitchens boost their efforts with smart efficiency. Business picks up during this time, but it comes with a strong sense of conscience.

Ramzan's true purpose goes beyond rituals and lively markets. It invites us to look at the valley's moral side, especially when economic pressures and social stresses test our shared strength.

Kashmir has gone through tough periods. Careless money choices and quick reactions often made things worse. Ramzan provides a clear space to review those patterns.

Shop owners think about fair pricing. Professionals consider ethical service. Families reflect on how everyday behaviour shapes the community atmosphere.

Living mindfully turns into a group discussion, rather than just a personal goal.

This yearly routine raises an honest question about keeping it up. Compassion and openness matter every day instead of only during this holy month.

Ramzan shows how shared self-control can improve markets, strengthen neighbourhoods, and encourage fair decisions in personal matters.

The next step is to carry this balanced way into the months ahead. Let charity become a commitment and fair trade the everyday standard.

Kashmir stands at a key moment. Thoughtful choices in business, the environment, and community life can lead us toward stability and prosperity for everyone.

Think of sustainable ways in our orchards or eco-friendly tourism by the lakes. Civic efforts, like cleaner spaces or fair resource sharing, help build trust.

Ramzan gives a clear example of how faith can influence public values and how personal change can improve society.

When a community takes this lesson beyond one month, it creates a strong foundation for progress, based on care and responsibility.

This conscious living opens the door to a fairer, brighter future for all.

CASH COURSE

Read This Before You Buy Anything

Ramzan's Living Market

How fasting fuels faith and lifts Kashmir's economy.

Irshad Mushtaq

Every year, as the crescent moon rises, marketplaces from Srinagar's Lal Chowk to Rajouri Kadal fill with customers searching for dates, dry fruits, fresh produce and spices. Traders and shopkeepers describe this as their busiest season, with demand surging weeks before the fast begins.

Imported dates are the heart of this seasonal boom. Premium Ajwa, Medjool and Safawi varieties from Saudi Arabia, UAE and Iran flood store shelves in every price range. Demand spikes so sharply that some wholesalers report moving thousands of kilograms daily during peak days of the month.

This rush has real financial impact for small business owners who count on Ramzan sales to carry them through slower months.

Fruit vendors see similar lifts in business with bananas, melons and apples flying off carts as families prepare Sehri and Iftar tables. Dry fruit stalls, stocked with almonds and cashews used in traditional Ramzan dishes and drinks, also thrive. Even meat suppliers notice spikes in consumption, highlighting that food markets overall experience one of their most active periods of the year.

Ramzan also pushes households to think differently about money. Fasting teaches restraint and prioritization. People buy what they need and avoid waste. Gift-giving and charity during the month circulate money in the community and support those in need. This blend of spiritual focus and financial mindfulness brings a sharper awareness of budgeting, saving and shared support.

Local concerns are part of the picture too. Fluctuating prices, especially for dates and fresh produce, can strain modest budgets. Consumers and vendors call for fair pricing and better supply chain stability to ease these pressures.

Still, for many in the valley, Ramzan is both a spiritual season and an economic engine. It stirs deep traditions, draws neighbours together around shared meals and religious purpose, and keeps markets alive with daily activity.

The faithful sharpen their sense of community at prayer and strengthen their financial resolve at the bazaar.

The author is a Srinagar-based reputed financial educator.



Representational Photo.

The Reel Religion Era

As short videos build belief, self-styled online preachers test the place of scholars and the legacy of Islamic learning in the valley.

Raqif Makhdoomi



Social media will continue to shape how people learn. The challenge for Kashmir's faith community is to balance access with depth, curiosity with caution, and enthusiasm with respect for those who have carried knowledge across centuries.

A single swipe now delivers answers to almost any question. Social media feeds move fast, and many people settle for quick explanations instead of careful study.

Tools such as ChatGPT and Grok turn complex issues into short, friendly chats. The habit of slow learning feels distant.

There was a time when students copied manuscripts by hand and traveled far to study one subject in depth.

Today, entire libraries sit inside a phone.

This easy access to information is a blessing, but it also tempts us to skim instead of reflect.

Young people spend hours on short videos these days. Long lectures that once held attention for two hours now struggle to compete with clips that last less than a minute. Generation Z often prefers Instagram snippets to detailed lessons.

These short bursts may inspire curiosity, but they rarely offer the depth that faith demands.

Many reels feature speakers who quote a verse or mention a Hadith number with confidence.

Quoting, however, is not the same as understanding.

Every Quranic verse has context. Scholars study what is known as Shaan-e-Nuzool, the background of revelation, to grasp the purpose behind each line.

Without that context, meaning can shrink or shift.

Social media has also produced a wave of self-taught preachers. Some place shelves of religious books behind them and speak with authority. They question established scholars and urge followers to rely only on personal reading.

Independent study has value, and Islam encourages reflection. But even these speakers rely on the work of earlier scholars.

The very books they cite were written by generations who devoted their lives to careful research.

A well-known Hadith recorded in collections such as Sunan al-Tirmidhi reminds believers of the rank of scholars.

It describes scholars as inheritors of the prophets, carrying forward knowledge rather than wealth.

This tradition highlights the honour given to those who dedicate their lives to learning and teaching.

Islamic history itself shows a rich chain of mentorship.

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They differed in legal reasoning, but they respected one another and shared teachers. Their diversity grew from discipline instead of impulse.

Today, a confident voice and fluent Arabic can win instant trust online. Viewers may feel they are breaking free from tradition, but they often end up tied to a single online personality.

Serious study of fiqh and Hadith requires years of training, guidance and humility.

The Quran itself calls believers to follow the Prophet's example and to seek guidance with sincerity. The Hadith literature preserves his teachings in detail.

Engaging with both requires patience and reliable scholarship.

Social media will continue to shape how people learn. The challenge for Kashmir's faith community is to balance access with depth, curiosity with caution, and enthusiasm with respect for those who have carried knowledge across centuries.

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Sincerely,

Rakshanda Gul
rakshandagul629@gmail.com

The Gongul We Couldn't Share

What happens when a Kashmiri grandmother's eyes say yes, but her body says no.

Aabroo Hussain

The other day, I was walking through the Gongul Agri-tech Mela at the Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir in Shalimar, holding on to a feeling that had started the previous Sunday.

That day, the idea came to me while my grandmother and I were sitting in the winter sun. We were side by side in the veranda, letting the warmth settle on our faces. On impulse, I asked her to come with me to the mela. I asked again, smiling, hoping my excitement would carry her with it.

Her eyes lit up with the same curiosity I have known since childhood. I could tell she wanted to go even before she said a word.

Then she began to speak about the long walk, the heavy crowd, the uneven ground, and the fear of losing her balance.

Each worry came from lived experience, from a body that now moves carefully and thinks before every step.

On one side was her desire to step out and see the world. On the other was a body that asked her to slow down.

I went alone.

The mela felt alive in every direction. Stalls displayed seeds, tools and local produce. Students moved in groups, laughter rising freely into the open air. Couples shared plates of food. Children tugged at balloons and sweets with restless joy. Cameras clicked against the backdrop of flowers in bloom.

The fragrance of gongul blossoms stayed in the air and wrapped the gathering in a soft sweetness.

As I walked through the crowd, I kept imagining my granny beside me. I could see her reading each sign slowly, asking farmers about their crops, stopping to admire the flowers.

But I could also see the strain the long walk would have placed on her legs and the anxiety the pressing crowd might have stirred in her heart.

I felt relieved knowing she was safe at home. At the same time, guilt settled in, because in choosing safety, I had given up the chance to share that day with her.

That conflict opened a larger question



MY GRANDMOTHER ONCE TRAVELLED FAR AND WIDE, ATTENDED WEDDINGS IN DISTANT TOWNS, and walked through busy markets with confidence. She held herself with strength and independence. Time has slowed her steps, but her curiosity still shines the same.

about how ageing silently redraws the map of a person's world.

Youth moves with ease through public spaces. It thrives on noise, colour and sudden plans. Age moves with thoughtfulness. It studies distance, measures steps and calculates risk.

The spirit, however, continues to seek connection, beauty and participation. The hunger to witness life does not retire with grey hair.

Her hesitation at the veranda was a conversation between will and limitation. Curiosity remained bright within her, but the body

asked for assurance.

Society often speaks as though ageing naturally narrows a person's life. Reality shows that public design and social habits often do that narrowing.

Research in gerontology supports this understanding with clarity. The World Health Organization has highlighted how social isolation increases the likelihood of depression, cognitive decline and cardiovascular illness among older adults. The National Institute on Aging has demonstrated

that seniors who participate in community activities tend to preserve memory, manage stress more effectively and maintain stronger overall health.

Engagement stimulates the brain, exchange activates neural pathways, and shared experiences anchor a sense of belonging.

A simple visit to a park or attendance at a local event strengthens both mind and heart.

Public spaces in our cities often prioritize movement over rest. Festivals centre on standing crowds. Seating remains lim-

ited. Clear walking paths and controlled crowd flow rarely receive focused attention. Medical assistance booths seldom form part of the main design. Dedicated hours that welcome senior citizens remain uncommon.

These gaps send a subtle message about who belongs most comfortably in public celebration.

Within families, care frequently revolves around medication schedules and meal times. Protection becomes the central theme, joy requires equal attention, and companionship carries healing power that pills cannot replace.

