

## Anti-Terror Op Enters Day 7 In Rajouri

### Fresh Anti-Terror Operation Launched in Poonch



Press Trust Of India

Jammu: Security forces continued 'Operation Sherwali' for the seventh consecutive day on Friday to hunt down two to three Pakistani terrorists believed to be hiding in the forests of Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, while another anti-terrorist search operation was launched in neighbouring Poonch district, officials said.

The forces targeted specific suspected terrorist hideouts with heavy firepower as the

ultras continued shifting positions across the difficult terrain, valleys and gorges in the Dorimal-Gambhir Moghla belt of the Manjakote area, the officials said.

Joint teams of police and security forces launched a cordon-and-search operation in the Surankote region of Poonch district on Friday after receiving intelligence regarding suspected terrorist movements. There were reports about the presence of two to three individuals, which | [More on P6](#)

## Army Reviews Anti-infiltration Grid Along LoC

Northern Army Commander Lieutenant General Pratik Sharma on Friday reviewed the operational preparedness of the force and assessed the robustness of the anti-infiltration grid along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Kashmir Valley.

"Lt Gen Pratik Sharma, #ArmyCdrNC, visited units deployed along the #LineOfControl in Kupwara Sector to assess robustness of anti-infiltration grid | [More on P6](#)

## J&K Cyber Police Sound Alarm Over Surge In Online Scams

Fake Calls, OTP Frauds & Phishing Links; Advise Two-Step Verification to Prevent WhatsApp Hacks

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Amid a growing number of online frauds and digital scams, the Jammu and Kashmir Cyber Crime Department has issued a public advisory urging citizens to remain vigilant against cyber criminals using fake calls, phishing links, OTP frauds and suspicious online requests to target unsuspecting users.

The advisory comes against



the backdrop of increasing cyber-related complaints from across Jammu and Kashmir, with fraudsters adopting increasingly sophisticated methods to gain unauthorized access to personal information, financial data and social

media accounts. Officials said members of the public should avoid clicking on unknown or suspicious links, refrain from sharing one-time passwords (OTPs) with anyone and carefully verify unfamiliar phone numbers,

messages or online requests before responding.

The department warned that cyber criminals frequently impersonate bank officials, government representatives, customer care executives or even acquaintances to trick victims into revealing confidential information or transferring money.

As part of its safety recommendations, the Cyber Crime Department advised users to strengthen the security of messaging platforms, particularly WhatsApp, by enabling the Two-Step Verification feature. Officials said the additional layer of protection can help prevent unauthorized access to | [More on P6](#)

## Trump Orders End To Iran Blockade

Trans Asia News

Washington: President Donald Trump said on Friday that the United States would lift its naval blockade on Iranian ports as part of a potential agreement with Tehran, while Iranian officials maintained a hardline stance on negotiations and demanded concrete U.S. actions before any commitments.

In a lengthy post on Truth Social, Trump said Iran would complete the "immediate removal" of mines from the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most strategically important shipping routes.

"Ships caught in the Strait due to our amazing and unprecedented Naval Blockade, which will now be lifted, may start the process of 'heading home!'" Trump wrote.

He added that Iran must permanently abandon any pursuit of nuclear weapons and guarantee free navigation through the waterway.

"The Hormuz Strait must be immediately open, no tolls, for unrestricted shipping traffic in both directions," Trump said.

The U.S. president said he would enter the White House Situation Room to make a decision on a potential accord.

"I will be meeting now, in the Situation Room, to make a final determination," he wrote.

Trump also claimed that Iran's enriched uranium stockpiles would be recovered and destroyed under a mechanism involving Tehran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

"Iran's enriched uranium will be | [More on P6](#)

## 670 CAPF Companies To Guard Amarnath Yatra Route

Agencies

Srinagar: The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has approved the deployment of 670 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) for security arrangements during this year's Shri Amarnath Yatra, scheduled to begin on July 3 and conclude on August 28, officials said on Thursday.

Officials said the deployment would be the highest ever for the annual pilgrimage and has been planned in coordination with the Jammu and Kashmir administration and senior | [More on P6](#)



Children enjoy a merry-go-round airplane ride during Eid celebrations in Srinagar on Friday. KO Photo by Abid Bhat.

## 'Delay Causes Irreparable Loss To Litigants'

### SC Sets 3-Month Deadline For HCs To Deliver Reserved Judgments

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: The Supreme Court on Friday directed all high courts across the country to pronounce judgments within three months of reserving orders, observing that delays in delivering verdicts cause irreparable loss to litigants and undermine the justice delivery system.

A bench comprising Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi issued a series of directions aimed at ensuring timely disposal of cases, particularly those involving personal liberty.

Stressing the need for expeditious decisions in bail matters, the bench said orders on bail applications should ordinarily be pronounced on the same day they are heard. In cases | [More on P6](#)

## Swiss Envoy Meets CM, Explores Areas Of Cooperation



Observer News Service

Srinagar: Swiss Ambassador to India Maya Tissafi on Friday called on Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah here and discussed issues of mutual interest and scope for collaboration.

"H.E. Mrs. Maya Tissafi, Ambassador of Switzerland to India, called on the chief minister today in Srinagar and discussed a range of issues of mutual interest, including sustainable tourism, horticulture and allied sectors," the CM's office

said on X.

The Swiss Ambassador had on Thursday called on J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

"Productive meetings in Srinagar with Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on the scope for (Switzerland-India) collaboration in Kashmir -- from sustainable tourism and vocational training to food processing and agriculture," Tissafi said in a post on X.

The Switzerland Ambassador said she was proud | [More on P6](#)

## 'We Should Not Disappoint Our Youngsters': SC On NEET-UG Row

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: We should not disappoint our youngsters, the Supreme Court on Friday said while stressing that the real problem relating to medical entrance examination NEET-UG would not stop till "actual accountability arises".

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the apex court that the government is seriously concerned about the concerns of the youths and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is personally supervising the situation so that "there is no lacunae".

Mehta told a bench of Justices P S Narasimha and



Alok Aradhe that some new mechanisms have been put in place for the NEET-UG retest scheduled for June 21.

"The real problem won't stop till actual accountability arises," the bench observed.

The top court was

hearing pleas, including the one seeking a direction to replace or restructure the National Testing Agency (NTA), which is responsible for conducting the NEET-UG, with a robust and autonomous body to conduct the medical entrance examination.

The bench said it is "actually very traumatic" if something like this happens, not just for the students, but also for their families.

"Accountability will be effective only when you know on whose shoulders, which individual shoulders, the responsibility lies," it said.

The top law officer said, "The buck must stop somewhere".

Mehta said the issue relates to youths and the government is seriously concerned about their concerns.

"Some new mechanisms are also put in place for the June 21 examination. It may not | [More on](#)

## NEET-UG To Shift To CBT Mode From 2027: NTA To SC

Press Trust Of India

The National Testing Agency on Friday told the Supreme Court that it is all set to conduct the NEET-UG exam in computer-based test (CBT)

mode from next year instead of the pen and paper mode after consulting the Centre. The National Testing Agency (NTA), responsible for conducting the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET), made the | [More on P6](#)

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# Mental Disorders Top Cause of Disability Worldwide: Study

Press Trust Of India

The world's burden of mental disorders have more than doubled since 1990, and they are now the leading cause of disability globally, overtaking cardiovascular disease, cancer and musculoskeletal conditions, according to a new study published in The Lancet journal. Researchers from The University of Queensland and Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research (QCMHR) in Australia and the US' University of Washington found that nearly 1.2 billion people worldwide were living with a mental disorder in 2023, nearly double the number in 1990. The increase was largely driven by rising numbers of anxiety and depression, and people aged 15-19 and women are disproportionately impacted, they said. In 2023, 620 million women of all ages were living with a mental disorder compared to 552 million men of all ages globally. Mental disorders also accounted for more than 17 per cent of all years lived with



disability worldwide. In India, age-standardised prevalence of anxiety disorders across both sexes was almost 2,592 per one lakh population in 1990, which rose by 123.5 per cent to 5,793 per one lakh population in 2023. Prevalence of the disorders increased among women by 136.7 per cent during 1990-2023, compared to 102 per cent among men. "These rising trends may reflect

both the lingering effects of pandemic-related stress and longer-term structural drivers such as poverty, insecurity, abuse, violence, and declining social connectedness," said first author Damian Santomauro, associate professor at the Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research in partnership with the University of Queensland. "Addressing this growing challenge will require (a) sustained invest-

ment in mental health systems, expanded access to care, and co-ordinated global action to better support populations most at risk," Santomauro said. Trends from the Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study 2023 were analysed for 12 mental disorders, including anxiety disorders, major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, autism spectrum disorders, ADHD, and eating disorders. The team said that regardless of the health sources available, mental disorders imposed a significant health burden across countries and territories in 2023. The burden has increased over time and a stronger surveillance is required, especially in low and middle-income countries, they said. Women experienced higher rates of anxiety and depression in 2023, while neurodevelopmental and behavioural disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), conduct disorder, and autism are more common in males and tend to peak in adolescence.

# Cycling Could Be Accessible Tool For Improving Brain Health, Review Finds

Press Trust Of India

A review of nearly 90 studies across 19 countries, including the US, Canada and several European countries, where cycling was tested as an intervention has found that the physical activity can be an accessible tool for improving brain health and overall well-being, such as through better moods and increased social connections. Researchers from Outride, a US-based non-profit, The University of Oklahoma and Loma Linda University, said with increasing mental health challenges and low physical activity levels, identifying low-cost, effective ways to support both well-being and movement throughout the lifespan is critical. The findings, published

in the journal Frontiers in Sports and Active Living, suggested that cycling -- particularly outdoors and consistently -- offers the most benefits across well-being domains. "This review demonstrates that going for a bike ride can support everything from boosts in mood, to increases in social networks, to improvements in cognition," lead author Lauren Schuck, senior research manager at Outride, said. The analysis also linked cycling to improvements in reaction time, attention and indicators of brain function associated with focus and cognitive performance. "Results indicate positive impacts of bicycling on well-being, including improved mood, reduced depressive

symptoms, increased social connection and enhanced cognitive functioning, especially among interventions occurring outdoors and over multiple sessions," the authors wrote. In practice, cycling can take on many forms of biking such as school-based riding programs, community group rides, stationary biking at gyms and active commuting, all which provide opportunities to support mental well-being and brain health in everyday life, they said. The team added that cognitive benefits from cycling tended towards an "inverted-U pattern" -- while moderate intensity can support cognition, overly intense exertion can temporarily impair it, they said.

