

Honouring Nari Shakti



32+ crore Jan Dhan accounts opened for women
3+ crore women became Lakhpati Didis
₹16+ lakh crore MUDRA loans to women, strengthening entrepreneurship

12

Vishwas ke, Vikas ke, Jan-kalyan ke

Amarnath Yatra

HM To Chair High-Level Security Meet On J&K

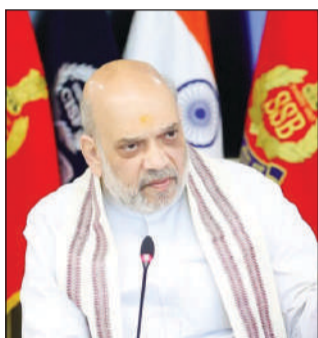
Observer News Service

Srinagar: Union Home Minister Amit Shah will chair a high-level security review meeting on Jammu and Kashmir in New Delhi on Friday, with a special focus on preparedness for the annual Amarnath Yatra scheduled to begin next month.

Sources said Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, along with senior civil, police and security officials, will attend the meeting and brief the Home Minister on arrangements made for the smooth conduct of the pilgrimage.

Among those expected to participate are the Director General of Police, the Chief Secretary, senior Army officers and officials from various security and intelligence agencies.

The meeting comes weeks ahead of the commencement of the annual pilgrimage to the Amarnath cave shrine, which attracts thousands of devotees from across the country and involves extensive security and



logistical arrangements across multiple districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sources said the review will focus on the overall security situation in the Union Territory, with particular emphasis on preparedness for the yatra. Discussions are expected to cover deployment of security forces, intelligence coordination, surveillance measures and contingency planning to tackle potential threats.

The Home Minister is also likely to assess the ground situation and review steps taken to ensure the | [More on P6](#)

Maintain Normalcy, Secure Yatra Route: CRPF DG

CRPF Director General G P Singh on Thursday directed personnel to take proactive measures to ensure a safe and peaceful Amarnath Yatra in the south Kashmir Himalayas. Singh, who is on a three-day visit to the | [More on P6](#)

Aim Is To Make J&K A Cradle Of Hockey Talent: LG

Investments In Infrastructure Helping Popularise Hockey In J&K

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir aims to emerge as a cradle of world-class hockey talent, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said on Thursday while attending the closing ceremony of the ALFA Hockey Inter-School Tournament-2026 at the Synthetic Hockey Astro Turf, Polo Ground, Srinagar.

Addressing participants and officials, Sinha said the administration is focused on expanding hockey infrastructure and creating a talent pipeline that supports players from the school level to the national stage.

"It is our aim to see more schools and more young players take up hockey in the coming



years and establish Jammu Kashmir as a cradle for world-class hockey talent," he said.

The tournament brought together students from 32 schools across various districts, including Kupwara, Bandipora, Kulgam and | [More on P6](#)

LPG Bookings Touch 1.40 Cr In 3 Days

Centre Assures Adequate Supplies

Agencies

Srinagar: A sharp rise in demand for fuel and cooking gas in parts of the country has prompted the Union Petroleum Ministry to issue a public assurance that supplies of crude oil, petrol, diesel, LPG and natural gas remain stable and adequate.

The clarification comes amid increased consumer demand reported at some retail fuel outlets and LPG distribution points, triggering concerns over the availability of essential | [More on P6](#)

J&K Statehood, Airport Closure Top Omar's Delhi Meetings

Meets Union ministers; Pitches Awantipora Flights During Srinagar Airport Shutdown

Seeks Central Support For Jobs, Infrastructure, Tourism & Hydropower Development In J&K

Observer News Service

New Delhi: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday raised Jammu and Kashmir's key political and developmental concerns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, pressing for the early restoration of statehood and seeking stronger central backing for tourism, infrastructure, connectivity and employment generation.

During the meeting, Omar discussed a range of issues concerning Jammu and Kashmir, including statehood, economic development, infrastructure expansion and tourism promotion.

In a post on X after the meeting, Omar said he had discussed issues of importance to Jammu and Kashmir, including the early return of statehood, the state of the



economy, the pace of development and the promotion of tourism.

He also congratulated Modi on completing 12 uninterrupted years in office, describing it as a landmark achievement.

Statehood Remains Key Political Demand

According to officials, Omar conveyed what he described

as the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir for the restoration of statehood, saying it would strengthen democratic institutions, deepen public participation and help advance the next phase of the region's development.

He urged the Prime Minister to take the process forward at the earliest.

