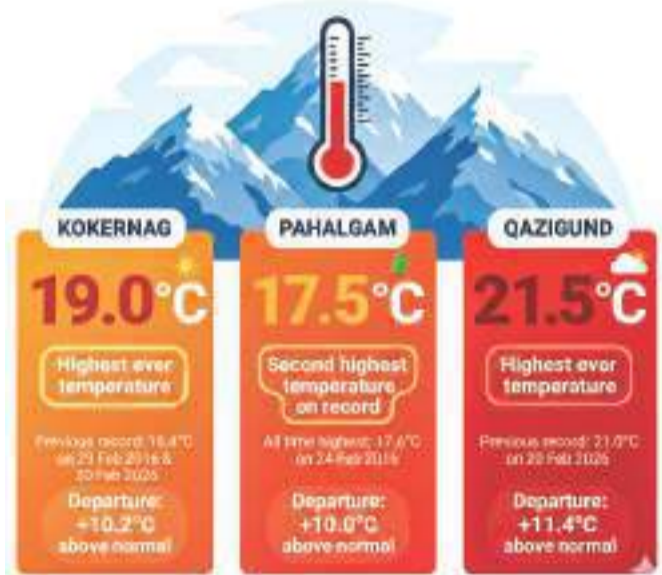


## Heat In The Heart Of Winter!

# Feb Warmth Breaks More All Time Records



### Observer News Service

Srinagar: Kashmir witnessed the fourth consecutive day of exceptional February warmth on Sunday, with multiple weather stations logging fresh all time highs and double digit departures from normal.

At Kokernag, the mercury surged to 19.0°C, marking the highest February temperature ever recorded at the station. The previous record of 18.4°C was set on 29 February 2016 and again on 20 February 2026. The day's temperature stood 10.2 degrees above normal.

In Qazigund, temperatures climbed even higher to 21.5°C, establishing a new all time February record. The earlier high of 21.0°C was recorded just days ago on 20 February 2026. The departure from normal was a striking +11.4°C.

Meanwhile, Pahalgam recorded 17.5°C, making it the second highest February temperature in its recorded history. The all time high of 17.6°C was logged on 24 February 2016. Sunday's reading was 10 degrees above normal.

The fresh set of records confirms **| More on P6**



Devotees offer congregational prayers during Ramazan at Hazratbal Dargah in Srinagar KO Photo By Abid Bhat

## 3 Terrorists Killed In Kishtwar Encounter

### Observer News Service

Jammu: Srinagar: Three members of the Pakistan-based terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammad were killed in an encounter with security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district on Sunday, officials said.

The gunfight took place under "Trashi-i" operation in the general area of Passerkut in the Chatroo belt after security forces acted on specific intelligence inputs. Officials said preliminary assessments suggest that one of the slain militants is Saifullah, a senior JeM commander who had reportedly infiltrated into Jammu and Kashmir nearly five years ago.

Saifullah is believed to have masterminded several deadly attacks on security forces, including a July 2024 incident in which four soldiers were killed. He had earlier managed to escape multiple encounters.

According to officials, the militants were hiding inside a mud house on the foothills. As search **| More on P6**

## Salal Reservoir Shrinks By 96%, Dredging & Flushing Begin

### Press Trust Of India

Jammu: Decades after key sediment-management facilities were rendered inoperable under the Indus Waters Treaty, the reservoir of the Salal power station has suffered a dramatic loss of storage of up to 96 per cent, prompting



NHPC to launch a silt management plan at the facility to

ensure sustained operational efficiency. According to official documents, the NHPC-run Salal concrete dam was originally designed with six under-sluices (gates located at the base of a dam) and six silt-excluder gates (silt-stopping structures) to manage sediment. However, **| More on P6**

## Trade Pact on Hold?

## India, US Push Back Negotiators' Meet Amid Tariff Ruling

### Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: India and the US have decided to reschedule the proposed meeting of their chief negotiators, supposed to be held in Washington from Monday, to finalise the text for the interim trade pact, sources

said on Sunday.

The Indian team was scheduled to start the three-day meeting on February 23 in the US. Joint Secretary in the Commerce Ministry, Darpan Jain, is the chief negotiator of India for this agreement.

"With regards **| More on P6**

## India Is Now World's Largest Rice Producer: PM Pitches For Use Of 'Swadeshi' Products During Festivals

### KO Web Desk

Srinagar: New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday highlighted India's emergence as the world's largest rice producer and showcased innovative farming practices from Kerala and Odisha during his monthly radio programme, Mann Ki Baat.

Stating that the results of farmers' hard work are reflected in national statistics, Modi said India is now producing over 150 million tonnes of rice. He described the achievement as



significant, noting that the country is not only meeting its domestic needs but also contributing to the global food basket.

"Producing more than



**KEEP THEM AWAY FROM FESTIVALS, KEEP THEM AWAY FROM HOLI AS WELL, AND ADOPT 'SWADESHI'. WHEN YOU BUY SWADESHI, YOU ALSO HELP IN THE CAMPAIGN TO MAKE THE COUNTRY SELF-RELIANT."**

150 million tonnes of rice is no small achievement,"

he said, adding that India's agricultural growth demonstrates the resilience and dedication of its farmers.

The prime minister said farmers are not merely food providers but "true devotees of the earth," and urged people to learn from them how to transform soil into prosperity. He observed that many cultivators are successfully blending tradition with modern technology, focusing not only on higher output but also on quality, value addition and access to new markets.

Modi **| More on P6**

## 'Don't Share OTP, Aadhaar, Bank details' PM Tips On Combating Digital Fraud

"Do not share your OTP, Aadhaar number, or bank account details with anyone. Most importantly, change your passwords regularly, just as you adapt your food and clothing with each season." This was the message delivered by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his

monthly radio address, 'Mann Ki Baat,' on Sunday, aimed at combating digital fraud. Modi explained that he had previously spoken at length about digital fraud, which has raised awareness about digital fraud and online scams. However, such incidents continue **| More on P6**

## ATM 'Jackpotting' Fraud On The Rise: What Indian Banks & Customers Should Know

### KO Web Desk

Srinagar: ATM "jackpotting", a cyber-physical fraud where criminals force machines to spit out cash without a real transaction, is emerging as a serious global threat, and experts warn Indian banks must stay alert.

Recently, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reported a sharp spike in such attacks in the United States, with over 700 cases in 2025 and losses exceeding \$20 million. Security analysts say similar tactics could be attempted anywhere, including India, if safeguards are weak.

### What Is ATM Jackpotting?

In jackpotting, criminals: Break open the ATM cabinet using stolen or generic keys

Install malware by replacing the hard drive or inserting a USB device

Override the system and command the machine to dispense cash



A well-known malware strain called Ploutus, first detected in 2013, is often linked to such attacks. It allows criminals to directly control the ATM's cash dispenser.

### Are Indian Customers at Risk?

Unlike card skimming or phishing, jackpotting does not usually target individual bank accounts. The primary loss is suffered by **| More on P6**

## SC To Hear Meta-WhatsApp Privacy Policy Case Today

### KO Web Desk

Srinagar: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday the appeals filed by tech giants Meta Platforms Inc and WhatsApp challenging a penalty of Rs 213.14 crore imposed by the Competition Commission of India over their privacy policy.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi is likely to take up the matter.

During a previous hearing on February 3, the bench made pointed observations against the companies, stating that they could not "play with the right to privacy of citizens in the name of data sharing." The court had also raised concerns about alleged monopolistic practices and the handling of users' private information.

The court referred to "silent customers" who may be digitally dependent, unorganised and unaware of the implications of data sharing policies, asserting that citizens' rights would not be allowed to be compromised.

The appeals arise from a CCI order that imposed a penalty of Rs 213.14 crore on the two **| More on P6**

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## Scholarships This Week

Kashmir Observer in association with Buddy4Study.com presents scholarships available for the meritorious students of Jammu and Kashmir

### Scholarship Name 1

#### Vivo Kanya Gyaan Scholarship Program 2025-26

**Description:** The vivo KanyaGyaan Scholarship Program 2025-26 is a CSR initiative by vivo India that supports young women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds in pursuing STEM undergraduate education. Open to first and second-year students, the program offers financial assistance, mentorship, and industry exposure to help scholars continue their studies, develop corporate readiness, and build successful careers in STEM.

**Eligibility:** Open to young women across India who are currently enrolled in full-time, regular STEM undergraduate courses such as B.Tech / B.E., B.Sc, BCA, etc. (first or second year) at NIRF-ranked colleges; preference will be given to government colleges.

Annual parental income must not exceed INR 5 lakh from all sources.

Applicants must have secured at least 70% marks in both Class 10 and Class 12, as well as in their most recent academic year/semester.

Children of employees of Buddy4Study or vivo India are ineligible.

Note: Students already receiving full financial assistance under other scholarships or government schemes are also not eligible.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited for a final interview conducted by a selection panel.

- Prizes & Rewards: Selected students will receive a fixed scholarship of INR 60,000 per year for up to three years.
- Last Date to Apply: 03-03-2026
- Application mode: Online applications only
- Short Url: [www.b4s.in/observer/VKGSP1](http://www.b4s.in/observer/VKGSP1)
- QR Code: <https://d1e9eg0t05513.cloudfront.net/static/images/scho-media/vivo-kanya-gyaan-scholarship-program-2025-261771307144.png>

### Scholarship Name 2

#### Bhumi Fellowship Program 2026

**Description:** The Bhumi Fellowship Program is being offered by the Bhumi Organisation, one of India's largest independent youth volunteer non-profit organisations. It is a prestigious opportunity designed to support passionate individuals committed towards creating social impact through community development initiatives.

**Eligibility:** Application is open to students between 21-30 years old while having secured a Bachelor's degree preferably in humanities, social sciences, education, management, law, engineering, medicine, or other related fields. Applicants must demonstrate a passion for social work and community development, align with teaching, EdTech, or Systemic Transformation, and be ready to relocate to Chennai, Coimbatore, or Trichy.

- Prizes & Rewards: A monthly grant of 25,500.
- Last Date to Apply: 31-03-2026
- Application mode: Online applications only
- Short Url: [www.b4s.in/observer/BHFP1](http://www.b4s.in/observer/BHFP1)
- QR Code: <https://d1e9eg0t05513.cloudfront.net/static/images/scho-media/bhumi-fellowship-program-20261771307137.png>

### Scholarship Name 3

#### MynVidya: Myntra Cares Scholarship Program

**Description:** The MynVidya: Myntra Cares Scholarship Program extends financial support to students belonging to the families of garment workers and artisans and helps them pursue their higher education in recognised State and Central Universities, including artisan-related NSDC-certified upskilling training programs, empowering students to overcome financial barriers in pursuit of their academic and career goals.

**Eligibility:** Applicants from families employed as a full-time garment workers and artisans who must have completed Class 12 in any stream with a minimum of 60% marks.

Must be enrolled in a full-time graduation course in any year (B.A., B.Sc., B.Com., BBA, BCA, etc.) in a recognised State/Central University.

Annual family income of the applicants must be less than INR 5,00,000.

Applicants for the NSDC Artisan Upskilling program must be 14 to 30 years old, must have completed Class 10 (no minimum percentage), and be enrolled in a recognised NSDC-certified training course in approved institutes or under the NHDP, SAMARTH, or IITHT programs, etc.

**Prizes & Rewards:** Selected students will receive a scholarship of INR 20,000 per year for 3 years.

(Note: Renewable for up to 3 years for students enrolled in full-time graduation courses, subject to academic performance and fulfilment of renewal criteria.)