## PUBLIC NOTICE



I, Younus Ahmad Parrey, S/o Mohd Yousuf Parrey, R/o Veeri, Bijbehara, Anantnag, born on 27/03/1979, hereby declare that I have lost my Discharge Certificate and Character Certificate of 9th Class bearing Admission No. 2290, dated 30/22/1993, issued by Government High School Nanil. Despite all efforts, the said documents could not be traced. Anybody having any information regarding these documents may kindly contact the undersigned. In case the documents are found, the same shall be treated as cancelled and invalid for official purposes.

Sd/-  
 Younus Ahmad Parrey  
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X

## NORTHERN RAILWAY

### E-Auction Notice

The Senior Divisional Commercial Manager/FS, Northern Railway, Firozpur and on behalf of President of India invites E-Auction from eligible and registered bidders for the following works over Firozpur Division:

Catalogue No.	Auction Start	Name of work
EAZR-SLR26-27	08.06.2026 at 11:00 Hrs.	Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 04610/F1, 12716/R1, 15136/F1, 04624/F1, 14628/F1, 11058/F1 & 19614/R1.
EAZR-SLR26-28	10.06.2026 at 11:00 Hrs.	Allotment of contract for leasing of parcel space in Train No./SLR compartment: 22552/F1, 19326/F1, 18104/F1, 15532/F1, 19612/F1, 14650/R1, 14682/F1, 14622/F1 & 22446/F1.
EAZR-PACKING45	10.06.2026 at 11:00 Hrs.	Allotment of contract for packing of two wheelers and other parcel packages at JUC.

For other details and registration, please visit Railway website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). No. 179-C/E-auction/FZR/26 Date:- 26.05.2026 1786/2026

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Applications are invited in the prescribed format for filling up the post of **Member in Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB)**, Delhi.

1. The application form for the above post and the detailed information regarding eligibility and the terms and conditions of service is available on below mentioned website of the Ministry and PNGRB.

<https://mopng.gov.in> and <https://pngrb.gov.in>

2. The duly filled in application form along with the desired documents should reach the office of the Joint Secretary (Gas Division), MoPNG, Kartavya Bhawan 3, New Delhi-110001 within 30 days from the date of advertisement in National Daily paper.

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## NORTHERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr. DSTE/FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders on <https://www.ireps.gov.in> against Tender Notice no. 433-Sig-T-12-26-27 Closing Date/Time 19.06.2026 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 tender, 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 online payment modes** available on IREPS portal like Net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

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Earnest Money (Rs.)	337700.00	Period of Completion	09 Months

NOTE: Tenderer should keep himself updated about the Tender amendments, Corrigendum, etc. by remaining in touch regularly with the website.

Tender Notice No: 433-Sig-T-12-26-27 Date:- 27.05.2026 Closing Date/Time : 19.06.2026 15:00 1806/2026

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Children enjoy an inflatable slide during Eid-al-Azha celebrations on the third day of Eid on Friday. KO Photo Abid Bhat.

# Kashmir Reminds Swiss Envoy of Home, Seeks Stronger Ties

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Switzerland's Ambassador to India, Maya Tissafi, said on Thursday that Kashmir's mountainous landscape felt "wonderfully similar" to her home country as she highlighted existing Swiss contributions to the region and discussed prospects for deeper cooperation in key sectors.

Tissafi, who is on a visit to Kashmir, held meetings with Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and People's Conference president and legislator Sajad Lone in Srinagar.

"The breathtaking mountains of Kashmir feel wonderfully familiar to a Swiss," Tissafi said in a post on social media platform X following her meetings.

She said discussions focused on the region's development priorities and future opportunities, noting that Swiss expertise was already contributing to Kashmir's growth through infrastructure projects, hydropower technology, high-altitude climate studies and dairy farming.

According to the ambassador, both sides also explored opportunities for future collaboration in vocational training, hospitality, food processing and tourism, sectors viewed as important drivers of economic development and employment in the region.



Tissafi described her visit as a memorable introduction to the spirit of Kashmir and said she had visited Srinagar's famed Nishat Bagh.

A spokesperson for the Jammu and Kashmir administration said the Swiss ambassador called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha at Raj Bhavan in Srinagar but did not disclose details of their discussions.



Sajad Lone in a post on X confirmed the meeting with the Swiss envoy, saying the two exchanged views on a range of issues concerning the region.

A career diplomat with more than three decades of experience in diplomacy, peacebuilding and development, Tissafi has previously held senior positions within Switzerland's Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, including serving as Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East and North Africa Division and ambassador to the United Arab Emirates.



Her visit comes as Jammu and Kashmir seeks to attract greater international investment and expertise in sectors such as tourism, renewable energy, agriculture and skills development.

# Farooq Abdullah Calls for Moral Introspection

Observer News Service

Srinagar: National Conference President Dr. Farooq Abdullah on Friday called for moral introspection and renewed emphasis on faith and values, while also seeking a thorough investigation into the NEET paper leak and reiterating that dialogue remains the only way to resolve long-standing problems.

Speaking to reporters at Dargah Hazratbal in Srinagar, Dr. Abdullah reacted to the Budgam incident, the controversy surrounding the NEET examination, and the prevailing security and political situation.

In remarks carrying both social and political undertones, the former Chief Minister said society was witnessing moral decline and urged people to reconnect with spiritual and ethical principles.

"We have lost our way and forgotten Allah and the Quran. We have to mend ourselves,"



he said, adding that society had drifted away from moral values.

His comments appeared to stress self-correction and social responsibility amid growing concerns over social discord, and erosion of ethical standards.

Turning to the controversy surrounding the NEET examination, Dr. Abdullah demanded a comprehensive and transparent

probe into allegations of paper leakage, saying the issue had shaken public confidence and affected the future of students.

He said the matter required serious investigation and accountability.

Without elaborating in detail, the National Conference leader also referred to reported examination controversies emerging from BJP-ruled states and said such incidents deserved impartial scrutiny to ensure credibility of competitive examinations.

According to KNT, Abdullah further maintained that dialogue remained the only practical route to resolve disputes and enduring challenges.

While making the remarks in the context of regional tensions and broader political concerns, he did not name any country directly but emphasized engagement and communication over confrontation.

"Dialogue is the only way to settle problems," he said.

# Road Macadamisation in Zadibal to Be Completed Before Muharram, Says MLA

Observer News Service

Srinagar: MLA Zadibal Tanvir Sadiq has assured residents that all major road repair and macadamisation works will be completed before the commencement of the religious month of Muharram.

The assurance comes amid growing public concern over the condition of several roads in areas such as Sazgaripora, Gasiyar, Alamgari Bazar and adjoining localities, where damaged road surfaces have become a source of inconvenience for commuters and residents alike. The issue assumes added significance during Muharram when thousands of mourners participate in religious gatherings and processions across the constituency.

Residents said many roads continue to remain in a dilapidated condition despite repeated representations to the authorities. They urged the administration to expedite the pending works to ensure smooth movement during the forthcoming observances.

"We are approaching Muharram and several roads are still uneven and damaged. These routes witness heavy footfall and traffic during the month, making timely repairs essential," said a resident of Sazgaripora.

Another resident from Alamgari Bazar said proper road infrastructure was necessary to facilitate the movement of mourners, particularly elderly people and children. "We only want the roads to be repaired before Muharram so that people do not face unnecessary difficulties," he said.

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**HIGHWAY STATUS**

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- Mughal Road - ( Open )
- Srinagar- Leh- ( Open )

 <b>HIJRI CALENDAR</b> 13 Zil-Hajj 1447	<b>PRAYERS</b>	
	FAJR	3: 40
	ZUHR	12:28
	ASR	5: 26
	Magrib	7:39
	ISHA	9: 17

## This Day In History

- 1591- Spanish troops in Zutphen surrender to Dutch and English forces under Maurice of Nassau
- 1626- An explosion at the Wanggongchang Gunpowder Factory in Beijing destroys part of the city and kills 20,000 people
- 1631- The Treaty of Fontainebleau signed between Maximilian I, Elector of Bavaria, and the Kingdom of France, establishing a secret alliance between them during the Thirty Years' War.
- 1635- The Peace of Prague signed between the Habsburg Emperor Ferdinand II and the Electorate of Saxony (representing Protestant states of the Holy Roman Empire). It effectively ended the civil war aspect of the Thirty Years' War
- 1646 -Spain & Netherlands sign temporary cease fire
- 1783- Benjamin Tower of Philadelphia publishes 1st daily newspaper in US
- 1808- Napoleon Bonaparte annexes Tuscany and gives it seats in the French Senate
- 1814- Napoleonic Wars: War of the Sixth Coalition - the Treaty of Paris (1814) is signed returning French borders to their 1792 extent.
- 1822- George Wilson and Joe LaRoche betray a planned slave revolt organized by Denmark Vesey in Charleston, South Carolina, confirming an earlier warning from Peter Prioleau. 35 Black people are later hanged. (date is approximate)
- 1842- John Francis attempts to assassinate Queen Victoria
- 1848- Second Battle at Giotto: Sardinia-Piemonte beats Austrians
- 1848- Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo between US and Mexico comes into force, giving California Nevada, Utah and most of Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona to the US in return for \$15 million
- 1862- Battle of Boonville MS - captured Gen Beauregard evacuates Corinth
- 1864- Battle of Bethesda Church [Totopotomoy Creek], cavalry battle fought in Hanover County, Virginia, inconclusive result (US Civil War)
- 1876- Ottoman sultan Abd-ul-Aziz is deposed and succeeded by his nephew Murat V.
- 1896- First car accident occurs; Henry Wells hits a cyclist in NYC
- 1902- Spanish King Alfonso XII, who was elected as a constitutional monarch, suspends the Cortes, Spain's parliament
- 1904- The Japanese Army capture the City of Dairen after landing troops along the south coast of Manchuria
- 1913- Treaty of London signed by the Great Powers, the Ottoman Empire and the victorious Balkan League (Serbia, Greece, Kingdom of Bulgaria, and Montenegro) bringing an end to the First Balkan War
- 1914- The new and then largest Cunard ocean liner RMS Aquitania, 45,647 tons, sets sails on her maiden voyage from Liverpool, England to New York City.
- 1921- Salzburg, Austria, votes to join Germany
- 1933- Patent on invisible glass installation
- 1941- British Army enters Baghdad, chasing pro-German coup government
- 1943- French General Charles De Gaulle arrives in Algiers
- 1943- US troops reconquer Attu Aleutians
- 1946- United flight 521 crashes on takeoff at LaGuardia Airport (NY) 42 die
- 1949- East German constitution approved
- 1959 - Iraq terminates milt assistance pact with US due to neutrality
- 1959 - World's 1st hovercraft (SR-NI) tested at Cowes, England
- 1966 - US launches Surveyor 1 to Moon
- 1967 - Biafra declares independence from Nigeria
- 1967 - King Hussein of Jordan visits Cairo
- 1971 - US Mariner 9 1st satellite to orbit Mars launched
- 1982 - Spain becomes 16th member of NATO
- 1990 - 135 die in a (6.4) earthquake in Peru
- 1990 - Earthquake hit Peru, killing 135
- 1992 - UN votes for sanctions against Serb-led Yugoslavia to halt fighting
- 1998 - A magnitude 6.6 earthquake hits northern Afghanistan, killing up to 5,000.
- 2012 - A number of nations including Germany, Turkey and Canada, expel Syrian diplomats following the Houla massacre



Irshad Mushtaq

Jammu and Kashmir is on the cusp of a major economic breakthrough.