The meeting comes amid

continued demands by the National Conference-led government for the restoration of full statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, nearly seven years after the erstwhile state was reorganised into two Union Territories in August 2019.

Statehood has emerged as the principal political demand of the government since it assumed office following last year's Assembly elections. Omar has repeatedly raised the issue with both Prime Minister Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, urging the Centre to fulfil commitments made before Parliament and the Supreme Court regarding the restoration of statehood.

The chief minister has consistently maintained that the elected government's ability to effectively address public concerns | [More on P6](#)

From Oil Grab to Olive Branch

Trump's Dramatic Iran Reversal

Agencies

New Delhi: US President Donald Trump threatened on Thursday to "assume total control" of Iran's oil and gas industries and warned that American forces would hit the country "VERY HARD TONIGHT", a dramatic escalation that came just days after he suggested a peace agreement with Tehran was within reach.

The remarks underscored the increasingly unpredictable nature of Washington's messaging on Iran, with Trump alternating between declarations that a deal is imminent and threats of intensified military action.

Trump said in a social media post that the US would hit Iran "VERY HARD TONIGHT" and would "assume total control" of Iran's oil and gas industries, including the key Kharg Island oil terminal, in the "not too distant future."

Trump compared his plans for Iran to how the US assumed control of | [More on P6](#)



Iran Closes Hormuz Again

A fragile ceasefire between the United States and Iran appeared to collapse early on Thursday after US forces launched fresh strikes on targets in southern Iran, prompting Tehran to announce retaliatory military operations and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most critical oil shipping chokepoint. The escalation marked one of the most serious direct military | [More on P6](#)

Custody Battles: Children Not 'Mere Evidentiary Objects', Says SC

Restricts Routine Psychological Evaluation of Children

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: The Supreme Court on Thursday set aside key directions of the Bombay High Court that had ordered a multi-layered psychological evaluation of a minor girl at the centre of a custody dispute involving allegations of sexual abuse against her father, holding that children cannot be treated as "mere evidentiary objects" in legal battles between estranged parents.

The top court ruled that psychological or



psychiatric evaluations of children should not be ordered routinely in custody, visitation or parental-access disputes and laid down a set of guidelines to protect minors from unnecessary trauma during

judicial proceedings. Dispute Stemmed From POCSO Case

The case arose from a dispute between the parents of a minor girl after the mother alleged that the child had been sexually abused by her father while the family was living in the United States between 2018 and 2019.

After returning to India, the mother lodged a case against her husband under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The father denied the | [More on P6](#)

Night Traffic Curbs On NH-44 For Repairs

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Night traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway (NH-44) will remain suspended on select dates from June 12 to facilitate repair and resurfacing works in Ramban district ahead of the annual Amarnath Yatra, officials said on Thursday.

According to an official order, traffic movement between Nashri and Navgug Tunnel will be completely suspended from 10 pm to 5 am during the intervening nights of June 12-13, June 14-15 and June 16-17.

The Ramban district administration has granted permission for the repair works, which are being carried out to improve road conditions before the Amarnath pilgrimage beginning July 3.

In view of the scheduled closure, no vehicle will be allowed to proceed from Udhampur towards Ramban, Banihal and Srinagar after 5 pm on the affected dates. Similarly, no vehicle will be permitted to travel from Qazigund | [More on P6](#)



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TIME - 🕒

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Explosive-Free Mining Technology Deployed at Srinagar Limestone Quarry

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A limestone mining site near Srinagar, where the use of explosives is prohibited, has adopted a new extraction technology to increase production while reducing environmental and operational impacts significantly.

Volvo Construction Equipment (Volvo CE) on Thursday announced the deployment of its EC300 excavator equipped with a BR40P Vibro Ripper attachment for TCI Max at the quarry site, where conventional rock-breaking methods were reportedly struggling to meet production targets.

According to the company, the vibration-based system fractures and extracts limestone continuously without the need for drilling or blasting. Unlike conventional breakers, the technology is designed to reduce shock waves and limit unnecessary excavation, enabling more precise extraction of target material.

Volvo CE said the equipment is expected to generate approximately three to four times the output of conventional breaker units operating on similar excavators,

potentially addressing production constraints faced by the quarry.

The company also highlighted environmental and operational benefits, including reduced vibration impact on surrounding areas, lower fuel consumption and improved workplace safety.

Commenting on the deployment, Volvo CE India Managing Director Dimitrov Krishnan said mining operators in blast-restricted zones often face significant challenges in maintaining production levels and that the new system is intended to provide an efficient alternative while minimizing environmental impact.