My grandmother once travelled far and wide, attended weddings in distant towns, and walked through busy markets with confidence. She held herself with strength and independence. Time has slowed her steps, but her curiosity still shines the same.

She still wants to see what blooms in spring and learn about the new ideas farmers bring to their fields.

Modern life celebrates speed and youth. Public spaces revolve around energy and productivity, while older people slowly fade into the background.

Age reminds us of fragility, so we keep it out of sight.

We can do better. Parks and universities can add more seating and shade. Events can arrange medical help, trained volunteers and senior-friendly hours. Gatherings can welcome grandparents and grandchildren together as a normal part of community life.

One day, every young person in a crowd will grow old and hope the world makes space for them too.

The wish to see flowers, hear music and sit among people never fades. Only the body slows down.

A caring society makes room for its elders.

The gongul flowers were in full bloom that day in Shalimar.

She deserved to see them.

— The author hails from Srinagar and can be reached at aabroo@startupkashmir.org.

Srinagar's Childhood Is Losing Ground

A city that once resounded with running feet now stands lined with parked cars.

Mohammad Ilyas Bhat

There was a time when Srinagar meant more than lakes, gardens, and tall minars.

The city breathed through its open grounds. Children filled those spaces with noise, laughter, and flying dust.

A boy could run till sunset, fall on the grass, rise again, and return home with scraped knees and a glowing face.

That felt like real wealth: open air, open land, and open childhood.

Srinagar once understood that play was part of growing up. Today, the proverb about work and play feels painfully true.

The city stands packed with concrete. Childhood stands pressed between buildings, barricades, and endless rows of parked vehicles.

Gole Bagh, later called Gandhi Park, stood as one of the grand grounds of our youth. It spread wide near the old Secretariat, shaded by proud chinars.

Cricket balls flew high there, football matches drew loud cheers, and circus tents rose during festive days.

Political leaders built stages and stirred crowds with speeches. We ran around those stages with the same excitement as a final match.

That ground felt like the beating heart of Srinagar.

Young people today know that place only through the Assembly complex and the High Court structures.

The land now speaks the language of institutions, but it once spoke the language of people.

A short walk away stood Tatoo Ground and the vast Khar Maidaan. Those fields welcomed every child. No one worried about traffic or broken window panes.

Then came development.

Khar Maidaan turned into a hospital OPD. Tatoo Ground filled with garbage and later with municipal shops. A playground became a market.

Land appears quickly for shops, but the ground beneath our feet disappears when children ask for space.



The Exhibition Ground once hosted a grand industrial exhibition each year. During the rest of the months, wrestling matches and volleyball games filled the air with energy.

Local pehlwans stood tall as heroes of their neighbourhoods. Sports felt like a living tradition. But today, many such grounds stand stripped of identity and spirit.

Maharaj Bazar, Maisuma, and Amira Kadal once enjoyed Hazoori Bagh, now called Iqbal Park, and the vast Polo Ground. Youth also played at the grounds of S.P. College and Amar Singh College.

Hazoori Bagh now works like a revenue spot for JK Bank. Polo Ground stands narrowed to make room for parking. Running feet gave way to stationary tyres. The sight

tells its own story.

Downtown Srinagar held pride in Eidgah and the open stretches near Badamwari and Islamia College.

These grounds felt like the lungs of the old city.

Many of these spaces now stand reduced or taken over by official projects. Even Pratap Park, once rich with beloved trees, now

shows more concrete than green.

A city without playgrounds cannot raise healthy citizens. Play builds teamwork, patience, leadership, and endurance. It keeps bodies active and minds fresh.

Children without grounds turn toward screens and narrow lanes. Parents watch rising anxiety and growing distance among youth.

Another striking example stands in the Srinagar Golf Club, built at a massive cost of over fifty crores.

Only a handful of elite players use it. Royal Springs already serves that circle.

Meanwhile, common children squeeze cricket games into tight streets. Broken window panes bring scolding and complaints.

Decisions still emerge behind closed doors, files move, and grounds vanish. Protests rise for a few days, and then concrete returns stronger than before.

Open land often gets labelled as unused ground and soon slips into development plans. Children have no lobby and sign no tenders. They stand watching as their playing fields turn into concrete plots. Then we wonder and lament: why childhood is fading so fast.

Srinagar once had Gole Bagh, Tatoo Ground, Khar Maidaan, Exhibition Ground, Hazoori Bagh, Polo Ground, S.P. College ground, Amar Singh College ground, Eidgah, Badamwari, and Islamia College ground. Many now stand altered or erased.

Our children have lost open skies and care-free laughter. The city now feels designed for cars and commercial blocks.

A generation may soon know every shopping complex by name and every parking slot by number, but never know the joy of running freely on grass.

Srinagar once reverberated with our footsteps. But today, engines fill that sound, while childhood waits indoors.

The question remains clear: Where did our playgrounds go? And who will bring them back?

— The author works in agricultural seed production and is currently writing his first short story collection in Kashmir.



SRINAGAR ONCE HAD GOLE BAGH, TATOO GROUND, KHAR MAIDAN, EXHIBITION GROUND, HAZOORI BAGH, POLO GROUND, S.P. COLLEGE GROUND, Amar Singh College ground, Eidgah, Badamwari, and Islamia College ground. Many now stand altered or erased.

ASF ENTERPRISES

Sale and Services of Computers 2nd. Floor
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Printers, Photocopiers. Faxes, ,CCTV
Cameras, Security System and Refilling of
all Types of Cartridges,
Toners Registered
Government
order Suppliers.



PUBLIC NOTICE

My particulars have been wrongly written in my Driving Licence bearing DL No: as Ajaz Ahmed Mir S/o Sadar Ud Din Mir, DOB 01-10-1976 while my correct name as per adhaar card is AJAZ AHMAD MEER S/O SADDAR UD DIN MEER D. O. B 01-06-1976. Now I have applied for the correction of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned RTO Within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.
AJAZ AHMAD MEER
S/O SADDAR UD DIN MEER

nf

Office Of The
Naib Tehsildar
Pattan

Sub.. issuance of
registration order in
respect of delayed birth..

PUBLIC NOTICE

The registrar birth BDO pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Muskan Hassan D/o Ghulam Hassan Bhat R/o Nehalpora with verified date of birth 08/04/2008 occurred at home in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

Sd
fko Naib
Tehsildar Pattan

Office Of Executive
Magistrate 1St Class
Zaingeer Bomai

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

This office has received a written application from Firdous Ahmad Bhat S/o Abdul Ahad Bhat R/o Logripora , Tehsil Zaingeer for issuance of Birth & Death certificate in favour of Ward(s) Namely Huzaif Firdous DOB: 25-05-2017 Gousia Firdous DOB: 24-03-2018

and as per document evidence produced by the applicant. In this regard, if anyone has any objection, he/she may file the same before the undersigned within 07 days. After that, no objection whatsoever will be entertained by this office.

Tehsildar
Executive Magistrate
Bomai
fko

Office Of Executive
Magistrate 1St Class
Zaingeer Bomai

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

This office has received a written application from Mohammad Sultan Ahanger S/o Ghulam Rasool Ahanger R/o Tujar Pahlilhar , Tehsil Zaingeer for issuance of Birth & Death certificate in favour of Ward(s) Namely Amaira Jan – DOB: 17-04-2024

Junaid Ramzan DOB: 16-03-2008 and as per document evidence produced by the applicant. In this regard, if anyone has any objection, he/she may file the same before the undersigned within 07 days. After that, no objection whatsoever will be entertained by this office.

Tehsildar
Executive Magistrate
Bomai
fko

भारतीय खेल प्राधिकरण
SPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA
भारत सरकार / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
खेल विभाग / DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS
(युवा कार्यक्रम और खेल मंत्रालय के तहत एक स्वायत्त प्रिकाय)
(An Autonomous Body under Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports)
(मानव संसाधन प्रभाग-II / Human Resources Division-II)

J N Stadium Complex East Gate. No. 10,
Lodhi Road, CGO Complex,
New Delhi-110003
East Gate. No. 10

वक्र.सं. 01-04001(01)/3/2025-एचओ - कार्मिक प्रभाग
F. No. 01-04001(01)/3/2025-HO - Personnel Division

दिनांक: 09-02-2026
Date: 09-02-2026

NOTIFICATION

Recruitment to the post of Junior Engineer - An opportunity to be part of India's quest for Sporting Excellence

Sports Authority of India (SAI), an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India, invites online applications from eligible candidates for 03 posts of Junior Engineer (01-UR, 01-OBC & 01-SC) on regular basis in Pay Matrix Level-08 (7th CPC), in continuation of Notification dated 16.07.2025, based on "PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF SCORES, Junior Engineer Examination, 2023" Issued by SSC. Candidates may apply through the SAI's portal using the same email ID as mentioned in the SSC Public Disclosure List. In case of change/non-functionality of email ID, candidates may write to recruitment.cell.sai@gov.in and itdivisionhq-sai@gov.in with the subject "Update of Email ID for Junior Engineer Application – Public Disclosure List." Candidates are advised to carefully go through the detailed notification available on the SAI website as well as MYA&S Website before submitting the online application.