Official figures place the Union Territory's GSDP at Rs 3,15,822 crore, with growth hitting 9.5% over revised estimates for 2025-26. Total expenditure touches Rs 1,05,958 crore, revenue surplus reaches Rs 9,378 crore, and fiscal deficit sits at 4.6% of GSDP.

These figures tell a story of planning and ambition, but they also raise a simpler question: does this growth make the average Kashmiri household financially stronger?

GDP growth remains a macroeconomic indicator, but household strength is a lived reality.

A family feels growth when income stabilizes, medical emergencies spare the savings account, and old age brings financial security.

Services contribute roughly 61% of J&K's economy, agriculture around 20%, and manufacturing about 19%. Household prosperity depends on many sectors working together.

A shopkeeper in Srinagar, an apple grower in Shopian, a taxi driver in Gulmarg and a young graduate in Pulwama all experience the economy differently. Growth becomes meaningful when monthly cash flow improves, uncertainty drops, and wealth creation becomes possible.

Tourism stands as one of the strongest pillars of J&K's economy. Invest India records that tourism contributes around 7% of the UT's GDP, with 2.36 crore tourist visits in 2024.

This sector supports hotels, transport, handicrafts, food services, guides, ponywallas, houseboats and thousands of small family businesses.

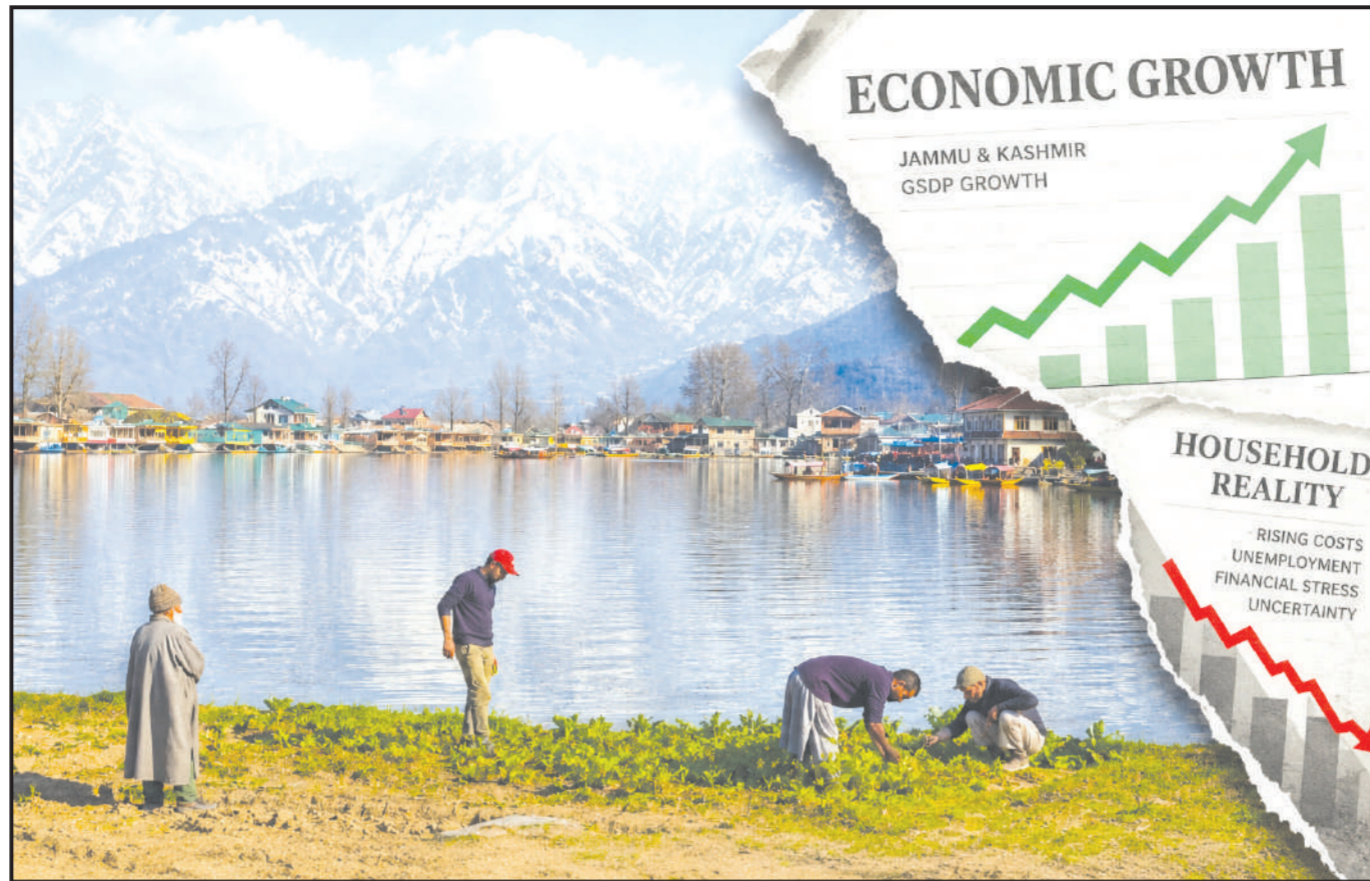
The Government of India sanctioned multiple tourism infrastructure projects under Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD, linking major destinations throughout the UT. These projects build infrastructure, generate employment and boost regional confidence.

Tourism income is seasonal and sensitive. Weather, security perception and transport disruption can affect it. A household depending solely on tourism income should build an emergency fund and diversify income sources.

Agriculture and horticulture serve as inheritance, identity and survival for many Kashmiri families. Invest India states that horticulture generates around Rs 10,000 crore annually, and J&K accounts for 91% of India's almond output.

The region holds nearly 48% forest cover and around 18,000 MW hydropower potential.

The Holistic Agriculture Development Programme holds special importance for household income. HADP documents show a budgetary requirement of Rs 5,012.74 crore for 2022-23 to 2027-28, a projected annual addition of Rs 28,142 crore to SGDP, 18,861 new enterprises, 2.88 lakh additional jobs, and training for more than 2 lakh persons.



## Is Kashmir Really Getting Richer?

With 9.5% growth, a fiscal surplus, and expanding tourism and agriculture sectors, J&K's economy is accelerating, but translating macroeconomic gains into household prosperity remains the central challenge.

HADP targets 13 lakh farm families and emphasizes 2.62 lakh marginal farm families.

Effective implementation can shift families to value-added income through food processing, dairy, mushrooms, beekeeping, high-density plantation, floriculture, trout, wool, poultry and farmer producer organisations.

Kashmiri youth need skills that convert into income. Government jobs provide status, though skills and enterprise create more opportunities than public employment alone.

The future includes self-employment, digital work, tourism services, agri-enterprises, food processing, export-oriented crafts, renewable energy, and women-led businesses.

HADP's project-wise targets show how sectoral programmes create income: 47,250 jobs

“A financially strong household needs a clear structure. The first layer is liquidity, the second layer is protection, the third layer is long-term investment, and the fourth layer is skill-based income.”

through vegetable promotion, 33,600 through farm mechanisation, 25,000 through high-density plantation, 15,700 through dairy, and 7,030 through food processing.

A youth who learns protected vegetable cultivation can build a local supply chain, while a graduate can provide digital services to farmers and artisans.

Skills become income, and income becomes financial strength.

A financially strong household needs a clear structure. The first layer is liquidity, the second layer is protection, the third layer is long-term investment, and the fourth layer is skill-based income.

Fixed deposits and small savings instruments provide safety, especially for emergency funds and senior citizens.

The Department of Economic Affairs publishes official notifications on small savings returns, including the 30 March 2026 notification for Q1 of FY 2026-27.

Such instruments help families preserve capital, though they should be matched with the purpose of money.

Gold holds emotional and cultural importance in Kashmir, linked with marriage, security and family tradition. It works best as one component of a broader portfolio, since a household keeping all savings in gold may face liquidity issues and generate little regular income.

SIPs in mutual funds can help long-term wealth creation when used with discipline and patience. The Reserve Bank of India and MoSPI publish household financial data reminding us that a household balance sheet is as important as a government balance sheet.

Every Kashmiri household can follow a simple financial discipline model.

First, build an emergency fund with six months of essential expenses in safe and liquid instruments. This money serves protection. Returns are a secondary concern.

Second, buy health insurance and term insurance where suitable. A medical emergency can push a family into debt. Insurance serves as a financial shield.

Third, borrow for productive assets. Lifestyle borrowing can weaken a family. Weddings, gadgets, vehicles and social expectations can trap families in debt.

Fourth, divide savings by goal. Short-term money can remain in safe instruments, while long-term money can go into growth assets through SIPs.

Fifth, create a second income skill. A farmer can add value through storage or processing, while a student can learn digital or tourism support skills.

Kashmir has seen difficult times, and families here understand uncertainty.

A weak season, a medical emergency, a failed crop or a delayed job can disturb the household budget. Financial planning in Kashmir is essential.

A young Kashmiri should grow up believing that skill, enterprise, honesty and financial discipline build a good life.

A small business supporting three families is also nation-building. A farmer adopting technology is also an entrepreneur. A woman managing savings wisely is also an economist of her home.

Jammu and Kashmir's growth figures are encouraging, though growth must travel from official documents to ordinary homes.

It must reach the orchard owner, the artisan, the taxi driver, the shopkeeper, the student, the employee, the widow, the pensioner and the young entrepreneur.

The future of Kashmir will be secured by households that save wisely, insure properly, invest patiently, manage debt carefully, learn skills, build enterprises and prepare for uncertainty.

A strong Kashmir economy begins with financially strong Kashmiri households.

— The author is a Srinagar-based financial educator.

## Kashmir's Biggest Tragedy

The erosion of literary culture, social grace, and community ethics has left many Kashmiri youth searching for borrowed identities.

definitions of culture that must be omitted because of the paucity of space, I shall employ Benedict's definition as a starting point to tease out an answer to the questions posed in this essay.