The EC300 excavator belongs to the 30-38 tonne category and is commonly used in quarrying, rock handling and mining operations. Industry observers say the deployment reflects a growing focus on technology-driven solutions for mining projects operating under environmental and regulatory constraints.

For TCI Max, the introduction of the new system is expected to improve efficiency and support controlled limestone extraction at the Srinagar-area quarry.

DC Reviews Block-Wise Status of Development of Playfields in Every Panchayat

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo chaired a meeting here at Meeting Hall of the DC Office to review the Block-wise progress of the initiative to develop at least one playfield in every Panchayat of the District.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiaz Ul Aziz, Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Assistant Commissioner Development, Tariq Ahmad, Executive Engineer REW, SDM East, Zuber Ahmad, Tehsildars of Panthachowk, Tehsildar Central Shalteng, Tehsildar Chana-pora and other senior officers of Rural Development Department.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner took a detailed review of the status of land identification, feasibility assessments, administrative approvals and other preparatory works required for execution of physical works for the development of playfields in all Panchayats across the District.

On the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner was given a Block-wise updates regarding the identification of suitable land and

the progress achieved so far under the initiative. He was informed that out of 21 Panchayats across the four blocks of Harwan, Qamarwari, Srinagar and Khomoh, playfields have already been developed in 10 Panchayats. The remaining Panchayats are at different stages of land identification, feasibility assessment, and approval processes.

The DC directed the concerned Officers to expedite the identification of suitable land in the remaining Panchayats and ensure that all feasibility reports, technical clearances and administrative approvals are completed at the earliest. He stressed the need for close coordination among all stakeholders to achieve the objective of developing at least one playfield in every Panchayat within the prescribed timelines.

Emphasizing the importance of creating quality sports infrastructure at the grassroots level, the DC said that the initiative would provide recreational facilities to local youth and promote sporting activities in rural areas. He also underscored the need for regular monitoring of progress and timely resolution of issues to ensure successful implementation of the project.

Minister Javid Flags off Farmers Group for Training Camp at SKUAST

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperatives and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar flagged off a group of farmers for a one-day training and awareness programme at SKUAST-Kashmir.

The programme was organized by the J&K Kisan Advisory Board with the objective of enhancing farmers' knowledge and exposure to modern agricultural practices. Around 80 progressive farmers from different areas participated in the training session.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister em-

phasized the importance of capacity building and knowledge-sharing in strengthening the agriculture sector. He said that the training programme would enable the farmers to gain firsthand knowledge about high-density orchard management, integrated farming systems, waste decomposer technology, modern agricultural tools and machinery and post-harvest management of fruits and vegetables.

Javid Dar highlighted that such initiatives are crucial for improving the farm productivity, increasing farmers' income and promoting sustainable agricultural practices across Jammu and Kashmir.

Muharram 2026

SMC Reviews Ground-Level Arrangements across City

Observer News Service

Srinagar: In order to ensure comprehensive civic preparedness for the forthcoming observance of Muharram-ul-Haram 2026, Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Faz Lul Haseeb on Thursday conducted an extensive field inspection of major Imambaras, shrines, and congregation points across Srinagar City.

The inspection was undertaken to review the status of arrangements being put in place by various wings of the Corporation and to assess on-ground preparedness at key religious sites expected to witness large gatherings during the holy month.

Accompanied by senior officers of SMC, including Joint Commissioners, Superintending Engineers, Executive Engineers, Chief Sanitation Officer, Transport Officer, Zonal Sanitation Officers, and concerned Ward Officers, the Commissioner visited several important locations, including Ayatullah Syed Yousuf Imam Bara, Bemina; Kadimi Imam Bara, Zadibal; Astaan Aalia Mir Shams-ud-Din Iraqi Shrine; Imam Bara Baghwanpora; and Imam Bara Hassanabad, among other sites.

During the inspection, the Commissioner issued strict directions to all concerned officers to ensure timely completion of sanitation, drainage clearance, road repairs, desilting of drains, maintenance of street lighting, uninterrupted water supply, and proper deployment of manpower and machinery at all identified locations.

The Commissioner stressed that all civic amenities must be made available well in advance and directed field officers to maintain continuous monitoring of the arrangements. He emphasized that no deficiency should remain unattended and that all departments must



All Civic Amenities must be made available well in advance and directed field officers to maintain continuous monitoring of the arrangements

work in close coordination to facilitate devotees and ensure smooth conduct of Muharram-related activities.