The invitation to apply does not imply final acceptance of candidature.
Online Application Period: 11.02.2026 (10:00 AM) to 26.02.2026 (05:00 PM)
For queries: recruitment.cell.sai@gov.in

cbc47103/12/0018/2526

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Aamina Yaseen, want to change my name in my Aadhaar Card bearing No. 7870 4476 2823 from Sumaira Yaseen to Aamina Yaseen.
If anybody has any objection in this regard, he/she may file the same before the concerned authority/centre within seven (7) days from the date of publication of this notice. After that, no objection shall be entertained.

jvd

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have applied for the issuance of DOB certificate in favour of my wards namely Usmaan Sayeed born on 08-06-2017 and Anjum Sayed born on 14-04-2014. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the Tehsil Office Bomai within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.
Mohammad Sayed Lone
Usmaan Sayeed
F/o Anjum Sayed

fko

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE

Open Tender Notice No:- OP-02-GSU-FZR-2025-26 Date: 15/02/2026
Dy. CE/GSU/FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites Open Tender (E-Tenders) against below titled tender and available on www.ireps.gov.in with closing date 12/03/2026 up to 11:30 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Tenderers are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through payment modes available on www.ireps.gov.in portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand Draft, Banker Cheque, Deposit Receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed. For more information log on to www.ireps.gov.in.

Tender Type	Tendering Section	Bidding System
Open Tender	Gati Shakti Unit	Two Packet System
Date of Uploading Tenders	Bid Starting Date	Bid Closing Date/Time
15/02/2026	26/02/2026	12.03.2026/11:30 Hrs

S.No.	Tender No.	Details of Tender			
1	OP-02-GSU-FZR-2025-26 Dated: 12/03/2026	Creation of Infrastructure at Ludhiana outfit for scheduled/unscheduled inspection of ELS/LDH based Electric locos.			
	Advertised Value (Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Validity of Offer	Period of Completion	
	13,72,70,974.37/-	8,36,400.00/-	90 Days	9 Months	
	Note: - 1. Before bidding, bidders to check for any corrigendum issued against tender.				

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-Tender Notice

Dy.CE/GSU/FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites Open Tender (E-Tenders) against below titled tender and available on www.ireps.gov.in with closing date 12.03.2026 up to 11:30 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Tenderers are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through only payment modes available on www.ireps.gov.in portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft Banker Cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed. For more information logon to www.ireps.gov.in

Tender Type	Tendering Section	Bidding System	Date of Uploading Tenders	Bid Starting Date	Bid Closing Date/Time
Open Tender	Gati Shakti Unit	Two Packet System	14.02.2026	26.02.2026	12.03.2026/11:30 Hrs.

S.N.	Tender No.	Details of Tender			
1	OP-01-GSU-FZR-2025-26 Dt.: 12.03.2026	Upgradation/Improvement of DHANDARI KALAN Goods Shed.			
	Advertised Value (Rs.)	Earnest money (Rs.)	Validity of Offer	Period of Completion	
	38,32,00,363.87/-	20,66,000.00/-	90 Days	12 Months	
	Note1. Before bidding, bidders to check for any corrigendum issued against tender.				

Tender Notice No:- OP-01-GSU-FZR-2025-26 Date: 14.02.2026

Serving Customers With A Smile



The methods used to consume news have changed over time from newspapers, to television, to the Internet on our computers to carrying the news around with us 24/7 on smartphones in our pockets.

Kashmir Observer, with 29 years of experience in news gathering is now available 24x7 on all digital platforms like laptops, cell phones or via Bluetooth on your smart TV's across the world

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Google Unveils India-US Cable, \$30 Mn AI Science Challenge, Skilling Push



Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- Betting big on India's AI potential, Google CEO Sundar Pichai on Wednesday announced new subsea cable routes to boost AI connectivity between India and the US, alongside major skilling initiatives, including training 20 million public servants and supporting 11 million students.

Pichai, who is here to attend the AI Impact Summit 2026, said the recently announced USD 15 billion AI hub at Vizag in Andhra Pradesh will house a gigawatt-scale compute facility and an international subsea cable gateway.

"I believe India is going to have an extraordinary trajectory with AI, and we want to be a partner," he said at a media event held on the sidelines of the Summit.

Pichai highlighted India's extraordinary potential in AI. "AI is the biggest platform shift of our lifetime ... for countries like India, AI presents a chance to leapfrog age-old gaps and create new opportunities."

He emphasised applications spanning healthcare, education, climate resilience, and more, and noted India's high adoption of AI-enabled voice and visual search.

He announced the India-America Connect Initiative - a new series of subsea cable routes to enhance AI connectivity between the US, India, and

multiple locations across the Southern Hemisphere.

Google also unveiled major skilling programs in India, including the Google AI Professional Certificate for students and early-career professionals, partnerships with Karma Yogi Bharat to train 20 million public servants, and generative AI support for over 10,000 Atal Tinkering Labs reaching 11 million students.

"Google has full-stack connectivity in India, and I have never been more excited about the future we are building together," he said.

Pichai earlier in the day met Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"We discussed how Google is helping with its mission to infuse AI at all levels in India to improve health, expand access to information in all languages, support startups, agriculture and so much more," Pichai said in a post on X.

Modi shared pictures of the meeting, saying, "It was a delight to meet Mr. Sundar Pichai on the sidelines of the AI Impact Summit in Delhi. Talked about the work India is doing in AI and how Google can work with our talented students and professionals in this field."

At the media event, Pichai stressed India's potential as a global AI leader, noting the technology's transformative applications - from improving healthcare and education to supporting resilient communities.

Silver Rebounds Rs 1,000 To Rs 2.46 Lakh/Kg On Strong Global Trends

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- Snapping a three-day losing streak, silver prices rebounded by Rs 1,000 to Rs 2.46 lakh per kg in the national capital on Wednesday, tracking strong trends in the international markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Gold of 99.9 per cent purity, however, fell by Rs 300 to Rs 1,56,700 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes).

"Silver traded with mild gains on Wednesday, stabilising after recent sharp declines as bargain buying emerged at lower levels," Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

He noted that near-term sentiment remains cautious amid a firm US dollar and uncertainty around the policy outlook of the US Federal Reserve. However, safe-haven and ongoing central bank buying continue to provide support on dips.

In the international market, spot silver gained USD 2.06, or 3 per cent, to USD 75.60 per



ounce, and gold rose nearly 1 per cent to USD 4,918.64 per ounce.

"Gold remained confined to a narrow trading range amid mixed global cues, as investors refrained from taking large directional bets ahead of the release of the FOMC minutes later in the day," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

He added that the minutes are expected to provide insight into Fed policymakers' assessment of the potential timing of future rate cuts, elements that could have a significant impact on US Treasury yields, dollar, and subsequently, bullion prices.

Kashmir Saffron Crash: 23.53 →19.58 Metric Tonnes

Observer News Service

JAMMU – Saffron production in Kashmir has declined from 23.53 metric tonnes in 2023–24 to 19.58 metric tonnes in 2024–25, according to official data.

In a written reply to a question raised by National Conference MLA Hasnain Masoodi, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary said that the total area under saffron cultivation in the Union Territory has remained constant at 1,116.27 hectares, but output and productivity have fluctuated.

According to the data shared in the House, saffron production stood at 17.33 MT in 2020–21, fell to 14.87 MT in 2021–22 and 14.94 MT in 2022–23, before registering a sharp rise to 23.53 MT in 2023–24.

It again declined to 19.58 MT in 2024–25, it said.

Average productivity as per traditional and rejuvenated combined improved from 4.02 kg per hectare in 2022–23 to 6.33 kg per hectare in 2023–



24 but slipped to 5.27 kg per hectare in 2024–25, it added. He further said that saffron exports during 2024–25 were recorded at 17.82 MT, down from 20.47 MT in the previous year.

The value of saffron production during the year stood at Rs 534.53 crore, while export earnings were pegged at Rs 486.43 crore, he said.

Providing details of the traditional (non-rejuvenated) In saffron areas, the deputy chief

minister said production from these fields was 5.02 MT in 2024–25, with a productivity of 4.5 kg per hectare.

In the previous year, production from traditional areas was 5.44 MT with a productivity of 4.87 kg per hectare, he said.

He said efforts are being made to stabilise and enhance saffron productivity through improved agronomic practices and rejuvenation measures.

Stock Markets Close Higher On Fag-End Buying In Bank, Metal Shares

Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI- Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty rose for the third straight session on Wednesday, driven by last-hour buying in bank, metal, and FMCG shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 283.29 points, or 0.34 per cent, to settle at 83,734.25 in a volatile trade. During the day, it touched an intraday high of 83,770.05.

The 50-share NSE Nifty gained 93.95 points, or 0.37 per cent, to close at 25,819.35.

Among the Sensex firms, Tata Steel, ITC, Axis Bank, Reliance Industries, Mahindra & Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, Hindustan Unilever, State Bank of India, UltraTech Cement, Trent, Sun Pharmaceuticals, and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the major gainers.

On the other hand, Eternal, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, HCL Technologies, Adani Ports, Tata Consultancy Services, IndiGo, Asian Paints, Maruti Suzuki India PowerGrid and HDFC Bank were the laggards.

"Indian markets witnessed a late surge driven by broad-based buying after a cautious start, as positive domestic sectoral cues helped offset lingering global uncertainties," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

He added that banking and financial stocks remained resilient on the back of steady asset-quality expectations, while selective buying in FMCG names contributed to relative outperformance.

"In contrast, the IT sector continued to lag, weighed down by concerns over AI-led disruption and margin pressures, which kept investor



sentiment subdued.