With respect to Kashmir, what "dominant personality traits" from "the great arc of human potentialities" were culled and woven into a "coherent whole"?

This is a difficult question to answer. But it would appear that, barring the poetic and literary genius of Kashmir, now dead and buried, Kashmiri people never had a dominant personality trait except during some tumultuous historical periods.

But a distinction needs to be made here. Kashmiris had a "lived experience" and a "habitus," the traits and characteristics of which included the waane pyend, or corner store evening socialization and gossip among the youth, rof te chakker among women, a somewhat demure and timid nature, the unique character of Kashmiri weddings, and the nature of socialization among the polite sections of society.

There were, and still are, subcultures like the waatals, bands, and others.

But while this may, in a loose sense, refer to culture, it appears more akin to lived experience. The inference that can be drawn from this is that Kashmiri culture veered more toward literature and fine poetry. But this is elite culture, not mass culture. Did Kashmiris have this? Again, the answer may lie in lived experience and a shared "habitus."

However, the sad feature of contemporary Kashmiri society is that both elite culture, literature and poetry, are now in a state of rest in peace, while the mass "culture" of lived experience is on life support.

The reasons for this can be teased out, but the entire onus cannot lie on the "wayward" youth of Kashmir.

Reasons first. Primarily, it appears that millennial capitalism, where production has been divorced from consumption, where foreign capital flows rule the proverbial roost, and where the

“As the economy becomes more financialized here, and as credit becomes a more dominant paradigm than a robust work ethic informed by political economy, and as the divorce between production and consumption deepens, things are likely to get worse.”

economy is fetishized, is the "culprit."

In such a system, consumption, or consumerism, becomes a surrogate for culture.

This fetishization and surrogacy are followed by Kashmiri youth lock, stock, and barrel, as they blindly imitate its most insalubrious aspects.

While this is a global trend, and some call it westernization, which it is not, because some salubrious aspects of "westernization" entail ethics, social responsibility, and integrity in socio-economic matters, at least in an ideal-type schema.

So why are Kashmiri youth gyrating to the siren song and pied piper of millennial capitalism?

One prong of the answer, which meshes into the other, is that the pull of millennial capitalism is so strong that it leaves the young culturally shattered, like roadkill. But this would not have happened if the young had confidence in themselves and their culture. How does this drool manifest itself?

I have a few anecdotal examples to offer here that may have a bearing on this. The best vantage points for observations and anecdotes that illustrate the argument are Kashmiri cafes and gyms. In the latter, I have had terrible experiences.

In cafes here, fake westernization and the pull of millennial capitalism are on eloquent display. Kashmiri yuppies, dressed in garishly ill-fitting and badly designed Western clothing, speaking English in fake accents, and eating food that is totally alien to them, though now normative across the world, are at their fake best.

Unable to really eat stylishly with forks and knives, and putting on airs that are at odds with their real selves, they perform a type of borrowed modernity. Even the waiting staff, mostly from rural areas of Kashmir, try to outdo each other in their fakery, which makes them seem like "modern clowns" or village idiots trying to find their bearings in the city.

In gyms, which I do not patronize, it appears from hearsay and observation that a "six-pack body" is the ideal. The name of the game behind this six-pack body is not a healthy lifestyle or even a passion for fitness. Rather, the premise is informed by power plays, showmanship, and the quest for female attention.

In essence, the gym power play is what I call "male surrogacy," that is, a pretense of manhood and courage as defined by the latest social media influencer.

Part of this feeds into the matrix of gangs and subgroups formed on the basis of rivalries and petty power games. But Kashmiri youth gangs again appear to be more about posturing, like eyeballing, rude comments designed to pass off as bravery, walking with swagger, mutual insults, and so on, than anything serious.

While this is the most visible aspect of our youth's drool over consumption, it is a far cry from my younger days, when smoking a cigarette, even surreptitiously, was seen as a crime, making a pass at a girl was considered abhorrent, and talking in a loud voice was seen as uncouth in the more polite sections of society.

This was a time when, to cite an example from my living memory, my grandfather, Haji Mir Qazi Basheer Ahmed, would walk the streets of the neighbourhood with his tasseled shalwar falling over his brightly polished shoes

and a starched turban adorning his handsome face. Every passerby would lower his eyes and offer salaams in the politest possible tone.

It was a time when my maternal grand-uncle, Khwaja Mohiuddin Mattoo, was the person people looked up to in setting the moral, ethical, and even religious tone of a neighbourhood.

This was also a time when such eminences grises and their peers across Kashmir looked after the needy, the marginalized, and the vulnerable in their communities.

Lovingly and fondly, these greats of the past were called "totha" or "taeitt saeb," beloved elders.

But those times and those people are now long gone. What remains are the wayward youth of Kashmir, where the noble, the ethical, and the faithful are invisibilized by the vulgarity swimming in the miasma-defined whirlpool of millennial capitalism.

As the economy becomes more financialized here, and as credit becomes a more dominant paradigm than a robust work ethic informed by political economy, and as the divorce between production and consumption deepens, things are likely to get worse.

With access to internet-driven consumerist titillations, modernization-induced rural labour migration to urban centers, and the corresponding pressure on land and other resources, the rural folk of Kashmir will perhaps naturally want to imitate their urban peers.

This grotesque imitation and dynamic will probably kill off the remnants of Kashmiris' lived and shared experiences and habitus.

The facilitators of this sordid and ungainly end will, in all likelihood, be the wayward youth of Kashmir. Among its many tragedies, this will constitute yet another tragedy for Kashmir. Alas!

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Wajahat Qazi

Kashmiri youth have become wayward. This may be a statement of the obvious. But the question is: what accounts for this?

Broadly, does this mean or imply cultural disintegration, a fragmentation of the self and its eventual dissolution? Is Kashmir losing its cultural soul?

And, more provocatively, did Kashmir ever have one?

These questions, as salient and important as they are, beg a further set of questions: what makes me, as an observer and student of culture in both broad and specific terms, raise them? What is their premise and predicate? Are there larger economic and global forces at work whose scope is so expansive that they throw cultures across the world under the proverbial bus?

An explication warrants and calls for a definition of culture first.

In her brilliant oeuvre, Patterns of Culture, the great anthropologist Ruth Benedict postulated culture as "being a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action [...] where every society selects a few dominant personality traits from the great arc of human potentialities and weaves them into a unified, coherent whole."

While there are other brilliant and cogent

# Farewell to Bashir Badr (1935–2026)

The poet whose couplets became part of daily speech is gone, but his words continue to circulate widely.



Rameez Rasool Mir

The twenty-eighth of May, 2026, came like any late spring morning. Word spread through literary circles by noon that Bashir Badr had drawn his final breath. He was ninety-one, his long life tracing the arc of modern India.

The bard was born on February fifteenth, 1935, in Ayodhya. That boy grew into the man who redefined Urdu poetry for millions.

Badr spent his intellectual life at Aligarh Muslim University, where he completed his doctorate. He later led the Urdu Department at Meerut College as its head, guiding students through the landscapes of classical and modern literature.

The academy recognized his contributions with the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Padma Shri, and numerous honours from Urdu literary institutions. These accolades sat lightly on a man whose true classroom was the coffee house, the bus stop, the late-night conversation.

He taught formal courses by day and lessons in informal humanity by night.

What distinguished Badr from his contemporaries was his choice to abandon the Persianized ghazal. He wrote in the Urdu of bazaars and bedrooms, of tea stalls and college

corridors. His verses spoke of love, memory, solitude, and sorrow using words plain enough for any reader.

A rickshaw puller in Lucknow could recite his lines with the same ease as a professor in Hyderabad.

This accessibility was deliberate, the result of a conscious choice to democratize the ghazal.

Badr believed poetry belonged to the people who inspired it, to the taxi driver as much as the academic. He wanted his couplets to travel on tongues before they ever reached shelves.

This simplicity was his genius.

While classical poets built elaborate gardens of metaphor, Badr planted his verse directly in the soil of human experience. He gave the ghazal a new direction after Partition, when Urdu poetry searched for a fresh identity amid social upheaval.

His poems became mirrors in which ordinary people saw their own faces. The lover saw his beloved, the exile his homeland, the grieving their tears acknowledged at last.

He restored to Urdu poetry its original purpose: the faithful recording of human emotion.

His most celebrated lines ring with tolerance and grace: "Dushmani jam kar karo lekin ye gun-jaaish rahe, Jab kabhi hum dost ho jaayein to sharmindah na hon."

The verse asks enemies to hate fiercely while preserving the possibility of friendship.

During an era of division, Badr argued for humanity through the architecture of his couplets. He understood that hatred burns itself out, while the door left open for reconciliation defines civilization. His philosophy was practical, grounded in the knowledge that



**KASHMIRIS WHO HAVE ENDURED DECADES OF LOSS FOUND IN BADR'S LINES ABOUT MEMORY AND LIGHT A LANGUAGE FOR GRIEF.** The valley has produced many poets, but it also recognizes kinship when it hears it. Badr was family. His verses entered Kashmiri households through radio broadcasts, wedding recitations, and the private screens of mobile phones.

human beings must share the earth.

He knew that yesterday's adversary might become tomorrow's neighbour, and he wrote accordingly.

His poetry moved beyond romance into the territory of social awareness and philosophical depth. He wrote about loneliness with the honesty of someone who had lived it. He wrote about communal harmony as a man who believed in peace between divided people.

Whether addressing personal sorrow or collective suffering, his words maintained a direct connection to lived reality. His pain was specific, located in particular rooms, attached to particular names, rooted in particular streets.

With Badr, the reader always found companionship. The poet sat beside him, sharing the same bench, the same wound, the same hope.

Kashmiris who have endured decades of loss found in Badr's lines about memory and light a language for grief. The valley has produced many poets, but it also recognizes kinship when it hears it. Badr was family. His verses entered Kashmiri households through radio broadcasts, wedding recitations, and the private screens of mobile phones.

"Let the light of our memories stay with us. Who knows what street our life might end on."

These lines travelled far beyond their origin. They became anthems for households where exile and longing formed the background of daily life.

Badr wrote about the streets where life ends, and Kashmiris recognized their own precarious geography.

A poet who could speak of ending streets understood what it meant to live in a place where any corner might become a final destination. He gave form to fears that had waited for words.

The obituary form usually marks an ending, but Badr's story resists such finality.

His books remain open on the desks of students. His couplets continue to circulate through phone screens in Srinagar and Saharanpur alike.