Special focus was laid on sanitation management, waste disposal mechanisms, emergency response preparedness, and improvement of public infrastructure around major religious congregational sites. The Commissioner also directed the concerned officers to remain available in the field and ensure

prompt redressal of public grievances. Reaffirming the Corporation's commitment towards public service, the Commissioner stated that Srinagar Municipal Corporation is fully committed to providing a clean, safe, and well-managed environment for the observance of Muharram-ul-Haram and that all necessary measures are being undertaken to ensure the convenience and welfare of the public.

Orientation Programme on "Access to Justice at Pre-Arrest, Arrest & Remand Stage" Held

Observer News Service

Srinagar: District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Srinagar organized an Orientation Programme on the theme "Access to Justice at Pre-Arrest, Arrest and Remand Stage" for police personnel and other stakeholders with the objective of enhancing awareness regarding legal safeguards, constitutional rights and procedural fairness during the criminal justice process.

The programme was attended by Principal District & Sessions Judge (Chairman DLSA), Srinagar, Haq Nawaz Zargar as Chief Guest.

Speaking on the occasion, the Principal District & Sessions Judge emphasized the significance of adherence to constitutional mandates, statutory safeguards and human rights standards during pre-arrest, arrest, and remand

proceedings. He underscored the collective responsibility of all stakeholders in ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability within the justice delivery system.

Secretary, DLSA Srinagar, Tabasum Qadir Parry highlighted the importance of ensuring access to justice and protecting the rights of individuals at every stage of criminal proceedings.

During the technical session, Adnan Sayeed, Special Judge Anti-Corruption (CBI Cases), Srinagar, delivered a detailed presentation on the legal framework governing arrest and remand procedures, the rights of accused persons, duties of law enforcement agencies and the role of judicial oversight in safeguarding individual liberties.

The programme also witnessed valuable interactions and observations from representatives of the Police Department, Prosecution and LADCs of

DLSA Srinagar who highlighted the importance of coordinated efforts in ensuring lawful procedures, of human rights and timely medical assistance whenever required.

An interactive Question and Answer session followed, enabling participants to seek clarifications and engage in meaningful discussions on various practical and legal aspects of the subject.

The programme was attended by Investigating Officers of all the police stations of District Srinagar, SP Headquarters, Umar Shah lauded the efforts of DLSA Srinagar in bridging the gap between the police and judiciary ensuring access to justice for all.

At the conclusion, Secretary, DLSA Srinagar, expressed gratitude to all stakeholders for their active participation and contribution towards strengthening access to justice and the rule of law.

Government of Jammu and Kashmir Health & Medical Education Department

Civil Secretariat, Srinagar/Jammu

Subject: Appointment of Ms. Sami Naseer D/O Late Sh. Naseer Ahmad Rather, (Ex-Nursing Orderly, Health & Medical Education Department) R/O Buchwara Dalgate, Tehsil Khanyar, District Srinagar as MTS in Government Medical College, Srinagar earmarked vacancies under RAS-2022.

NOTICE

It is hereby notified for the information of below mentioned candidate, who has been recommended for appointment as Multitasking Staff (MTS) in Health & Medical Education Department under Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme, 2022 read with S.O 429 dated 6th September, 2022 read with S.O 397 dated 16th of August, 2024 that she is required to submit her personal details, including email address and mobile number, to the Health & Medical Education Department, Civil Secretariat, Srinagar before the Nominated Nodal Officer, Additional Secretary to the Government, Health & Medical Education Department, Civil Secretariat, Srinagar in person or through online mode within a period of 21 days, positively from the date of issuance of this notice for registration under the Employee Verification System (EVS).

This submission is mandatory for initiation of verification of character and antecedents, in terms of Government Order No. 1003-JK(GAD) of 2021 dated 27.09.2021 read with Circular No. 18- JK (GAD) of 2022 dated 20.05.2022 issued by the General Administration Department. The requisite details must be submitted within 21 days from the date of issuance of this notice. Failure to comply within the stipulated time frame shall be construed as unwillingness to accept the appointment, and the candidates shall forfeit her claim to the post under RAS-2022, without any further correspondence.