"On the earnings front, Q3FY26 results for the Nifty 500 were broadly in line with expectations, underscoring that while growth trends remain mixed, the domestic macro environment continues to offer medium-term stability," Nair said.

Broader indices also traded firm, with the BSE Smallcap Select Index rising 1.02 per cent and the Midcap Select Index gaining 0.40 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, PSU Bank rose by 1.41 per cent, Metal by 1.24 per cent, FMCG by 1.16 per cent, Capital Goods by 0.89 per cent, Industrials by 0.80 per cent, Commodities by 0.78 per cent, Bankex by 0.72 per cent, Oil & Gas by 0.62 per cent, Telecommunication by 0.59 per cent, and Energy by 0.55 per cent.

On the other hand, IT, Services, and Focused IT ended in the red. A total of 2,237 stocks advanced, while 1,955 declined and 191 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Shares of ITC, Godfrey Phillips and VST Industries surged 20 per cent amid reports that companies have implemented price hikes to pass on the impact of the recent excise duty increase to consumers.

The stock of Larsen & Tou-

bro settled over 1 per cent higher after the engineering major announced that it has teamed up with Nvidia to build India's largest Gigawatt-scale AI factory.

"Indian equity markets extended gains for the third consecutive session staging a gradual recovery, with the Nifty rising 0.4 per cent, supported by strength in PSU and metal stocks. On the flows front, FII remained net buyers on Tuesday, purchasing equities worth Rs 995 crore, while DII also bought shares worth Rs 187 crore, providing support to sentiment," Siddhartha Khemka - Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said. According to Bajaj Broking, Indian equity benchmarks extended their gains for a third consecutive session on Wednesday, supported by easing geopolitical tensions and lower volatility.

"Banking and financial counters remained resilient amid stable asset quality expectations, and selective buying in FMCG names aided outperformance. In contrast, IT stocks underperformed due to concerns over AI-led disruption and margin pressures, which weighed on sentiment," the brokerage firm said in a note.

DGCA Proposes Stricter Norms To Deal With Unruly Passengers

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- Aviation watchdog DGCA has proposed stricter norms to deal with unruly passengers, including allowing airlines to directly impose a flying ban on such passengers for up to 30 days.

"A 'No/ Zero Tolerance Policy' has been adopted to ensure the safety of the aircraft/persons/property and to maintain good order & discipline on board an aircraft," the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said in its draft revised rules.

Among other proposals, the regulator has mentioned that an airline shall formulate and implement a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the handling of unruly passengers and for reporting the incidents to the DGCA, and shall circulate the same among all concerned stakeholders. An independent committee set up by the airline that will include a representative from another carrier, among others, will take a decision on the flying ban.

"... an airline may directly impose a flying ban for a disruptive passenger for a period not exceeding thirty days (30) days without referring the matter to the Independent Committee, where the passenger is found to have committed

any of the following disruptive acts on board an aircraft," the regulator said.

Such an action can be taken by an airline for various violations, including smoking on board the aircraft, consumption of alcohol onboard a domestic flight and misuse of an emergency exit or unauthorised use of life-saving equipment, including life jackets.

Under the existing Civil Aviation Requirement (CAR), pending decision of the independent committee, the concerned airline may ban such unruly passenger from flying for up to 45 days.

This provision also remains in the proposed revised CAR for handling unruly passengers.

Unruly passengers can face varying periods of flying ban depending on the level of offences. For Level 1, the ban can be up to three months and for Level 2, the same can be up to six months. In the case of Level 3 and 4 cases, the minimum ban can be for two years or more without a limit.

While Level refers to unruly behaviour such as physical gestures, verbal harassment or unruly inebriation. Level 2 refers to physically abusive behaviour, including pushing, kicking, hitting, grabbing or inappropriate touching or sexual harassment.

SKUAST-K Concludes 21-Day Winter School On Regenerative Agriculture

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR- In a significant move toward fortifying India's agricultural future against the rising challenges of climate change, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir concluded a 21-day ICAR Winter School on Wednesday at its Shalimar campus.

The intensive program, 'Fostering Climate Resilience and Sustainability through Organic and Regenerative Agriculture', brought together an elite group of 30 scientists and faculty members representing 10 different states and Union Terri-

scientist and World Food Prize Laureate, Dr Rattan Lal, whose insights into carbon sequestration and soil health provided a visionary framework for the participants. Other international luminaries included Prof Baghirath Singh Chauhan from the University of Queensland, Australia, and Dr Asmita Murumukar of Ohio State University, USA. The sessions were further enriched by Dr Ramesh Singh, Global Leader for Regenerative Agriculture at ICRI-SAT, and Dr K Kathiresan, former Vice-Chancellor of Annamalai University, alongside specialized resource persons from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and various State Agricul-



tories, marking a milestone in national collaborative research.

The program was conducted under the supervision of Course Director Prof Parmeet Singh, Chief Scientist of Agronomy, who designed a curriculum that bridged the gap between traditional organic practices and modern regenerative science. Over the course of three weeks, the Directorate of Research transformed into a hub of global intellectual exchange, featuring a rigorous schedule of 40 offline and 10 online sessions delivered by some of the most influential voices in world agriculture.

The academic rigor of the Winter School was underscored by the participation of legendary soil

tural Universities.

During the valedictory function, Dr Haroon Rashid Naik, Director, Research SKUAST-K, commended the organizers for maintaining a high standard of scientific discourse. The highlights of the program were interactive lectures, practical laboratory work, and field exposure visits that allowed participants to see regenerative principles in action. He encouraged the visiting scientists to act as ambassadors for these "nature-positive" technologies, urging them to implement and scale the knowledge gained within their home institutions to ensure a ripple effect across India's diverse agro-climatic zones.

Companies Grappling With Hiring-Related Discrepancies: Report

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- Companies are grappling with hiring-related issues, with the discrepancy rate in resumes touching as high as 5 per cent for recruitments in the first half of fiscal 2025-26, according to a report.

The report 'Workforce Fraud Files - H1 FY26' by business intelligence firm AuthBridge is based on an analysis of background checks. The firm said it conducts 15 million monthly verification checks. Background checks were done for various factors, including identity, address, employment history, education, criminal records, and curriculum vitae validation.

White-collar reported a 4.33 per discrepancy rate while gig-workers reported a 5.6 per cent discrepancy rate in background verification, the report said.

"Despite faster and more digitised hiring workflows, we continue to see gaps in fundamental checks such as employment history, address, and education. These are not minor inconsistencies; they have direct implications

for organisational risk, compliance, and trust," AuthBridge Founder & CEO Ajay Trehan said.

Among white-collar hires, employment verification emerged as the most impacted check, with a discrepancy rate of 11.15 per cent, followed by address verification at 7.68 per cent.

Education checks recorded discrepancies of 4.49 per cent, while reference checks stood at 4.17 per cent. Although lower, discrepancies related to drug screening and criminal record checks were also observed.

The on-demand workforce showed higher vulnerability across specific checks. Address verification discrepancies were recorded at 9.70 per cent, while identity (NID) discrepancies stood at 2.53 cent, the report said.

Criminal record check discrepancies in the on-demand economy (ODE) were observed at 2.23 per cent.

An industry-wise analysis revealed that address discrepancies were prevalent across IT (12.02 per cent), banking & BFSI (10.23 per cent), pharma (11.21 per cent), retail (10.64 per cent), and telecom (15.42 per cent).

India, Canada May Finalise Terms Of Reference For FTA Talks Next Month

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- India and Canada are expected to finalise terms of reference for initiating talks for a free trade agreement (FTA) during the visit of Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney to India next month, an official said.

The terms of reference (ToR) outline the scope and modalities of a proposed trade pact.

The two countries were earlier negotiating a trade pact but it was paused by Canada in 2023.

Now they have decided to resume talks from the beginning as a lot has changed on the global trade front during these two years.

The official said that the two sides are engaged in finalising the ToR for a mutually beneficial trade agreement.

"It is likely to be finalised during the visit of the Canada's prime minister," the official added.

Both sides have appointed their chief negotiators for the trade pact negotiations.



Joint Secretary in Department of Commerce Brij Mohan Mishra is the chief negotiator from the Indian side. Bruce Christie is Canada's chief negotiator.

India's exports to Canada rose 9.8 per cent to \$4.22 billion in 2024-25 from \$3.84 billion in 2023-24. Imports, however, declined 2.33 per cent to \$4.44 billion in the last fiscal year from \$4.55 billion in 2023-24.

Bilateral trade in goods and services stood at \$18.38 billion in 2023. There are about 2.9 million Indian diaspora and over 4,27,000 Indian students in Canada.

JKEDI, GDC Shopian Ink MoU to Boost Startup Ecosystem

Observer News Service

SHOPIAN- In a significant initiative aimed at fostering entrepreneurship and strengthening the startup ecosystem among students, the Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) Shopian has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Government Degree College Shopian.

The MoU was formally signed by JKEDI District Nodal Officer, Sayeem Rafiq, along with his team members, Mudaris Mohiudin and Syed Rizwan Andrabi. Representing Government Degree College Shopian, the agreement was signed by the Principal, GDC, Prof. Tariq Hussain Mir, accompanied by Dr. Mohd Iqbal Dar and Dr. Nazir Ahmad Bhat.