The voice that understood human emotion better than most has stopped speaking, but the words remain, stubbornly alive. They persist in the mouths of lovers, the arguments of politicians, the consolation of friends.

Poetry this honest survives the centuries. It accumulates meaning with passing years.

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## The Man of the Hills

A Gujjar-Bakarwal leader whose journey from Poonch's remote hills to national policy tables redefined tribal identity, education access, and constitutional recognition in India's north.



Shahid Hakla Poonchi

The hills of Poonch rarely spoke to power, and few voices crossed beyond them.

Wazir Mohd Hakla Poonchi rose from that silence, carrying mountain life into public space. His world took shape amid steep terrain, scarce services, and long seasonal distances in what is now Jammu and Kashmir.

He was born on 14 March 1915 in Bandi Chechian village of Tehsil Haveli, District Poonch. Fateh Mohammad Hakla, his father, was a respected landowner and pastoralist. After early loss in the household, Makhni Bi sustained the family, with guidance from Noor Mohammad, his paternal uncle, who influenced his early years.

Raised amid pastoral life, he absorbed early lessons in endurance and community responsibility. Urdu, Persian, and Arabic became part of his learning, though lived experience among pastoral families served as his deeper education. Observations of exclusion, limited schooling, and social distance among tribal groups formed an early intellectual direction toward public work.

Shaped by the freedom

movement's currents, he absorbed ideas of equality, justice, and collective belonging. Travelling through villages of Poonch and Rajouri, he engaged households, gatherings, and nomadic routes with conversations on education and social awareness. Those journeys connected scattered settlements into a shared awareness of public voice.

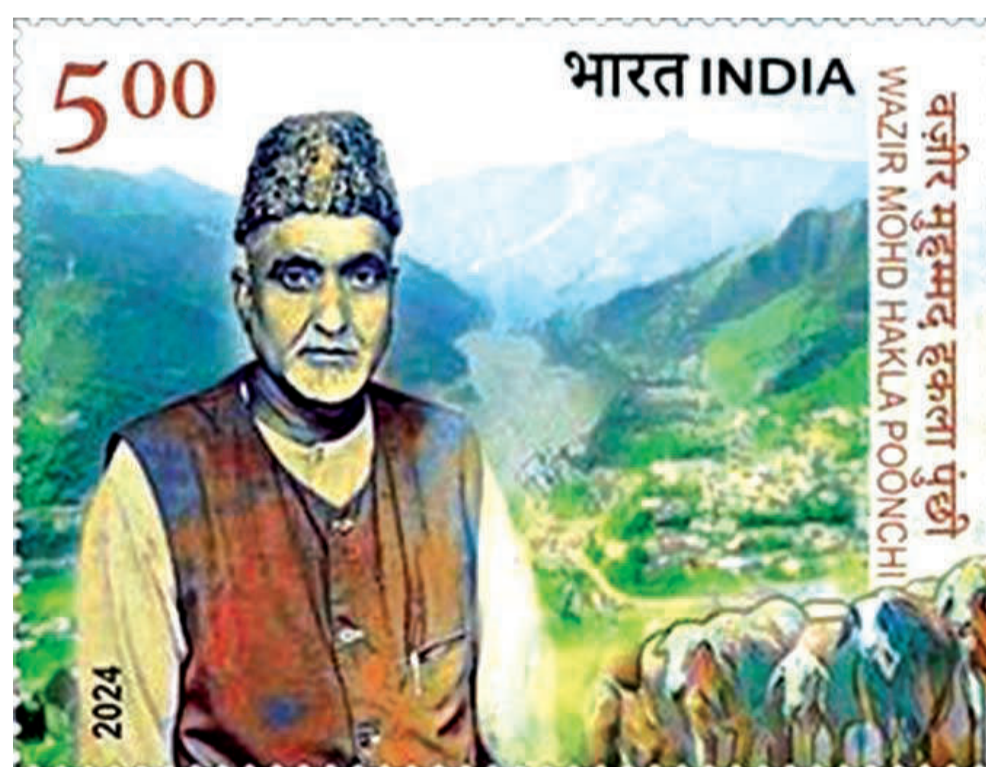
Guided by a strong belief in unity, he consistently emphasized harmony among Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jain communities. Public life in his approach remained grounded in coexistence, mutual regard, and shared civic responsibility.

That stance earned respect across diverse groups within border districts of Jammu region.

Emerging as a leading figure of the Gujjar-Bakarwal community, he dedicated his public mission toward addressing deep structural exclusion. Mountain settlements lacked roads, schools, electricity, healthcare access, and administrative reach. Seasonal migration patterns intensified isolation, while educational opportunities remained rare.

Travelling repeatedly through remote belts, he spoke directly with families about schooling, awareness, and participation in public institutions. His advocacy placed education at the center of community transformation. Scholarship access, hostel facilities, and mobile schooling models became consistent demands in his public interventions.

Leading organized efforts from 1958 onward, he advanced constitutional recog-



ognition for Gujjar-Bakarwals through Scheduled Tribe status. Conferences in Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh propelled his advocacy into national forums.

A landmark moment unfolded at the All India Gujjar Conference in Badarpur, Delhi on 11 June 1965, where he presented structured claims for tribal recognition.

Presenting further demands in 1975, he led a delegation to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, submitting formal memoranda outlining constitutional safeguards for tribal populations. His advocacy connected local pastoral life with national policy frameworks, placing mountain concerns within

parliamentary discourse.

Advancing educational reform, he repeatedly argued for institutional support systems for tribal children. Scholarship frameworks expanded, hostels for Gujjar-Bakarwal students emerged, and mobile schooling concepts gained administrative attention. Roads, electricity access, healthcare facilities, and drinking water systems formed consistent components of his development agenda.

Writing and research formed another dimension of his contribution. Studies on Gujjar history, oral traditions, folklore, and Gojri language positioned him as cultural chronicler alongside activist. His

work supported expansion of Gojri language programming through All India Radio stations in Jammu and Srinagar, strengthening cultural visibility in public broadcasting space.

During the 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pak conflicts, border districts of Poonch and Rajouri experienced heightened uncertainty. His presence among border communities strengthened civilian cooperation with Indian Army units. Public engagement during wartime reinforced shared commitment to national stability and local coordination.

Recognition came during his lifetime through the title "Wazir-ul-Qaum," conferred

in 1973 at the All India Gujjar Conference in Kotla Mubarakpur, Delhi. Public institutions later carried his name across Jammu and Kashmir, including roads, schools, and community halls in Poonch district. A road from Drungli bypass to Noona Bandi Bridge in Nangali block bears his name, along with a government high school in Bandi Chechian and a conference hall and library near the Gujjar-Bakarwal Boys Hostel in Poonch.

National recognition expanded in later decades. A commemorative ₹5 postal stamp was sanctioned on 25 July 2022 by the Government of India and released on 24 July 2024 at Raj Bhawan Srinagar by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha. Educational departments in 2025 directed placement of his portrait and stamp frames across colleges, schools, post offices, hospitals, and university spaces across Jammu region, including Jammu University and medical institutions in Rajouri and Poonch.

Wazir Mohd Hakla Poonchi passed away on 15 August 1977 after a brief illness, a date closely tied to the memory of national independence.

His work continued beyond his lifetime, sustained through institutions, policy change, and the cultural legacy he helped set in motion across the decades that followed.

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**WAZIR MOHD HAKLA POONCHI'S LIFE STANDS WITHIN THE HISTORY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR AS A SUSTAINED MOVEMENT LINKING MOUNTAIN COMMUNITIES TO CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION.**

His journey placed education, cultural preservation, and civic participation at the center of public life for the Gujjar-Bakarwal community, leaving a record that continues through institutions, language, and collective memory.

# SC Reiterates Mandatory TET Exam for In-service Teachers

## Extends Deadline Till Aug 2028

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday reiterated that clearing the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) is mandatory for in-service teachers and extended the time till August 31, 2028 for passing the exam to remain in service.

A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Manmohan dismissed a batch of more than 65 review petitions filed by several state governments, teachers' associations and individual teachers challenging the court's earlier ruling in the Anjuman Ishaat-e-Taleem Trust case.

The petitioners had sought reconsideration of the court's 2025 judgment which held that in-service teachers appointed before the enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, and having more than five years left before retirement,

must clear the TET within two years from September 1, 2025.

In an order, the court said, "TET examination must be conducted by the relevant authorities expeditiously as well as the time and resources required for the same are limited, we alter and extend the timeline from 2 to 3 years, the qualification has to be obtained by 31st August, 2028 instead of 31st August, 2027, as originally directed".

The court, however, made it clear that no further extension of time would be granted.

Rejecting the argument that the TET requirement amounted to retrospective application of the law, the bench said the statutory framework of the RTE Act clearly envisaged that even in-service teachers were required to acquire minimum qualifications within a prescribed timeframe.

The judgment noted that the RTE Act specifically dealt with teachers already in service at the commencement of the law and granted them time to obtain

the prescribed qualifications.

"The legislature intended the in-service teachers to also meet the prescribed minimum threshold," the court said.

The bench further held that exemptions contained in subordinate legislation or notifications issued by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) could not override the parent statute.

"To make the verdict inoperative based on the contention that several thousands of teachers would be rendered out of service as a consequence thereof would mean that teachers who do not possess the TET qualification would continue in service, impacting the educational future of generations to come," the court said.

The petitioners had contended that teachers appointed before the RTE Act and the 2011 amendment to the NCTE Act could not be compelled to qualify TET midway through their careers, arguing that it amounted to an unfair change in service

conditions.

The court rejected the submission, saying the requirement of TET was linked to maintaining standards in elementary education and flowed from the constitutional mandate guaranteeing quality education to children.

"The RTE Act is a child-centric legislation and must be read so. Service of teachers cannot come at the cost of educational future of the children," it said.

The states had also argued that enforcing the TET condition within a short period could result in a large number of teachers losing their jobs, adversely affecting public education and continuity of teaching in schools. Acknowledging the practical difficulties, the court said continuity in elementary education and the welfare of children required a pragmatic approach.

"At the same time, service of teachers cannot come at the cost of the educational future of the children," the bench said.

# Book On Op Sindoor Tells Stories Of 100 Personnel

Observer News Service

New Delhi: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday released a commemorative volume documenting the experiences of 100 officers, sailors and airmen who participated in Operation Sindoor, describing the military action as an unprecedented success that compelled Pakistan to seek a ceasefire within four days.

The publication brings together first-hand accounts from personnel across the Army, Navy and Air Force, offering a rare glimpse into the human experiences behind one of India's most significant recent military operations.

Speaking at the release function, Singh said the volume goes beyond being a historical record and captures the personal journeys of soldiers who carried out the operation.