- Last Date to Apply: 28-02-2026
- Application mode: Online applications only
- Short Url: [www.b4s.in/observer/MVMCSP2](http://www.b4s.in/observer/MVMCSP2)
- QR Code: <https://d1e9eg0t05513.cloudfront.net/static/images/scho-media/1768888581.png>

### Scholarship Name 4

#### BGM Foundation Pashu-Seva Scholarship Program 2025-26

**Description:** The BGM Foundation Pashu-Seva Scholarship Program 2025-26 invites applications from meritorious students pursuing courses in Veterinary Science, Animal Husbandry, Agriculture, Dairy Science, Livestock & Poultry Management, Para Veterinary, Fodder Management or allied fields. Scholars will receive fixed financial support to pursue their studies in animal care and welfare.



**Eligibility:** Must be an Indian citizen enrolled in a recognised institution in India.

Must be pursuing a full-time undergraduate or postgraduate (general/professional) courses (any year) as well as diploma programs in Veterinary Science, Animal Husbandry, Agriculture, Dairy Science, Livestock & Poultry Management, Para Veterinary, Fodder Management or allied fields.

Must have secured a minimum of 50% marks (or equivalent CGPA) in the last qualifying examination. (Note: 5% relaxation to girl students, PWD, single-parent, orphans, first-generation college graduates, students from aspirational or rural districts, studying in government schools, and students from village/rural backgrounds.)

Annual parental income should not exceed INR 8 lakh (from all sources)

Children of employees of Buddy4Study or BGM Foundation are not eligible to apply.

**Prizes & Rewards:** Selected students will receive a fixed Scholarship per year

For Diploma Courses: INR 36,000

For General Graduation / Post-Graduation Courses: INR 36,000

For Professional Graduation / Post-Graduation Courses: INR 75,000

Note: The scholarship fund covers tuition fees, accommodation, food, transport, examination fees, and other academic expenses.

- Last Date to Apply: 28-02-2026
- Application mode: Online applications only
- Short Url: [www.b4s.in/observer/ABCPS1](http://www.b4s.in/observer/ABCPS1)
- QR Code: <https://d1e9eg0t05513.cloudfront.net/static/images/scho-media/bgm-foundation-pashu-seva-scholarship-program-2025-261768888626.png>

### Scholarship Name 5

#### JN Tata Endowment Loan Scholarship Fall 2026-Spring 2027

**Description:** The JN Tata Endowment invites loan scholarship applications from Indian students who wish to pursue higher studies overseas. Students who are selected for the loan scholarship, may be recommended for a partial Travel Grant and a Gift Award, which is linked to their academic performance in their overseas studies, at the discretion of the Trustees of the Trusts concerned.

**Eligibility:** Open to Indian citizens who have completed at least one undergraduate degree or are in the final year of an undergraduate program at a recognised institution in India. Applicants must intend to pursue post-graduate, doctoral, or postdoctoral studies abroad in a recognised graduate program.

Candidates not selected earlier, or those who could not avail of the J. N. Tata Endowment loan scholarship despite selection, may apply afresh.

Applicants already pursuing post-graduate studies overseas may apply at the end of the first year or at the start of the second year, provided at least one full academic year (12 months) remains at the time of the scholarship award (typically in July). Candidates on CPT or OPT must have at least two full semesters or three quarters remaining.

Applicants must have secured a minimum of 60% average marks in their undergraduate or post-graduate studies and must not be older than 45 years as on June 30, 2026.

- Prizes & Rewards: Loan scholarship of upto Rs. 20 lakhs
- Last Date to Apply: 15-03-2026
- Application mode: Online applications only
- Short Url: [www.b4s.in/observer/JNT10](http://www.b4s.in/observer/JNT10)
- QR Code: <https://d1e9eg0t05513.cloudfront.net/static/images/scho-media/jn-tata-endowment-loan-scholarship-fall-2026-spring-20271768844710.png>

### Scholarship Name 6

#### Tata Capital Pankh Scholarship Program 2025-26

**Description:** Tata Capital Limited provides financial support to enable students from underprivileged families to achieve their educational aspirations.

**Eligibility:** The Tata Capital Pankh Scholarship Program 2025-26 is open to Indian students currently enrolled in Classes 11 and 12, general graduation, specialised discipline programme, polytechnic/diploma, or ITI courses at recognised institutions in India. Applicants must have secured a minimum of 60% marks and 80% for professional graduation in the preceding academic year. Additionally, the annual family income from all sources should not exceed INR 2.5 lakh.

Students can receive a scholarship of up to 80% of their course fees, ranging from INR 10,000 to INR 1,00,000, depending on their academic level and performance. (whichever is less)

- Last Date to Apply: 28-02-2026
- Application mode: Online applications only
- Short Url: [www.b4s.in/observer/TCPS34](http://www.b4s.in/observer/TCPS34)
- QR Code: <https://d1e9eg0t05513.cloudfront.net/static/images/scho-media/2025-261768281821.png>



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## Labourer Dies of Electrocution in City

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A 45-year-old labourer died after reportedly suffering an electric shock while carrying out construction work in the Soura area of the city on Sunday.

Official sources identified the deceased as Mohammad Yousuf Wagay, son of Mohammad Ismail Wagay, a resident of DH Pora in Kulgam district.

According to information provided by the attendant, Wagay was engaged in shuttering work at the residence of Mudasir Ahmad Dar in Ahmad Nagar,

Soura, when he allegedly came into contact with a live electric wire. He sustained a severe electric shock during the course of work.

He was immediately shifted to Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences, Soura, for treatment. However, doctors at the hospital examined him and declared him brought dead on arrival.

According to KNT, authorities said medico-legal formalities are being carried out in accordance with procedure. Police have taken cognizance of the incident.

## Restoration of J&K Statehood Key to Development: Sagar

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference General Secretary Ali Muhammad Sagar said that the party's resolve that the restoration of full statehood for Jammu and Kashmir is central to achieving sustained development, effective governance and lasting peace in the region.

Addressing party functionaries and media representatives, Sagar underscored that genuine progress in Jammu and Kashmir can only be secured when the people's democratic rights are fully restored and the region is empowered with the authority of an elected state government.

Sagar said that the

National Conference has consistently championed constitutional methods and democratic struggle to ensure that the promise of statehood made to the people of Jammu and Kashmir is honoured without further delay. He reaffirmed that the demand for statehood is not merely political rhetoric but a legitimate aspiration rooted in restoring constitutional dignity, self-confidence and administrative control to the people.

According to KNS, he asserted that true peace, equitable development and meaningful political empowerment will follow only when Jammu and Kashmir regains the full status it historically held, ensuring that governance is truly by the people and for the people.

## Eight Injured in Highway Accident; Seven Victims from Srinagar

Observer News Service

Jammu: An Ertiga cab carrying eight passengers met with an accident at Sherbibi along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway on Saturday late evening.

Sources said the vehicle bearing registration number JK01AW-4650 was travelling on the highway when it met with the mishap under circumstances that are being ascertained. The cab was reportedly carrying seven members of

a family from the Padshahi Bagh area of Srinagar along with another passenger from Pulwama district. Rescue teams and local police rushed to the spot soon after the incident.

All injured persons were shifted to SDH Banihal for first aid and later referred to GMC Srinagar for further treatment.

According to KNT, Police have taken cognizance of the incident and necessary proceedings are underway.



Devotees offer prayers at the historic Dastgeer Sahib Shrine during the holy month of Ramazan in Srinagar. KO Photo Abid Bhat.

## Vice-President C. P. Radhakrishnan to Grace KU's 21st Convocation

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The University of Kashmir (KU) is all set to hold its 21st Convocation on February 26, 2026, at the Convocation Complex of the varsity, marking a significant academic milestone for the institution and its graduating students and scholars.

The Vice-President of India, C. P. Radhakrishnan, will grace the occasion as the Chief Guest and deliver the convocation address. The visit will mark his maiden official visit to the Valley after assuming the office of the Vice President lending special significance to the ceremony. Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, UT, and Chancellor KU, Manoj Sinha will preside over the convocation, and Chief Minister, Jammu & Kashmir UT and Pro-Chancellor KU, Mr. Omar Abdullah will attend the convocation as Guest of Honour. In addition, Minister for Higher Education UT J&K, Sakina Masood (Itoo), senior officers of the civil administration, police department, faculty members and officials of the University administration will also be a part of the event.

While expressing her happiness over the upcoming convocation, Vice-Chancellor KU, Prof. Nilofer Khan, said, "The 21st Convocation is a moment of collective pride for the Uni-

versity community. It celebrates the academic accomplishments of our students and reaffirms our commitment to quality education, research and public engagement."

She further noted that the presence of the Hon'ble Vice-President of India at the ceremony reflects the growing

convocation is a formal academic ceremony to confer degrees, gold medals and certificates of merit upon deserving students and scholars. The Act prescribes the formalities and order of the academic procession, which will be observed during the ceremony.

A total of 59558 degrees which in-



national recognition of the University's academic and research contributions.

Held under the provisions of the Kashmir University Act, 1969, the

cludes 44910 Undergraduates, 13545 Postgraduates, 461 MD/MS, 04 MCH, 18 M.Phil and 620 Ph.D shall be conferred during the 21st Convocation.

**"The 21st Convocation is a moment of collective pride for the University community. It celebrates the academic accomplishments of our students and reaffirms our commitment to quality education, research and public engagement."**

## FCIK Submits Fresh Representation to CM for Structured Closure of Legacy NPAs

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Federation of Chambers of Industries Kashmir (FCIK) has formally submitted a comprehensive representation to the Chief Minister Omar Abdullah outlining practical and urgent measures for the Special One-Time Settlement (SOTS) Scheme currently under active consideration of the J&K Bank management.

The representation, copies of which have also been shared with senior Government authorities and the management of Jammu & Kashmir Bank, underscores the urgent need for a structured framework to resolve long-standing legacy MSME NPAs, restore entrepreneurial confidence, and provide a clear, actionable pathway for distressed units to restart operations-paving the way for a sustainable and renewed revival of the regional economy.

The submissions call for the Government's support, as the major equity holder in J&K Bank, in formalizing a calibrated, non-discriminatory, and non-discriminatory SOTS, distinct from routine OTS frameworks, to serve as a structured legacy-closure instrument.

Such a scheme, FCIK notes, would enable recovery of otherwise stuck assets, provide balance sheet

clarity to the Bank, restore entrepreneurial dignity, revive credit culture, and unlock fresh economic activity. The proposal draws upon regulatory precedents issued by the Reserve Bank of India and settlement schemes implemented by leading public sector banks, aligning the framework with contemporary MSME classifications and current economic realities.

Highlighting the unique relationship between the people of the region and J&K Bank, FCIK recalls that during decades of turbulence, the Bank remained the principal financial lifeline while most other banks and institutions withdrew operations.

"However, the people reciprocated by placing extraordinary trust in the institution, shifting their deposits to the Bank, with over 90 percent of funds still originating from within the Union Territory," FCIK noted, emphasizing that this stable, low-cost funding base has underpinned consistent growth and record profitability for the institution.

The Federation submitted that this mutual trust must now guide a balanced and forward-looking resolution of legacy stress, especially as the majority of MSME NPAs reflect accumulated historical stress rath-

er than willful default.

Drawing on RBI guidelines and national precedents, FCIK proposed that the SOTS cover NPAs up to at least 50 crore. The suggested framework includes waiver of unapplied and penal interest, rational principal settlement with calibrated haircuts, inclusion of failed OTS, technically written-off accounts and cases under litigation, delinking relief from collateral value, reduced 5% upfront amount for application processing, repayment window up to 2 years and a transparent, rule-based mechanism without subjective exclusions.

The objective may not be concessions but closure-cleaning up historical NPAs, restoring entrepreneurial dignity, unlocking stuck capital, and enabling fresh credit expansion.