The collaboration aims to strengthen institutional partnership for the promotion of entrepreneurship development, innovation and startup-oriented activities among students.

Under the agreement, JKEDI Shopian will extend technical support through structured training pro-

grammes, entrepreneurship awareness sessions, mentorship and capacity-building initiatives designed to encourage students to explore self-employment and enterprise creation as viable career pathways.

As part of the partnership, both institutions will jointly organize Entrepreneurship Awareness Programmes (EAPs), skill development workshops, startup boot camps, business plan competitions and incubation support activities. These initiatives are intended to equip students with practical entrepreneurial skills, enhance employability and contribute to the development of a vibrant startup ecosystem in the region.

Officials from both institutions emphasized that the MoU will play a crucial role in nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset among the youth of Shopian, while contributing to local economic growth and job creation.

The initiative aligns with the broader vision of promoting innovation-driven growth and empowering educated youth to become job creators rather than job seekers.

Anantnag Medical College Receives Nod For Superspeciality Course In Cardiology

Press Trust Of India

Jammu:The Government Medical College-Anantnag has become the first newly established institution in the region to receive approval to start a superspeciality course in cardiology, an official spokesperson said on Wednesday. The National Board of Examinations has accredited "Three Dr NB Cardiology seats" to the Department of Cardiology, GMC Anantnag, the person said, according to a statement.

Sakeena Itoo, Minister for Health and Medical Education, termed the sanction a testament to the government's resolve to upgrade healthcare infrastructure and medical education in the Union Territory.

"The government is determined to ensure that people of J&K have access to high-quality specialised healthcare. The approval of a superspeciality cardiology course at GMC Anantnag is a major stride in that direction. It will not only strengthen tertiary care services in south Kashmir but also reduce the need for patients to seek advanced cardiac treatment outside the region," the minister said.

She said the government seeks to strengthen medical institutions through infrastructure development, recruitment of specialist faculty, procurement of advanced equipment, and expansion of academic programmes.

"With the introduction of the superspeciality cardiology course, GMC Anantnag is poised to emerge as a key hub for advanced cardiac care, research, and training. The development is expected to greatly benefit cardiac patients by providing timely and specialised treatment closer to home, while also creating new opportunities for postgraduate medical aspirants," Itoo said.

J&K Freezes Boundaries of All Administrative Units Till Census Completion: Min

1,200 Agriculture Posts Referred to JKPSC, JKSSB; No New Veterinary Centres Proposed

KO Web Desk

Jammu: The Jammu and Kashmir government has frozen the boundaries of all administrative units across the Union Territory until completion of Census 2021, Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Javid Ahmad Dar informed the Assembly on Tuesday.

Replying to a question raised by MLA Abdul Majeed Bhat (Larmi), the Minister said that vide S.O. 53 of 2025 dated February 27, 2025, issued by the Planning and Monitoring Department, the government has ordered freezing of boundaries of districts, tehsils, municipalities, towns, revenue villages and other administrative units with effect from July 1, 2025, till completion of the census exercise. He said that under Section 2 (J) of the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989, delimitation of Panchayat Halqas is strictly based on population figures, and any rationalization can be undertaken only after Census 2021 is completed. The government, he added, remains committed to equitable distribution of resources based on justice and fairness.

Dar said the administration is serious about rationalization of Panchayat Halqas with Community Development Blocks, taking into account proximity, geographical factors and public access to services.

Meanwhile, replying to another question by MLA Khurshied Ahmed of Gulabgarh, the Minister,

who also holds the Agriculture Production portfolio, said around 1,200 gazetted and non gazetted posts in the department have been referred to the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission and the Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board for filling up vacancies. He informed the House that 17 Veterinary Centres and 21 Sheep Extension Centres are currently functional in the Gulabgarh constituency, with two centres being managed through internal arrangements to ensure uninterrupted services. These centres cater to the healthcare needs of livestock in the area.

The Minister clarified that there is no proposal at present to establish new Veterinary or Sheep Extension Centres in Gulabgarh or elsewhere in the Union Territory. He said new centres are considered based on livestock population, geographical conditions, distance from existing facilities, techno feasibility and availability of resources.

Highlighting support measures for migratory livestock breeders, Dar said the department organizes summer camps at highland pastures including Dudhwan in Warwan, Kousarnag in Kulgam, Thatbal in Gulabgarh, Chandrani in Ramban and Nikan in Mangnar, Gulabgarh, to provide veterinary healthcare during the grazing season.

Responding to supplementary queries regarding vacancies and staff deployment during migration periods, the Minister assured the House that adequate arrangements are made and genuine concerns would be addressed promptly.

Kishtwar DM Issues Order To Regulate Donations During Ramzan

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: Authorities in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district on Wednesday issued an order regulating the collection of donations during the holy month of Ramzan, citing concerns over unauthorized fund-raising activities.

Kishtwar District Magistrate Pankaj Kumar Sharma said it is the statutory obligation of the administration to ensure that public contributions intended for relief, welfare or religious purposes are not misappropriated, laundered or diverted for extraneous or subversive activities.

There has been a tendency of unauthorized collection of donations by certain individuals and organizations during Ramzan, necessitating immediate regulatory intervention, Sharma said in the order.

"While the tradition of Zakat and Sadaqah (charitable giving) is an integral and sacred facet of the religious and social fabric during Ramadan, any act of artifice, misrepresentation, or fraudulent solicitation of funds not only desecrates the sanctity of the Holy Month but also exploits the altruism of the public," the DM said.

He said regulatory oversight is essential to safeguard transparency and maintain public trust.

Invoking powers under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, the DM laid down specific guidelines for compliance.

According to the order, no

individual, NGO, trust, society or committee shall undertake donation collection within the territorial jurisdiction of Kishtwar district without valid registration under relevant laws and prior intimation to the executive officer, Waqf board unit Kishtwar or the president, Majlis Shura Committee Kishtwar, wherever applicable.

All fundraising entities have been directed to maintain proper records of collections and expenditures. Any solicitor found without authenticated copies of registration and authorization documents shall be treated as unauthorized, it said.

The order strictly prohibits coercive tactics, harassment of commuters or obstruction of public pathways for donation collection.

Sub-registrars have been asked to publish within five days a list of registered charitable trusts operating in the district to guide the general public.

A dedicated vigilance helpline has been activated for reporting instances of fraudulent solicitation or harassment. The senior superintendent of police, along with sub-divisional magistrates and tehsildars, has been directed to ensure strict enforcement of the order in letter and spirit.

The directive has come into immediate effect and shall remain operative throughout the holy month of Ramzan, the order said, adding any violation shall invite action under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and other applicable laws.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

CRPF Drops

hearing, counsel representing the CRPF informed the tribunal that, as per instructions received from the Inspector General of Police Headquarters, the proposal to set up the camp on the identified land had been dropped. NGT had issued notice to the UT of Jammu and Kashmir and other respondents on a plea challenging the setting up of a CRPF camping site at Brane Nishat in Srinagar.

The petition argued that the land falls within an ecologically sensitive conservation reserve and is legally prohibited for construction. Taking note of the development, the tribunal observed that nothing survived in the matter and disposed of the application. The connected interim application was also closed, Sharma said.

'43 High-Altitude

officials said on Wednesday. These bases, established above the height of 6,000 feet, are used to house the troops of the central paramilitary force for a few days and launch search and assault operations in the heights where terrorists are holed up in the 'dhoks' (mud and stone huts).

A total of 43 temporary operating bases have been created till now after the first was created in July, 2025. Out of these, 26 such bases have been created in the Kashmir region while the rest 17 are in the Jammu area, the sources said.

Each temporary operating base houses about 16-25 troops apart from some personnel of the local police, they said.

Officials said a good number of temporary operating bases were established on the Pahalgam-Tral-Harwan axis immediately after the April 2025 terrorist attack in the Baisaran meadows of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and other security forces used one such temporary operating base to eliminate in July the three terrorists who were responsible for the Pahalgam attack. This operation was called 'Operation Mahadev'.

Operation Mahadev began on May 22 as part of a security plan that was drawn a day after the April 22 attack in the scenic Baisaran valley of Pahalgam where 26 tourists were killed.

The central paramilitary force has procured some special equipment for these temporary operating bases like tactical boots, winter jackets, sleeping bags and satellite phones.

According to data, there are about two local terrorists active in the Union territory while there are about 100 foreign terrorists active at present.

Ramazan Begins

up on dates, dry fruits, bakery items and groceries for the first fast.

Dates remained the most sought after item, with traders reporting brisk sales of varieties such as Ajwa, Safavi, Kalami and Medjool. Almonds, walnuts, raisins, cashews and figs also saw high demand.

"The last three days have seen a sharp increase in sales, especially of dates," said Parvaiz Ahmad, a dry fruit trader in Srinagar. "Customers prefer different varieties depending on quality and price."

Shopkeepers said dates imported from Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Algeria and Iran were available in multiple grades, with rates varying based on size and quality.

Bakeries and meat shops also witnessed a steady rush, while grocery stores reported increased purchases of cooking oil, gram flour, fruits and sugar, staples commonly used during the month.

Muslims observe fasting from dawn to dusk during Ramazan, breaking their fast traditionally with dates and water before offering evening prayers. The month is marked by prayer, charity and community gatherings, and will conclude with the celebration of Eid ul Fitr following the sighting of the next crescent moon.