"It was different from all other wars that India has fought so far. The commemorative publication goes beyond historical account and captures the

personal experiences of brave soldiers. It also offers insight into the human dimension of modern warfare where leadership, courage, judgment under pressure and commitment translate strategy into success," Singh said in a post on X.

The event was attended by Anil Chauhan, Dinesh K Tripathi and A P Singh.

According to the Defence Ministry, the accounts included in the volume span all three services as well as the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff. Contributors include combat aviators, naval personnel, air defence operators, special forces troops, signalers, logisticians and medical officers who played various roles during the operation.

Compiled under the guidance of the Chief of Defence Staff, the publication seeks to highlight the experiences of those who executed the mission on the ground and at sea, rather than focusing solely on strategic decisions taken at higher command levels.

Singh described the book as a tribute to the personnel involved in the operation and said it allows citizens to connect with the dedication and resilience of the armed forces.

"The citizens need to draw inspiration from this book and become citizens worthy of the tremendous cost the nation pays to ensure security and maintain sovereignty," he said.

The Defence Ministry said the volume deliberately departs from traditional military histories, which often focus on decisions made in headquarters and operations rooms. Instead, it seeks to capture the realities of warfare as experienced by soldiers on the Line of Control, air defence crews tracking hostile drones, fighter pilots undertaking combat missions and sailors maintaining operational readiness at sea.

Calling it an effort to recover the "texture" of war as it is lived by service personnel, the ministry said the book preserves the voices and experiences of those who formed the backbone of Operation Sindoor.

## CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

### Anti-Terror Op

prompted a thorough search of the area, they added.

Operations were still ongoing when the last reports were received.

In Rajouri, the search operation continued following reports of movement of terrorists in the Dormal-Gambhir Moghla belt after security forces carried out fire assaults on suspected hiding places, they said.

Northern Army Commander Lieutenant General Pratik Sharma, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Jammu Bhim Sen Tuti and a CRPF Inspector General visited the area on Wednesday and reviewed the ongoing anti-terror operation in the dense forests.

On Thursday, heavy firing and multiple grenade launcher assaults by security forces resulted in visible plumes of smoke rising from the forested area, indicating successful strikes on targeted locations during the operation, officials said.

Security forces have been diligently tracking the movement of the suspects, following blood stains believed to have been left by the fleeing terrorists on Monday. They successfully uncovered a hideout after a brief exchange of fire while strengthening their cordon in the area where the blood stains were found, they added.

Backed by helicopters, drones and sniffer dogs, joint teams of the Army, Jammu and Kashmir Police and paramilitary forces have been conducting extensive searches in the adjoining areas. The cordon around the operation zone has also been reinforced through the deployment of additional troops, officials informed.

As part of enhanced security measures, vehicle checks on roads connected to the operation area have intensified, and more reinforcements have been dispatched into the forests of Dori Maal in the Gambhir Moghla region.

Operation Sheruwal began last Saturday after an encounter broke out between terrorists and security forces in the Dormal-Gambhir Moghla belt following intelligence inputs about the presence of terrorists in the Singhpora-Chatroo area.

A joint team of the Army, Jammu and Kashmir Police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) launched a massive cordon-and-search operation in the area based on specific information about the movement of suspected terrorists.

The operation led to a brief exchange of fire after contact was established with the terrorists, prompting security forces to continue extensive searches in the rugged and heavily forested terrain.

According to preliminary reports, two to three Pakistani terrorists, including a commander, are believed to be hiding in the area.

### Army Reviews

and review #OperationalPreparedness," Army's Northern Command said in a post on X.

The commander also witnessed a demonstration of innovations successfully implemented in field conditions to integrate Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) and Counter Unmanned Aerial System (CUAS) with Techniques Training and Procedures (TTPs) for enhanced combat capabilities along the LoC.

"He commended all ranks for their battle-hardened resilience, indomitable courage & relentless commitment to duty amidst a challenging operating environment," the Army said.

The Army commander stressed the continuation of persistent endeavours to improve battle drills and skills to become technically adept, mentally robust and tactically agile, the post added.

### J&K Cyber Police

accounts and reduce the risk of impersonation and hacking attempts.

The department also stressed the importance of prompt reporting in cyber fraud cases, especially those involving financial transactions. Early intervention, officials said, can significantly improve the chances of blocking suspicious fund transfers and facilitating recovery of lost money.

Citizens have been urged to immediately report incidents of cyber fraud to the nearest police station or through the National Cyber

Crime Reporting Portal. Victims can also seek assistance by calling the dedicated cyber helpline number 1930.

Officials said the advisory is part of the department's ongoing efforts to raise public awareness about digital safety and encourage responsible online behaviour as dependence on internet-based services, digital payments and social media platforms continues to grow.

The Cyber Crime Department reiterated that vigilance remains the first line of defence against online fraud and urged users to remain cautious while sharing personal information, conducting financial transactions or interacting with unknown contacts online.

### Trump Orders

unearthed by the United States, in conjunction with Iran and the IAEA, and then destroyed," he said.

Dismissing reports that Washington was considering financial compensation or investment-linked arrangements with Tehran, Trump said no funds would be transferred under the emerging framework.

"No money will be exchanged, until further notice," he wrote, adding that only "items of far less importance" had been agreed so far.

It was not immediately clear whether Iran had accepted the conditions outlined by Trump or whether the reported U.S. naval blockade had formally been lifted.

### Iran Signals Hardline Position

Iranian officials, meanwhile, reiterated a cautious and uncompromising approach toward negotiations with Washington.

Iranian Parliament Speaker and chief negotiator Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said Tehran had little faith in US commitments and viewed military strength, rather than diplomacy, as the source of leverage.

"We seize concessions not through dialogue, but with missiles. In negotiations, we merely make them understand," Qalibaf wrote on X.

He added, "We have no trust in guarantees or words, as only actions are the measures."

"No action will be taken before the other side acts," he said.

Qalibaf further argued that preparedness for future conflict remained central to any agreement.

"The winner of any agreement is the one who prepares better for war from the day after," he said.

Indirect talks between Iran and the United States, mediated by Pakistan and facilitated by Qatar, have continued in recent weeks. Iranian officials say discussions are based on a 14-point proposal aimed at ending hostilities, halting what Tehran describes as American maritime aggression, and securing the release of Iranian assets frozen abroad.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said earlier this week that the negotiations were focused on ending military aggression and did not include discussions over Iran's nuclear programme or management of the Strait of Hormuz.

"The indirect talks with the United States are centred on ending aggression on all fronts," Baqaei told reporters, adding that "the nuclear issue or the management of the Strait of Hormuz are not part of the negotiations."

### Memorandum Not Yet Finalized

Despite speculation that the talks were nearing a breakthrough, Iranian officials sought to downplay expectations.

An informed source cited by Iran's Tasnim news agency said reports in some Western media outlets about the contents of a potential memorandum of understanding were inaccurate.

"The text of the memorandum has not yet been finalized," the source said.

"If the text is finalized, it will be officially announced."

"For this reason, the texts that Western media outlets have so far published as part of the main text are devoid of accuracy," the source added.

According to the source, the draft memorandum has undergone several revisions in recent days.

Separately, Ali Baqeri Kani, deputy secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said on Thursday that the United States must release all frozen Iranian assets without conditions.

"The United States should unconditionally

release all of Iran's frozen assets," Baqeri Kani said, describing the demand as "the legal right" of the Iranian people.

The latest statements underscore the significant gaps that remain between Washington and Tehran despite ongoing diplomatic contacts, with both sides publicly maintaining firm positions on key security and economic issues.

### 670 CAPF Companies

security agencies.

The CAPF personnel will be deployed along the entire pilgrimage route, from Lakhapur to the cave shrine in south Kashmir Himalayas. Security cover will include the Baltal and Pahalgam routes, Baltal and Nunwan base camps, Yatri Niwas Jammu, Jammu-Srinagar National Highway and other key transit points.

Additional paramilitary forces are expected to start arriving in Jammu and Kashmir in the first week of June, while the deployment process is likely to be completed by June 25, officials said.

The Indian Army will secure strategic heights along the yatra routes and areas around the cave shrine, while Jammu and Kashmir Police will coordinate security operations during the pilgrimage.

Officials said the security arrangements have been planned in a way that anti-terror operations across the Union Territory remain unaffected.

Special focus will remain on the Baltal and Chandanwari routes, the cave shrine and major transit camps. Road Opening Parties (ROPs), area domination patrols and surveillance along highways will also be intensified, they said.

Security along the Jammu-Srinagar railway corridor has also been strengthened in view of the expected increase in pilgrims travelling by Vande Bharat trains. Areas including Udhampur, Katra, Reasi, Banihal and Qazigund will remain under heightened vigil during the yatra.

More than 3.5 lakh pilgrims have registered for the pilgrimage since the process began on April 15 through designated bank branches across the country, officials said.

The 57-day pilgrimage will commence simultaneously from the Baltal and Nunwan-Pahalgam routes on July 3 and conclude on August 28 on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan and Sawan Purnima.(KNS)

### 'Delay Causes

where orders are reserved, the court said they must be pronounced and uploaded by the following day.

The apex court noted that delays in judicial pronouncements can have serious consequences for litigants, especially in matters concerning personal freedom, and emphasized that timely decisions are essential to maintaining public confidence in the justice system.

The bench also directed that orders granting bail or suspending sentences should be communicated to jail authorities immediately after being pronounced. It said efforts should be made to ensure that undertrials or convicts granted relief are released preferably on the same day and, in any case, no later than the next day.

The directions are expected to streamline judicial processes and reduce delays that often leave litigants waiting for extended periods after hearings have concluded.

The Supreme Court's observations come amid growing concerns over the pendency of reserved judgments and the impact of delays on access to justice, particularly in cases involving the liberty of individuals.(Agencies)

### Swiss Envoy Meets

to share how Swiss expertise is contributing to the region's development through the private sector, from tunnels and bridges to hydro-power tech and joint research.

"And yes, great conversations in Kashmir do seem to come with a cup of kahwa on the side!" she added.

Tissafi also visited the famous ski resort of Gulmarg in north Kashmir's Baramulla district.

### 'We Should Not

be appropriate to divulge what is there, otherwise the very purpose will be frustrated. It is being monitored at the highest possible executive level," he said.

"The prime minister personally is supervising this so that there is no lacunae," Mehta said.

The bench cited the example of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and said there was never a situation like paper leak in the examinations conducted by the commission and the NTA needs to learn from other institutions.

"It is actually very traumatic if something like this happens, not just for the students, but also their families and everybody," the bench said, adding, "They invest so much of emotion".