FCIK has expressed deep concern over the daily-based resurfacing of daily SARFAESI "name and shame" notices and e-auctions in local newspapers, following a year of significant restraint during which the Bank's leadership had repeatedly assured borrowers of a forthcoming solution. The continuation of such public actions has not only undermined borrowers' financial credibility but also caused social distress and reputational damage within the community.

## CTI Organizes Programme on "Strengthening Cooperatives through Good Governance"

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Cooperative Training Institute, Srinagar, organized a programme on "Strengthening Cooperatives through Good Governance", followed by the felicitation and certificate distribution ceremony of the Diploma in Cooperative Management (DICM) for the trainees.

The programme highlighted the critical role of good governance in strengthening the cooperative institutions. Deliberations focused on transparency, accountability, professional management, statutory compliance and active member participation as the foundation for strong and sustainable cooperatives. The speakers emphasised that good governance is essential for improving the performance and public trust in cooperative institutions.

Babila Rakwal, Commissioner Secretary, Cooperative Department, Babila Rakwal, felicitated the successful DICM trainees while distributing the diploma certificates among them.

Special Secretary, Cooperative Department, Ulfat Jabeen and Principal, Cooperative Training Institute, Srinagar, Dr Khalid Hussain Malik besides others were present on the occasion.

The dignitaries congratulated the trainees for successfully completing the diploma and encouraged them to apply their knowledge in strengthening the cooperative societies through ethical and efficient practices.

The Deputy Registrars, Assistant Registrars, District Audit Officers besides Auditors, Sub Auditors and Junior Supervisors were sensitised regarding the good governance for strengthening the co-operatives.

The Programme concluded with a reaffirmation of the Institute's commitment to capacity building, modernization of cooperative education and promotion of good governance within the cooperative sector.

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**HIGHWAY STATUS**

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

PRAYERS	
FAJR	5: 45
ZUHR	12:45
ASR	4: 44
Magrib	6:24
ISHA	7: 44

## This Day In History

- 1455- Johannes Gutenberg prints his first Bible (estimated date) [1]
- 1540- Francisco Vázquez de Coronado's expedition sets off from Mexico in search of the 7 cities of Cibola
- 1574- France begins 5th "holy war" against Huguenots
- 1660- Charles XI becomes king of Sweden
- 1689- Dutch prince William III proclaimed King of England
- 1782- Engineer James Watt's patent for a rotary motion for the steam engine (his sun-and-planet gear) is granted
- 1846- Polish revolutionaries march on Kraków, but are defeated
- 1847- Battle of Buena Vista, Mexico; Zachary Taylor leads mostly volunteer troops against larger Mexican Army force; Mexico retreats, both sides claim victory
- 1854- Great Britain & Orange Free state sign Convention of Bloemfontein
- 1861- Dutch Prime Minister Floris van Hall resigns
- 1870- Mississippi is readmitted to US after the Civil War
- 1874- Major Walter Clopton Winfield patents a game called "sphairistike" (lawn tennis)
- 1883 - American Anti-Vivisection Society organized (Philadelphia)
- 1886 - Aluminum manufacturing process developed
- 1886 - "The Times" of London publishes world's 1st classified ad
- 1903 - The US and Cuba sign an agreement by which Cuba releases Guantanamo and Bahía Hondo to the US for naval stations.
- 1903 - The Sultan agrees to an Austro-Russian plan to reform the government of Macedonia in yet another effort to stifle the rising disorder among the rival Bulgarian.
- 1904 - United States acquires control of the Panama Canal Zone for \$10 million.
- 1904 Having occupied Korea, Japan signs a treaty with Korea under which it becomes a Japanese protectorate in return for Japanese protection from other powers
- 1919 - Fascist Party forms in Italy by Benito Mussolini
- 1940 - Russian troops conquer Lasi Island
- 1943 - German troops pull back through Kasserine-pass Tunisia
- 1944 - Forced deportation of the Chechen and Ingush people to Central Asia.
- 1954 - 1st mass inoculation against polio with Salk vaccine (Pittsburgh)
- 1958 - USSR performs nuclear test at Novaya Zemlya USSR.
- 1967 - US troops begin largest offensive of Vietnam War.
- 1983 - The United States Environmental Protection Agency announces its intent to buy out and evacuate the dioxin-contaminated community of Times Beach, Missouri.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

I, Haroon Maqbool S/o Maqbool Hussain Dar, R/o Nooripora Magam, hereby inform the general public that I have applied for issuance of a D Class Contractor Card in the R&B /Civil Branch of the Public Works Department (PWD), Srinagar/Budgam.

If anybody has any objection regarding the issuance of the said Contractor Card in my favour, they may file their objection before the concerned Superintendent Engineer, R&B Department Srinagar/ Budgam within seven (07) days from the date of publication of this notice.

No objection shall be entertained after the expiry of the stipulated period.

Sd/-  
Haroon Maqbool  
R/o: Nooripora Magam

fko

# What a Photograph Can Do

A portrait of a wounded boy and his father at Sharjah's Xposure festival became a meditation on grief, hope, and the bond that holds families together.



Seema Sangra

I stood inside the bright halls of Xposure 2026 in Sharjah, moving with the crowd, smiling at volunteers, nodding at familiar faces, and letting the festival's energy wash over me.

Photography lined every wall, and people drifted from frame to frame with phones raised and conversations flowing in low, excited tones.

I felt the usual thrill of being surrounded by images that promise new ways of seeing the world.

Then I saw Saleh.

His portrait held me in place. One eye looked straight at the camera while the other lay hidden beneath a white bandage.

His teeth were shattered, his right arm ended halfway, and most of the fingers on his left hand were gone.

An explosion had torn into his small body and left marks that no child should ever bear.

Doctors had flown him to the United States for surgery, and the caption beside the frame named him with simple clarity: Saleh, a child caught in conflict.

The photograph came from Deanne Fitzmaurice, a Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist known for long documentary projects that follow people through their hardest seasons.

I felt her patience in the image, and I felt Saleh's presence even more strongly.

He was alive. That fact alone unsettled me and moved me at the same time.

I kept searching his open eye for a clue. I looked for hope, anger, fear, or disappointment. His expression resisted my attempt to define it.

I found myself asking a question that stayed with me for the rest of the day: how do we measure pain when it belongs to someone else?

Another photograph in the same section showed Saleh with his father, Rahim. The title read "Father's Touch."

Saleh faced the camera again with that single steady gaze, while Rahim's rough hand rested on him in comfort.

The father's nails were broken, his skin hardened by labour and life. That hand transformed the



Saleh with his father, Rahim. Photo: Deanne Fitzmaurice

**"I left Xposure with Saleh's steady eye fixed in my mind, with Rahim's weathered hand resting gently on his son, and with Ana's balloon suspended between freedom and farewell. The festival gathered visual storytellers who translated grief, conflict, and longing into frames that invite us to look longer and think deeper."**

mood of the scene.

I sensed warmth in that simple gesture, and I wondered whether Rahim believed his son could still find a future beyond hospital walls.

The festival continued around me with cheerful noise and shifting light. Visitors discussed lenses and lighting, and children tugged at their parents' sleeves. I felt rooted to the floor, thinking about hospital rooms, about fathers who stand beside beds, and about children who learn too early what violence can do.

I moved on, slowly, into other sections. The themes changed with each turn. Environmental stories gave way to artificial intelligence, then to architecture, the skyline of the UAE, jewelry that shimmered under careful lighting, and horses cap-

tured in motion.

I saw work by Lucia Giacani, whose fashion portraits felt cinematic and controlled. I stopped at images by Ali Haj Suleiman, who documents life under conflict with direct honesty.

Photographs by Carol Allen-Storey drew attention to women and children living through poverty and disease. I also encountered projects by Ximena Borrazás and Svet Jacqueline, each artist turning the camera toward injustice and human struggle.

Every wall offered a different story, but the question of pain followed me.

Then I stopped before a photograph that felt lighter at first glance. A hand reached toward a balloon drifting upward. The frame left the intention open.

Was the hand releasing the balloon into the sky,

or stretching to catch it before it disappeared?

I raised my phone and captured the image.

A woman standing nearby smiled at me and said, "You really like this one."

I told her I did, and I asked what she saw in it.

"It could be either," she replied, leaving the meaning suspended between us.

The photograph belonged to Ana Backhaus. In a note beside the series, she wrote about losing her mother, the woman who had held her family together through every storm. She described feeling lost and alone, facing a future that no longer looked familiar.

Her words gave the floating balloon a new weight. The image became a study of grief and release, of holding on and letting go.

As I walked through the final halls, I kept returning to a simple thought. Artists turn private suffering into something visible. They take what feels unbearable and offer it to strangers.

History shows that many landmark works rise from conflict, loneliness, and loss. Abundance often struggles to spark the same depth of creation.

The International Association for the Study of Pain describes pain as a personal experience shaped by biology, psychology, and social life. It also affirms that each person's account of pain deserves respect, and that words form only one way of expressing it.

Standing inside that festival, I felt the truth of that idea.

A photograph speaks without a single sentence, but it communicates what pages of text sometimes fail to capture.

I left Xposure with Saleh's steady eye fixed in my mind, with Rahim's weathered hand resting gently on his son, and with Ana's balloon suspended between freedom and farewell.

The festival gathered visual storytellers who translated grief, conflict, and longing into frames that invite us to look longer and think deeper.

Pain may resist measurement, but it can be framed and placed on a wall where strangers stand before it and feel its force.

That day in Sharjah, I learned that when art holds pain with honesty, it ceases to belong to one life alone and enters the shared space between us.

*The author is a media academic and writer from Jammu and Kashmir. She serves as Program Leader for the Media Studies Department at Amity University Dubai, where she teaches journalism and visual storytelling, and writes on art, conflict, and culture.*



Muhammad Arbaaz Niazi

Kashmir now stands firmly inside India's gig economy story.

Young people sign up for app-based driving, food delivery, online tutoring, freelance design, data tagging, content writing, and home services with the hope that quick income and flexible hours will bring stability. Platforms present these jobs as modern and open to anyone willing to log in.

This shift first gathered pace in cities such as Bengaluru, Delhi, and Mumbai, where strong digital networks and dense markets keep demand high.

The valley operates under very different conditions. Private sector opportunities remain limited, industry lacks depth, and competition for government posts stays intense. Platform work therefore feels like an economic necessity for many young people rather than a passing trend.

Kashmir's gig economy grows out of limited options and structural constraints, and that reality defines its character.

Young men attach their cars to ride-hailing apps and spend long hours chasing rides. Graduates deliver meals and groceries on routes set by platforms. Postgraduates teach online classes or compete for remote freelance projects posted by clients they never meet. Instagram pages serve as digital storefronts where algorithms decide visibility and reach.

Many join to support their families and meet rising costs, while few treat this work as a long-term career built on steady growth.

Flexibility drives the appeal, as workers choose when to log in and which tasks to accept. That freedom matters in a region where private jobs remain scarce and government posts draw fierce competition.

At the same time, risk shifts toward the worker.

Companies avoid long-term commitments. Income rises and falls without warning. Paid leave rarely exists, and health insurance often offers little real protection. The language of partnership sounds empowering, though legal safeguards remain thin.

Earnings depend on season and demand. A driver may earn well during tourist months and struggle when rides decline. A freelancer may complete a project and then wait weeks for another. An algorithm update can reduce visibility overnight. A low rating can limit future assignments. Appeals move through automated systems that offer little human engagement.

This uncertainty spills into personal life. Young people delay marriage plans, and families postpone building homes as unstable income drives major life decisions.

Medical expenses demand careful calculation



## Kashmir's Gig Gamble

As app-based jobs expand in Kashmir, flexibility brings income but leaves workers exposed to fluctuating pay, invisible management, and limited upward mobility.

against unpredictable earnings, while workers remain constantly available since declining tasks can affect future opportunities.

