

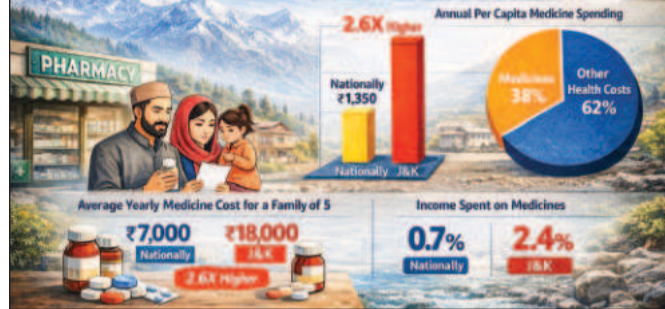
Why Kashmir Pays More For Medicines Than The Rest Of India

Generics promise relief and public insurance covers hospital care, but everyday prescription costs continue to take a disproportionate share of household income in the valley.

Irshad Mushtaq

IN many homes across Jammu and Kashmir, the pharmacy bill has become as routine as the electricity bill. The difference is that it keeps rising, and it eats into incomes that already trail the rest of the country. Figures from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation show India's

per capita Net National Income at current prices stood near ₹1.97 lakh in 2022-23 and moved higher in 2023-24. Economic surveys of Jammu and Kashmir place regional per capita income below that mark. Budget documents in recent years have put it roughly between ₹1.55 and ₹1.68 lakh per person, while the national average crossed ₹2 lakh.



That gap shows how hard every recurring expense hits, especially health care. National health financing data reveal where the pressure falls. The National Health Accounts report that out-of-pocket payments account for about 47 percent of total health expenditure in 2020-21. Medicines form the largest share of that spending, typically 35 to 40 percent.

Findings from the National Sample Survey Office confirm that drugs dominate household medical expenses in both rural and urban India. When incomes are lower and medicine spending is recurring, the strain deepens quickly. Retail-based expenditure assessments cited by health economists place India's average annual **| More on P6**

SED Puts TET Order On Hold

Observer News Service

Srinagar: School Education Department on Thursday kept its order of Teachers Eligibility Test (TET) in abeyance till further orders.

SED Secretary in an order said, "The Government order regarding the designation of JKBOSE/State School

Standards Authority (SSSA) as nodal agency for conducting TET is hereby kept in abeyance, till further orders."

Earlier, in the previous order the department has said that in exercise of the powers vested in the Government and in compliance with the directions of the Supreme Court of India, JKBOSE, State School Standards Authority (SSSA) is designated as Nodal Agency for conducting TET for the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, with immediate effect.

"The JKBOSE, SSSA shall take immediate necessary steps for operationalization of the TET examination framework in accordance with **| More on P6**

Let's Throw Out Our Colonial Mindset: VP

Stresses Swadeshi Innovation; Advises Graduates To Stay Away From Drugs & Use SM Wisely

Women Lead Academic Roll Of Honour; Receive 186 Gold Medals, 108 PhDs

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Vice President C. P. Radhakrishnan on Thursday called upon the nation to shed its colonial mindset and embrace Swadeshi innovation to emerge as a global leader in technology and sustainable development, while urging youth to anchor their success in character and discipline.

Addressing the 21st Convocation of the University of Kashmir during his first visit to Jammu and Kashmir after assuming office, the Vice President said graduating students must focus on innovation



rooted in Indian knowledge, resources and needs.

"As a graduating student, I urge you all to focus on Swadeshi innovation and solutions rooted in Indian

knowledge, resources and needs. We need not be worried; we need not be inferior. We are to throw out our colonial mindset first," he said.

Stressing that change is the only constant, Radhakrishnan said the world is transforming rapidly and young people must adapt by equipping themselves with new skills and embracing innovation. Success in life, he added, ultimately depends on character and discipline.

"Until now you answered questions set by your professors. From today onwards, life will set you the questions. Patience. **| More on P6**

CM Urges Graduates To Become Job Creators, Not Seekers

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who is also the Pro-Chancellor of the University of Kashmir, on Thursday urged graduating students to aspire to become job creators rather than job **| More on P6**

Give Daughters Opportunity & Equal Ground, They Lead: LG

'Universities Must Move Beyond Being Custodians of Knowledge'

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday said daughters lead and excel when given equal opportunity, as he addressed the 21st Convocation of the University of Kashmir.

The ceremony was graced by the Vice President of India C. P. Radhakrishnan and attended by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Higher



Education Minister Sakina Itoo, Vice Chancellor Prof Nilofer Khan, vice chancellors of **| More on P6**

Grand Mufti Sets Rs 80 As Sadaqat-ul-Fitr

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Grand Mufti of Jammu and Kashmir, Mufti Nasir-ul-Islam, on Thursday announced that Sadaqat-ul-Fitr for 2026 has been fixed at Rs 80 per person, urging Muslims to fulfil the obligation before Eid-ul-Fitr prayers.

He said Zakat-ul-Fitr is compulsory for every Muslim, including men, women and infants. Parents must pay on behalf of minor children, while adult children are responsible for themselves. A husband, he clarified, cannot pay on behalf of his wife without her consent.

The Mufti explained that the amount is based on the value of half a Sa' of wheat, calculated at Rs 77 and rounded off to Rs 80 as a precaution.

Wealthier individuals may give Sadaqat-ul-Fitr in wheat, cash, dates, raisins or other approved food items instead of the fixed amount.

He said the **| More on P6**

India & Israel Elevate Ties To 'Special Strategic Partnership'



Press Trust Of India

Jerusalem: India and Israel on Thursday elevated their "time-tested" relationship to a special strategic partnership and agreed to fast-track a long-awaited free trade deal even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi backed the Gaza peace initiative, asserting that humanity must never become a victim of conflict.

In his media statement after holding wide-ranging talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Modi said India's

security interests are directly linked to peace and stability in the Middle East and that New Delhi has been pitching for a peaceful solution to the conflict in Gaza.

Following the meeting between the two prime ministers, India and Israel inked a total of 17 agreements and documents that will provide for deeper cooperation in artificial intelligence, trade, investment, education, manufacturing, culture, maritime heritage, agriculture and a plethora of other areas. The two sides **| More on P6**

HC Imposes Rs 50K Costs On JDA

Says Forfeiture Cannot Be Invoked Arbitrarily

M Ahmad

Srinagar: The High Court of J&K and Ladakh held that forfeiture clauses, though contractual in nature, cannot be invoked mechanically or arbitrarily, particularly when the alleged default itself is attributable to the authority.

A bench of Justice Wasim Sadiq Nargal made the observation while finding the Jammu Development Authority (JDA) responsible for auctioning an encroached plot of land and retaining a bidder's money for over 15 years without handing over possession.

The court observed that a public authority cannot penalize a citizen for non-payment when the land put to auction was not free from encumbrances.

The case relates to a 2011 auction of 5.38 kanals of land at Chinor Chowk, Bantalab, Jammu. The petitioner, who emerged as the highest bidder, deposited Rs 25.50 lakh pursuant to the Letter of Intent issued by JDA. However, upon visiting the site, he found that part of the land was under encroachment, including a pucca structure and access lanes.

The Bench noted that the petitioner had raised the issue with **| More on P6**

COVID-19 Medical Supply 2 Booked For ₹27 Lakh Fraud

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Crime Branch, Jammu and Kashmir, has registered a formal case against two persons for their alleged involvement in a large-scale fraud related to the procurement of medical supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Union Territory.

Officials said the case was initiated following a written complaint alleging that the accused, residents of Peerbagh and Sanat Nagar areas of Srinagar, impersonated themselves as delegates of the J&K Ministry and OSD Supplies.

By adopting deceitful means, the accused allegedly induced various government departments and institutions to transfer payments for medical supplies into bank accounts fraudulently opened in the names of genuine suppliers. They also purportedly created fake email IDs to misrepresent the identity of the original supplier.

Preliminary verification conducted by the agency revealed that the accused dishonestly obtained ₹27 lakh from a government office and had allegedly planned to fraudulently withdraw **| More on P6**

NGT Flags Open Dumping Near Kashmir's NH-44

Tribunal Orders Speedy Inspection And Cleanup After Garbage Piles Up Near Highway And Irrigation Canal.



Syed Sammar Mehdi

New Delhi: Acting on a fresh petition, the National Green Tribunal on Wednesday ordered an immediate inspection of an illegal dumping site along National Highway 44 in Awantipora and directed the

local municipal body to clear the waste without delay.

The case, filed by social activist Raja Muzaffar Bhat, came up before the principal bench of the National Green Tribunal, headed by Justice Prakash Srivastava. The bench took note of allegations **| More on P6**

WISHING EVERYONE

Ramzan Mubarak

Presents

NOOR-E-RAMADAN

Co-Presented By

Brought To You By

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Outdoor Partner

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Whoever fasts the month of Ramadan due to faith and seeking reward, his previous sins will be forgiven.



NOTICE

It is information to the general public that my name in my Aadhaar Card bearing No-5548-2881-1625 has been wrongly entered as Jali Begum. while my correct and actual Name is Rafeeqa Begum. Now I want the same to be corrected. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/ she may file his/her objection in the Concerned Authority, within a period of seven (7) days from the date of publication of this notice, after that no objection shall be entertained.

Rafeeqa Begum
W/o Ghulam Hassan Sheer Gojree
R/o Pattan Tehsil Pattan
District Baramulla

Nahida Shafi Awarded Ph.D. in Computer Science

The University of Kashmir conferred the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Computer Science upon Ms. Nahida Shafi during its 21st Convocation held in Srinagar. The convocation was graced by the Hon'ble Vice President of India, C. P. Radhakrishnan. Ms. Nahida Shafi's doctoral research, titled "Design and Development of an Efficient Bidirectional Encoder Representations using Transformers based framework for Joint Intent Recognition and Slot Filling", was carried out at the Department of Computer Sciences, School of Applied Sciences & Technology, under the supervision of Dr. Manzoor Ahmad Chachoo. The University extended its congratulations to Dr. Nahida Shafi on her outstanding academic achievement and wished her continued success in her future endeavors.

SS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER BUDGAM

Subject:- Necessary Correction/change in address in data to the License No. JK-0420160030957 issued in favour of JAVID NABI GANIE Parentage GHULAM NABI GANIE Whereas an application has been received by one JAVID NABI GANIE Parentage GHULAM NABI GANIE wherein he claimed that the Name has been wrongly recorded in the records of Driving Licenses as JAVID NABI GANAI Parentage GH NABI GANAI Which needs to be changed as JAVID NABI GANIE Parentage GHULAM NABI GANIE. Now therefore it is notified for the information of the general public that objections if any in this regard shall reach in written in the office of the Assistant Regional Transport office Budgam within a period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice in the daily newspaper. After expiry of stipulated time no objection will be entertained. Assistant Regional Transport officer Budgam Kashmir

mcb

OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR GOOM AHMADPORA PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified for the information of the general public that Mohammad Ishaq Bhat S/o Ghulam Ahmad Bhat R/o Pati Panditan Malmoh, has applied for issuance/record of Date of Birth of his son namely Imam Ali Bhat as 18-05-2011 in the School records. If anybody has any objection in this regard, he/she may file the same before the Nayabat, Goom Ahmadpora, within seven (07) days from the date of publication of this notice. After that, no objection shall be entertained. Mohammad Ishaq Bhat S/o Ghulam Ahmad Bhat R/o Pati Panditan Malmoh

fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that the name of my daughter has been incorrectly recorded in her Aadhaar Card as ALEEZA MUNEEER, whereas her correct name is ALEEZA AIN. I intend to apply for the correction of her name in the Aadhaar Card bearing No. ** ** 3644, changing it from ALEEZAH MUNEEER to ALEEZA AIN. Any person having any objection to this change may submit the same within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice. Name: Muneer Ahmad Pandith Father of: Aleeza AIN R/o: Bundgam, Magam, Budgam, J&K

bmg

JAMMU AND KASHMIR BOARD OF SCHOOL EDUCATION, BARAMULLA PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified for the information of the general public and concerned authorities that my name has been erroneously recorded in the records of the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education, Baramulla, as: "Mohd Qyum Lone S/o Ali Mohd Lone R/o Kripalpora, Sari Tehsil Singhpora." That my correct name and particulars are as under: Mohd Qayoom Lone S/o Ali Mohd Lone R/o Kripalpora, Sari Tehsil Singhpora, District Baramulla. I have applied for the necessary correction in the official school records and all related educational documents. Any person having any objection to this correction may file the same before the concerned authority within the stipulated period from the date of publication of this notice. Mohd Qayoom Lone

fko

OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR PATTAN

Sub.. Application of Javeda Begum w/o Syed Abdul Rasheed Qadri R/o pattan for issuance of legal heir certificate..