The bench also highlighted the problem that most of the institutions were ad-hoc.

"So much so, that you will have the best of the officers working and everybody will depend on that. It is the phenomenon everywhere in our country," it said.

"It is not the individual who has the capability, it is the institution which has the capability. That is what you need to prepare," the bench said.

It noted that pursuant to its May 25 order, Director (Legal) of the NTA has filed an affidavit.

"We will go through your affidavit and we will keep monitoring it for sometime," the bench said.

It also noted that Dr K Radhakrishnan, who is a former chairman of the ISRO and presently working in honorary capacity as the chairman of the high-powered steering committee on NTA Reforms, has also filed an affidavit indicating the implementation of the recommendations of the committee and the future course of action.

The bench asked the Centre to file an affidavit indicating how and in which manner the process of conduct and conclusion of the examination, year after year, will be done.

It said the Centre would also indicate the method by which an "institutional memory through continuity of human resource, institutional expertise through deployment of specialised personnel and institutional plurality by composition of experts is put in place".

"The endeavour is to ensure that NTA would have the wherewithal, physical as well as intellectual, to ensure that no incidents such as the 2024 or 2026 examinations occur," the bench said.

It said the affidavit was filed by the Centre within six weeks and posted the matter for hearing in the second week of July.

During the hearing, the bench asked Radhakrishnan, who was present in the court, how much monitoring of the implementation has happened.

"Also tell us how did this failure occur," the bench asked, adding, "Despite the monitoring on the basis of the high-powered committee's recommendation, if this incident has happened, then there is something wrong with the original recommendation because it did not conceive of a situation which would have arisen".

Radhakrishnan said many of the recommendations were initiated already.

He said in 2025, NEET-UG was conducted "almost satisfactorily" and there were a couple of incidents of power failure in some of the examination centres.

On May 12, the NTA cancelled the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Undergraduate), or NEET, held on May 3 amid allegations of paper leak. A re-examination has been scheduled for June 21.

The paper leak allegations are under investigation by the CBI.

After the questions of NEET-UG were allegedly leaked in 2024, the top court had refused to cancel the test but passed various directions aimed at tackling paper leaks and also a criterion for cancelling public exams.

While hearing the pleas on May 25, the top court observed it's sad that the NTA has not learnt lessons from the earlier NEET paper leak.

It had sought the response of the Centre, NTA and CBI on pleas for the replacement of the testing agency with a robust and autonomous body to conduct the medical entrance exam.

The top court had issued notice on the pleas, including the one filed by the Federation of All India Medical Association through lawyer Tanvi Dubey

### NEET-UG To Shift

statement before the apex court, which is hearing a batch of petitions related to the paper leak this year that led to the cancellation of

the May 3 exam.

In an affidavit filed before a bench of Justices P S Narasimha and Alok Aradhe, the NTA said a high-level committee of experts (HLCE) has recommended transition of NEET-UG to CBT mode.

It said that among the major NTA examinations, only NEET (UG) 2026 was conducted in the pen and paper (PPT) mode, primarily according to the scheme of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the National Medical Commission.

It said all other major NTA examinations are already conducted in CBT mode.

"The HLCE has specifically recommended transition of NEET (UG) from PPT to CBT mode, along with the introduction of multi-session and multi-stage testing," said the affidavit filed by Director (Legal), NTA.

"The transition will be implemented from the next examination cycle in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (the client ministry for NEET-UG) - thereby bringing all major NTA examinations onto the CBT platform," it said.

The affidavit was filed in pursuance of the May 25 order passed by the apex court, which is hearing pleas, including the one seeking a direction to replace or restructure the NTA with a robust and autonomous body to conduct the medical entrance examination.

In its affidavit, the NTA said it has acted in good faith, with due diligence and in accordance with law to safeguard the integrity of the national examination system and the interests of a very large majority of bona-fide aspirants whose effort and integrity is not in question, and will not be devalued.

It said in June 2024, the Ministry of Education had constituted a HLCE under the Chairmanship of Dr K Radhakrishnan, a former chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation, to make recommendations for the reform of the NTA.

The affidavit said the HLCE had submitted its comprehensive report to the Centre in October 2024 and the report contained 101 recommendations.

It said with a view to ensuring that the recommendations contained in the HLCE report were implemented in a structured, time-bound and accountable manner, the ministry constituted a high-powered steering committee (HPSC) in November 2024 under the chairmanship of Radhakrishnan.

The NTA also gave details about the functioning of the HPSC.

"It is respectfully submitted that, under the oversight of the HPSC, the answering respondent (NTA) has implemented, or is in the advanced stages of implementing, a substantial body of the recommendations contained in the HLCE report," the affidavit said.

It said standard operating procedures for question-paper setting and vetting have been institutionalised.

It said the NEET (UG) 2026 examination was conducted on May 3 at 5,432 centres and over 22.05 lakh candidates appeared in the test.

"The re-examination scheduled on June 21, 2026 will be conducted under a further strengthened SOP framework, with multi-layer authentication, surveillance and inter-agency coordination, in line with the directions and oversight of the HPSC," the affidavit said.

It said the cancellation of the May 3 examination and reference of matter to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for investigation "are themselves illustrative of the seriousness with which the answering respondent and the Government of India view examination integrity".

It said the decision was taken in the interest of students and in recognition of the trust on which the national examination system rests.

"All necessary cooperation is being extended by the answering respondent to CBI in the ongoing investigation," the NTA said.

Giving details of the way forward, the NTA said randomisation and the rotation policy are being further institutionalised for the engagement of paper setters, moderators, vetters, translators, proof readers, etc for high-stakes and sensitive examinations.

"Further, AI-based tools shall be used for at least 85 per cent of the translation work in order to minimise human intervention and reduce the time involved in the process and consequently lower the probability of any security compromise," it said.(Agencies)

# IMD Forecasts Below-Normal Monsoon for 2026, El Niño Raises Agriculture Concerns

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast below-normal southwest monsoon rainfall for 2026, warning that developing El Niño conditions could influence rainfall distribution and pose challenges for agriculture and water resources across the country.

The updated forecast has heightened concern among policymakers and the farming sector, given the critical role monsoon rains play in India's agriculture-dependent economy.

According to the IMD, the southwest monsoon season from June to September is expected to remain below the Long Period Average (LPA), with rainfall projected at around 90 to 92 percent of the seasonal average. The weather agency said the overall monsoon is most likely to fall in the "below normal" category.

The IMD's forecast follows growing indications of El Niño



development over the Pacific Ocean during the monsoon season, a climatic phenomenon often associated with weakened rainfall over parts of the Indian

subcontinent. The department said evolving atmospheric and oceanic conditions could affect both the spread and distribution of rainfall during key agricul-

tural months.

Meteorologists noted that rainfall distribution remains as significant as total seasonal rainfall, particularly during July and August

when sowing and crop growth activities reach peak levels.

The southwest monsoon contributes nearly 70 percent of India's annual rainfall and remains central to agricultural output, groundwater recharge, and rural livelihoods. Any prolonged rainfall deficit or uneven distribution can directly affect crop production, especially in rain-fed farming regions.

According to KNT, Experts have warned that weaker monsoon conditions may place pressure on crops such as pulses, oilseeds, cotton, and non-irrigated rice while also raising concerns over food prices and inflation if rainfall shortfalls persist.

While weather officials stressed that seasonal forecasts are periodically updated and regional rainfall patterns may vary, the below-normal outlook has already triggered discussions around preparedness, water management, and contingency planning in agriculture-dependent states.

## Arrest Warrant Issued in Gurez Musk Deer Poaching Case

**SRINAGAR:** The Jammu and Kashmir Wildlife Department has issued an arrest warrant against one identified hunter and launched a manhunt to trace others involved in the killing of an endangered male musk deer in the forests of Gurez in north Kashmir's Bandipora district.

Wildlife officials said the animal was allegedly killed for extraction of its musk pod, which is illegally traded in the black market.

Wildlife Warden North Kashmir, Intesar Suhail, said one of the accused has been identified and further legal action is underway.

"So far one person has been identified. He is a tribal from Rajouri. An arrest warrant has been issued and further action will follow," Suhail said.

Officials said efforts are underway to identify and arrest two more persons believed to be involved in the incident.

The case surfaced after photographs and videos showing the hunters with the slain animal circulated on social media, prompting the Wildlife Department to initiate an investigation.

According to officials, the incident is believed to have taken place about a week ago in the Doudhpathi Kissar area of Gurez forests.

Visuals purportedly linked to the incident show three hunters cutting the carcass of the endangered Kashmir musk deer, scientifically known as *Moschus cupreus*, with a firearm seen nearby.

Officials said a wildlife team, including range officers and field personnel, has been deputed to Gurez to investigate the killing and collect evidence.

As per KNT, The musk deer is protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and hunting of the species is prohibited. Wildlife officials said poachers often target the animal for meat, skin and particularly the musk pod, which carries high black-market value. (Observer News Service)

## Nadigam Railway Crossing in Budgam to Remain Closed for 4 Days



Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The railway level crossing at Nadigam Halt in Budgam has been closed for vehicular traffic for four days due to track upgradation works, officials said. According to a public notice issued by Northern Railways, the crossing, located between Budgam and Mazhom, will remain closed for all vehicular traffic from today till Monday, June 01

at 8:00 PM, for a period of 96 hours. The notice said the closure is necessary for the installation of a modern rubberised level crossing surface aimed at ensuring smoother and safer movement for commuters.

Commuters have been advised to plan their journeys in advance, allow extra travel time and cooperate with traffic police and railway staff deployed at the site.

## Development Projects, Healthcare Facilities Reviewed in Nowshera



Observer News Service

**NOWSHERA:** Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary on Friday conducted an extensive tour of Nowshera, inspecting various developmental works and healthcare facilities in the region.

During the visit, the Deputy Chief Minister met several delegations and individuals who appraised him of various public issues, development needs and local concerns.

He also visited Sub-District Hospital (SDH) Nowshera to assess the healthcare facilities and patient care being provided at the institution.

During interaction with the patients, attendants and hospital staff, the Deputy Chief Minister sought feedback regarding functioning of the hospital and the quality of services being delivered.

He directed the concerned authorities to ensure better healthcare services, avail-

ability of essential facilities and timely treatment for the patients. He emphasised that public welfare and efficient healthcare delivery are among the top priorities of the government.

The Deputy Chief Minister also inspected the Dak Bunglow Nowshera to review the ongoing works, maintenance and overall facilities aimed at improving public convenience and hospitality standards. He stressed the need for timely completion of works while maintaining quality standards to enhance the public utility and facilities for the visitors.