Flexibility, in this setting, starts to resemble ongoing pressure to stay online at all times.

Local conditions deepen the strain on gig workers in the valley. Internet service has improved over time, though disruptions still interrupt online work and delay tasks. Payment systems often create delays that complicate household budgeting.

Platforms invest minimally in local offices or grievance systems, and major decisions flow from distant dashboards that rarely reflect everyday realities in Kashmir.

Public discussion often raises rising numbers and economic contribution, while job quality receives far less scrutiny. Work means more than income alone, since it also provides predictability and the ability to plan ahead.

Gig work generates earnings in bursts and offers limited assurance over time, leaving long-term stability uncertain for many workers.

The idea of being one's own boss weakens when

incentives change without explanation and fuel prices rise while payouts stay flat.

Platforms recruit more workers to maintain supply, and oversupply reduces bargaining power. Options to switch platforms or demand better terms remain narrow in a constrained job market.

Skill development raises another serious concern in this model. Many educated young people take on low-skill, high-effort tasks that offer limited upward movement and no clear path forward.

Platforms focus training on immediate efficiency and task completion, while long-term professional growth receives little attention. Experience gained through apps often stays confined to the platform and rarely translates into stable employment later.

Women also enter this space under specific pressures. Home-based digital work appears convenient and socially acceptable. Pay often remains modest, and work hours extend late into the night.

Informal arrangements increase vulnerability, while written contracts remain rare.

Supporters argue that the gig economy continues to evolve and that regulation will mature over time.



**Kashmir faces a clear choice as digital work expands. Design and accountability will define the outcome. Fair rules can align flexibility with protection. The app economy will grow. Regulation will decide whether it builds stable opportunity or sustains constant uncertainty.**

They point out that platforms expand access for students, women, and those excluded from traditional hiring. Digital work can also function during periods when physical workplaces face disruption. These arguments deserve attention.

Access, however, differs from advancement.

Entry without enforceable protections places risk on individuals. Clear pay floors, transparent deactivation rules, functional health and accident coverage, and accessible grievance systems form the foundation of fair work in a digital age.

Policymakers must decide whether gig work complements formal employment or slowly replaces it as the dominant model.

Kashmir needs jobs that provide stability, skill development, and social protection. Long-term prosperity depends on more than constant activity.

Gig work in its current structure does not consistently provide these elements. Reform can narrow the gap through minimum earning guarantees, empowered local grievance bodies, and formal recognition of gig workers as workers with rights.

An economy built on insecurity normalizes instability and lowers expectations. Activity may rise, while mobility and long-term planning weaken.

Kashmir faces a clear choice as digital work expands. Design and accountability will define the outcome. Fair rules can align flexibility with protection.

The app economy will grow. Regulation will decide whether it builds stable opportunity or sustains constant uncertainty.

*The author is a student examining the links between socio-economics, environmental issues, public policy, and education. He can be reached at arbaazniyaz011@gmail.com.*

# The Atlas Years of Kashmir

An ode to the working-class bicycle that once symbolised mobility and now survives as memory.



Jamsheed Rasool

Slacking back his hair with oil, he stood tall and lanky, balanced awkwardly on a rattling Atlas bicycle.

In the early years of the twenty-first century, in a highland cul-de-sac like Kashmir, that bicycle had already begun to invite caricatured whispers as a loser's vehicle.

Sabir, a name that meant the patient one, had an aquiline nose, quick wit, manly voice, and a sharp command of his lessons. These traits should have drawn notice from the stream of girls who flowed out of the biology block each afternoon. The bicycle undid it all.

Perched on that steel frame, he faded from view, and not a single girl turned her head. He spoke with clarity, grasped ideas with speed, and carried himself with effort. Even so, something about his posture and clothes seemed to signal poor ancestry, as if deprivation had found its own language.

Like me, he cycled through the same two outfits every week, washing and wearing them until even hope felt threadbare.

"Are we aliens?" he would ask with bitterness. "Why don't they look at us? Why those boys on flashy motorbikes, loud and careless, smoking openly and mocking teachers? Why them?"

The questions hovered in the air without resolution.

By the winter of 2004, the bicycle had turned into a symbol of defeat, tied to generations who had lived hand to mouth while promises of upward mobility slipped away. To reverse that story would have required a figure from Sisyphus, condemned to push a stone uphill only to watch it roll back down. Sabir sometimes seemed heir to that burden.

The girls continued to pass each day, and the bitterness settled deeper within him. He grew convinced that intellect alone could never soften the poverty that framed his life or alter the way he appeared in their eyes.

"Do they X-ray my family?" he once asked, his voice breaking. "Do they see the poverty before they see me?"

I urged him toward stoicism, and moving through youth with intention and trusting time over glances. He rejected that counsel. He believed that if, at the height of youth, one failed to earn even a casual greeting or fleeting eye contact, then life itself felt diminished. He immersed himself in existentialism, speaking of alienation, otherization, poverty, and suffering until those words sounded less like philosophy and more like diagnosis.

Then, on an ordinary day, he disappeared.

It is the late 1980s, and a mason's family in downtown Srinagar wakes before the azaan has fully settled into the lanes. The house still breathes in sleep. His wife turns once in bed and pulls the quilt closer around the children. He washes his face with cold water that bites into the skin, oils his hair quickly without looking into a mirror, and prepares himself for the day that is already waiting.

Outside, his Atlas bicycle leans against the wall like a loyal animal, heavy, black, and scarred by years of use. He lifts the sack containing his tools: the trowel polished smooth by repetition, the plumb line that decides straightness, the hammer, chisel, spirit level, bits of wire, and nails saved carefully from earlier work.

He ties everything to the carrier. The bicycle groans under the weight and never complains.

One jute bag hangs heavy on the handlebar.

Inside it is a flat steel trowel for spreading mortar evenly, like butter on bread. There is a plumb bob, a small weight on a string that shows whether a wall stands straight. A mason's hammer rests beside it, with one blunt end and one sharp end to break and shape stone.

There is a spirit level with a small bubble in glass to check balance. A measuring tape, creased and worn, helps mark each inch. A chisel cuts into stone with steady force. A wooden float smooths rough plaster and makes the surface ready for living.

Tucked carefully inside is a mercury level instrument, gifted

by a distant uncle who returned from Hajj. It is precise, foreign, and deeply valued. Beside it lies an old qibla indicator, brass-toned and scratched, still pointing faithfully toward prayer amid cement dust and noise.

The second jute bag carries less weight but more meaning. Inside is a copper-golden tiffin, its edges dented and its hinges worn.

There is rice, always rice. Yellow dal, thin but warm. Turnips or haakh, cooked soft. Sometimes there is a boiled egg, wrapped separately, almost ceremonial. A piece of bread lies folded on the side.

That tiffin is the emblem of blue-collared Kashmir, predictable, sufficient, and uncomplaining. It feeds muscle rather than appetite. It carries a faint smell of turmeric and metal.

At noon, he will open it routinely on a half-built wall, and steam will rise for a moment before fading into the cold air. By evening, the bicycle will transport him back the same way, the bell softer now, the bag lighter, the shoulders heavier, delivering continuity to the many who wait at home.

Before leaving, he tells his wife softly that he will bring sweets that evening, candies for the children, maybe fritters if work finishes early. She smiles without opening her eyes.

In such houses, promises serve as breakfast.

He rings the bell once, just once. The thin, bright clang travels down the lane and into the rooms. The children stir. That sound is his signature.

In the late eighties and early nineties, the bicycle is a vehicle of value for the lower-middle-class, manual workforce. Masons, carpenters, and painters all ride it. It needs no petrol, no documents, and no permissions. It asks only for strength and balance.

Sometimes his wife sits sideways on the carrier with her dupatta carefully tucked in. A child stands on the front steel rod, gripping the handlebar and laughing into the wind, while another presses against his back.

Five lives balance on two thin tyres. They wobble, laugh, and arrive. And that is how families move.

Dusk belongs to the children. They listen for a sound they know well. When the bell rings again, louder now, rushed and joyful, they run to the door. He reaches deep into the pockets of his soiled waistcoat or greasy oversized shirt and pulls out small treasures: sugar candies wrapped in crinkled paper, fritters folded in yesterday's newspaper, sometimes a bruised apple.

Their hands carry the smell of his sweat and lime dust. They do not mind. That bell, to them, is sweeter than any lullaby.

Friday feels like a festival. Thursday is payday, when notes are folded tight, a little damp with sweat and slightly torn, but precious all the same. On Friday mornings, debts are cleared, the shopkeeper, the butcher, the neighbour. Tuition fees are paid, and respect returns for a while.

Then they ride their bicycles to Jama Masjid from downtown Srinagar in small groups, bells ringing, tools left behind, clothes freshly washed. They listen to the sermon of the Mirwaiz with bowed heads and crowded hearts.

After prayers, they head to the market for spices, kehwa leaves, and sometimes a samovar held carefully and balanced like a child.

Some weeks they buy mutton, other weeks chicken, Sunday food, rare food, celebratory food. If the weather allows, they visit Badamwari. Children run, kehwa boils, and the bicycle stands parked nearby, as if watching.

Friday evening is set aside for maintenance. He oils the chain carefully, wipes away the dust, checks the brakes, and tightens the bolts. The ritual is precise and respectful.

This bicycle feeds the family, and Saturday's commute depends on the care given tonight. The smell of oil blends with kehwa. And life, for a moment, feels held together.

Then one day, the scaffold slips.

There is a cry, a body falling the wrong way, and a sound no bell can make. It is a sight many have seen: a mason on the ground with his head split open, limbs twisted into shapes they never learned, blood pooling and moving toward the bicycle lying nearby. Red stains the black metal, and tools lie scattered, innocent and useless.

Carpenters meet similar ends.

A beam slips from its hold, a plank suddenly gives way, and silence



settles in before help can arrive.

The owner comes, looks, sighs, and pays a small amount. It is enough for burial and never enough for life. There is hardly any insurance, barely any paperwork, and almost no awareness, only hands that once worked.

The wife is left behind. She moves from office to office, from pillar to post. Officials avert their eyes and ask questions that wound.

Was he registered? Is there proof? Why now?

Relatives whisper, and former comrades offer sympathy and remain powerless. Everyone is poor, and everyone lives with fear.

At home, the bicycle remains. Rust creeps in, the chain stiffens, and the tyres slowly deflate. No one oils it anymore. It leans against the wall like a memory that hurts to touch.

That bicycle, once a source of laughter, income, and pride, now decays silently.

It carried a nation builder, a man who raised walls, schools, homes, and shops, whose hands shaped the city.

Systems forget him, owners move on, comrades fade away, and history turns its page.

Only the bicycle remembers.

The bicycle was built sometime in the 1980s, heavy, dependable, and unapologetic. It had a thick steel frame painted in stubborn black, bottle green, or government blue.

A long, slightly curved handlebar grew smooth from years of palms and sweat. The leather or rexine saddle had hardened into a permanent shape. The chain sang dryly unless it was oiled every Sunday. Wide mudguards stopped monsoon filth from climbing up the trousers. A carrier was welded to the back like an extra, but it became the backbone of survival.

The bell gave off a sharp, metallic clang, neither polite nor aggressive, announcing presence on dusty lanes, factory gates, office corridors, and school roads. It was the sound of punctuality and warning, of a man carving a narrow passage through chaos.

In the 1970s, this machine was still a marker of arrival. Owning a bicycle meant progress, proof that one had moved beyond walking and that one's labour now earned speed.

By the late 1960s, it had settled into its true role as the common man's carriage. Factory workers rode it to mills, workshops, and warehouses. Lower-rung clerks pedalled to municipal offices and insurance buildings.