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is inform to general public that applicants mother's legal heir certificate is under process in this office in this matter report was sought from Patwari concerned which reveals that applicants mother namely Haleema Begum w/o Abdul Gani Qadri R/o poshwani pattan died on 02/12/2025 and left following legal heirs..

Name	Age	Relationship with the Deceased	Marital Status
Javeda Begum	60	Daughter	MARRIED

In this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

fko Naib Tehsildar Pattan

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is information for the general public that I MOHTASHIM IBRAHIM Son of MOHD IBRAHIM R/O SUNDIPORA BUDGAM has applied for contractor card (D) class.. If any body having any objection regarding the same they may submit their objection written to the Superintendent Engineer R & B Circle Budgam within a period of 7 days from the date of this notice. No objection will be entertained after that. MOHTASHIM IBRAHIM S/O MOHD IBRAHIM R/O SUNDIPORA BUDGAM

mcb

PUBLIC NOTICE

I Manzoor Ahmad Beigh have changed my daughter's name from Aiman Jan to Aiman Manzoor. In future my daughter's name will be known as Aiman manzoor. If anybody is having any objection in this regard he/she will contact School Principal Green Valley Educational Institute Elahi Bagh Srinagar within seven days from the date of publication of this notice. However, no objection shall be entertained after the expiry of said period.

Media line advt

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified that we, the parents of our ward, are applying for correction of our daughter's name. Our ward is studying in Class 9th, Section A at Presentation Convent High School, Srinagar. The correction is as follows: Ward's Name: From TABIAHTO ANABIA BINTI MUKHTAR. If anyone has any objection to the above correction, they may contact the office of the Principal, Presentation Convent High School, Srinagar, within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. No objection shall be entertained after the expiry of the said period. Mukhtar Ahmad Sheikh & Zarqa Parents of Anabia Binti Mukhtar R/O: Shahi Mohalla Awanta Bawan Soura Sgr Mob: 9906579171

Media line advt

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Urooja Hameed, D/o Abdul Hameed Mir, R/o Kungnoo, Tehsil Shopian, District Shopian, do hereby state that my correct and actual name is UROOJA HAMEED. However, due to a clerical error, my name has been wrongly recorded as URJAN in my Aadhaar Card bearing Aadhaar No. **1297. That the name URJAN and UROOJA HAMEED refer to one and the same person, i.e., myself. I have sworn this affidavit to declare my correct name as UROOJA HAMEED and for correction of my name in the Aadhaar records and other concerned documents. If any person has any objection regarding this matter, he/she may file the same before the concerned authority within the stipulated period.

fko

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE TEHSILDAR KREERI

Subject: Application of SARA BEGUM W/O ABDUL RASHID AKHOON R/O KREERI for the issuance of Legal heir certificate

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the subject cited above in this context a report sought from patwari halqa concerned. The report of patwari halqa concerned and the death certificate issued by competent Authority reveals that ABDUL RASHID AKHOON S/O ABDUL AHAD AKHOON R/O KREERI Tehsil kreeri has passed away on 23/02/2023. Moreover family structure of the applicant is as under:

- SARA BAGUM wife 63 years H/W widow
- RIFAT BEGUM daughter 39 years H/W married
- ZUBIADA RASHID daughter 37 years H/W married
- RUQIYA RASHID daughter 35 years H/W Married

The applicant has applied for Issuance of Dependent certificate in favour of SARA BEGUM if anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of said certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained

NAIB TEHSILDAR KREERI

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is informed to the General public that my Name has been wrongly recorded in my Services record bearing Belt No-355/3rd Bnt sec. Pid No.996577 as Gh Moh -Ud -Din instead of Gh Mohi -Ud -Din Lone. I would like to correction my Name in my Services record as per School and J&K BOSE record. If anybody having any objection in this regard may file the same in the office of the Compondent JKAP 3rd BNT Security Zawan Srinager within a period of (7) seven days from the publication of this notice. No objection will be entertained after expiry of stipulated period. Gh Mohi Ud Din Lone S/O. Mohd Sultan Lone R/O :- Gund Chobatera . Tehsil :- Qaziabad . Distt :-Kupwara .

fko

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan

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

PUBLIC NOTICE..

The registrar birth EO MC pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Mohammad Salim s/o Ashiq Hussain Lone R/o Hanjiwera Tehsil Pattan with verified date of birth 14/06/2022 occurred at SDH pattan in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

Sd/ Naib Tehsildar Pattan fko

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan

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

Public Notice..

The registrar birth EO MC pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Zeeshan Aarif Yatoo s/o Aarif Hamid Yatoo R/o Malikpora Tehsil Pattan with verified date of birth 09/06/2020 occurred at SDH pattan in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

Sd Naib Tehsildar Pattan fko

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan

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

Public Notice..

The registrar birth EO MC pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Zuhra Mushtaq D/o Mushtaq Ahmad Mir R/o Nehalpora Tehsil Pattan with verified date of birth 01/03/2021 occurred at SDH pattan in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

Sd Naib Tehsildar Pattan fko

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan

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

Public Notice..

The registrar birth EO MC pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Abu Zeeyan S/o Mudasir Ahmad Tantray R/o Nowpora kalan Sopore with verified date of birth 21/04/2020 occurred at SDH pattan in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

Sd Naib Tehsildar Pattan fko

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan

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

Public Notice..

The registrar birth EO MC pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Arwa Maqsood D/o Maqsood Ahmad war R/o Dachanpora Rohama Tehsil Rafiabab with verified date of birth 03/08/2020 occurred at SDH pattan in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

Sd Naib Tehsildar Pattan fko

Office of the Naib Tehsildar Pattan

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

Public Notice..

The registrar birth EO MC pattan has submitted a case file pertaining to birth of Arwa Jan D/o Javid Ahmad Bhat R/o Kalseri Tehsil Pattan with verified date of birth 06/03/2024 occurred at SDH pattan in this connection if any body having objection for issuance of said certificate he may contact to this office within 04 days after that no objection shall be entertained.

Sd Naib Tehsildar Pattan fko

Government of Jammu & Kashmir DEPARTMENT OF URBAN LOCAL BODIES KASHMIR Office of the Municipal Committee Devsar

Subject: Registration of private Cesspool tankers/suckers in Municipal Committee Devsar

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified for the information of all private Cesspool tankers/Suction Machines owners/drivers/contractors operating within the Municipal limits of Devsar town that they shall register themselves with this office within seven (07) days from the date of publication of this notice. Any vehicle owner, contractor, agency, or individual found operating a Cesspool Tanker/Suction Machine within the Municipal limits without obtaining proper registration from this office shall be liable for appropriate action as warranted under the relevant laws and regulations. Failure to comply with this notice shall invite strict action.

No. MC/DVR/Sanitation/2026/252-54
 DIPK-NB-3437/25
 Dated: 26-02-2026

Sd/ Executive Officer, Municipal Committee, Devsar

Government of Jammu & Kashmir OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL AND HOSPITALS DIVISION SRINAGAR

(Tele-fax No: 019-2496089) *****

Subject: AMC of 5.0 MVA Automatic Voltage Regulator AVR installed at Govt. Superspeciality Hospital Srinagar

Ref : 1.This office NIT No: M&HDS/TS /2025-26/129/e-tendering Dated: 03.01.2026.

EXTENSION

In view on No response, the critical dates of above subject work(s) tendered vide above referred e-NIT(s) are extended as follows: -

S.No	Description	Date and Time
1.	Last Date of Bid Submission	02.03.2026 (13:00 hrs)
2.	Date of Bid Opening	02.03.2026 (15:00 hrs)

All other Terms and Conditions of the NIT shall remain the same.

Sd/ Executive Engineer, Mechanical & Hospitals Division, Srinagar.

No: M&HDS/TS/9052-55
 DIPK-11377/25
 Dated: 26.02.2026



Shaykh Mehdi Hussain Hamdani

'Khaak-saari was his strength. Like a fruit-bearing tree, the more he grew, the lower he bowed'

On February 25, 2026, we mark twenty-eight years since the passing of Allama Mir Sheykh Mehdi Hussain Hamdani Najafi — a scholar whose presence still resonates in the spiritual heart of Budgam and beyond. Personalities like his do not fade; they become living legacies.

Born in 1937, he bridged Kashmir's spiritual heritage with the scholarly depth of Iraq's seminaries. After refining his early education at Sultanul Madaris, Lucknow, his pursuit of Ma'rifat took him to Najaf, where he studied under luminaries such as Ayatullah Abu al-Qasim al-Khoei and Ayatullah Ruhollah Khomeini. From them, he absorbed not only jurisprudence but also a profound sense of justice, courage, and social responsibility. As son-in-law of Ayatollah Aga Syed Muhammad Mosavi Yachgami and principal of Jamia Mifta-ul-Uloom, he strengthened and expanded a noble legacy. Under his guidance, the institution became a centre of discipline, character-building, and spiritual formation — a bridge between Najaf and Kashmir.

Known for his humility and saintly disposition, he lived the values he taught. Whether listening to a scholar or a farmer, he embodied akhlaq in action. In harsh winters, he walked among the needy, offering both relief and dignity. "Like a fruit-laden tree, the more he grew, the lower he bowed." His call for Ittehad-e-Bainul-Muslimeen, unity among Muslims, remains deeply relevant. He built no monuments of stone but shaped generations of students who continue to serve society. On his 28th Barsi, we pray that Allah (SWT) grants him the highest Jannah among the Ahul Bayt (a.s.). Some souls leave footprints in snow that never melt.

From a group of Mo'taqideen

Massive Blaze Guts Cotton Unit at HMT Industrial Estate

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A massive fire erupted during pre-dawn hours at the HMT Industrial Area on the outskirts of Srinagar, completely gutting a cotton processing factory and triggering a large-scale firefighting operation. Officials said the State Fire Control Room in Srinagar received an emergency call, following which fire tenders from Fire Station Mujgund were rushed to the spot. Upon arrival, firefighters found the cotton factory engulfed in flames, with thick plumes of smoke rising from the industrial premises.

Considering the intensity of the blaze and the highly combustible material stored inside the unit, additional reinforcements were mobilized from Fire Station JVC Veer. Water

bowsers and foam tenders were also deployed from the Fire and Emergency Headquarters to strengthen the containment effort and prevent the fire from spreading to adjoining industrial establishments.

Fire and Emergency Services personnel were seen battling the flames amid challenging conditions as cotton stocks and machinery fueled the blaze. Authorities said due to co-ordinated efforts the fire was contained.

According to KNT, there were no immediate reports of casualties at the time of filing this report. The cause of the fire and the exact extent of property loss were yet to be ascertained. Officials said a detailed assessment would be conducted once the flames are fully brought under control.



Vice President Experiences Dal Lake's 'Timeless Charm'

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Vice President C P Radhakrishnan on Thursday enjoyed a cruise ride on the iconic Dal Lake, describing the experience as a glimpse of Srinagar's timeless charm and natural beauty.

Radhakrishnan arrived here on Wednesday evening on his maiden visit to the Kashmir valley. He later attended the Kashmir University's 21st convocation on Thursday evening.

"I experienced the timeless charm,

"I appreciate the efforts of the administration in promoting eco-tourism, preserving natural heritage, and creating new livelihood opportunities for local communities,

pristine waters, and breathtaking natural beauty of Srinagar during a morning cruise on Dal Lake today," the vice president posted on his personal X handle.

The vice president said he was

deeply impressed by the transformative changes taking place in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in infrastructure development and improved connectivity.

"I appreciate the efforts of the administration in promoting eco-tourism, preserving natural heritage, and creating new livelihood opportunities for local communities," he said.