Officials said market inspections were intensified ahead of the holy month to check hygiene standards, rate lists and overcharging, with action taken against violators to prevent

profiteering.

Ramazan, observed as a month of fasting, reflection and compassion, will culminate with the celebration of Eid-ul-Fitr following the sighting of the next crescent moon.

J&K's Entry

sporting potential of the region.

Abdullah expressed confidence that such milestones would inspire young cricketers from Jammu and Kashmir to aim for national representation and contribute significantly to Indian cricket.

The congratulatory messages from the Lieutenant Governor and the Chief Minister underscored the significance of the achievement, widely seen as a defining moment in the Union Territory's sporting narrative.

Uproar In J&K

students. They accused the administration of suppressing a legitimate regional demand.

Treasury bench members countered the opposition, alleging that the BJP was politicising the issue instead of showing genuine concern for the students. Heated exchanges followed between members of the two sides.

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary said the police function under the jurisdiction of the Lieutenant Governor and advised the BJP to raise the matter with him. He accused the opposition of addressing the galleries rather than engaging substantively.

Amid continued sloganeering, Mubarak Gul, who was in the Chair, adjourned the House for the day.

Earlier, BJP MLAs had joined students of Jammu University protesting the government's decision to establish the proposed NLU in Budgam district of Kashmir. The announcement has triggered allegations of regional imbalance, with students and political leaders in Jammu demanding that the institution be located in their region.

Protesters took out marches on Wednesday, raised slogans against the government and briefly blocked the Tawi bridge, disrupting traffic for about 30 minutes before police cleared the area. When students attempted to march towards the Civil Secretariat, they were stopped at the gates, leading to brief scuffles.

The controversy began after Omar announced that the NLU would be set up in Budgam, prompting demands from Jammu-based groups for equitable access to legal education and opportunities for local students.

J&K Debt At

burden of rising liabilities.

Detailing the debt trend over the past six years, the chief minister said liabilities stood at 89,037 crore in 2019-20, accounting for 54 per cent of GSDP. In 2020-21, liabilities increased to 98,244 crore and the ratio rose to 59 per cent due to economic contraction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With recovery gaining momentum, the ratio declined to 53 per cent in 2021-22 despite liabilities rising to 1,06,753 crore. In 2022-23, liabilities stood at 1,09,825 crore and the ratio further eased to 48 per cent. However, in 2023-24, liabilities climbed to 1,25,205 crore, pushing the ratio up to 51 per cent.

For 2024-25, liabilities are projected at 1,37,067 crore, but the expanded GSDP has again brought the ratio down to 48 per cent.

Omar said borrowings were kept within the prescribed limits of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management framework and were directed towards capital expenditure, infrastructure development, power sector reforms and asset creation.

He asserted that rising internal debt has not occurred without productive outcomes, citing sustained capital investment and improving debt indicators as evidence of responsible fiscal management.

Shankaracharya Temple

and spiritual consciousness," he said.

He added that devotees visiting Vaishno Devi for darshan would also visit the new temple,

creating significant economic momentum across the region.

"This influx will generate employment opportunities, strengthen local enterprises and inject fresh energy into overall regional development," he said.

Major Push for Women and SHGs

During his visit to Katra, the Lieutenant Governor also presided over the 'Samridh Nari, Samridh Bharat' programme at the Spiritual Growth Centre, where he interacted with women entrepreneurs from self help groups in Reasi and adjoining districts.

Announcing a major livelihood initiative, he said the Shrine Board is enhancing its annual procurement of Puja Samagri and Prasad from self help groups from Rs 5 crore to Rs 12 crore. In the coming years, total annual purchases from these groups will be scaled up to Rs 50 crore.

He said 20 additional self help groups will be onboarded into the supply chain, providing livelihood support to around 1,500 women from villages in Reasi, Udhampur and Jammu.

Calling it a decisive step to boost the regional economy, he emphasised that purchases would prioritise local self help groups, women and young entrepreneurs.

Vision for Katra and Cultural Renewal

Reiterating the commitment of the Shrine Board to devotee welfare, the Lieutenant Governor said that spiritual hubs must remain vibrant while ensuring comfort, safety and dignity for pilgrims.

"When sacred sites thrive with vitality, they spark renewed faith and unlock paths to progress," he observed.

He also spoke about the civilisational roots of the Union Territory, stating that its soul is deeply embedded in India's heritage. Through a proposed Gurukul initiative, the Shrine Board will nurture youth who will uphold sacred traditions and perform religious practices with authenticity and understanding.

Sharing his broader vision, he said he envisions Katra carving a unique global identity in the coming years, attracting investment, superior infrastructure and expanded business activity, while creating boundless opportunities for the youth.

The Lieutenant Governor further said that the Shrine Board aims to build a world class cultural and spiritual centre that provides lasting social stability and prosperity.

Highlighting key decisions taken in a recent board meeting, the governor said an International Museum of Goddess Devi will be established in Katra.

"A light and sound show, on the lines of the shows at Somnath Temple and the Statue of Unity, will also be developed to offer an enhanced spiritual and cultural experience to devotees visiting the town," he said.

The LG said that many pilgrims visiting the shrine face difficulties in travelling to the Shiv Khori shrine for darshan of Lord Bholenath.

"To address this, the Shiv Khori Shrine Board and the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board have jointly decided to operationalise helicopter services between Katra and Shiv Khori," he said.

Sinha said that the helipad at Katra is in the final stage of construction and a similar facility at Shiv Khori is also nearing completion.

Sinha expressed hope that heli services from Katra to Shiv Khori will commence within the next three months, enabling pilgrims to visit both shrines conveniently.

Referring to social welfare measures, he said that an empowered committee under the National Green Tribunal had earlier recommended a joint rehabilitation programme by the Jammu and Kashmir government and the Shrine Board for ponywalas and labourers.

"The Shrine Board has now decided to take full responsibility for their phased rehabilitation," he said.

Sinha also highlighted the Shrine Board's role during recent floods, stating that it organised health camps, ensured the timely supply of essential materials and undertook the reconstruction of 15 schools in Katra and

adjoining areas damaged due to heavy rainfall.

He said that last year the Shrine Board constructed five temples, while five more are under construction. Another five temples will be built in Diggar and later handed over to local residents, he added.

Emphasising holistic development, Sinha said, "Along with the municipality and the Jammu and Kashmir administration, the Shrine Board will extend financial support for the town's modernisation and infrastructure development," he added.

Among those present on the occasion were Members of the Shrine Board, senior officers of the civil administration and police, Vice Chancellor of SMVDU, the Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Deputy Commissioner Reasi and representatives of women self help groups from Reasi and adjoining districts.

25 Candidates Move

further consideration on March 2.

The aggrieved candidates have assailed Result Notification No. PSC/Exam/S/2026/03 dated January 20, 2026, whereby the Commission declared the result of the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services (Judicial) Mains Examination pursuant to Advertisement Notification No. 07-PSC (DR-P) of 2025 dated May 14, 2025.

In their plea filed under Article 226 of the Constitution, the candidates have sought quashing of the entire selection process, including the January 20 result notification, alleging that the evaluation and shortlisting were conducted dehors the prescribed norms under the Public Service (Conduct of Examination) Rules, 2022 and the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Service (Judicial) Recruitment Rules, 1967.

They contend that the selection process was vitiated by "statutory invalidity" and violates the constitutional guarantees of equality and equal opportunity in public employment under Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution of India.

They have also challenged the interview notice issued by the Commission, fixing February 17, for commencement of viva-voce, and sought urgent listing of the matter, submitting that any delay would render the petition infructuous.

Relying on various judgments of the Supreme Court, the candidates submitted that absence of moderation in evaluation leads to "examiner variability" or the "hawk-dove effect," resulting in disparity in marking by strict and liberal examiners.

The "hawk-dove effect" or examiner variability refers to a situation where a strict examiner awards lower marks ("reduced valuation") while a liberal examiner awards higher marks ("enhanced valuation"), leading to inconsistency in evaluation.

The aggrieved candidates contended that failure to adopt a proper moderation process undermines uniformity and consistency in valuation of answer scripts.

They have sought directions to quash the result notification and the selection process, restraining the authorities from proceeding further with the interviews, and a direction to undertake the selection afresh in strict compliance with the applicable examination rules. They have also prayed for redrawing of the category-wise select list in accordance with inter se merit after proper evaluation and moderation.

A Kashmiri Brokerage

gold or fixed deposits. Stock markets felt distant and unfamiliar.

Irshad chose a different path. He built his practice around SEBI-regulated equity and mutual fund advisory services.

Over the years, even as the region went through political and economic disruptions, he continued to hold investor awareness sessions.

He spoke about disciplined investing and, for Muslim clients, explained Shariah-compliant investment options that allowed them to participate in markets without compromising their beliefs.

"I always told clients that patience beats

panic," Irshad said. "Markets reward discipline."

The firm operates from a modest office on the first floor of the Samad Complex in Munawarabad, above a busy Srinagar road. From there, his team manages equity trades, derivatives, mutual funds and portfolio advisory services for clients across the region.

Many of those clients are first-time investors. "We spend a lot of time on the basics," Irshad said. "Risk, asset allocation, long-term thinking. Bigger city brokers may assume people already know these things. Here, we walk through them step by step."

The partnership with Mirae Asset Sharekhan strengthened that effort.

The national brokerage provides research, technology and access to a wide client network. "M I Securities offers something harder to quantify: local trust built over years of steady engagement," Irshad said.