Their mornings began before the sun, a rinse at the tap, starch pressed into the shirt collar, trousers flattened overnight under a mattress.

Then the bicycle rolled out, tyres crunching gravel, the bell ringing twice at familiar corners.

Strapped to the carrier or hanging from the handlebar were tiffin boxes, red, blue, yellow, sometimes steel wrapped in cloth, holding rice, lentils, leftovers, survival packed neatly for a long day.

The bicycles of the 1950s and early 1960s were rarer and even heavier, often imported or assembled from British designs such as Raleigh and Hercules models with upright frames, rod brakes, and dynamos that hummed faintly at night. They belonged to teachers, postmen, and men of modest authority.

By the late 1960s and 1970s, Indian manufacturing had taken over, producing cycles that were sturdier and cheaper, less elegant but more forgiving of potholes, dust, and neglect.

With each passing decade, the machine became more accessible, until it stood inseparable from working life itself.

Commuters told different stories across continents. In small

towns of the United Kingdom, cycling or walking meant paved roads, trimmed hedges, predictable weather, and distances measured in calm minutes. In suburban India during the same decades, it meant dust clouds, broken roads, stray cattle, honking buses, and heat rising off the ground like breath.

The bicycle absorbed it all, the sun, the rain, the weight of a man returning home with vegetables tied in newspaper, a packet of medicine, sometimes a cheap sweet for a child.

By evening, the bell rang softer and the pedals slowed. Dependents waited at home, parents, siblings, children, expecting proof that the day had been endured.

The bicycle leaned against the wall, dusted but steady. It stood ready to begin the journey again the next morning, each turn of the wheel sustaining an entire household.

In the late 1970s, a middle-class man in Kashmir rides to his masonry shift on a bicycle built for endurance rather than elegance. It is usually a Hercules or an Atlas, steel-framed, coal-black or bottle-green, the paint faded by years of frost and sun.

The tyres are thick and reliable. The carrier is firmly welded. The bell gives a sharp metallic clang, neither cheerful nor rude, just enough to say he is passing through.

He pedals through lanes that are still half asleep. His breath shows in the cold air. His trousers are clipped at the ankle, and his sweater fits tight at the wrists.

The bicycle knows the road well, and he knows it just as well.

They woke before the light had fully spread, when the air still felt sharp with cold and the day was just beginning. They packed steel tiffins, pulled on woollen sweaters, and lifted oil-stained lunch bags onto their shoulders. Their bicycles stood against frost-bitten walls, ready to roll.

Soon they were on the road to Hindustan Machine Tools, HMT. That road ran through their lives.

Each morning followed the same pattern: a look at the clock, a few quick steps, a firm push on the pedals, and then the punch-in at the gate.

Inside the factory, sound had order. The lathes hummed low, and gear teeth met with a soft click. Men leaned over benches, working side by side, each movement measured and sure. Wrists moved with confidence. Eyes read measurements finer than a strand of hair.

This was beyond brute labour. It felt closer to watchmaking. Patience turned into habit and habit turned into skill.

Blue collars remained buttoned and hands darkened with oil, while the mind kept its precision. Here, time was something they produced rather than chased.

There was something unmistakably Gorky-esque about it, like The Mother without buzzwords or banners. Men moved through repetition. Their lives were measured in shifts, and self-respect was stitched silently into endurance. There were no speeches or revolutions, only bread, wages, routine, and survival.

They felt like kin to Britain's factory workers before Margaret Thatcher, before unions were dismantled, coal towns hollowed out, and pride recast as inefficiency.

They also belonged to India before liberalisation, before Manmohan Singh loosened the bolts of the economy, when factories promised stability and the future felt firm enough to plan a family around.

Pandits and Muslims walked in together through the same gate. They answered the same whistle and worked at the same benches. Religion remained in the locker room, while precision ruled the floor.

workers from the valley continued in factories that grew smaller as opportunities narrowed, and they learned to adjust to changing conditions. Pandit workers moved to factories in Haryana and other parts of India, where new postings opened doors while also uprooting familiar lives. They stepped into new towns, adapted to different languages, and began again with the same skills in their hands and fresh surroundings before them.

The bicycles found different roads, and buzz began to circle around new realities. What remained was memory, especially of evenings when watches were assembled during the day and dreams were argued over at night, when cinema, labour, and everyday life seemed to move forward together.

Some of those urban legends consumed by conflict and compulsion lived by the bicycle, and the bicycle sustained their place in the city's daily life.

Newspaper hawkers led the way at dawn, pushing through cold air while the rest of the city still stirred awake. Their voices travelled ahead of them, headlines shouted into narrow lanes before tea had even begun to boil.

War, curfew, scandal, and death travelled through their breath as they rode, moving with the turn of the wheel. Ink clung to their fingers through the morning, while coins slipped into shirt pockets with the ease of first light spreading through the lane.

Soon after came the pickle sellers, their glass jars clinking softly against the metal carriers. The scent of oil, chilli, and mustard seeds drifted through the air as they stopped at familiar doorways.

Lids were lifted, aromas released, and housewives leaned out from balconies to ask for small measures that promised large satisfaction.

The exchange felt brief, almost ceremonial, before the sellers moved on to the next lane.

Flip-flop sellers came next, bright stacks of cheap rubber footwear tied neatly behind their seats. They moved at an easy pace, calling out prices in long lines that drifted through the neighbourhood. Parents stopped them to buy pairs for children whose feet seemed to outgrow shoes within a season.

As summer settled over the city, ice-cream men entered the lanes with tin boxes fastened tight against the heat. Their bells sounded gentle and persuasive, drawing children out of their homes while kulfi softened in the warmth and small hands reached out with laughter and shining eyes.

Knife-sharpeners added another sound to the streets, the whetstone fixed to the rear wheel, pedals turning effort into grind. Sparks rose as steel met stone, and blades wrapped in cloth were handed over for renewal. Housewives waited as edges returned to life and kitchen work regained its ease.

Fish sellers began even earlier, baskets heavy and damp, water dripping onto spokes as they rode. The smell announced them before their voices did, and bargaining filled the air until hands met in agreement.

Close by, boiled chickpea sellers balanced aluminium pots that released steam scented with salt, chilli, and lemon. Protein came by the handful, coins passed from palm to palm, and strength was measured in small portions.

Mechanics formed another part of this moving world. They crouched by the roadside with hands permanently darkened by grease, mending punctures and pumping tyres until their arms ached. Twisted handlebars were straightened, brakes were tightened, and chains were set right again. Their own bicycles often remained in place, while the flow of others' cycles sustained their work.

They laboured through long days and ate modest meals, but their effort kept the city in motion. Those bygone men circulated through the city like veins carrying life. Records rarely mentioned them, formal protections rarely reached them, but their presence shaped the streets in fundamental way.

The bicycle, in their world, served as shop, tool, companion, and income, binding survival to two thin tyres and a turning chain.

There was a time when the Atlas bicycle stood as a condition of living rather than a matter of choice. It served necessity instead

of aspiration, built from heavy steel, untouched by fashion, ready to support men who supported the nation with their labour.

It took masons to work at dawn, carried clerks to government offices, and brought schoolteachers, radio technicians, and postmen to their duties.

Sacks of tools rested on its frame, lunch tins wrapped in cloth hung from the handle, and at times a wife sat sideways on the carrier while children held tight to the front rod.

During those years, the bicycle signalled survival shared by all rather than status claimed by a few.

Men of standing rode it with ease and without hesitation. The director of Radio Kashmir reached his office on a bicycle, and newly married couples moved gently through the lanes of old Srinagar, modest and at ease in public view.

The bicycle belonged to everyone, as movement itself remained simple and grounded in everyday life.

That bicycle stood as a sign of endurance and resolve. It took on potholes, harsh winters, rust, heavy loads, and long stretches of neglect without complaint. It asked only that the rider keep pedalling. It reflected the daily effort of earning a living, the honour found in labour, and the courage woven into repetition.

Its loud bell signalled arrival rather than status. It seemed to say: I am at work, I am present, I will be home by dusk.

The shift came slowly, guided by rising incomes and new aspirations, as old steel frames gave way to light fibre and speed turned into style. The bicycle shed its sacks, tools, and sweat, returning as a sleek machine defined by imported parts and costly gear. Riding moved from daily need to weekend ritual, from open streets to gated colonies.

The new rider pedals for fitness and photographs, driven by leisure rather than livelihood. The fibre bicycle signals surplus time and income, far removed from the earlier cycles that existed within narrow means and bore the demands of survival.

In this new order, the old Atlas bicycle reads as failure. Riding one now suggests poverty, stalled mobility, inherited disadvantage.

An object once linked to endurance now signals a life that never rose. The same cycle that served nation builders is taken as proof of being left behind.

The loss lies in fading memory. The bicycle stayed the same while society revised its view of labour. What once felt common turned awkward. And what once bridged classes now separates them.

In a narrow lane, an old Atlas bicycle rests against a wall, unfashionable and ignored, holding a past few care to claim.

My eureka moment came when I found Sabir on Facebook. Now in his late thirties, he serves as Chief Technology Officer at a San Francisco-based IT company.

Years ago, he left biology for mathematics, sold his small plot of land, and moved to Delhi for coaching, staking his future on education.

A degree in Computer Applications led to a campus job in Dubai, followed by consistent growth as he learned new technologies and took on larger roles.

Today, he lives in the United States, the same young man who once reset his course now leading in tech.

To my surprise, Sabir still holds on to the sting of those years. In his standalone home in San Francisco, he has assembled an exact replica of the Atlas bicycle he once rode, the same rattling companion from his days at the biology tuition centre.

He spoke almost casually about the many spare-parts warehouses he searched to rebuild it with precision, down to the smallest bolt. On weekends, he sits on his balcony and looks at the bicycle for hours, treating it like an artifact.

When I asked why the old bitterness stayed with him despite all he had achieved, he answered with a line from Peaky Blinders: "I do this to remind myself who I would be if I was not who I am now."

— The author is a senior scribe and short story writer from Srinagar with more than 15 years of experience in media, education, and corporate sectors. His work, published in various outlets, focuses on the human stories and changing dynamics of his homeland. He can be reached at jamsheeddar37@gmail.com.

## Man Enters Trump's Mar-a-Lago Resort Premises, Shot Dead

Agencies

Washington: An armed man was shot and killed after entering the secure perimeter of Mar-a-Lago, President Donald Trump's resort in Palm Beach, Florida.

Although Trump often spends weekends at his resort, he was at the White House during this incident. The incident took place at 1:30 am Sunday.

First lady Melania Trump was also with the president at the White House on Saturday night. The name of the person who was shot has not been released.

Palm Beach County Sheriff Rick Bradshaw said there was no immediate indication that the suspect was known to law enforcement. He was identified as Austin Tucker Martin, 21, of North Carolina.

FBI Director Kash Patel said in post on X that the bureau would be "dedicating all necessary resources" to the investigation.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a post on X:

"In the middle of the night while most Americans were asleep, the United States Secret Service acted quickly and decisively to neutralize a crazy person, armed with a gun and a gas canister, who intruded President Trump's home. Federal law enforcement are working 24/7 to keep our country safe and protect all Americans. It's shameful and reckless that Democrats have chosen to shut down their Department."

Though details of the armed man's motive for entering the Mar-a-Lago perimeter are not yet known, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent in a Fox News interview on Sunday morning reacted by criticising Democratic rhetoric.

"This existential threat that this venom from the left really has to stop," said Bessent, who added he had just spoken with Trump.

The man killed was identified by investigators as 21-year-old Austin Tucker Martin, according to a person familiar with the matter. He was from North Carolina.

The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss details of the investigation.

The man had a gas can and a shotgun, according to Anthony Guglielmi, a Secret Service spokesman.