According to PTI, the vice president said these initiatives have not only given a boost to tourism but have also ushered in a "new era" of peace, progress, and prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir.

Commissioner SMC Inspects Municipal Assets



Observer News Service

Srinagar: Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Faz Lul Hasseb, conducted an extensive inspection of municipal assets at Tibetan Colony, Eidgah, and Devi Angan, Badam Wari, to review the status of civic infrastructure and assess the management, maintenance, and utilization of public facilities.

During his visit to Tibetan Colony, Eidgah, the Commissioner undertook a comprehensive review of municipal infrastructure, including sanitation arrangements, drainage networks, and waste management operations. He evaluated the performance of field-level services and directed concerned officials to ensure sustained cleanliness, improved operational efficiency, and prompt resolution of civic grievances

raised by residents.

At Devi Angan, Badam Wari, the Commissioner inspected the municipal asset and reviewed its maintenance standards, operational functionality, and potential for enhanced public utilization. Emphasizing the importance of safeguarding public infrastructure, he instructed officials to maintain the facility strictly in accordance with municipal norms and to maximize its effective use for community benefit.

Highlighting the importance of regular on-ground monitoring, the Commissioner reiterated SMC's commitment to strengthening urban governance through improved infrastructure management, enhanced accountability, and responsive civic administration. Senior officers and officials of Srinagar Municipal Corporation accompanied the Commissioner during the inspection.

Two Youth Critically Injured in Tengpora Accident

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Two young men were critically injured in a road accident at Tengpora area of Srinagar on Thursday and were rushed to SMHS Hospital

for treatment.

The injured have been identified as Mushqoor Ahmad, son of Abdul Rahim, aged 26, and Imran, son of Abdul Aziz, aged 28. Both are residents of Karna and presently staying at Tengpora.

Hospital sources said both sustained serious injuries and are undergoing treatment in critical condition.

According to KNT, Police have begun investigation into the circumstances leading to the accident.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir (UT)
Phone:-01933-295302 E-mail:-techrpu1786@gmail.com

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER R&B DIVISION PULWAMA.

TENDER NOTICE

E-NIT No: 160/EEP/RNB/of 2025-26/ 11681-91 Dated: 26/02/2026

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K UT term e-tenders (In Single Cover system) are invited on %age Basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt. CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Government for the following work :-

S.No	Name of Work	Adv. Cost (Rs. Lacs.)	Cost of T/D (Rs.)	Earnest Money (In %age.)	Time of Completion in working Days	Class of Contract	Major Head of Accounts	Administrative Accord/Call No: Approval No:	Call
1	Hr. secondary school Drabgam ACR (sno.1644)	33.61	1100/-	2% of DV.cost	265 working days	BEE/AAY	Samagra Shiksha	314 -Chirag of 2025 dt.01.12.2025	1st call

The Bidding documents consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, bill of quantities (B.O.Q.), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of date given below:-

1.	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	26 - 02-2026
2.	Bid downloading Start Date	26 - 02-2026 from 10:00 A.M
3.	Bid submission Start Date	24 - 02-2026 from 10:00 A.M
4.	Bid Submission End Date	09 - 03-2026 upto 0 4:00 P.M
5.	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	10 - 03-2026 at 11.00 A.M in the Office of the Executive Engineer R&B Div.Pulwama
6.	Submission of Performance Security (PS)	Within three (03) days of receipt of LOA. (The First lowest successful bidder has to provide 5% of allotted cost as Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG and EMD of 2% shall be released after receipt of 5% Performance security.

- Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in the shape of Treasury Challan /Receipt as per Annexure -C (Debited to M.H.0059 PWD) and EMD in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to the Executive Engineer R&B Div. Pulwama (The Date of Treasury Challan and EMD should be between the date of start of bid and Bid Submission End date.
- The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the office of Executive Engineer R&B Div. Pulwama
- The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of bids.
- EMD in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG in favour of the Executive Engineer R&B Div. Pulwama
- The Contractors are advised to visit the site and to be aware of the conditions for launching at site of work before quoting the rates.
- The contractor shall also be responsible for any theft/ damage to any of the component at site and the cost of damage/ theft if any shall be deducted from the work done or CDR of the Contractor till completion of work and handing over.
- The 1st lowest bidder has to produce an amount equal to 5% of contract as Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division Pulwama within three (03) days after the date of receipt of letter of acceptance and shall be released after successful completion of DLP. The Bank Guarantee should be valid for 45 days beyond DLP

Head Draftsman Technical Officer Executive Engineer R&B Division Pulwama
DIPK-1138/25 dated: 26-02-2026

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

AIRPORTS
SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈️

RAILWAYS

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

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

HIJRI CALENDAR
09- Ramadan
1447

PRAYERS

FAJR	5: 40
ZUHR	12:44
ASR	4: 45
Magrib	6:28
ISHA	7: 48

This Day In History

- 138 - The Emperor Hadrian adopts Antoninus Pius, effectively making him his successor
- 1497 - Italians troops reconquer Taranto on France
- 1910 - Dalai Lama flees Tibet for British India to escape Chinese troops
- 1916 - Battle of Verdun: German troops conquer Fort Douaumont without firing a shot, the largest and highest fort defending the city of Verdun during World War I
- 1921 - Tbilisi, capital of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, occupied by Bolshevik Russia
- 1921 - The Living Buddha, Hutuktu, is crowned King of Mongolia as the country declares independence from China
- 1925 - Diplomatic relations between Japan and the Soviet Union established
- 1930 - Check photographing device patented
- 1932 - Austrian immigrant Adolf Hitler gets German citizenship
- 1945 - US aircraft carriers attack Tokyo
- 1954 - Abdul Nasser appointed Egyptian premier
- 1956 - Nikita Khrushchev denounces Joseph Stalin at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
- 1962 - India Congress Party wins elections
- 1964 - Muhammad Ali [Cassius Clay] TKOs Sonny Liston in 7 for his first world heavyweight championship title

THE JAMMU & KASHMIR BOARD OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

Sub Office Kupwara

PUBLIC NOTICE


I have passed/appeared in SSE (Class 10th) under Roll No. 1527200

Session: Annual Year: 2020 through The Jammu & Kashmir Board of School Education. The error has been committed by the School against my mother's name as MUMTAZA BEGUM instead of MEEMA BEGUM.

Now I have applied for correction in The Jammu & Kashmir Board of School Education, New Campus, Bemina, Srinagar. If any person has any objection in this regard may file the same in the office of the Deputy Secretary, Certificates Kashmir Division within seven days from the date of publication of this notice, after the expiry of said period, no objection will be entertained.

This is published for the information of the general public.

The correct particulars be recorded as under:
Name: MOMIN RASHEED
Father's Name: ABDUL RASHEED WAR
Mother's Name: Mumtaz Begum MEEMA BEGUM
Date of Birth: 07-04-2006
Residence: KARGAM
Mobile No: 788947231



ird

कर्मचारी भविष्य निधि संगठन
EMPLOYEES' PROVIDENT FUND ORGANISATION

श्रम एवं रोजगार मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार
Ministry of Labour & Employment, Govt. of India
Regional Office Kashmir/ क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय कश्मीर
EPFO, Batamalo, Srinagar-190009
E-mail - ro.kashmir@epfindia.gov.in

No. RO/Kmr/Admin/building/711 Date: 19/02/2026

PUBLIC NOTICE

Sealed offers are invited from owners of suitable office premises for hiring on lease basis for use as "The office of the Regional Office, Kashmir, Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)".

Location:
- Within Municipal limits of Srinagar or Budgam, preferably in a commercially accessible area with proper road connectivity and public transport facility.

Required Carpet Area:
- Approximately 11000 square feet of ready-to-occupy office space in a single building having multiple floors or ground floor with adequate space.

Essential Requirements:
- Adequate power and water supply
- Parking space for staff and visitors
- Provision for installation of networking and office infrastructure
- Building compliant with local municipal and safety regulations

The premises should be in good condition and suitable for immediate occupation. The building must have proper sanitation facilities, fire safety measures, and access for persons with disabilities.

Interested owners may submit their detailed offers along with building layout plan, ownership documents, expected rent per square foot, and other relevant particulars within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The premises owned by PSUs or Government entities can also submit their proposals and the details of such premises are also requested to be provided to this Office for further necessary action.

The Regional Office, Kashmir reserves the right to accept or reject any or all offers without assigning any reason thereof.

For further details, interested parties may contact:
Regional Provident Fund Commissioner
Employees' Provident Fund Organisation,
Batamalo, Srinagar-190009
Date: 18-02-2026
Place: Srinagar
Email: ro.kashmir@epfindia.gov.in (VinayKumar)
Date: 18-02-2026 Place: Srinagar Regional PF Commissioner-H/olC
RO Kashmir

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E-Tender Notice

Sr.DEN-III/FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites open tenders (E-Tenders) against below titled tenders and available on www.ireps.gov.in with closing date 18.03.2026 up to 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tenders, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through only payment modes available on www.ireps.gov.in portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft/Banker Cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed. For more information logon to www.ireps.gov.in.

Tender Type	Tendering Section	Bidding System
Open	Works	Single Packet System

Date of Uploading Tenders	Bid Starting Date	Bid Closing Date/Time
24.02.2026	04.03.2026	18.03.2026/ 15:00 Hrs

S.No.	Tender No.	Details of Tender
1.	236-2025-26	Improvement of washing line no. 4 and sick line/AC pit -ADEN-I-ASR Amritsar Railway Station in the section of ADEN-I-ASR.

Advertised Value	Earnest Money	Validity of Offer	Period of Completion
Rs.1,81,55,144.98/-	Rs.2,40,800.00/-	60 Days	12 Months

Similar nature of work:- "Any work involving:- 1. Construction of CC apron/ Washable apron/Ballast Less Track (BLT) AND/OR 2. Repair/Rebuilding of CC apron/Washable apron/Ballast Less Track (BLT) AND/OR 3. Concrete in Bridges."

Note: 1. Before bidding, bidders to check for any corrigendum issued against tender.
No.: 236-2025-26-ADEN-I-ASR Date: 25.02.2026 640/2026

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Notice Inviting Tender

Sr. DEE/TR/JAT acting for and on behalf of the President of India invites E-Tenders for the works as under. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date 20.03.2026 at 15.00 Hrs. only Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall not be considered.

Tender No.	Name of work	App Cost (Rs.)	Cost of Tender form (Rs.)	Date & time for submission of tender	Earnest Money # (Rs.)	Completion period	Opening of tender	Website Particulars
764-TRD-JAT-2025-26	TRD work in c/w reliability improvement in MRTL-BPRS section over Jammu division	₹ 2,79,42,792.39	NIL	Upto 20.03.2026 15:00 Hrs	2,89,700/-	Twelve (12) Months	20.03.2026 after 15:00 Hrs.	www.ireps.gov.in

Note: # Tenderer (s) may please note that offers received without Bid Security either in cash through e-payment gateway or as Bank Guarantee bond from a scheduled commercial bank of India or as mentioned in tender documents (as per Annexure-21) valid for a period of 90 days beyond the bid validity period, will be considered as incomplete & invalid offer and for which contractor shall have no claim on Railway.

No.: 764-TRD-JAT-2025-26 Dated: 25.02.2026 643/2026

Serving Customers With A Smile

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KO VIEW

Photos in the Jhelum

Srinagar woke to a troubling sight this Thursday morning. A heap of discarded photographs lay on the roadside near Zaina Kadal, close to the Jhelum. People on their way to work stopped and stared. Many were fasting, seeking forgiveness and blessings in this sacred month. They started picking up the photographs and looking closely at the faces.

Shock shortly spread through the crowd. More men stepped in to check the pile, and many froze when they recognized someone they knew.

Faces of relatives, friends and neighbours stared back at them. Some recognized loved ones who have passed away. Small children appeared in several photographs, their school portraits and family snapshots tossed aside without care.

One man held up a picture of himself from his youth and said he has been struggling with a mysterious pain in his leg. Others pointed to taweez found mixed with the photographs, their threads tangled in the dust.

The scene drew more people within minutes. Low murmurs soon turned into loud concern as people connected the dots and understood what this pointed to.

Someone had gathered these personal photographs, used them for so-called faith healing, and then thrown them into the river, which later pushed them back to the shore.