Together, the arrangement has connected a growing base of Kashmiri investors to India's financial mainstream.

Irshad describes the January ranking as a team accomplishment. He credits his staff for consistency and his clients for staying invested through volatile periods.

Then he returns to the principles he has repeated for nearly two decades: "Follow the rules, keep learning, and do not chase quick profits."

For a firm that began in a market many once considered peripheral, the leaderboard position is a sign that disciplined investing, even from a small office in Srinagar, can compete with the country's biggest financial centers.

This time, the numbers tell that story.

J&K Pays Pensions

in accordance with the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 and instructions issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs."

The Ministry's written reply explained that the payment of pensions should be viewed in the context of transitional safeguards provided under the Reorganisation Act. "Prior to reorganisation, the members elected from Ladakh were part of the single Legislative Assembly/Legislative Council of the undivided State. Their tenure was governed by the laws in force at that time, and the pension earned by them is a legal right upon completion of the prescribed term," the reply noted.

The reply states that Section 95 of the Reorganisation Act provides for the continuation of existing laws in the successor Union Territories until amended or repealed. "There is no provision in the Act that restrains or withdraws pensionary benefits already earned. Further, Section 87 provides for distribution of assets and liabilities of the erstwhile State between the two Union Territories, which includes financial obligations such as pensions. The pension for former legislators is not a fresh benefit but a continuation of a lawful entitlement earned prior to reorganisation, subject to final financial adjustment between the successor Union Territories as determined by the Central Government," the reply stated.

The Minister clarified that there is no legal provision applicable to Ladakh for payment of pensions to former lawmakers. "Since the pensions were authorized under the Jammu and Kashmir State Legislature Members' Pension Act, 1984 (as applicable to the UT of J&K), and there exists no enabling provision for the UT of Ladakh to disburse such pensions (the Act having been repealed in its application to Ladakh), the liability continued to rest with the UT of Jammu and Kashmir," the reply said.

The Ministry further added that the MHA also clarified these pensions should be dealt with by the J&K Legislative Assembly. "The Office of the Principal Chief Controller of Accounts, Ministry of Home Affairs, also clarified that these pensions should be handled by the Secretariat/DDO of the J&K Legislative Assembly," the Ministry said, adding that the Finance Department concurred with this view on November 24, 2021, and the approval was eventually approved by the Lieutenant Governor.(KNO)

J&K Reach First-ever Ranji Final, Shock Bengal

Press Trust of India

KALYANI (WEST BENGAL): Sixty-seven years after their maiden appearance, Jammu and Kashmir stormed into the Ranji Trophy finals for the first time on Wednesday, upstaging two-time former champions Bengal by six wickets in the semifinals here to add another historic chapter to a fairytale season so far.

Auqib Nabi's stunning nine-wicket match haul and their IPL star Abdul Samad's fearless strokeplay ensured that the side once labelled "perennial under-achievers" now stands one step away from the title.

Chasing a modest 126 at the Bengal Cricket Academy ground, J&K rode on Samad's unbeaten 30 off 27 balls (3x6, 1x4) and rookie Vanshaj Sharma's composed 43 not out off 83 ball (4x4) as the pair stitched an unbroken 55-run stand for the fourth wicket to seal history on the fourth and penultimate day of the semifinal.

In a heartwarming gesture, Samad, who had done the bulk of the damage, allowed the 22-year-old Vanshaj to finish it in style and the youngster launched Mukesh Kumar over long-on for six to spark wild celebrations in the visiting camp.

From strugglers to history-makers

Jammu and Kashmir had played 334 Ranji matches before this season, winning only 45. It took them 44 years to register their first victory, against Services in 1982-83.

Knockout appearances were rare. A breakthrough came in 2013-14 when they edged Goa on net run rate to reach the quarterfinals, and in 2015-16 they stunned Mumbai at the Wankhede Stadium under state icon Parveez Rasool.

But consistency eluded them for decades as this season, under coach Ajay Sharma and captain Paras Dogra, they transformed belief into results.

After an opening loss to



Mumbai, they bounced back with innings wins over Rajasthan and key victories against Delhi and Hyderabad to enter the knockouts.

A dramatic 56-run win over Madhya Pradesh in the quarterfinal, powered by Nabi's 12/110, brought them to the semifinals for the first time.

Bengal's big names, bigger letdown

With four India internationals in Mohammed Shami, Akash Deep, Mukesh Kumar and Shahbaz Ahmed, and India A star batter Abhimanyu Easwaran along with home advantage to boot, this was Bengal's game to lose.

They did exactly that after folding for 99 in 25.1 overs on day three that set Jammu and Kashmir a paltry 126 to win. Resuming at 43/2 on the penultimate day, J&K lost an early wicket, but Bengal failed to sustain pressure despite Akash Deep's relentless 15-over morning spell (3/46) and Shami's probing 1/24 from 24 overs.

There were anxious moments when Shubham Pundir was cleaned up and Dogra edged behind -- a low diving catch by Abhishek Porel off Akash Deep eventually upheld after review.

But Bengal looked fatigued and short of ideas once Samad counterattacked. The IPL batter, retained by Lucknow Super Giants, turned the tide in a single over against Akash Deep that fetched 18 runs.

He did not spare Shahbaz either, dancing down the track to deposit him over mid-wicket and then through covers as J&K crossed the 100-run mark.

From there, shoulders dropped in the Bengal camp.

The introduction of part-time options and a visible dip in intensity underlined a campaign that promised much but fizzled when it mattered most.

Nabi's season for the ages

The foundations of Jammu and Kashmir's win, however, were laid by Nabi.

"Last time we missed it in the quarters, but we did all the hard work, and we deserved it," said Nabi after winning the man-of-the-match.

The 29-year-old pacer followed his 12-wicket match haul in the quarterfinal against Madhya Pradesh with another devastating effort, finishing with nine wickets in the match, including a five-for in the first innings, to take his season's tally

to 55 wickets at an average of under 13.

Nabi had also contributed with the bat, playing a decisive knock at No. 9.

J&K had posted 302 in their first innings, reducing the deficit to 26, thanks to Dogra's gritty 58 (112 balls), Samad's counterattacking 82 (85 balls) and a crucial late surge from Nabi (42 off 54) and Yudhvir Singh (33) in a 64-run last-wicket stand.

Dogra's milestone

For 41-year-old captain Paras Dogra, it was a week of personal and collective milestones.

In a career spanning 24 years across Himachal Pradesh, Pondicherry and now J&K, Dogra also became only the second batter after Wasim Jaffer to score 10,000 Ranji Trophy runs.

Introduced to the game by his father, Kultar, Dogra's journey has been one of endurance and quiet steel.

"It's a big achievement; I never thought about it. I enjoyed the journey full of ups and downs. The game makes you a strong human being," Dogra said.

His resolute half-century in a 143-run partnership with Samad in the first innings set the tone for the side's resilience.

Cricket Tests More Than It Gives: Paras

Press Trust of India

KALYANI (WEST BENGAL): With nine emotive words, Jammu and Kashmir's inspirational captain Paras Dogra encapsulated his 24-year grind, which also mirrored the team's incredible under-dog story.

Under his leadership, J&K defied odds to enter their maiden Ranji Trophy final with a six-wicket win over two-time champions Bengal here on Wednesday.

"Cricket tests you far more than it rewards you," he said after helping the team to its first Ranji final after sixty-seven years of wait.

"We just have to be stubborn. He added.

The 41-year-old skipper's words were a reflection of not just the match but a career built on resilience in a season in which he has helped transform a side considered "underdogs" for the longest time.

After beginning with Himachal Pradesh in 2001, Dogra turned out for Pondicherry from 2018-19 to 2023-24, and then moved to Jammu and Kashmir ahead of the 2024-25 season, embracing yet another challenge late in his career.

Since his debut in 2001, he has amassed 10,517 runs in 152 first-class matches at an average of over 48, with 34 centuries and 36 half-centuries, including a career-best 253.

A former India 'A' batter who featured in unofficial Tests against West Indies 'A' in 2013, Dogra has been one of domestic cricket's most consistent run-getters.

At J&K, he walked into a dressing room seeking belief and this season, that belief turned into history.

"We have to keep going. So,

God has written that we will play in the final," he said after Jammu and Kashmir made the final, ending a 67-year wait since making their debut in 1959-60.

During the semifinal, Dogra also became only the second batter after Wasim Jaffer to cross 10,000 Ranji Trophy runs.

"Kabhi socha nahin tha (never thought I will get to this milestone). Khelna pas-and hai, baaki uparwala ne 10,000 run bana diya (I just love playing and by the grace of God I could make 10,000), so I'm really very happy," he said.

Calling the landmark special but secondary to the team goal, he credited his colleagues and support staff for keeping him motivated at the fag end of his career.

"Thank you very much for that. It felt good. I never thought I would do this. But I love this game. I just like to play."

"Definitely, I am very happy and I am also very happy that I got to play with such amazing guys. The coaching staff. The management. They are supporting me in everything.

"So, I think we have been talking about it from the first day, so, hopefully we will do it."

J&K had conceded a 26-run first-innings lead after being bowled out for 302, but Dogra insisted there was no panic in the dressing room.

"There was still two-and-a-half-days game was left so the lead of 26 runs doesn't matter that much.