# ED Sets Target Of Filing 500 Chargesheets This Fiscal; Completing Probe In 1-2 Years

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has set a target of filing 500 chargesheets in money-laundering cases in the current financial year and investigating officials have been directed to ensure that once a case is registered, the probe should be completed within one to two years, except in "complex" matters, the agency said on Sunday.

These measures were discussed and finalised during the federal probe agency's 34th Quarterly Conference of Zonal Officers (QCZO) held in Assam's capital, Guwahati, on December 19-21 last year. The meeting was chaired by ED Director Rahul Navin.

The agency has been holding this once-in-three months conference outside Delhi since last year, with the last two editions held in Kevadia (Gujarat) and Srinagar (Jammu and Kashmir).

"The decision to hold the conference in northeastern region reflects the directorate's recognition of the strategic and operational importance of the region," the ED said in a statement.

It added that the meeting was significant as it was the last before the end of the current fiscal (March 31). Officials were told that the focus must be on "meaningful" achievement of

targets, logical conclusion of investigations, timely filing of prosecution complaints and ensuring that attachments and penalties are legally sustainable and effectively realised.

"The target of filing 500 prosecution complaints in the current financial year was reiterated and all field formations were urged to make concerted efforts to achieve the same while also preparing for an enhanced target in the next financial year.

"The need for this enhanced target is to proactively conclude long-pending investigations and to systematically reduce the life cycle of new investigations to a reasonable time frame of one to two years except in exceptionally-complex cases," the statement said.

The ED officials were also told that the powers given to them under the criminal sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) come with a corresponding responsibility and they should exercise those with caution, fairness and accountability.

"It was advised that officers must remain mindful of the impact of enforcement actions and ensure that summons and other statutory notices are issued judiciously, based on clear necessity and proper application of mind," the statement said.

The conference also discussed issues related to "priority areas" like intensifying efforts to track illicit assets abroad, identifying trade channels being misused for money laundering, misuse of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and prioritisation of digital-arrest and cyber-fraud cases, instances of which are witnessing a "sharp" rise.

ED investigators were also asked to check the proliferation of illegal-betting and online-gaming platforms in the country, money laundering through share-market manipulation, and remain vigilant against foreign funding channels that may be used for unlawful narrative building, destabilising activities or anti-national purposes.

The officers were also advised to leverage mechanisms, such as Interpol, using the domestic BHARATPOL, including issuance of colour notices, especially "Purple" notices.

The "Purple" notice issued by the Interpol aims to seek or provide information on the modus operandi, objects, devices and concealment methods used by criminals.

The officers were also directed to complete the adjudication of all pending cases registered under the now-repealed Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) by March 31.

Challenges related to

delays, getting sanctions for prosecution, non-cooperation by police in some states, limited manpower, logistical constraints in remote regions, the lack of digitised land records and valuation issues relating to volatile digital assets were also discussed, the statement said.

It added that the officers were also "encouraged" to make full use of formal channels of cooperation with foreign countries, including Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) requests, letters rogatory (judicial requests) and extradition processes.

"The value of building direct professional relationships with foreign enforcement counterparts was highlighted as early informal engagement often facilitates quicker intelligence sharing and ultimately, a smooth transition to formal requests, thereby strengthening ED's effectiveness in handling cross-border money-laundering and asset-recovery cases," it said.

Some other central agencies like the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) and Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) delivered thematic presentations for the ED officials during the conference.

## TERROR CONSPIRACY IN DELHI

### Bangladeshi Nationals Among Eight Arrested

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: Eight suspects have been nabbed for allegedly plotting a major terror conspiracy in Delhi at the behest of Pakistan's ISI and Bangladesh-based extremist organisations, police sources said on Sunday.

Six of the suspects have been arrested from different parts of Tamil Nadu and will be brought to Delhi for interrogation. Some of the arrested individuals are stated to be Bangladeshi nationals, the sources added.

Two persons were picked up earlier during follow up action linked to the same case.

Security agencies had on Saturday issued an alert on a possible explosion near the Red Fort here after Central intelligence agencies indicated that Pakistan-based terror outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) has allegedly kept prominent religious places in India on its target list.

The sources said the operation was carried out following specific intelligence inputs about a module suspected to be planning subversive activities in different parts of the country, they said.

During searches, police recovered dozens of mobile phones and SIM cards from their possession, which are being analysed to ascertain the extent of the network and possible foreign links.

Preliminary investigation suggests that the group was in touch with handlers linked to Pakistan's ISI and certain Bangladesh-based outfits. Central agencies are assisting in the probe, sources said.

Intelligence agencies had indicated that the LeT could be attempting to carry out an Improvised Explosive Device (IED)-based attack. The alleged plan is reportedly linked to attempts by the terror group to avenge the February 6 blast at a mosque in Islamabad, Pakistan, sources said.

The alert came in the backdrop of the deadly car explosion near the historic Red Fort on November 10, 2025, which killed at least 13 people and injured more than 20 others.

## CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

### Feb Warmth Breaks

the persistence and intensity of the ongoing warm spell across the Valley. Meteorological data shows that several stations are consistently reporting departures of more than 10 degrees above seasonal averages, an anomaly rarely observed in February.

With maximum temperatures aligning more closely with mid April averages than late winter norms, the prolonged warm spell continues to reshape what is typically one of the coldest phases of the season. The unusual warmth has raised concerns over its impact on snow cover, water resources, and agriculture in the region.

### 3 Terrorists Killed

parties approached, they opened fire, triggering an intense exchange. The structure caught fire during the gunfight and was completely gutted, leaving the bodies charred beyond recognition.

Two AK-47 rifles and ammunition were recovered from the encounter site. The body of the third militant, along with a weapon, was retrieved later in the evening. Efforts are underway to establish the identities of the deceased through forensic examination.

The operation was carried out by troops of the Counter-Intelligence Force Delta in coordination with the Jammu and Kashmir Police and the CRPF. The Army's White Knight Corps said contact was re-established around 11 am in difficult terrain and weather conditions, leading to the neutralisation of the militants.

Northern Army Commander Lieutenant General Pratik Sharma commended the troops for what he described as swift and precise action, reaffirming the Army's commitment to maintaining peace in the region.

Officials said intelligence inputs had indicated the presence of Saifullah and two of his associates, both believed to be Pakistani nationals.

The Chatroo forest belt has witnessed multiple encounters since January 18. With Sunday's operation, seven JeM militants have been killed in separate encounters in the Jammu region this year.

Meanwhile, in a separate development, a truck driver was detained for questioning in Samba district after Pakistani contact numbers were found on his mobile phone during routine checking at Pangdour chowk. Police said further investigation is underway.

### Salal Reservoir

following the treaty signed in 1960 and a subsequent agreement in 1978, the six under-sluices were permanently plugged, and operation of the silt-excluder gates was prohibited, it said. "In the absence of any sediment-management facilities, silt started accumulating in the reservoir thereafter," an official said.

As a result, the reservoir's original storage capacity of 284 million cubic metres (MCM) has dwindled to just 9.91 MCM, as recorded in a bathymetric survey conducted in May 2025, it added.

Officials said that a three-pronged plan is being undertaken for the first time after the suspension of the treaty last year. "We are working under an effective silt management plan to ensure the operational effectiveness of the power station. One of the activities under this is dredging, through which we are trying to remove silt from the dam," Salal Power Station Executive Director Anish Gouraha told PTI.

He said that the plan focuses on three key measures - dredging, flushing and

under-sluicing to reduce sedimentation in the dam and improve power generation efficiency.

To address the crisis, a no-objection certificate (NOC) was issued to Reach Dredging Limited, Kolkata, for the desilting of the Salal dam reservoir. "The work commenced on November 25, 2025," the official said.

Reach Dredging Limited (RDL) has been involved in dredging operations for the removal of deposited sediment from the Salal Dam reservoir. The company specialises in river engineering, land reclamation and operating portable dredgers.

The firm has obtained permission from the J&K Department of Geology and mining for the disposal of one lakh metric tonnes (MT) of silt. "Of this, 1,77,802 MT has been dredged so far, while 68,490 MT has already been disposed of," officials added.

In a parallel move, another NOC was issued on February 17 to Dharti Dredging and Infrastructure Limited, Mumbai. "Statutory clearances are under process, after which the work will commence," the official said.

Separately, a tender has been floated on February 9 to make functional the permanently plugged under-sluices. "The last date for bid submission is March 23," the official added.

In a parallel move, another NOC was issued on February 17 to Dharti Dredging and Infrastructure Limited, Mumbai. "Statutory clearances are under process, after which the work will commence," the official said.

Separately, a tender has been floated on February 9 to make functional the permanently plugged under-sluices. "The last date for bid submission is March 23," the official added. Officials said that the ongoing and proposed measures are aimed at restoring at least partial storage capacity and improving the long-term operational viability of the hydropower station.

He said that flushing operations are being undertaken periodically to minimise sediment build-up and enhance the efficiency of the power station. "These measures are helping in improving the overall performance of the plant," he added.

For the third component, under-sluicing, Gouraha said bids have been floated, and responses are being evaluated. "A final decision is yet to be taken, but this is also an integral part of our sedimentation management strategy," he said.

The NHPC-run Salal Hydroelectric Project is a 690 MW run-of-the-river power plant located on the Chenab River in Reasi district, and it supplies electricity to the Northern Grid, including Jammu and Kashmir.

Salal was the first hydropower project constructed by India under the treaty and features a 130-metre-high dam.

As per reports, sediment trapped by the Salal hydropower dam has resulted in a reduction in the water storage capacity of its reservoir.

The 22-kilometre-long reservoir created by the Salal dam on the Chenab River has faced high sediment inflows due to fragile geological formations, steep and unstable slopes, intense monsoon rains and frequent seismic activity in the region, the reports said.

Taking this into consideration, Union Minister of Power and Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar on January 4 directed sediment removal at the Salal project to ensure maximum utilisation of water resources, in the wake of the treaty being kept in abeyance between India and Pakistan.

### India, US Push

to the visit of the Indian team of negotiators to the US for the India-US trade deal, the two sides are of the view that the proposed visit of the Indian Chief Negotiator and the team be scheduled after each side has had the time to evaluate the latest developments and their implications. The meeting will be rescheduled at a mutually convenient date," the Commerce Ministry sources said.

The development is important following the US Supreme Court's verdict against sweeping import tariffs imposed by the Trump administration on trade partners. Trump on Friday imposed a 10 per cent tariff on all countries, including India, from February 24 for 150 days after the court verdict.

US President Donald Trump on Saturday announced raising tariffs on all countries to 15 per cent from 10 per cent announced a day earlier.

In a major setback to Trump's pivotal economic agenda in his second term, the US Supreme Court ruled that the tariffs imposed by Trump on nations around the world were illegal and that the president had exceeded his authority when he imposed the sweeping levies by using the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) of 1977.

The US had imposed a 25 per cent reciprocal tariff on India in August 2025. Later, an additional 25 per cent duty was imposed for buying Russian crude oil, taking the total tariffs on India to 50 per cent.

India and the US, earlier this month, agreed on a framework to finalise an interim trade deal, under which Washington will cut down the tariffs to 18 per cent. So far, the punitive 25 per cent has been removed. The remaining 25 per cent exists.

Following the Supreme Court ruling, Trump has again announced hiking these tariffs to 15 per cent. This levy, if notified, will be over and above the existing MFN or import duties in the US.

For instance, if a product faces a 5 per cent MFN duty, an additional 15 per cent will be imposed, taking the effective duty to 20 per cent. Earlier, this was 5 plus 25 per cent.

There is, however, no clarity about what the US tariff will be on countries such as India after the 150-day period.

To sign and implement the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement, the framework has to be converted into a legal document.