The discovery cut deep, as faith holds a central place in Kashmir, especially in this holy time. People seek peace, reflection, and spiritual clarity. Instead, they confronted fear and suspicion. Many asked the same question: How did our private photographs reach this pile?

The incident sparked outrage online, with people sharing stories of similar objects found in orchards, inside bedrooms, in graveyards and along riverbanks. What once seemed rare now feels like a pattern that keeps repeating.

Signs linked to occult practices surface with troubling frequency now. People speak openly about mental distress, sleepless nights, and broken families tied to such acts. Some even link personal tragedies to these shadowy rituals.

This pattern points to an organized chain of exploitation. Self-styled healers promise cures and solutions. Vulnerable families hand over photographs in hope and desperation.

Money changes hands, fear deepens, trust erodes, and a hidden trade grows in silence. Such acts thrive on secrecy and social pressure. Disputes among relatives or neighbours sometimes take this dark turn. Rumours spread fast in tight communities. Suspicion poisons relationships, and spiritual belief turns into a tool for manipulation.

Law enforcement must treat this as a serious criminal enterprise. Authorities can trace those who collect photographs, question the networks that promote these services, and send a clear signal that exploitation in the name of faith will face consequences.

Religious leaders can speak with clarity and guide people toward ethical paths. Civil society can raise awareness and encourage families to seek medical and psychological help instead of falling prey to fear.

Kashmir is witnessing a deep shift within its social fabric. A society grounded in faith and tradition can protect itself through openness and collective action.

This sacred month invites reflection and reform. The sight at Zaina Kadal demands both with clarity and conviction.

CASH COURSE

Read This Before You Buy Anything

Ethical Wealth Building

How Shariah funds and ETFs help investors grow money without compromising values.

Irshad Mushtaq

Have you ever wondered how to invest in the stock market without giving up your values? Many Muslim investors face that question. They want their savings to grow, but they want to stay true to Islamic principles. That is where Shariah funds and ETFs step in.

Let us start with the basics. A Shariah fund, often called a halal mutual fund, invests only in companies that follow Islamic guidelines. It avoids businesses linked to alcohol, gambling, pork, tobacco, and interest-based banking. It stays away from firms burdened by excessive debt. A board of Shariah scholars reviews and approves the investments to ensure they meet these standards. In simple terms, it works like a regular equity mutual fund, but it passes through a faith-based filter. The focus is not only on avoiding what is prohibited, but on supporting responsible and ethical businesses.

Now consider ETFs, or exchange-traded funds. These are baskets of stocks that you can buy and sell on the stock exchange just like a single share. They usually track major indexes such as the Nifty 50 or the Sensex. ETFs are known for lower costs, diversification, and transparency.

When you combine these two ideas, you get Shariah ETFs. They track indexes made up of halal-screened companies. Investors gain diversification, reasonable costs, and the flexibility to trade easily. For Muslims, this opens the door to stock market participation without ethical compromise. At the same time, these funds appeal to anyone interested in responsible investing.

Shariah investing shows that profits and principles can grow together. It offers a path that feels financially sound and morally aligned.

The author is a Srinagar-based reputed financial educator.

Matka Under the Lens

The charm of clay enhances taste and texture, but porosity and shelf life raise important food safety questions for commercial sales.



Tajamul Islam Salroo

“
Earthen pots attract us with their cultural warmth and rich taste. People who use them follow careful cleaning, handling, and storage practices to keep the dahi safe. At the same time, the dairy industry prefers sealed plastic cups because they offer higher hygiene, longer shelf life, and easier compliance with food safety rules.

Someone asked me a simple question the other day: is serving dahi in earthen pots truly safe?

The question got me thinking about our traditions, so I decided to dig deeper.

I read scientific studies, checked food safety rules, and looked at packaging guidelines.

What I found clearly connects our old ways with modern science.

People across Kashmir and beyond cherish earthen pots for making dahi. We call it Matka Dahi, and many prize it for the special earthy scent it adds to the curd.

The clay's porous nature lets a bit of air flow through. This process creates a thick, creamy texture. Some even say it infuses tiny amounts of calcium and iron into the food.

This same porosity brings benefits and challenges. It enhances flavour and feel, but it complicates keeping things spotless.

Microbes find spots to settle in those tiny openings. Businesses face real food safety issues here.

They must uphold top cleanliness during production and keeping.

India's Food Safety and Standards Authority, or FSSAI, oversees all materials touching food. Their packaging rules demand that everything stays food-grade.

These items prove safe and fit for purpose. They protect people's well-being.

The rules detail options for dairy like plastics and glass that meet standards. Earthen pots lack specific mentions either way, especially for homes or small operations.

The broad rule states that contact materials avoid adding pollutants or risky elements to the food.

Commercial dahi often comes in sealed cups. FSSAI requires food-grade supplies and clean methods during packing and closing.

These steps curb germ spread and maintain quality through the product's time on shelves.

Dahi turns quicker in earthen pots than in plastic ones. Several fac-

tors explain this pattern.

The clay's porous build lets dampness and air move through small gaps. This trait boosts cooling and structure. Microbes use those spaces to thrive fast without full cleaning and drying ahead of time.

Earthen pots require careful handling. Strong cleaners risk soaking into the material. Gentle rinses work best, followed by complete sun exposure to dry.

Any leftover wetness invites bacteria and yeasts to grow.

Plastic cups come with tight foil covers that shut out air and outside threats. Earthen pots stay open in small ways. This setup speeds up germ action and shortens freshness during extended keeping.

Sealed plastic cups build a strong

place them in the refrigerator without delay. They also keep them away from room temperature for long periods to maintain freshness and safety.

Plastic cup producers follow strict basics as well. They use certified food-grade materials that meet FSSAI guidelines.

Filling areas remain clean and controlled to maintain hygiene. Strong, secure seals protect the product from tampering.

Clear labels mention expiry dates and storage instructions so consumers know exactly how to handle the product safely.

Earthen pots attract us with their cultural warmth and rich taste. People who use them follow careful cleaning, handling, and storage practices to keep the dahi safe.

“
Makers select plain, natural clay without chemicals. They avoid painted or coated pots to ensure nothing unwanted seeps into the dahi.

shield. They cut down on air contact and guard against dirt while moving and storing.

Businesses see sealed plastic cups as the top choice for safety. These options extend product life, simplify cleaning, and align well with required standards for shops.

Earthen pots hold deep value in our food heritage, and people handle them with great care to keep them safe.

Makers select plain, natural clay without chemicals. They avoid painted or coated pots to ensure nothing unwanted seeps into the dahi.

People season and soak the pots first. This step makes them stronger and helps manage their natural porosity.

They wash the pots with clean drinking water and then leave them out in full sunlight to dry completely before filling them.

Once filled, they cover the pots and

At the same time, the dairy industry prefers sealed plastic cups because they offer higher hygiene, longer shelf life, and easier compliance with food safety rules.

This balance shows why bodies like the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India should offer clear guidance. They can frame practical standards for traditional containers in commercial use.

That way, people can continue to enjoy our shared food traditions with confidence and good health.

The author is the Managing Director of Zum Zum Food Products, based at the Industrial Growth Centre, Lassipora. He can be reached at tajamul12@yahoo.co.in.

Letter to Editor

An Iftaar That Strengthened Our Bonds

That evening at the campus of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication in Jammu still feels warm in my heart. We had planned a simple iftaar as students. We thought we would gather, share food, and break the fast together.

But the evening grew into something deeper. It turned into a memory that I will always hold close.

IIMC Jammu feels like a small India in itself. Students come here from different states, different cultures, and different walks of life. We bring our languages, food habits, festivals, and dreams. Classrooms fill with many voices and viewpoints. That mix gives the campus its energy.

That evening, all those backgrounds came together in the most beautiful way.

As the sun slowly dipped, we gathered and waited for the time of iftaar. Muslim students who had observed roza through the day sat beside friends from Hindu, Sikh, Christian, and other families. Some joined to stand with us in solidarity. Some came to support their friends. Everyone came with open hearts.

When the clock showed 6:30 pm, we began with dates. Rooh Afza moved around the circle. Plates of fruit, pakoras, and homemade dishes passed from hand to hand. The setting felt simple and pure. We sat close, shared space, and smiled with ease. Laughter rose often, talks flowed without effort, and a feeling

of comfort wrapped around us.

Our two professors joined us and chose to sit among the students. They shared the same food and became part of the circle. Their presence brought encouragement and warmth.

That moment taught me that real learning grows through shared experiences and human connection.

The evening stood for something larger than a meal. Festivals find their true joy when people celebrate them together. During Diwali, our campus glows with diyas and cheerful faces. During Ramzan, that same campus opened its heart and embraced the spirit of iftaar. Respect and friendship filled the space.

As journalism students, we often

write about society and its many layers. That evening, we lived a story that deserves to be told. We saw unity in action, and felt the strength of shared moments.

The iftaar needed no grand decoration. Sincerity gave it beauty, and togetherness gave it meaning.

When people sit together and share a meal, hearts open with ease.

That evening, our campus felt like a home.

Sincerely,

Vedicaa Manoj Sawal
vedicaasawal@gmail.com

Wings Without Sky

Kashmiri youth built their dreams on degrees. The economy never rose to meet them.

Falak Fayaz

At twenty, life should open like a window. You study hard, finish college, and hope the world will make space for you.

But in Kashmir, twenty feels more like standing in a long corridor where every door stays closed. The sound of possibility is missing.

What fills the air instead is the shuffle of shoes outside employment offices, the low buzz of phones with new job alerts, and the same question playing in everyone's mind: Where do we go from here?

When there is no work for the hands, the heart begins to sink.

Jammu and Kashmir's unemployment rate stands at 17.1 percent, nearly double the national average, according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy. The numbers tell one story, the faces tell another.

There is an engineer driving a cab, a postgraduate selling apples, and a teacher waiting for a call that never comes.

These are not people without ambition. They studied, prepared, and waited. The system simply stopped meeting them halfway.

A graduate from Sopore said it best: "We were told to build our wings, but no one gave us the sky."

Education once felt like a sacred promise in Kashmir. Parents sold land, took loans, and believed that degrees would bring respect and stability.

Today, those degrees hang on cracked walls, reminders of hope that didn't reach its destination.

Socrates once said the hunger of the mind is harder to satisfy than the hunger of the body. That hunger burns across the valley.

Students work late into the night, but when morning comes, there are no jobs to greet them. From Srinagar to Pulwama, the story is the same: "We are qualified for nothing that exists, and nothing exists for



what we are qualified for." This is not simple joblessness. It feels like a theft of purpose.

When purpose fades, many look for escape.

Drug addiction in Kashmir has grown into one of its darkest crises. Reports estimate nearly seventy-five thousand active users, most between seventeen and thirty-three.

In IMHANS Srinagar, the main rehabilitation hospital, corridors smell of disinfectant and despair.

A single puff behind a college gate, and a pill passed around at a party are small beginnings that often end with a parent praying beside a hospital bed.

A rehabilitation worker once said, "Our youth are not addicted to drugs. They are addicted to forgetting."

Forgetting feels easier than facing

another day of waiting.

Crime statistics reflect the same hopelessness. Street fights, petty thefts, and knife attacks involve boys who should still be in college. They are called "frustrated youth."

Frustration is not a crime. It is what happens when effort meets a wall.

Elders like to say, "An empty mind is the devil's workshop." The young ask, "Who emptied it?"

Kashmir's culture once grew from patience, work, and creativity. There were looms, orchards, and songs. Today, social media fills that space.

Screens promise luxury without labour. Influencers perform success while those watching scroll through another day of uncertainty.

The old crafts fade as fast as new

reels appear.

Mental health adds another heavy layer. The World Health Organization reports that Kashmir faces one of India's highest rates of depression and post-traumatic stress. Therapy remains a distant concept for many. People have learned to carry pain as a routine part of life. Uncertainty has become a shared inheritance passed down through decades of conflict and loss.

Living with uncertainty here takes strength. Continuing to dream inside it takes courage.

Still, hope shows up in small ways.

A boy opens a café with his friends. A girl writes about healing. A craftsman teaches his art to keep it alive.

Each act, however small, becomes

a stand against despair.

A teacher once asked, "If the hands that should build our future are losing themselves in smoke, who failed whom: the youth, or the system that gave them no sky to fly?"