"Because it was a five-day game. So, we were still positive. That we will chase as many runs as possible. But we were not expecting that Bengal will fold so quickly."

Asked if the result had sunk in, he said: "Yes, it has sunk in, we were in a good position. So, yes, definitely."

Dogra also hailed the importance of Abdul Samad's counterattacking 82 in the first innings after J&K had slipped to 13 for three.

"Three wickets fell early. Samad is always positive. So, when you play with him, you don't have to worry about the runs. So, it was like that, just stay with him and because of that, I scored runs too."

Keeping it in channel: Nabi's mantra

Auqib Nabi, who followed up his 12-wicket haul in the quarterfinal with nine scalps in the semifinal besides a crucial 42 at No. 9, kept things simple: to put the ball in the channel.

"My mindset is that you put the ball in a channel, don't think too much about the results and what the batsman are doing or thinking," Nabi said.

"I have my own area, I stick to that. I don't think much about the rest."

On staying positive after conceding the lead, Nabi added: "We were positive throughout because we restricted Bengal well in the first inning as well. If you look at the last match, there were 600-650 runs scored here."

"So we were positive that we will put the ball in good areas and we will restrict them and then will chase them out quickly."

He was also asked about his 64-run 10th wicket partnership with Yudhvir Singh.

"We work a lot on batting as well lower down the order. In the entire season, the last 4-5 players add up to 100-200. So we work a lot on that as well."

Politicians Unite to Hail J&K Ranji History Makers



Press Trust of India

JAMMU: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday congratulated the Jammu and Kashmir cricket team for its remarkable achievement in the Ranji Trophy, praising the players, coaches and support staff for their collective effort and dedication.

The J&K team scripted history by defeating Bengal by six wickets in their maiden Ranji Trophy semi-final appearance, registering a landmark victory that marks a defining moment in the side's domestic cricket journey.

The CM extended congratulations on behalf of the people of J&K and expressed confidence that the region's cricketers will soon make a mark at the international level.

"On my behalf, and on behalf of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, I extend heartfelt congratulations to all of them. I hope the day is not far when we will see players from Jammu and Kashmir playing a very important role in the national team," the Chief Minister told reporters.

He said the team's progress over the past couple of years reflects sustained hard work, discipline and strong guidance from the coaching and support staff.

"Our team has made remarkable progress. This achievement is the result of the hard work of the players, the guidance of the coaches, and the dedication of the support staff.

"Winning the Ranji Trophy is not something an individual can accomplish alone; it is the success of the entire team and the supporting staff," Abdullah said.

The Chief Minister said the achievement has inspired young sportspersons across the Union Territory and reaffirmed the government's commitment to strengthening sports infrastructure and nurturing emerging talent.

Mahbooba Mufti congratulates the team.

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti also congratulated the Jammu and Kashmir cricket team for its historic victory in the semi-finals of the Ranji Trophy against Bengal.

"Heartfelt congratulations to the J&K Cricket Team on their magnificent victory in the Ranji Trophy semi-final. History created! With grit, courage, and unbreakable belief, you've written a golden chapter in J&K's sporting journey. "May Allah Talah bless you with even greater success ahead," Mufti said in a post on her X handle.

LT Governor Sinha praises team

Lt Governor Manoj Sinha joined CM Abdullah and PDP president Mufti in congratulating the Paras Dogra-led side for their maiden appearance in the summit clash.

"Congratulations to the J&K cricket team on their magnificent victory in the

Ranji Trophy semi-final "You have etched a new golden chapter in the sporting history of J&K," the Lt Governor said in a post on X.

He said the entire Union Territory is proud of the team's extraordinary performance.

"May you continue this winning momentum and bring glory to J&K," Sinha said.

Politicians from all parties celebrate J&K feat

In the J&K Legislative Assembly, which is currently in budget session, Congress leader Nizam Ud Din Bhat informed the House, drawing applause from the members.

Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather, he said he has got the information from the sports minister, Satish Sharma, and it is a proud and shining moment for the J&K that the team has reached the final for the first time, and he wished them success.

Former Test cricketer Irfan Pathan, who had also mentored the state team some years back, also congratulated them.

"History created! J&K reach their first-ever Ranji Trophy final. So proud to see these boys take J&K cricket to new heights. "You beauty, Abdul Samad, what a knock!" former Indian cricketer Irfan Pathan, who had joined the Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA) in March 2018 as a player-cum-mentor in a one-year contract, wrote on X.

Sahibzada Ton, Bowlers Lift Pakistan into Super Eights

Press Trust of India

COLOMBO: Pakistan rode on Sahibzada Farhan's scintillating, maiden hundred and their spinners' excellent display to beat Namibia by a handsome margin of 102 runs and enter the Super Eights of the T20 World Cup here Wednesday.

Batting first, Pakistan posted a formidable 199 for three in their must-win game.

Farhan, who needed just 20 deliveries to move from 50 to 100, ended on 100 not out off 58 balls, becoming

hammad Nawaz chipped in with a wicket each as Namibia fared miserably in the chase to finish their campaign winless after four outings.

With this win, Pakistan have also ensured their qualification to the next edition of the T20 World Cup, scheduled to be co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand in 2028.

This is also Pakistan's biggest margin of victory in the T20 showpiece.

Earlier, Pakistan man- aged 47 runs in the powerplay for the loss of Saim Ayub's (14 off 12 balls)

ter coming down the track to smack one over long-on.

Taking a cue from his captain, Farhan launched into leg-spinner Myburgh for a big six over deep mid-wicket, and then, sent his tossed up googly soaring over the same region in a similar fashion, using the slog sweep to good effect on both occasions.

The three sixes in one over gave Pakistan's run rate a boost and Salman Agha then lofted Bernard Scholtz straight down the ground for another maximum. However, Agha was out caught by Gerhard



ing only the second player from Pakistan to score a century in the tournament after Ahmed Shehzad's ton against Bangladesh in 2014 at Mirpur.

In all, Farhan hit 11 boundaries and four sixes while adding 67 runs with skipper Salman Agha (38 off 23 balls) and 81 runs with Shadab Khan (36 not out off 22 balls).

In reply, Namibia were all out for 97 in 17.3 overs with mystery spinner Usman Tariq (4/16 in 3.3 overs) and leg-spinner Shadab Khan (3/19 in 4 overs) leading Pakistan's charge with the ball, picking up four and three wickets respectively.

Salman Mirza and Mo-

wicket.

Seeking to recover from the heavy defeat to traditional rivals India, Pakistan strengthened their batting with the inclusion of Khawaja Nafay in the middle order while leaving out the woefully out-of-sorts pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi.

While the team did get the occasional boundaries, their approach was far from ideal as they resorted to defensive batting, which pretty much explained why they were 55 for one after overs at the Sinhalese Sports Club.

However, skipper Salman Agha broke the shackles at the start of the ninth overs with a six off Willem Myburgh, the bat-

Erasmus off Brassell in the next over.

Picked for this game, Nafay began with a boundary after he rocked back to cut the ball through backward point.

Nafay's brief stay though was cut short when he was caught and bowled by Namibian skipper Erasmus.

Meanwhile, Farhan continued to spearhead Pakistan's batting, cutting, pulling and driving with finesse to dominate Namibian bowlers.

Shadab ended the Pakistan innings with a couple of sixes against Erasmus in the last over.

The total proved to be more than sufficient for Pakistan.

Ponting Rues Lack of Aura as Australia Crash Out of T20 Cup



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Former captain Ricky Ponting says the current Australian side lacked the aura that defined its past teams at global events and termed the country's early exit from the men's T20 World Cup as a "really poor campaign".

Speaking on the latest episode of the ICC Review, Ponting said the team on paper did not carry the same presence as previous Australian outfits that dominated ICC tournaments.

"You look at that Australian team on paper, it just doesn't look to have that sort of aura around it that a lot of other Australian teams have going into ICC events and World Cups," Ponting said.

"You need to have your best players and your most experienced players standing up and winning big moments for you in these tournaments if you want to go ahead and win and Australia haven't had that."

The former skipper pointed to underwhelming returns from the top order, including Cameron Green at No.3 and Tim David at No.4 in the latter matches, as well as a collapse against Sri Lanka where Australia lost six wickets for 20 runs in the closing overs.

Australia failed to qualify for the Super 8s after suffering a shock 23-run defeat to the Zimbabwe, a result Ponting felt effectively ended their campaign.

"It's been a really poor campaign, it has to be said.

Just losing to Zimbabwe like they did, that's going to be the game that they're going to think back and think like that's our World Cup gone, there and then," said Ponting.

Australia began the tournament with injury concerns, with Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins ruled out and Tim David unavailable at the start. However, Ponting said the loss to Zimbabwe would be the one that lingers.

Ponting admitted he had expected Sri Lanka to be tough to beat at home and credited them for a clinical run chase against Australia. "I felt Sri Lanka would be difficult to beat at home and that's certainly the way it turned out. They played really well against Australia. That was an amazing run chase when you look at it. That sort of score is never an easy one to chase down.

Ponting said the former players were disappointed but not critical of the current group.

"As a past player, we certainly don't sit back and bash the current players or talk about them in a negative way when they don't win. We just want to see our team do well. So, unfortunately, that hasn't happened over the last couple of weeks. And that's something that group of players has to live with."

Ponting also dismissed suggestions that Australia do not prioritise the T20 World Cup, insisting that winning ICC titles remains the pinnacle.



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