To finalise the legal text for the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement, the Indian team is scheduled to meet its counterparts in Washington from February 23-26, 2026. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal had said the deal may be signed in March and implemented in April.

During 2021-25, the US was India's largest trading partner in goods. The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total exports, 6.22 per cent of its imports, and 10.73 per cent of its bilateral trade.

In 2024-25, bilateral trade totalled USD 186 billion (USD 86.5 billion in exports and USD 45.3 billion in imports).

### India Is Now

cited the example of a Kerala village in Thrissur district where 570 varieties of rice are being cultivated in a single field. The varieties include local strains, herbal rice and even those sourced from other states. He described the initiative as more than agriculture, calling it a campaign to preserve the country's seed heritage.

He also referred to the efforts of a young farmer from Odisha, Hirod Patel, who adopted an integrated farming model. Patel constructed a mesh structure over his farm pond to grow creeper vegetables, planted fruit trees such as bananas, guavas and coconuts around it and introduced fish farming in the same pond. According to Modi, the model has resulted in better land utilisation, water conservation and additional income, drawing farmers from other regions to study the approach.

The prime minister further noted that agricultural products from India are increasingly reaching foreign markets by air. He mentioned exports such as Nanjangud bananas from Karnataka, Mysuru betel leaves and Indi lemons to the Maldives. These products, known for their quality and taste, have also received Geographical Indication tags.

Modi said today's farmer is focused on improving both quality and quantity while expanding into global markets, reflecting a broader transformation underway in Indian agriculture.

The prime minister strongly pitched for use of 'swadeshi' products during festivals and asked people to always remember to be 'vocal for local'.

Modi said the Islamic holy month Ramzan is currently going on and wished everyone the best for the occasion.

Holi is also coming in a few days and this means that a time filled with colours, gull, and laughter is about to knock at our doors, he added.

"May you all celebrate all festivals happily with your family and loved ones. And yes, always remember some mantras, like being vocal for local," Modi said.

The prime minister said many foreign-made products have entered the Holi celebrations, or even other festivals.

"Keep them away from festivals, keep them away from Holi as well, and adopt 'swadeshi'. When you buy swadeshi, you also help in the campaign to make the country self-reliant," he said.

### PM Tips On Combating

to occur. He said that many people are being targeted through digital arrest and financial fraud, and quite often, senior citizens have been swindled of their lifelong earnings.

To protect themselves, the prime minister urged everyone to remain vigilant and advised that KYC (Know Your Customer) or re-KYC procedures should only be carried out through bank branches, official apps, or authorised platforms.

"Do not share OTP, Aadhaar number, or bank account information with anyone. And most importantly, keep changing your password from time to time. Just as food and clothing change with each season, make it a rule to change your password every few days," he said.

Modi said that often, people come across news of fraud involving businessmen. "Someone calls up and says, 'I am a high-ranking officer. You need to share some details with me.' Innocent individuals might fall prey to such tactics, making it crucial for everyone to stay alert," he said.

Referring to the KYC process, the prime minister noted that, when individuals receive messages from banks requesting KYC updates, they may wonder why it is necessary since they've already completed the process.

"I urge you not to fret; this is just for the

safety of your money. We all know that nowadays everything from pension, subsidy, insurance, UPI, everything is linked to the bank account," he explained.

This is why banks periodically perform re-KYC to ensure that customers' bank accounts remain secure, Modi added. "Yes, here too, you must remember one thing: criminals make fake calls, send SMS and links," he said.

Modi mentioned that the Reserve Bank of India recently held a financial literacy week focused on these issues, and the campaign will continue throughout the year. He urged people to heed the RBI's advice and keep their KYC updated.

"Remember: correct KYC, timely re-KYC keeps your account safe. Become an empowered citizen. Because only empowered citizens build a strong and self-reliant India," he said.

### ATM 'Jackpotting' Fraud

banks and ATM operators, not customers. However, customers may face: Temporary ATM shutdowns Cash shortages in affected areas Service disruptions during investigations

### What Banks in India Can Do

Security experts recommend: Upgrading ATM locks and physical security Installing tamper-detection sensors and CCTV coverage Allowing only approved software to run on ATM systems Monitoring USB ports and unusual system activity

Training staff to detect signs of tampering What Customers Should Watch For If you notice: Loose or damaged panels Unusual devices attached to the ATM Visible pry marks or suspicious activity Report it immediately to the bank or local authorities.

As India continues expanding its ATM and digital banking network, experts say strengthening physical and cyber security together is key to preventing such high-tech cash thefts.

### SC To Hear

companies for alleged abuse of dominant position through WhatsApp's privacy policy.

On November 4, 2025, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal set aside a portion of the CCI's order that had barred WhatsApp from sharing data with Meta for advertising purposes for five years. However, it upheld the monetary penalty.

Subsequently, the appellate tribunal clarified that its ruling relating to privacy and consent safeguards also applied to user data collection and sharing for non-WhatsApp purposes, including both advertising and non-advertising uses.

The Supreme Court had earlier indicated it would pass an interim order on February 9 and directed that the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology be impleaded as a party in the appeals.

The bench is also considering a cross appeal filed by the CCI, which has challenged the NCLAT decision insofar as it permitted continued data sharing between WhatsApp and Meta for advertising purposes.

The case is being closely watched for its implications on data privacy, competition law and the regulatory oversight of major digital platforms in India.

Khelo India Winter Games-6th Edition

# LG Sinha Inaugurates Laser & Mashaal Show in Gulmarg

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha formally inaugurated the Laser and Mashaal show at 6th edition of the Khelo India Winter Games in Gulmarg on Sunday.

According to the details available with KNO, the opening ceremony was attended by Minister Satish Sharma, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Commissioner Secretary to the Government Youth Services & Sports, Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, MLA Gulmarg Farooq Ahmad Shah, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, Secretary Youth Services & Sports Nuzhat Gul, Deputy Com-

missioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa and other senior officials.

The event featured vibrant cultural performances, laser shows, and other entertainment activities, adding grandeur to the inaugural ceremony.

An official told KNO that more than 500 to 600 athletes from different parts of the country have already arrived in Gulmarg to participate in the event.

All necessary arrangements have been put in place at Gulmarg Golf Club and other designated competition and accommodation sites for the smooth and successful conduct of the prestigious winter sporting event, the official added.



**YOUTH SOAK IN NATURE'S SERENITY** at Astanmarg, embracing reflection and peace during the spiritual month of Ramadan.

KO PHOTO, MOHAMMAD BURHAN

## CBC Holds Day-2 Pre-Publicity Programme at Gujjar & Bakerwal hostel

Observer News Service

**UDHAMPUR:** The Central Bureau of Communication, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India, Field Office, Udhampur organized the second day of its pre-publicity programme at Gujjar & Bakerwal Hostel, Udhampur in continuation of the upcoming Multi Media Exhibition scheduled from 23rd to 27th February, 2026 at Government Degree College Boys Udhampur.

The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation of students, staff and people aiming to engage the youth and spread awareness about flagship schemes and developmental initiatives of the Government of India.

A series of IEC activities including a quiz contest, drawing competition and seminar were organized.

The programme com-

menced with a welcome address by Gulsher Ahmed Assistant warden, who appreciated CBC Udhampur for conducting awareness activities at their hostel.

Vikram Uppal from CBC Field Office Doda also delivered a brief address, motivating students to stay informed and play a proactive role in Nation-building efforts. He said the forthcoming Multi Media Exhibition will focus on key national themes such as Viksit Bharat, Mission Aroha, Startup India, and VB-G RAM G. through exhibitions, audio-visual presentations/ Aids, cultural programmes, and interactive sessions. The event aims to highlight transformative initiatives contributing towards inclusive growth and the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

The quiz contest was conducted by Farhat Roheen, Accounts Assistant of the Hostel encouraging students to par-

ticipate enthusiastically.

Speaking on the occasion, Gurnam Singh from CBC Field Office Udhampur elaborated on the significance of public awareness and community participation in ensuring effective implementation of Government programmes at the grassroots level. He also extended his gratitude to the Warden, Staff of Gujjar & Bakerwal Hostel for their co-ordination and support and invited them to participate in ensuing Multi Media Exhibition with Family and Friends.

Gulzar Hussain, Warden of Gujjar & Bakerwal Hostel, graced the occasion as the chief guest. In his address, he appreciated the efforts of CBC Udhampur in spreading awareness among students and encouraged them to actively participate in the upcoming exhibition to gain maximum knowledge about various welfare schemes.

Officers and officials from PWD (R&B) Division

## Minister Rana Assesses Progress of Development Projects in Mendhar

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana today chaired a virtual review meeting to assess the progress of ongoing development works being executed by the Public Works Department (PWD) in Mendhar.

The meeting was attended by the Chief Engineer PW (R&B) Pir Panjal, Executive Engineer PW (R&B) Mendhar and other concerned officers of the department.

During the review, the Minister took a detailed appraisal of projects being executed under SASCI, works related to EMRS infrastructure, various road projects under the UT Capex Budget & NABARD, and the ongoing works on the drainage system in Mendhar Town.



He emphasized upon maintaining quality standards, adherence to timelines and removal of bottlenecks to ensure timely completion of all projects.

The Minister exhorted upon the officers to ensure quality execution so that the system effectively addresses public concerns.

The Minister directed the officers to expedite the pace of execution, particularly in road connectivity projects, keeping in view their public importance.

He emphasized close field-level monitoring and asked the officers to submit regular progress reports.

Reiterating the government's commitment towards balanced and inclusive development, the Minister said that infrastructure upgradation in border and remote areas like Mendhar remains a priority and all ongoing works must be completed within the stipulated time frame for the benefit of the local population.

## DC Doda Inaugurates Construction of Motorable Path

Observer News Service

**DODA:** Deputy Commissioner (DC) Doda, Harvinder Singh inaugurated the construction work of a motorable path from Nehru Chowk to the residence of Dr. Bashir Ahmed Mintoos under the first phase of the District Capex Plan.

The project, being executed by the PWD (R&B) Division Doda at an estimated cost of Rs. 30 lakh, aims to strengthen local infrastructure and provide improved connectivity to residents of the area, ensuring safer and more convenient access for commuters and nearby households.

Officers and officials from PWD (R&B) Division



Doda, the Executive Officer Municipal Committee (MC) Doda, senior citizens and prominent local residents were present on the occasion.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner Doda interacted with senior citizens and local residents, patiently listening to their concerns and suggestions regarding civic amenities and developmental needs.

He assured them that the administration remains committed to inclusive and people-centric development.

The DC Doda also conducted an on-site inspection of the area and directed the executing agency to ensure quality workmanship and timely completion of the project while adhering to prescribed standards.

## CS Reviews Framework for Early Childhood Care & Education

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, held a meeting of all the stakeholders to take assessment of the interventions proposed for the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) by the Social Welfare Department.

Speaking in this meeting he called for a time-bound, outcome-driven "Whole-of-Government" approach to transform Anganwadi Centres into vibrant hubs of holistic child development across Jammu & Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by Commissioner Secretary, GAD; Commissioner Secretary, Social Welfare; Project Director, Samagra Shiksha; MD, Mission Poshan; MD, JKRLM; Director, School Education, Jammu/Kashmir; and other senior officers of the concerned departments.

Highlighting the transformative role of early childhood development in light of the National Education Policy and the vision of "Viksit Bharat", the Chief



Secretary observed that no nation can dream of sustainable development without productively investing in its children.

He described children as the guarantee of a prosperous tomorrow and the real wealth of any nation. He emphasized that even nations endowed with abundant natural resources ultimately depend on the quality of their human resources for productivity and growth, and asserted that there is no better way to create quality human capital than

through timely and strategic early childhood interventions.

Stressing clarity of goals and adherence to timelines, he directed all departments to work in close coordination to achieve measurable improvements in nutrition, school readiness and foundational learning outcomes.