That question still lingers. What kind of future will these young people shape? Will they build companies or break under the weight of waiting? Will they write poems or police reports?

Kashmir's beauty has always been told through snow, mountains, and lakes. But its real beauty now lies in its people, the ones who wake up every morning, keep faith, and try once more to find their place in the world.

— The author can be reached at fulakfayaz.bhat69@gmail.com



A TEACHER ONCE ASKED, "IF THE HANDS THAT SHOULD BUILD OUR FUTURE ARE LOSING THEMSELVES IN SMOKE, WHO FAILED WHOM: THE YOUTH, OR THE SYSTEM THAT GAVE THEM NO SKY TO FLY?" That question still lingers. What kind of future will these young people shape? Will they build companies or break under the weight of waiting? Will they write poems or police reports?

Eyes on Tradition

An eyecare professional reflects on protecting the vision behind Kashmir's heritage.

Sana Gul Khurshid

Every day, Kashmiri artisans come to me, bringing the stories of their hands and the weariness of years in their eyes.

These are men and women who craft the soul of Kashmir. Their work produces the soft weave of pashmina, the delicate inlay of papier-mâché, and the intricate carvings that decorate homes across the region.

Their craft depends on precision, focus, and endless attention to detail. Their eyes become instruments trained to see the minutest threads, strokes, and patterns.

Over time, I notice that their near vision sharpens at the cost of long-distance sight.

Faces across a room, the trees lining the streets, and the hills beyond the city gradually blur. Their world narrows to the small space where their hands create beauty.

I see artisans in their forties and fifties surprised by this change, asking why their vision has suddenly failed them. They arrive believing their eyes are healthy because the details they see every day remain clear.

But many of them carry cataracts that progressively cloud distance vision. They do not realize how severe their condition has become until it interferes with daily life.

Headaches, eye strain, and watery eyes are common complaints. I have witnessed the transformation when they finally wear the correct prescription glasses. Faces brighten, smiles appear, and the relief is unmistakable.

Corrective lenses often feel like magic, restoring the confidence to continue their work comfortably. For many, it is the first time in years that their eyes feel supported.

Most artisans have little culture of preventive eye care. They continue their meticulous work without glasses, ignoring early symptoms until strain becomes unbearable.

Delayed reporting is common, and many visit the clinic only after decades



of near work have affected their sight.

Women often report later than men, even though they participate equally in the handicraft sector. Their struggles remain largely unrecognized until intervention becomes mandatory.

Systemic health issues add to the risk. Many artisans do not know they have diabetes or hypertension, conditions that can silently damage the retina. Taking medication alone is not enough to protect eyesight.

Without awareness, they continue their work with increasing risk, sometimes unaware that permanent damage may already be underway.

Eyes change naturally with age. Prescriptions increase over time, and flexibility diminishes. Presbyopia makes focusing on close objects more difficult, compounding the strain of a lifetime spent on delicate tasks.

These age-related changes combined with chronic labour-intensive work cre-

ate complex challenges for vision maintenance.

Artisans need to understand safe limits for their work hours, structured schedules, and the importance of breaks.

Spending time outdoors allows the eyes to relax, improving muscle function and preventing overstrain. Regular eye check-ups, at least annually or preferably every four to five months, help detect changes early.

Early intervention can prevent condi-



WHEN ARTISANS LEAVE MY CLINIC WITH RELIEF AND UNDERSTANDING, I see the possibility of sustaining a centuries-old tradition, preserving a sector that forms the backbone of Kashmir's cultural heritage.

tions from progressing to the point where corrective measures become less effective.

Many artisans work long hours without rest because their craft sustains livelihoods and families. They prioritize production over health, unaware that small interventions can preserve vision and productivity.

Observing these artisans over time has taught me that vision care cannot be limited to treatment alone. Education, preventive guidance, and structured work practices are equally important.

When artisans leave my clinic with relief and understanding, I see the possibility of sustaining a centuries-old tradition, preserving a sector that forms the backbone of Kashmir's cultural heritage.

— The author is an eyecare professional. She can be reached at sanakhurshid63@gmail.com.

SC Bans NCERT Class 8 Book Over Chapter On Corruption In Judiciary

Says Gunshot Fired To Bleed Institution

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday imposed a "complete blanket ban" on any further publication, reprinting or digital dissemination of NCERT's Class 8 social science book as it contains "offending" contents on corruption in the judiciary, saying they have fired a gunshot

and the judiciary is "bleeding". Observing that there appeared to be a "deep-rooted conspiracy" and "calculated move" to undermine the institution and demean the dignity of judiciary, the apex court directed that all copies of the book – physical and digital – currently in circulation be immediately seized and removed from public access without any delay.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant issued show cause notices to the NCERT director and the secretary of the department of school education asking them to explain why

suitable action, including that of contempt, be not initiated against those found responsible for introducing the "offending" chapter.

"As an abundant precaution, a complete blanket ban is hereby imposed on any further publication, reprinting or digital dissemination of the book titled 'Exploring Society: India and Beyond' (Vol II)," the bench, which also comprised justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Panchohi, said.

The bench warned that any attempt to circumvent its order through electronic medium or

alternative titles containing the same content shall be treated as a direct interference, willful breach and defiance of its directions.

"They have fired a gunshot. The judiciary is bleeding," a visibly irked CJ said during the hearing in a suo motu matter over the book.

"It is my duty as the head of the institution to find out who is responsible; heads must roll," the CJ said, adding, "We would like to have a deeper probe." The bench said it was "nearly shocked" when one of the newspapers published an

article regarding release of the social science textbook having the chapter.

It said after media report was published, the apex court's secretary general was asked to verify whether such a publication was released by NCERT.

"Instead of having an introspection of what had been written in the book in the most reckless, irresponsible, contemptuous and motivated manner, the director (of NCERT) responded in writing defending the contents of the book," the bench said.

It said on a prima facie

examination of the book's content and read in conjunction with the administrative response received from director, it seemed "there is a calculated move to undermine the institutional authority and demean the dignity of the judiciary".

It said if allowed to go unchecked, it would erode the sanctity of judicial office and the estimation of public at large and more importantly, within the impressionable minds of youth.

The bench observed the narrative contained in book chooses not to dwell into any of the transformative initiatives and

measures pioneered by court, including towards streamlining the ease of access to justice, and the substantive contribution made by judiciary towards the preservation of democratic fabric.

"This silence is particularly egregious given the sheer volume of high-ranking officials who have been censured by this very court in the past for corrupt practices, fraudulent activities and siphoning of public funds etc," it said.

The bench said choice of words and expressions in the book might never be a simpliciter inadvertance or bona fide error.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Why Kashmir Pays

per-person medicine spending at roughly ₹1,300 to ₹1,400. Pharmacy trend estimates and regional market analyses suggest annual per-person spending in Jammu and Kashmir approaches ₹3,600.

A family of five nationally may spend about ₹7,000 a year on medicines. But a similar family in Jammu and Kashmir may spend close to ₹18,000.

That means families here spend roughly 2.6 to 2.8 times more than the national average on prescriptions.

Medicines absorb about 0.6 to 0.7 percent of income nationally, while regional estimates place the share in Jammu and Kashmir near 2.3 to 2.4 percent.

Once those numbers are applied to the region as a whole, the scale becomes striking.

Census-based projections place Jammu and Kashmir's population near 1.3 crore. At about ₹3,600 per person each year, total annual medicine spending approaches ₹4,700 to ₹4,800 crore.

At the national per-person level of roughly ₹1,350, the total would sit closer to ₹1,800 crore. The implied difference nears ₹3,000 crore every year.

Over a decade, that cumulative gap rises toward ₹30,000 crore in additional household outlays compared with national patterns.

The impact sharpens at family level when time enters the equation.

A household spending ₹18,000 annually instead of ₹7,000 commits about ₹11,000 more each year to medicines. If costs and usage grow at 10 percent annually, cumulative excess spending over 20 years can reach ₹4 to ₹5 lakh.

Financial modeling shows that investing ₹11,000 per year at a 10 percent annual return builds a corpus of roughly ₹6.7 lakh over two decades.

Combined, the extra spending and lost investment growth approach ₹10 to ₹12 lakh per family. Applied to an estimated 8 to 9 lakh families in the Union Territory, the long-term wealth impact moves toward ₹80,000 to ₹1,00,000 crore.

Behind these numbers lies a shift in disease patterns.

Research led by the Indian Council of Medical Research through the India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative documents rising hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular risk in northern states, including Jammu and Kashmir. The National Family Health Survey 2019-21 round reports growing levels of elevated blood pressure and blood glucose among adults. Chronic conditions demand continuous treatment.

A patient managing diabetes or hypertension may spend ₹500 to ₹2,000 per month depending on brand and dosage, translating into ₹6,000 to ₹24,000 annually for a single condition.

Supply chains and pricing structures amplify that burden.

Himachal Pradesh hosts more than 600 pharmaceutical manufacturing units and contributes a substantial share of India's drug formulations, according to the Department of Pharmaceuticals. Jammu and Kashmir depends heavily on medicines transported from such hubs.

Market studies and investigations by the Competition Commission of India describe trade margins in certain branded generics ranging from 200 percent to as high as 1,000 percent between ex-factory price and maximum retail price in segments outside strict controls.

The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority caps prices for medicines listed under the National List of Essential Medicines, while many non-scheduled branded generics remain outside firm ceilings.

Industry illustrations show strips leaving factories at ₹5 to ₹10 reaching retail prices of ₹80 to ₹120 after company pricing decisions, distributor margins and retailer shares.

But public programs aim to reduce those costs.

The Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana, implemented by the Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Bureau of India, operates hundreds of outlets in Jammu and Kashmir. Official releases report sales in the Union Territory reaching tens of crores annually, with consumer savings several times higher compared with branded equivalents. Nationally, cumulative savings run into thousands of crores.

The World Health Organization affirms that quality-assured generics match branded medicines in safety and efficacy, strengthening the economic case for substitution.

Insurance expansion further provides a cushion for major hospital expenses. Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana and its SEHAT extension offer coverage up to ₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care admissions.

But outpatient medicines for chronic illness continue to rely largely on household budgets, which keeps monthly pharmacy bills central to family finances. Public hospitals provide selected essential medicines and diagnostics without charge, though availability varies by district and procurement cycle.

Diet and substance use trends also define long-term medicinal costs. Enforcement updates from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India document action against adulteration in edible oils, milk and spices.

Regional authorities have acknowledged rising substance abuse concerns and expanded de-addiction services, recognizing the medical and economic consequences of addiction.

Taken together, the data tell a consistent story: Jammu and Kashmir combines lower per capita income with higher estimated per-person medicine spending, rising chronic disease prevalence and brand-driven retail pricing.

Annual differences measured in thousands of rupees per household grow into crores at regional scale and lakhs over a generation.

Evidence from national income statistics, health accounts, disease surveys and competition studies supports a path centered on prevention, rational prescribing, transparent pricing and wider adoption of quality-assured generics.

Families managing prescriptions every month feel the burden in real time, while structural reform shows a way to turn recurring drug expenses into lasting financial stability.

SED Puts TET

the Action Plan formulated in the meeting held in October-2025," reads the precious order.

SED had also said that JKBOSE shall develop and notify a detailed schedule for conduct of TET.

"The board shall coordinate with NIC, School Education Department, Higher Education Department, Home Department, and other concerned authorities for logistical, technical and security arrangements," it reads.

It had also said that the board shall ensure alignment of syllabus and examination standards with the guidelines of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), with suitable contextual modifications.

In the previous order, SED while referring the returned and the findings with advice that was sought from the Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, UT of J&K said that if any of such teachers fail to qualify the TET within the time that we have allowed, they shall have to quit service. They may be compulsorily retired; and paid whatever terminal benefits they are entitled to.

Let's Throw Out

courage and character will determine how you respond to setbacks," he told the graduates, urging them to remain firm in their values and respectful of others' sentiments.

Highlighting India's growing innovation ecosystem under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said the entrepreneurial environment has become more vibrant and supportive than ever before. Referring to the COVID-19 pandemic, he recalled the Prime Minister's call to Indian scientists to develop a vaccine.