"The government is committed towards responsive governance and grassroots development. Meaningful public interactions immensely help in understanding the aspirations of the people and ensure that governance remains people-centric and result-oriented," maintaining the Deputy CM.

## Water Levels Expected to Rise Downstream as NHPC Announces Silt Flushing Exercise in Kargil

Observer News Service

**SRINAGAR:** The National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) has issued a public advisory regarding reservoir flushing at the Chutak Power Station in Kargil district, warning that water levels downstream are expected to rise significantly during the scheduled exercise on May 31.

According to an official communication issued by the Chutak Power Station authorities, silt flushing at the Chutak Barrage will be carried out on May 31 from 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM. During this period, water will be released from the reservoir, resulting in increased river discharge downstream of the barrage.

Authorities have urged residents living near downstream areas of the

barrage to avoid approaching the river under any circumstances during the flushing period.

The advisory specifically cautioned the public not to venture near the riverside as fluctuating and elevated water levels may pose safety risks.

NHPC officials said public announcements would also be made to alert residents and prevent movement near vulnerable stretches downstream of the power station.

The notice further stated that there would be no power generation from the Chutak Power Station during the flushing operation.

The communication has been circulated to district authorities and key departments, including police, irrigation, public works and disaster management agencies, as part of precau-

tionary and coordination measures ahead of the exercise.

Reservoir flushing is a periodic maintenance activity undertaken at hydropower projects to remove accumulated silt and sediment, ensuring operational efficiency and protecting long-term infrastructure performance.

As per KNT, authorities have advised the public to remain cautious and cooperate with safety instructions during the scheduled operation.

The Chutak Hydroelectric Plant is a 44 MW run-of-the-river power station on the Suru River in Kargil, Ladakh. Operated by NHPC Limited, it harnesses local water resources to generate vital electricity for the remote Kargil district, officially achieving a record power generation of over 205 Million Units recently.

## Program on "Healthy Youth, Prosperous Nation" Organized at University of Jammu

Observer News Service

**JAMMU:** "Healthy Youth, Prosperous Nation" Ek Sankalp - NASHA MUKT BHARAT, an awareness program, was successfully organized by Science Clubs, Utsaah, jointly with the Department of Zoology in collaboration with, the Jammu and Kashmir Science, Technology and Innovation Council (JKSTIC), Department of Science and Technology (DST), UT of J&K on May 29th, 2026 at the University of Jammu.

Under the theme of Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan, which is a flagship campaign to create awareness and reach youth and society for understanding the gravity of substance abuse. The youth and various stakeholders came to discuss and take part in the activities for a common goal of making India free of substance abuse. Slogans and posters were displayed during the event to spread awareness.

The welcome address was delivered by Prof. Seema Langer, Head, Department of Zoology and she shared her views about this critical issue of society with students, scholars, faculty, staff and employees present during the event and urged everyone to spread awareness at their level to make a better tomorrow.

Shruti Khanna, Assistant Director, JKSTIC, was the

special guest during the program and appreciated the efforts. She applauded the initiative and encouraged more such programs to join hands for a NASHA MUKT NATION.

The chairperson, Utsaah, Prof. Meena Sharma, Dean, Faculty of Science, University of Jammu, extended her wholehearted support for the event.

Expert guest speaker Manoj Sauguna, Superintendent, NCB Jammu Zonal Unit, Narcotics Control Bureau, informed the audience about this grave issue of drug addiction, its spread across India and J&K and how the government is strategizing to combat this societal malaise. He shared relevant information regarding whom to reach out to and how to reach out. He asked everyone to take part against this war and informed the 14446 and 1933 helpline no. of deaddiction centres across India and J&K.

During the Valedictory session, slogan competition participants were awarded and certificates were distributed. The event was conducted by Dr. Chinmoyee Maharana, Assistant Professor, Department of Zoology and Coordinator, Science Club, Utsaah, University of Jammu, who delivered a vote of thanks to all, especially JKSTIC for sponsoring the event, dignitaries for their valuable insights and everyone for engaging and active participation.

## GIS-based Master Plan for Kathua Discussed at Stakeholders' Meeting



Observer News Service

**KATHUA:** A meeting of all stakeholders was held on Friday at the DC Office Complex Kathua to discuss the modalities for preparation of the Draft Local Area Plan under the GIS-based Master Plan for Kathua town and its adjoining areas.

The meeting was attended by MLA Kathua Dr. Bharat Bhushan, MLA Jasrota Rajiv Jasrotia, Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Sharma, Additional Deputy Commissioner Mahima Madan, Chief Planning Officer Ranjeet Thakur, concerned district officers and representatives of Beopar Mandal.

Assistant Professor Dr Sakshi, the representative of the Project Coordinator from the Centre of Urban Planning for Capacity Building, Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU), Amritsar also joined the meeting virtually.

She delivered a detailed PowerPoint presentation highlighting the roadmap of the project and outlining the key parameters for formulation of the Local Area Plan. The presentation focused on planned urban growth, environmental sustainability, improvement in quality of life, economic prosperity and development of efficient infrastructure and public services.

It was informed during the meeting that Kathua town and its peripheral areas qualifying the prescribed parameters would be incorporated in the final Master Plan after taking into consideration the suggestions and inputs of elected representatives and

stakeholders. The meeting was further informed that a comprehensive survey process would soon be initiated for collection of vital data required for scientific planning. The identified gaps and issues would subsequently be placed in the public domain for suggestions and feedback before finalisation of the plan.

Speaking on the occasion, MLA Kathua Dr. Bharat Bhushan stressed the need for incorporating various pressing urban issues in the planning process. He highlighted concerns related to flood vulnerability, canalisation of Kathua Khad, creation of additional parking spaces, decongestion of the main market, relocation of street vendors and establishment of a proper drainage system for the town. He also called for an extensive and data-driven survey to ensure effective planning.

MLA Jasrota Rajiv Jasrotia emphasized the need to take into account the developmental requirements of the areas adjoining Kathua town to ensure their systematic and balanced growth in future.

Deputy Commissioner Kathua Rajesh Sharma underscored the importance of meticulous and people-centric planning. He stated that the proposed plan should be formulated in a manner that strengthens urban infrastructure without adversely affecting the existing facilities and the people dependent upon them.

The meeting decided that consultations with all stakeholders would be carried out in a continuous and participatory manner during the formulation of the Master Plan.

## CRPF Officer Dies after Collapsing at Zainapora Camp

**SRINAGAR:** An Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) died after collapsing inside a camp in the Zainapora area of south Kashmir's Shopian district on Friday, officials said.

The ASI was posted at the Horticulture Camp in Zainapora when he suddenly fell unconscious inside the premises, prompting immediate evacuation by fellow personnel.

He was shifted to the Community Health Centre (CHC) Zainapora for treatment, where doctors declared him brought dead on arrival, officials said.

The deceased was a resident of the Rajbagh area of Kathua district.

Authorities have taken cognisance of the incident and initiated further proceedings to determine the circumstances surrounding the death.

As per KNT, no further details were immediately available. (Observer News Service)

## Massive Forest Fire Rages in Rajouri Raises Alarm over Ecological Damage

**RAJOURI:** A massive forest fire raging at different locations in Rajouri district has caused extensive damage to forest cover, with hundreds of trees reportedly affected and concerns mounting over destruction to local flora and fauna.

The blaze has been reported from forest areas near Manur Gala and Koteranka in the Rajouri Forest Division, where fire has continued to spread for the last several days amid prevailing heat wave conditions.

Officials said forest fires broke out at multiple locations in the division as soaring temperatures and dry conditions intensified the situation.

Teams from the Forest Department, assisted by allied departments, have been engaged in efforts to control and contain the blaze in the affected forest belts.

The fire has triggered concern among locals and environmental observers, who fear long-term ecological damage due to destruction of vegetation and wildlife habitat in the affected areas.

The circumstances surrounding the fire have also become a matter of concern, with calls emerging for a thorough inquiry into the incidents and assessment of whether any preventable factors contributed to the spread of the blaze.

Officials have not yet released a formal estimate of the total area damaged or the scale of losses to forest resources.

According to KNT, authorities continued firefighting and containment efforts as the fire remained active in parts of the Rajouri Forest Division. (Observer News Service)

## Truck Plunges Into 400-Foot Gorge at Zojila

**SRINAGAR:** A driver and his conductor had a miraculous escape after a 14-wheeler trailer truck plunged nearly 400 feet into a deep gorge near Zojila along the Srinagar-Kargil route, officials said on Friday.

The accident occurred near Pani Matha in the Zojila sector when the trailer, traveling from Sonamarg to Kargil, reportedly went out of the driver's control and skidded off the road before falling into the gorge.

Officials identified the vehicle as a 14-wheeler trailer bearing registration number JK01BC/2359.

Despite the severity of the accident and the considerable height from which the vehicle fell, both the driver and conductor survived in what officials and locals described as a miraculous escape.

The truck, however, was completely destroyed in the crash.

The mishap triggered concern among commuters and transport operators using the Srinagar-Kargil Highway, a strategically important yet challenging mountain route known for sharp curves, steep gradients and difficult driving conditions.

Police and local authorities reached the spot soon after the accident to assess the situation and collect details regarding the circumstances leading to the crash.

According to KNT, the condition of the driver and conductor has been shifted to Primary Health Centre Sonamarg, while authorities were examining the cause of the accident.

The Zojila axis witnesses frequent traffic movement during the operational season, and road safety concerns often surface due to difficult terrain and unpredictable weather conditions in the high-altitude pass. (Observer News Service)

## Ladakh Govt Revises Dearness Allowance for Employees Under 6th Pay Commission

Observer News Service

**LEH:** The Administration of the Union Territory of Ladakh has revised the Dearness Allowance (DA) for government employees continuing to draw pay under the 6th Central Pay Commission, enhancing the allowance from 257 percent to 262 percent of basic pay with retrospective effect from January 1, 2026.

The revision has been ordered by the Finance Department of the UT Administration in pursuance of the Ministry of Finance,

Government of India notification dated April 22, 2026.

According to the order, the revised allowance will apply to employees of the Union Territory of Ladakh who continue to receive salary under the pay scale and grade pay structure of the 6th Central Pay Commission.

The Finance Department said the increase of five percentage points in Dearness Allowance has been approved by the competent authority and will take effect from the beginning of the current year.

The order also clarified the method of calculation and payment of the revised allowance. Payments involving fractions of 50 paise and above will be rounded off to the next higher rupee, while amounts below 50 paise will be ignored.

Officials said the revision has been issued in line with the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance guidelines and forms part of periodic adjustments aimed at offsetting the impact of inflation on employees covered under the older pay structure.



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