The Commissioner, Social Welfare Department, Sarmad Hafeez took this occasion to reveal that ECCE services are being delivered through 28,190 Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) across

the Union Territory, integrating preschool education (3-6 years), supplementary nutrition, immunization, growth monitoring, early identification of developmental delays and inclusive services for Divyang children.

He added that the pedagogical framework is anchored in Navchetna (0-3 years) and Aadharsila (3-6 years), promoting play-based and activity-oriented learning across five developmental domains as that of cognitive learning, language,

socio-emotional, physical and cultural development.

While throwing light on the proposed interventions under the roadmap of ECCE, the MD, Poshan, Sajad Hussain Ganai informed the meeting that a key pillar of the roadmap is structured as inter-departmental convergence. He elaborated that with the Health Department, integrated home visit protocols for AWWs and ASHAs, ECD-focused Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Days (VHSNDs), co-counselling sessions and developmental delay screening mechanisms have been institutionalized.

Additionally under this new strategy the School Education Department had ensured 100 percent mapping of AWCs with nearby primary schools has been completed, and 657 AWCs have been identified for co-location to ensure seamless transition from preschool to Grade 1 and alignment with Foundational Literacy and Numeracy goals under the NIPUN Bharat Mission.

## House Guttled in Fire in Kulgam

**SRINAGAR:** A residential house and an adjoining cowshed were gutted in a fire incident in the Humpathri area of D H Pora in south Kashmir's Kulgam district, officials said on Sunday.

The fire broke out late Saturday evening and quickly spread to the nearby cowshed, reducing both structures to ashes within a short span, they said.

The property belonged to Mohd Ashraf Mir, a local resident. Locals, along with personnel from the Fire and Emergency Services department, rushed to the spot and managed to bring the blaze under control, officials said, adding that the structures had suffered extensive damage by then.

According to KNS, no loss of life or injuries were reported in the incident, they said.

The cause of the fire was not immediately known and an investigation has been initiated, officials added. (Observer News Service)

## Centre Responds to MP Er Rashid's Intervention on Baramulla-Uri Railway Alignment

**SRINAGAR:** Awami Itihaad Party (AIP) Chief Spokesperson Inam Un Nabi has welcomed the response of the Union Ministry of Railways to the concerns raised by MP Baramulla Er Rashid regarding the proposed Baramulla-Uri railway alignment passing through densely populated areas of Baramulla town.

In a statement, Inam Un Nabi said MP Er Rashid had taken up the matter with Union Railway Minister, highlighting that the present alignment affects residential localities including Sherwani Colony, Jetty Khawabagh and Fatehpura besides adjoining residential colonies and may lead to displacement of families and disruption of community infrastructure.

Quoting the reply received from Union Minister of State for Railways Ravneet Singh Bittu, Inam Un Nabi said the Ministry has conveyed: "I have received your letter dated 02.02.2026 regarding representation concerning the proposed Baramulla-Uri Railway alignment affecting densely populated residential areas. The above-mentioned letter has been forwarded to the directorate concerned for necessary action."

According to KNS, Inam termed the response a positive development and expressed hope that Northern Railways will review the present alignment, explore alternative routes and ensure proper consultation with local residents before finalising the project. He added that AIP will continue to follow up the matter to safeguard public interests while supporting development. (Observer News Service)

## Four Arrested for Theft of Iron Plates from Pindobal Bridge Site

**ANANTNAG:** Police have arrested four persons for allegedly stealing 44 iron plates from an under-construction bridge at Pindobal in Anantnag district, officials said on Sunday.

A complaint was received on February 17, 2026, from Javed Iqbal Hafiz, a resident of Lazibal Anantnag, stating that he works as a contractor and had placed 44 iron plates at the under-construction Pindobal bridge on February 11 for construction purposes.

He alleged that during the intervening night of February 11 and 12, unknown persons stole the iron plates from the site. Despite efforts by him and his workers to trace the missing material, the plates could not be located, following which he approached the police.

On receipt of the complaint, a case under FIR No. 12/2026 was registered under Section 303(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at the concerned police station, and investigation was taken up.

During the course of investigation, police arrested four accused identified as Parvaiz Ahmad Dar and Reyaz Ahmad Dar, both residents of Pindobal; Firdos Ahmad Khokhar of Khurli Adhall Kokernag; and Javed Ahmad Dar of Deviangam Hawal Srinagar.

According to KNS, all the stolen iron plates have been recovered from their possession, police said, adding that further investigation is underway. (Observer News Service)

## J&K Judicial Academy holds Refresher on Financial Powers, GeM Procurement

**JAMMU:** The Jammu & Kashmir Judicial Academy on Saturday organised a one-day refresher training programme for judicial officers and ministerial staff on the powers and duties of Drawing and Disbursing Officers (DDOs), with a special focus on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal.

Held under the patronage of Chief Justice Arun Palli, the programme aimed to enhance financial discipline and transparency in the judicial system's procurement and expenditure processes.

Academy Director Naseer Ahmad Dar underscored the importance of accountability and digital procurement in strengthening institutional efficiency.

Resource person Sarthak Khoda, a GeM trainer, provided a detailed overview of the e-marketplace, covering workflows from registration and order placement to billing and payment reconciliation. He also briefed participants on recent policy updates and features.

According to KNS, later sessions were led by Accounts Officer Jagteshwar Singh, who elaborated on the legal framework governing DDOs under the General Financial Rules (GFRs), Treasury Rules, and Financial Codes. Topics included budgetary control, bill preparation, advances, pensions, and audit procedures.

An interactive session allowed participants to raise queries and share field-level experiences regarding financial compliance. The Academy stated that the programme is part of its ongoing commitment to capacity building, aiming to ensure greater accountability in the financial administration of the judicial system. (Observer News Service)

## ADC Bhaderwah leads Plantation Drive at Village Domanda

**BHADERWAH:** Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Bhaderwah, Sunil Kumar Bhutyal led a massive plantation drive at Village Domanda to promote environmental conservation and greenery in the region.

The drive was conducted in collaboration with the Forest Department and local community members. DFO Bhaderwah Davinder Kumar, Tehsildar Bhaderwah Kamalpreet Singh, along with officials and staff members of the Forest Department, actively participated in the event.

During the plantation drive, more than 500 saplings of Deodar and Kail were distributed among the locals. The plantation drive witnessed enthusiastic participation from villagers, who joined hands with the administration to plant the trees and spread awareness about the importance of preserving the environment. (Observer News Service)

## South Africa Thrash India By 76 Runs In Super Eight Match

Press Trust of India

AHMEDABAD- David Miller rolled back the years with a stroke-filled fifty before South Africa executed clinically with the ball to choke India and secure a handsome 76-run win in their Group 1 Super Eights match of the T20 World Cup here on Sunday.

Opting to bat, South Africa rode on Miller (63 off 35 balls) and young Dewald Brevis (45 off 29 balls) recovery act -- 97-run fourth-wicket stand from just 51 balls -- to post 187 for 7.

In reply, India never got going as the Aiden Markram-led side outsmarted them to bowl the co-hosts out for 111 in 18.5 overs with Marco Jansen taking 4/22.

Keshav Maharaj grabbed



3/24, while Corbin Bosch (2/12) also gave crucial breakthroughs.

Credit should also go to Lungi Ngidi who didn't take any wicket but bowled miserably and gave away just 15 runs from his full quota of four overs to stymie India's fightback. Shivam Dube

was India's top-scorer with a 37-ball 42.

In a bold move, part-time off-skipper Aiden Markram (1/5; 1 over) opened with the new ball and gave the crucial breakthrough, removing in-form Ishan Kishan for a four-ball duck in the opening over.

India's star opener Abhishek Sharma ended his hat-trick of ducks to open his account in the T20 World Cup but fell for 15 as Marco Jansen struck twice in the powerplay to have India 26/3.

Miller rolled back the years with exhilarating

strokes but Jasprit Bumrah's superb bowling restricted South Africa to 187/7.

Miller struck 63 off 35 balls and got fine support from young Dewald Brevis (45 off 29 balls) as the duo led a recovery act in a 97-run fourth-wicket stand that came off just 51 balls.

Bumrah (3/15 in 4 overs) and Arshdeep Singh (2/28 in 4 overs) had reduced the Proteas to 20/3 inside the first four overs after they opted to bat.

Brief Scores: South Africa: 187 for 7 in 20 overs (David Miller 63, Dewald Brevis 45, Tristan Stubbs 44; Jasprit Bumrah 3/15, Arshdeep Singh 2/28).

India: 111 all out in 18.5 overs (Shivam Dube 42; Marco Jansen 4/22, Keshav Maharaj 3/24, Corbin Bosch 2/12).

## Jofra, Jacks Power England To Sensational Win After Salt's 62

Press Trust Of India

PALLEKELE- The pace-spin duo of Jofra Archer and Will Jacks tore through Sri Lanka's top-order after Phil Salt's 40-ball 62 to set up a sensational 51-run win for England in an eventful Super Eights fixture of the T20 World Cup here on Sunday.

After left-arm spinner Dunith Wellalage (3/26) did the star turn for a disciplined Sri Lankan attack to limit a scratchy England to 146 for nine, the islanders seemed to have the match under control.

But speedster Jofra and off-spinner all-rounder Jacks turned the game on its head in the second half, leaving Sri Lanka tottering at 34 for five in the sixth over in a total domination of the powerplay. Sri Lanka were eventually bowled out for 95 in 16.4 overs.

Jacks returned fine figures



of 3/22 in four mealy overs while Archer ended with 2/20 in three overs, and they were well supported by Liam Dawson (2/27 in 4 overs) and Adil Rashid (2/13 in 3.4 overs) as they wrapped up the lower-order and tail.

In the end, Salt's knock too proved to be vital to the final outcome of the match, even as his other colleagues in the batting unit failed miserably.

For Sri Lanka, skipper Dasun Shanaka was the top scorer with 30 off 24 balls.

If England's start was bad, Sri Lanka's beginning was worse as Jofra got rid

of the dangerous Pathum Nissanka (9 off 8 balls) cheaply, caught by Jamie Overton who was asked to stand at deep mid-wicket just before that ball and the opener fell into the trap to a fast and full delivery.

Reprising the role played by Wellalage in the first half, Jacks then got into the act by removing Kusal Mendis and Pavan Rathnayake in successive balls.

Archer had Kamil Mishara caught by Overton at gully and Jacks sent Wellalage after he played across the line to get caught by skipper Harry Brook at mid-on.

## NADA Cuts Suspension of Four Indian Athletes Following Early Admission

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI- Four Indian athletes have received reduced bans from the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) after early admission of their offence and acceptance of the sanction.

Himanshu Rathi, Basanti Kumari and Shashi Bhushan Singh were handed three-year bans -- a reduction of one year -- after they accepted their offence within 20 days of being charged, according to the NADA's latest update.

Meanwhile, Balvindra Singh was handed a five-year ban, starting from September 19, 2025.

Middle-distance runner Rathi was provisionally suspended after he tested positive for stimulant mephentermine in 2025. His three-year ban has started from November 20, 2025.

The 24-year-old Kumari, a distance runner who participated in the 2025 World University Games in half marathon, tested positive for 19-norandrosterone. Kumari's ban started from November 7, 2025.

The 30-year-old Bhushan won a 1500m silver medal in the 2023 National Games in Goa. His three-year ban period started from September 19, 2025.

Athletes may receive reduced bans under "case resolution agreement" provided in Article 10.8 and 8.3 of NADA Anti-Doping Rule 2021.

The maximum ban period for a first offence is four years but Article 10.8 of the NADA Rules provides for "results management agreements" under which athletes can get reduced punishment based on early admission and acceptance of sanction.

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