"How many of us believed in it? But we found the best vaccination, and it worked very well for the entire humanity," he said, contrasting it with Western economies that, according to him, were focused on patenting and pricing vaccines at high rates. "A unit of vaccination can be sold for USD 7,500, but how can a poor man afford that?" he asked.

He asserted that Indian innovations are widely accepted across the world and encouraged students to seize global opportunities through initiative, enthusiasm and hard work.

Turning to development in Jammu and Kashmir, the Vice President said the central government has approved expansion of Srinagar International Airport at an estimated cost of over Rs 1600 crore. He also highlighted the Chenab Rail Bridge, describing it as a marvel and the world's highest railway bridge.

"These projects are more than engineering achievements. They are instruments of social harmony. When places are connected, people are connected. And when people are connected, hearts are closely connected," he said, adding that such initiatives create new opportunities for youth.

Referring to special scholarship schemes for students from Jammu and Kashmir, he said these programmes enable them to study in institutions across the country and strengthen national integration by connecting regions, cultures and languages.

The Vice President strongly cautioned students against drug abuse, saying no religion encourages narcotics. "Your parents depend on you to take care of them in their old age. Stay away from drugs and advise your friends and family members to do the same," he said.

He also advised moderation in social media usage, warning against addiction. "Social media will not help you become more successful in life. Everything should have its limits. Time management is essential," he said.

Expressing satisfaction over the convocation's highlights, he noted that the Minister for Higher Education is a woman, the Vice Chancellor of the University is a woman and a majority of gold medal recipients were women. He termed it a powerful reflection of women's empowerment and progress in Jammu and Kashmir.

Lauding the University, established in 1948, he praised its NAAC A++ grade, 34th rank in the NIRF University category, more than 7,700 research publications since 2019 and pioneering initiatives such as the National Himalayan Ice-Core Laboratory, which underscore its expanding academic footprint and global engagement.

Recalling his tenure as Governor of Jharkhand, he mentioned hosting students from Jammu and Kashmir under an exchange programme and instructing officials to serve them food according to their preferences as a mark of respect. "As democrats, we must respect the sentiments of all," he said.

The Vice President urged graduates to view their degrees as the beginning of new responsibilities and to contribute to society with knowledge and commitment. "Mera Kashmir nahi, tumhara Kashmir nahi, hamara Kashmir," he said, calling for unity and shared ownership of the region's future.

He expressed hope that under the leadership of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Srinagar would emerge as the cleanest city in the country under the Swachhta Survekshan. He said he was impressed by the infrastructure development, connectivity projects and eco-tourism initiatives in the Union Territory, noting that these efforts have boosted tourism, created livelihoods and strengthened peace and development.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah were also present at the convocation ceremony, which marked a significant milestone for graduating students stepping into new responsibilities beyond campus.

CM Urges Graduates

seekers, asserting that Jammu and Kashmir is steadily emerging as a hub for innovation and participatory governance. Addressing the 21st Convocation ceremony of the University, where Vice President of India C. P. Radhakrishnan was the Chief Guest, the Chief Minister said that for too long the region's economy had been viewed through a narrow lens.

Full Story on kashmirobservers.net

Give Daughters

various universities, heads of departments, senior civil and police officials, faculty members, students and their parents.

Congratulating the graduating students, the Lieutenant Governor extended his best wishes and urged them to define their future with clarity and commitment. "One purpose. One priority. Country first," he said.

He reminded students that individual growth and national progress are intertwined. "Always remember when you build the country, the country builds you back. Nations do not rise only from resources. They rise from educated people and when the nation rises, so do you," he said.

Describing the convocation as proof of generational metamorphosis and fulfilled aspirations, Sinha said it reflects the unwavering faith of youth in modern education. He underlined that the knowledge earned at the university is not limited to technical competence but shapes holistic personality growth.

"Education builds self confidence, equips for meaningful lives and molds responsible citizens, linking personal success to collective good," he said.

Calling education the most powerful instrument of change ever placed in human hands, he said it redirects the course of life, reshapes the destiny of families and, when embraced fully by youth, rewrites the future of a nation from the ground up.

Emphasising academic relevance, the Lieutenant Governor said ideas emerging in classrooms must impact the wider world. He urged universities to move beyond their traditional role.

"Universities must move beyond being custodians of knowledge and evolve into vibrant centres of innovation, human development and social transformation," he said.

Full Story on kashmirobservers.net

Grand Mufti Sets

charity should be distributed among the poor, destitute, needy relatives, orphans and travellers within local communities, and must not be given to mosques, khanqahs or political and religious organisations.

India & Israel Elevate

also vowed to expand their already close defence partnership by working towards joint development and joint production of military hardware under the framework of the transfer of technologies.

The US-Iran standoff and other issues in the region figured in the talks and PM Modi mentioned India's firm belief in the value of dialogue and reiterated New Delhi's readiness to offer support, if required, toward achieving a peaceful solution, according to Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri.

In his media statement, PM Modi elaborated on the upward trajectory of India-Israel ties and said the relationship is built on a strong foundation of deep trust, shared democratic values, and human compassion.

"Our relationship has stood the test of time. Today, we took the historic decision to elevate our time-tested partnership to 'Special Strategic Partnership.' This decision reflects the aspirations of the people of both countries," he said.

The relationship was upgraded to a strategic

partnership in 2017.

"Our economic cooperation remains an engine of growth, innovation, and shared prosperity. Last year, we signed a bilateral investment agreement to promote mutual investment. We will also soon finalise a mutually beneficial Free Trade Agreement (FTA)," Modi said.

The prime minister also talked about the joint resolve of India and Israel in combating terrorism.

"India and Israel are absolutely clear that terrorism has no place in the world. Terrorism, in any form, in any manifestation, cannot be tolerated," Modi, who landed in Israel on Wednesday on a two-day visit, said.

"We have stood shoulder to shoulder against terrorism and its supporters, and will continue to do so."

The prime minister noted that India's security interests are directly linked to peace and stability in West Asia.

"Therefore, we have supported dialogue and a peaceful solution from the very beginning. This is the call of the Global South and all humanity," he said.

"India's thinking is clear: humanity must never become a victim of conflict. The Gaza Peace Plan has opened a path to peace. India has fully supported these efforts. We will continue dialogue and cooperation with all countries in the future," he said.

The prime minister also made a mention of the resolved by the two sides to forge a partnership in the area of critical and emerging technologies.

"Technology is central to our future partnership. Today, we decided to establish a critical and emerging technologies partnership. This will give new impetus to cooperation in areas such as AI, quantum, and critical minerals," he said.

"I am pleased that an agreement has been reached for the use of UPI (United Payment Interface) in Israel. We are also committed to improving people's lives by sharing our experiences in the field of digital health," he said.

Modi also touched upon the defence ties between the two sides.

"We have decades-old and trusted cooperation in the defence sector. The MoU signed last year will add new dimensions to this. Together, we will move forward towards joint development, joint production, and transfer of technology," he said.

As India is looking at developing an indigenous air defence shield called "Sudarshan Chakra", it is learnt that the Indian side also explored the possibility of incorporating certain elements from Israel's Iron Dome all-weather air defence system into its proposed missile shield.

The prime minister said both sides will also advance cooperation in areas of civil nuclear energy and space.

In his remarks, Netanyahu said the future belongs to those who innovate and Israel and India are determined on innovation.

"We are proud ancient civilisations, very proud of our past, but also absolutely determined to seize our future and we can do it better together," he said.

Modi, referring to robust engagement between the two countries in the agriculture sector, said it has been decided to give this cooperation a futuristic direction.

"The Centres of Excellence established in India with Israeli cooperation are excellent examples of our friendship. Given their success, we have set a goal of increasing their number to 100," he said.

The existing Centres of Excellence offer new technology for agricultural production.

"Taking a step further in this direction, we are working on creating Villages of Excellence. This will bring Israeli technology to every village in India, significantly increasing the income and productivity of millions of farmers," Modi said.

At a media briefing, Foreign Secretary Misri, responding to a question on New Delhi's position on the Palestine issue, said India backs the US-endorsed Gaza Peace Initiative and referred to PM Modi's remarks on it in his address to Israel's Knesset on Wednesday.

"We firmly believe that it (the Gaza Peace Initiative) holds the promise of a just, durable and lasting peace for all the people of the region, including by addressing the Palestinian question," the foreign secretary said.

"This is something that was made amply clear by the prime minister in his address to the Knesset yesterday where he framed this issue very comprehensively," he said.

Misri, referring to Modi's remarks, said this is not the time to lose hope and it is the time sustain the hope.

In the meeting, India and Israel also discussed the implementation of the India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and cooperation under the framework of I2U2 (India-Israel-UAE-US).

"We had a comprehensive discussion on regional and global issues. While promoting regional connectivity, we will move forward with renewed momentum on the India-Middle-East-Europe-Economic-Corridor and the India-Israel-UAE-US (I2U2) framework," Modi said.

Before departing for New Delhi, the prime minister posted on X: "Today's discussions with PM Netanyahu were very fruitful. We've taken a historic decision to elevate our time-tested partnership to a Special Strategic Partnership. This decision reflects the aspirations of the people of both

countries."

HC Imposes

JDA soon after the auction and withheld further payment until the encroachment was removed. Internal records of the authority acknowledged the existence of encroachment and identified the encroacher, yet possession was not handed over for years, the court noted.

Rejecting JDA's contention that the allotment stood cancelled due to non-payment of the remaining bid amount, the Court held that forfeiture clauses cannot be invoked where the alleged default is attributable to the authority itself.

"The contention of the respondents (JDA) that the Letter of Intent stood automatically cancelled and that the earnest money was liable to be forfeited, cannot be accepted in the facts and circumstances of the present case," the court said, adding, "Forfeiture clauses, though contractual in nature, cannot be invoked mechanically or arbitrarily, particularly when the alleged default itself is attributable to the authority

The court observed that retaining the petitioner's money for more than 15 years without either delivering possession or refunding the amount reflected arbitrary conduct and amounted to unjust enrichment.

The Court emphasized that development authorities are under a legal obligation to ensure that land put to auction is free from encumbrances and that they must act fairly and transparently in dealings with citizens.

Allowing the petition, the Court directed that the JDA shall, within a period of one week from the date of receipt of its order, calculate the total sale consideration in respect of the land originally auctioned in favour of the petitioner measuring 5.38 kanals.

"...upon receipt of the amount (from petitioner) and upon completion of all requisite codal formalities, the respondents-JDA shall, within a period of four weeks thereafter, hand over possession of the land measuring 5.01 kanals found free from encumbrances, along with possession of the equivalent land allotted in lieu of the encroached portion measuring approximately 0.37 kanals, free from all encumbrances."

The court also imposed costs of Rs. 25,000 upon JDA and directed that the same shall be borne by the Officer/s who has/have filed such wrong affidavit or taken contradictory stand with a view to mislead the Court. Further the court imposed Rs. 25,000 on JDA for the inordinate delay and unjustified retention of the petitioner's money.

"The aforesaid amount, in nutshell to the tune of Rs. 50,000 shall be deposited by the respondents-JDA with the Advocates' Welfare Fund within a period of four weeks(beginning February 25)."

2 Booked For

2.24 crore from a government medical institution, officials said.

On the basis of prima facie evidence, offences under Sections 420, 467, 468, 471 and 120-B of the IPC read with Section 66-D of the IT Act have been established. Cognisance of the matter has been taken and further investigation is underway, they added.

NGT Flags Open

that the Municipal Committee of Awantipora had been dumping solid waste near Padgampora Dangerpora village, close to both the highway and an irrigation canal known locally as Padgampora Nihar.

Counsel for the petitioner told the tribunal that waste collected from Awantipora and Tral towns was being dumped at the site without segregation or treatment. He argued that the location, next to a functioning canal, violates the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, and the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016.

Photographs submitted to the tribunal showed mounds of garbage lying in the open. An inspection report dated Aug. 14, 2025, by the J&K Pollution Control Committee stated that the site had been set up without prior approval. On the same day, the pollution control body issued a show-cause notice to the municipal committee for violating environmental norms and proposed punitive action. The dumping, the petitioner said, continued despite that notice.

In its order, the tribunal directed the pollution control committee to conduct a fresh inspection, assess the quantity of waste dumped, determine how long it has remained there and report on steps taken to address the damage. It asked for a detailed report at least one week before the next hearing. The Municipal Committee of Awantipora has been ordered to take all remedial measures in the meantime.

Responding to the order, Dr. Bhat said the government had allocated substantial funds to establish a sanitary landfill for the town. Instead, he said, authorities chose a site near the national highway and agricultural land and failed to implement a scientific waste management system.

He said repeated representations to officials did not stop the dumping, prompting him to approach the tribunal. He expressed hope that the bench would consider imposing environmental compensation on the municipal body at the next hearing.

The case is scheduled to be heard again on May 13, 2026.

Above-Normal Temperatures Trigger Early Bloom in Kashmir

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Day temperatures continued to hover above normal across Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday, with several places in Kashmir recording departures of 6 to 9 degrees Celsius above the seasonal average.

According to the data accessed by KNO, Srinagar recorded a maximum of 20.2 degrees Celsius, 8.2 degrees above normal, while Qazigund settled at 20.4 degrees, 9.4 notches above normal. Kupwara registered 20.3 degrees (8.9 above normal) and Kokernag 18.9 degrees (9.1 above normal). Pahalgam recorded 14.6 degrees, 6.1 above normal, and Gulmarg 10.6

degrees, 8.2 above normal. In the Jammu region, Jammu city recorded a maximum of 27.0 degrees Celsius, 3.9 degrees above normal. Katra settled at 25.2 degrees (4.3 above normal), while Banihal and Batote recorded over 20 degrees each, nearly 7 degrees above normal. Bhandarwah registered 18.9 degrees, 4.5 above normal. Ladakh also witnessed relatively mild conditions, with Leh at 7.4 degrees Celsius, Kargil at 9.3 degrees and Nubra Valley at 10.9 degrees.

The continued spell of warmer days, coupled with a significant precipitation deficit this month, has begun to reflect on the ground. Horticulture

experts said several fruit trees and ornamental plants in the Valley are showing signs of early budding and flowering, weeks ahead of their usual schedule.

They said the reduced chill period has shortened dormancy in apple and other temperate fruit crops, potentially disturbing their natural growth cycle. Any sudden cold spell at this stage, they cautioned, could affect flowering, fruit setting and overall yield.

Farmers have also reported accelerated vegetative growth in some seasonal crops, raising concerns about long-term crop health if dry and warm conditions persist.



Abid Bhat/KNO

“Srinagar recorded a maximum of 20.2 degrees Celsius, 8.2 degrees above normal, while Qazigund settled at 20.4 degrees, 9.4 notches above normal. Kupwara registered 20.3 degrees (8.9 above normal) and Kokernag 18.9 degrees (9.1 above normal). Pahalgam recorded 14.6 degrees, 6.1 above normal, and Gulmarg 10.6 degrees, 8.2 above normal.”

Terrorism Indicators Decline In J&K: Army Commander

'India Will Respond With Greater Force to Any Misadventure'

KO Web Desk

SRINAGAR: Western Army Commander Manoj Kumar Katiyar on Thursday said terrorism indicators in Jammu and Kashmir have shown a sustained decline and the overall situation in the Union Territory has become "very normal," even as the Army remains alert to cross-border threats.

Addressing reporters, Lt Gen Katiyar said all terrorism parameters in J&K have consistently gone down. "The situation in Jammu and Kashmir has become very normal. However, this is a well-planned conspiracy by Pakistan to send a few terrorists to disturb the atmosphere. Our Army and all departments of the civil administration are fully prepared," he said.

Responding to queries about recent encounters in the Kathua-Kishtwar belt, the Army commander said forces act swiftly on credible intelligence inputs. "Wherever we receive information, we take immediate and prompt action. This year, in several successful operations, we neutralised terrorists who had come to create disturbances in our country," he said.

On reports of revival of terror launch pads and camps across the border, Lt Gen Katiyar said the Army is closely monitoring developments. "We are fully aware of what actions are taking place there. If they are trying to regenerate or reassemble their terrorist bases, we have that information. We will formulate our plans accordingly," he said.

Referring to reports that terrorist infrastructure was being rebuilt after Operation Sindoor, the Army commander said Pakistan's military leadership seeks to remain relevant through confrontation with India. "Despite repeated peace efforts from our side, they keep doing something to keep this confrontation alive," he said, terming it a matter of concern.

He asserted that India would respond more forcefully to any future provocation and would not be deterred by nuclear threats. "We see it as a bogey meant to prevent us from taking strong action. We will not get deterred by nuclear threats," he said.

When asked about the possibility of Operation Sindoor 2, Lt Gen Katiyar said Pakistan had been taught "a very strong lesson" during Opera-

tion Sindoor and any renewed misadventure would invite a harsher response. "If they create conflict conditions again due to their internal reasons, we will respond in an even better and stronger manner," he said.

Clarifying the sequence leading to the ceasefire after the events of May 7, 2025, the Army commander said that India's Director General of Military Operations conveyed completion of action and sought talks, which were initially declined. "Fighting continued for the next 88 hours. After extensive damage to their military bases, their DGMO approached our DGMO, and it was during that conversation that the ceasefire draft was prepared. After deliberations, our government accepted the request," he said.

Rejecting suggestions that India had targeted civilians or political leadership during Operation Sindoor, Lt Gen Katiyar said the response was precise and objective-driven. "We did not target any civilian areas. We initially targeted only terrorist bases. When Pakistan attacked our military stations, we responded by attacking their military stations and air bases," he said.

Fire Damages Over 20 Shops in Bandipora Market

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: At least 20 shops were damaged in a fire that broke out in the main market of north Kashmir's Bandipora district in the early hours of Thursday, officials said.

According to KNO, the blaze erupted around dawn and spread rapidly to adjacent shops due to the congested layout of the market-place. Thick smoke engulfed the area as flames leapt from one structure to another, triggering panic among residents and traders, they said.

Fire and Emergency Services personnel rushed to the spot soon after receiving information and launched a firefighting operation. Teams of Jammu and Kashmir Police and local volunteers assisted in dousing the flames.

After several hours of efforts, the fire was brought under control, preventing it from spreading to nearby residential houses, officials said, adding that no casualties or injuries were reported.



Property worth crores of rupees is feared to have been damaged, though the exact extent of the losses is being assessed. The cause of the fire was not immediately known, and an inquiry has been initiated to ascertain its origin.

Meanwhile, Bandipora MLA Nizamuddin Bhat visited the site and sought immediate financial assistance and rehabilitation support for the affected traders.

He said around 29 shops were damaged in the blaze, and nearly 39 families dependent on these establishments had suffered losses. "Multi-storeyed buildings

and entire stocks have been reduced to ashes. It will take a long time for them to recover," he said.

Bhat urged the Lieutenant Governor's administration and the Chief Minister to provide compensation beyond routine provisions, stating that existing rules offer limited relief for commercial losses.

He also called for the early settlement of insurance claims of affected traders to enable them to restart their businesses. The MLA announced Rs 20 lakh in assistance for the market from the Constituency Development Fund, subject to applicable rules.

SDH Chadoora Receives Advanced Anesthesia Workstation

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Sub District Hospital (SDH) Chadoora Budgam on Thursday received a latest Anesthesia Workstation, aimed at strengthening surgical facilities at the hospital.

The machine was inaugurated by MLA Chadoora Ali Mohammad Dar in the pres-

ence of Chief Medical Officer Dr Gulzar, Block Medical Officer Dr Riyaz and other concerned officials.

Officials told KNO that with the installation of the new equipment, the hospital will be able to conduct advanced and complex surgical procedures more efficiently. The facility, they said, will further

streamline services under the 24x7 FRU, where gynecological surgeries are already being performed during night hours.

In addition to gynecology, surgical services in ENT, Orthopedics, Ophthalmology and General Surgery are expected to be strengthened with the availability of the latest anesthesia support system.

Inam Ul Haq Siddiqui Appointed Ombudsman

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir government has appointed former senior KAS officer Inam Ul Haq Siddiqui as Ombudsman for Srinagar and Ganderbal districts, entrusting him with overseeing grievance redressal mechanisms in the two key districts, including the Chief Minister's constituency.

According to Government Order No. 61-JK (RD&PR) of 2026 issued on Wednesday, a copy of which lies with Kashmir Observer, the appointment draws upon Siddiqui's distinguished career spanning more than three decades in public administration. An official statement said his vast experience is expected to "reinforce transparency, fairness, and effective grievance redressal mechanisms" across the assigned regions.

During his service, Siddiqui held several pivotal positions, including Additional Secretary to the Government, Chief Executive Officer of the Gulmarg Development Authority, and Project Director of the Governor's Grievance Cell. In these roles, he played a key role in strengthening accountability and improving governance delivery systems. He has also been associated with World Bank-funded initiatives, contributing to financial oversight as well as the modernisation of land records.

Siddiqui's professional profile is further strengthened by advanced training in Management Information Systems from the University of East Anglia, United Kingdom, along with specialised training with the Department of Space in Hyderabad. (Observer News Service)

Govt's TET U-Turn Exposes 'Lies', Questions Credibility: Sajad Lone

JAMMU: Peoples Conference President Sajad Lone on Thursday tore into chief minister Omar Abdullah-led government in J&K, accusing it of misleading the public on the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) issue and demanding clarity on its contradictory stand.

Lone pointed to the volte-face within 24 hours—from the government denying any knowledge of the TET order on Tuesday to placing it in abeyance on Wednesday.

In a post on X, the Peoples' Conference president posed a pointed question: "Did the government lie yesterday? Or do they have no idea what is being signed?"

Arguing that the U-turn exposed the government, he said, "Only a government which has the power to issue the order on TET can keep the order on TET in abeyance."

Lone alleged a pattern where the administration first pleads ignorance and later justifies its actions. "The government denied any prior knowledge. Yet in the Assembly while replying to questions, they justified demotions," he said.

MLA Handwara said the credibility of not just the government but the entire political class stands eroded. "The credibility of not just this government but the institution of politics is in grave danger of being sullied perhaps irreversibly. Why would the masses trust any politician," he asked.

According to KNS, taking a swipe at the administration's defiance, he said, "The audacity of the government can be gauged by the fact that even the fear of getting exposed in the current digital age doesn't deter them from lying through their teeth." (Observer News Service)

Aga Muntazir Raises Naming Issue, Urges Use of 'Sheikh ul-Alam International Airport'

BUDGAM: MLA Budgam, Aga Syed Muntazir, has formally requested the administration to ensure the use of the correct official name for the airport, emphasizing its geographical location within the Budgam district.

In a communication addressed to the concerned authorities, the MLA highlighted that while the facility is officially named Sheikh ul-Alam International Airport, it continues to be erroneously referred to as "Srinagar International Airport" in various official records and communications.

Muntazir pointed out that the airport falls geographically within the jurisdiction of Budgam district, with all essential services—including revenue, police, medical aid, and civic infrastructure—being provided by the Budgam district administration.

"This practice does not accurately reflect the airport's true geographical location or the administrative role of the Budgam district," the legislator stated.

According to KNS, he urged the authorities to issue necessary directives mandating the use of the complete and accurate nomenclature—"Sheikh ul-Alam International Airport, Budgam"—in all official correspondence, notifications, signage, and government records.

The MLA termed the correction a matter of administrative fairness and due recognition for the Budgam district's contribution to the airport's operations. He expressed hope that the request would receive prompt consideration from the authorities. (Observer News Service)

Mughal Road to Reopen for Vehicular Traffic Today

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Authorities have ordered reopening of historic Mughal Road for vehicular movement from Friday (February 27), following the successful clearance of heavy snow accumulation along the high-altitude stretch.

The decision has sparked widespread relief and happiness among residents of Shopian and the Pir Panchal region, who remain cut off from each other for months during the harsh winter season.

According to official orders issued by the district administrations of Shopian and Poonch, accessed by KNO, Light Motor Vehicles (LMVs) will be permitted to ply on the road between Buiyaz and Peer Ki Gali from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM, subject to favourable weather conditions and absence of any unforeseen disruptions.

The reopening follows recommendations from the Officer Commanding, 79 RCC (GREF), after snow clearance operations were completed on the crucial Buiyaz-Peer Ki Gali stretch, one of the most avalanche-prone segments of the route.

Officials said the movement will initially remain



regulated and restricted to daytime hours to ensure commuter safety. Authorities said that traffic will only be allowed under suitable weather conditions, and travellers must strictly adhere to advisories issued by the Traffic Police.

To ensure smooth and safe passage, the 79 RCC (GREF) has been directed to maintain adequate manpower and machinery at vulnerable locations, particularly in avalanche-prone zones. Continuous monitoring of these stretches will be carried out to mitigate risks such as landslides, shooting stones, and sudden snow slides.

The Senior Superintendents of Police of Poonch and Traffic Rural Jammu, along with officials in Shopian, have been instructed to deploy sufficient personnel at key checkpoints, including

Bhramgalla, Buiyaz, and Poshana. These measures aim to regulate traffic flow, enforce timing restrictions, and prevent congestion on the narrow mountain road.

Residents from both sides of the Pir Panchal range have welcomed the move, calling it a "lifeline" that reconnects families, facilitates trade, and reduces travel time between the Kashmir Valley and the Jammu region. Many expressed hope that the road will remain operational for the whole year very soon.

The Mughal Road, officially designated as NH-701A, serves as an alternate route connecting Shopian in south Kashmir with Poonch and Rajouri districts in Jammu.

Apart from its strategic importance, the road also holds historical significance, tracing the route once used by Mughal emperors.

Drug Peddler Arrested in Sopore

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: In its continued efforts to curb drug trafficking and eliminate the menace of narcotics from society, J&K Police arrested a drug peddler in Sopore and recovered Psychotropic substance from his possession.

A police party of Police Station Sopore, as per the statement issued to Kashmir Observer intercepted a suspicious individual during naka checking at Chachu Mode, Iqbal Nagar Sopore. He has been identified as Umar Tariq Dar, son of Tariq Ahmad Dar, resident of Munkak, Batpora Sopore. Upon personal search, Spasmodoxyvon Plus capsules and Alprazolam tablets were recovered and seized as per due procedure.

The accused was arrested accordingly, a case vide FIR No. 38/2026 has been registered at Police Station Sopore and investigation has been initiated.

J&K Police remains committed to making the society drug-free and ensuring the safety and well-being of its citizens. Public cooperation remains vital in this fight against the menace of drugs. (Observer News Service)

OFFICE OF THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OFFICER POSHAN KUNZER

TENDER NOTICE

For and on Behalf of Chairman, Procurement Committee rural/urban, Tender Notices affixed with revenue stamp worth Rs/=5 (Five Only) are hereby invited from fixed price shops/registered shop keepers/Cooperative Stores/Super Bazaars of District Baramulla for Supply of below mentioned items for Anganwardi Centres falling within Project POSHAN Kunzer.

S.No	Item	Specification	Rate to be Quoted per
01	Channa	Black Grade 1	kg
02	Edible Oil Pir Brand	FSSAI Certified	ltr
03	Moongi	Green Grade 1	kg
04	Haldi	FSSAI Certified	kg
05	Salt	FSSAI Certified	kg
06	Biscuits	FSSAI Certified	Packet

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:-

- The Quotations in sealed envelope accompanied with samples of the Nutrition Items Packed in transparent Jars with seal & Stamp Supplying agency should reach the office of the POSHAN Project Kunzer (Chairman-Procurement Committee-Rural/Urban) by or before 06-03-2026 upto 1.00 pm.
- The Specification must mention the brand of item for which the rate is Quoted and the item/Brand must be FSSAI Approved.
- The rates should be Quoted both in wards and figures and covered with transparent tape without writing.
- The Quotations shall be opened 07-03-2026 up to 1.00 pm in presence of the intending Suppliers.
- The Suppliers are also directed to submit the samples of the items before cutoff date.
- The rates should be Quoted for destination at Anganwardi Centres spread across 38 Panchayat Halqas of POSHAN Project Kunzer and should be inclusive of freight Charges and all taxes including SGST and CGST. The supplies shall be delivered at Anganwardi Centres by the supplier.
- All the Suppliers must ensure their requisite registrations with their competent authorities.

Note: Any Supplier failed to submit the sample before the cutoff date shall be exempted from participation in tender process.

No: CDDPO/POSHAN/Estt/Kunz/2026/600-606

Dated:-26-02-2026

DIPK-11364-25

DT: 26/02/2026

Chair Person Procurement

Committee-Rural

Ranji Final: Sensational Nabi Puts J&K in Commanding Position Against Karnataka

Press Trust Of India

HUBBALLI- India's latest pace sensation Aqib Nabi rocked Karnataka's star-studded top-order with a sensational opening spell as Jammu and Kashmir took a vice-like grip on the Ranji Trophy final despite Mayank Agarwal's defiant hundred here on Thursday.

At stumps on the third day, eight-time champions Karnataka were placed at 220 for five, trailing the visitors by 364 runs with Agarwal batting on 130 in the company of wicketkeeper Kruthik Krishna (27).

Nabi ended the day with impressive figures of 3/32 in 14 overs.

This was after Jammu and Kashmir, riding on Shubham Pundir's 121 in a collective batting effort, posted a mammoth first-innings total of 584 in their maiden Ranji final. Nabi, then, took centre stage.

Jammu and Kashmir were in the box seat once they put up

a huge first-innings total, and Nabi then left the Karnataka batters searching for answers.

The 28-year-old Nabi, who dominated the season with over 55 wickets in nine games going into the summit showdown, including a 12-wicket match haul (7/40 & 5/70) against Madhya Pradesh in the quarter-final, got the ball to move away and nip back while also dishing out the occasional yorkers at a good pace.

Staking a claim for a place in the Indian team, Nabi landed the first big blow on Karnataka when he dismissed KL Rahul with a peach of a delivery.

Nabi squared up India Test star Rahul completely with late movement as the ball kissed the edge of the bat on its way to wicketkeeper Kanhaiya Wadhawan, whose loud appeal prompted skipper Paras Dogra to opt for a review after on-field umpire Rohan Pandit decided against raising his finger.

TV replays confirmed the edge, and Dogra was vindicated



in going upstairs at the insistence of his keeper and bowler, resulting in a massive moment in the game just three minutes before lunch. Pumped up, Nabi grabbed two

more wickets of successive balls in the second session to put his team on top. But before Nabi's double blow, left-arm seamer Sunil Kumar got the better of Karnataka captain Devdutt Pa-

dikkal. Padikkal did not show great footwork as Kumar's back of a length delivery that moved slightly induced an edge for Abdul Samad to complete a fine

catch in the slip cordon.

Unfazed by the loss of two big wickets, the seasoned Agarwal at the other end meant business as he went about his task in a thoroughly professional manner, finding the boundaries with some classic strokes.

Even as Agarwal stood firm, the home team lost two more wickets to the brilliant Nabi. He first cleaned up Karun Nair with another unplayable delivery that hit the off-stump after moving away on pitching, leaving the in-form batter clueless.

In walked Ravichandran Smaran, who averages 75 in First-Class cricket, but the middle-order batter's rich form and the incredible stats did not matter to Nabi, who sent him packing for a golden duck with a back of a length ball that straightened a bit after pitching.

Smaran was unsure whether to play or leave it, but the ball took the outside edge and went through to the keeper to leave Karnataka tottering at 57 for

four in 18 overs.

Shreyas Gopal survived the hat-trick ball that hit him on the pad after swinging in sharply.

Gopal and Agarwal then steading the ship with a partnership of 105 runs for the fifth wicket, though J&K still had their nose ahead heading into the fourth and penultimate day's play.

Agarwal, who got a life on 124, then found an able ally in Krishna and added 58 runs for and unbroken sixth wicket.

Earlier, Pundir's hundred and half-centuries from Yawer Hassan (88), captain Dogra (70), Abdul Samad (61), Wadhawan (70) and Sahil Lotra (72) powered Jammu and Kashmir to a mammoth first-innings total.

Prasidh Krishna was the most successful bowler for Karnataka, returning figures of 5/98 in 34.1 overs after toiling for more than two full days.

J&K resumed the third day's play at 527/6 with Lotra and Abid Mushtaq at the crease.

Champions League: Vinicius Helps Real Madrid Advance

Agencies

MADRID- With the winning goal and another corner-flag dance, Vinicius Junior fittingly had the final say in an emotionally charged rematch with Benfica to guide Real Madrid into the round of 16 of the Champions League on Wednesday.

Defending champion Paris Saint-Germain also advanced out of the playoffs — but only after narrowly getting past Monaco — while Atalanta pulled off a remarkable comeback against Borussia Dortmund with a dramatic last-second goal to maintain Italian involvement in the competition.

Juventus fell short of completing its own stunning second-leg recovery, though, eliminated by Galatasaray after extra time.

Vinicius jeered by Benfica fans

Playing a week after being the target of alleged racial abuse in the first leg against Benfica, Vinicius wrapped up Madrid's 2-1 win over the Portuguese team — and a 3-1 victory on aggregate — with his team's second goal in the 80th minute at the



Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

The Brazil star slotted a low finish into the corner and celebrated his goal like he did last week, by dancing beside the corner flag.

Vinicius was loudly booed by Benfica fans nearly every time he touched the ball, a hangover from the first leg when he accused Benfica player Gianluca Prestianni of calling him a "monkey".

Prestianni has denied racially insulting Vinicius while confronting him with his jersey over his mouth, but did not play Wednesday's game after being provisionally banned for one match by UEFA. Benfica coach Jose

Mourinho, who previously led Madrid, was also suspended for the game so didn't take his place in the dugout.

Benfica opened the scoring in the 14th minute through Rafa Silva to briefly bring the score level at 1-1 on aggregate, only for Aurelien Tchouameni to equalize two minutes later for Madrid.

Madrid maintained its record of playing in the round of 16 every year this century and will play either Manchester City or Sporting Lisbon next.

PSG keeps title defense alive

PSG also survived an early scare in

the second leg to advance out of the playoffs for a second straight season.

Protecting a 3-2 lead from last week, the titleholder went behind to Maghnes Akliouche's 45th-minute goal but was then boosted by a red card to Monaco's Mamadou Coulibaly in the 58th.

Goals by Marquinhos and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia put PSG in front in the game. Jordan Teze's stoppage-time equalizer came too late for Monaco. PSG's reward is a meeting with either Barcelona or Chelsea.

PSG right back Achraf Hakimi played a day after being ordered to stand trial in a rape case.

Juve comeback stamped out by Galatasaray

Juventus almost pulled off one of the great Champions League recoveries.

Trailing 5-2 from the first leg, Juve went ahead against Galatasaray when Manuel Locatelli converted a penalty before halftime and overcame a red card to its defender Lloyd Kelly by scoring more goals through Federico Gatti and Weston McKennie to take the game to extra time.

Army Defends Khelo India Winter Games Team Championship

Press Trust Of India

GULMARG- The army won an overall nine gold medals, including eight in the Gulmarg leg, to defend their team championship title in the Khelo India Winter Games here on Wednesday.

Himachal Pradesh finished as the runner-up with four gold medals on the final day of the competition.

The closing ceremony of the KIWG will be held at the golf course here on Thursday, hosted by the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council and managed by the Sports Authority of India. The first leg of KIWG was held in Ladakh from January 20-26.

On the third day of the competition, Army and Himachal Pradesh won an equal number of four gold medals apiece, while hosts J&K won their first gold.



Karnataka's veteran skier Bhavani Thekkada Nanjunda,

who had clinched a hat-trick of gold medals in last year's KIWG, finished at the top of the podium in Nordic women's sprint across 1.5kms.

Bhavani has participated in each of the six editions of the KIWG.

Zubaid Ahmad Lone brought cheer to Jammu and Kashmir by winning the men's giant slalom race in the snowboarding competition. He warded off a stiff challenge from Army's

Vivek Rana.

J&K finished with a gold and a silver and 10th spot in the medal standings.

While Armyman Mayank Panwar was the slalom man of the Games with a pair of gold medals, Army showed complete domination in the Nordic (cross-country) events.

In the 15kms Nordic skiing race, Mohammad Ali (34:21.49 secs) led an Army 1-2-3 with Padma Namgail (34:36.74 secs) winning the silver medal and Sunny Singh (35:16.83 secs) claiming the bronze.

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