Deputy Secretary to the Government Health & Medical Education Department

DIPK-2039/26 Dated: 11.06.2026

No. ME-NG/500/2024-02 (7581901)

S. No	Form No	Date of Application	Name	Mothers name	Address	DOB	Disability	Category	remarks
01	30944	08.07.2024	Ms. Sami Naseer	Naseer Ahmad rather		28.06.1997	-NA-	-NA-	Fill up personal details within the period of 21 days

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

AIRPORTS
SHIEKH UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311

RAILWAYS

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

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

HIJRI CALENDAR
26 Zil-Hajj
1447

PRAYERS	
FAJR	3: 34
ZUHR	12:30
ASR	5: 30
Magrib	7:45
ISHA	9: 27

This Day In History

- 1547 - King Ferdinand of Austria subjects himself on Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent
- 1707 - Hungary declares itself independent under Ferenc Rákóczi II (aka Francis II Rákóczi)
- 1721 - England signs Treaty of Madrid
- 1727 - Spain underwrites Preliminary of Paris
- 1753 - Austria, Great Britain & Modena sign secret military treaty.
- 1951 - UN arm forces reach Pyongyang Korea
- 1963 - Vostok 6 launched, pilot is 1st woman cosmonaut
- 1980 - UN Security Council calls for South Africa to free Nelson Mandela
- 1982 - Fahd becomes King of Saudi Arabia after King Khalid dies at 69
- 1983 - NASA's Pioneer 10 becomes the 1st man-made object to leave the solar system
- 1990 - Boeing 767 sets non-stop commercial flight, Seattle to Nairobi Kenya.
- 1993 - Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani re-elected President of Iran.
- 2000 - President Kim Dae Jung of South Korea meets Kim Jong-il, leader of North Korea, for the beginning of the first ever inter-Korea summit, in the northern capital of Pyongyang.
- 2002 - The United States of America withdraws from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty
- 2006 - The US Senate issues a formal resolution apologizing for failure to create anti-lynching legislation
- 2007 - The Al Askari Mosque in Samarra is bombed reportedly by Iraqi Baathists, destroying the mosque's two ten-story minarets
- 2012 - A series of bombings across Iraq kill 93 and wound 300 people
- 2015 - Philae, 1st spacecraft to land on a comet in European Space Agency's Rosetta mission re-awakes after 7 months
- 2017 - Otto Warmbier returns to the US in an unresponsive state after being held in North Korean jail for 17 months,
- 2018 - Battle for key Yemen port of Hudaydah begins with assault by Saudi backed pro-government forces against Iranian-backed Houthi rebels

From KO Archives

'Shocked' Tourist Joins Efforts To Clean Dal

S RINAGAR- A German tourist, who was "shocked" by the levels of "pollution" in the famous Dal Lake here, on Sunday joined NGOs cleaning up the water body.

"I am shocked to see the pollution in the lake ... Last time when I visited Srinagar and stayed in a house boat, the condition of the lake was not so bad," said Marc Stollreiter, 30, who hired 60 labourers to clean the Nehru Park part of the lake.

This part was once a favourite place for youngsters to swim. Once, even former Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah had jumped into the lake here during his regime in 1996-2002.

Stollreiter said the plan to clean the lake was chalked out by him and his friend Birgit Lenger in collaboration with House Boat Owners Association, Valley Citizen's Council and Dal Zamindar Union.

By noon, volunteers took out tonnes of garbage, including polythene carry bags and plastic bottles, from the lake into boats for proper disposal.

A concerned Stollreiter said, "This lake is dying-- It needs proper maintenance and urgent measures to ensure that coming generations are not deprived of the beautiful water body."

A visitor to the city since his childhood, the tourist said that on every trip he observed an "increase" in the level of pollution in the lake.

His efforts were lauded by the General Secretary of the Valley Citizen's Council, Imdad Saqi.

"We are very concerned over the deteriorating health of the lake and failure of authorities to save it," he said and alleged the Lakes and Waterways Development Authority set up to maintain the lake was doing nothing.

(Kashmir Observer, 12 June, 2007)

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Legal Counsel: Tasaduq Khwaja
Switchboard: (0194) 2502327 | +91 8899256463
Editorial: (0194) 2502327
Email: editor@kashmirobserver.net

Kashmir's Missing Unicorn

After 22 years and crores of taxpayer money, J&K's startup institution has one question left to answer: where are the companies?



Dr. Fayaz Mohammad



JKEDI must be restructured under an independent board where government is one voice among several instead of the only voice. Active founders who are currently building, experienced operators who have survived real markets, and investors who have written real cheques must hold genuine decision-making authority.

Let me ask you something. Name one startup from Kashmir that a person in Delhi uses. One app on someone's phone in Mumbai that was built here. One company from this valley that earned a place on a national business page for what it built, rather than for showing up at a government event.

Take your time. That silence is the story of JKEDI. The Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute was founded in 1997. It began actual operations in 2004. The startup push started in 2018. Six years later, that policy was silently buried and replaced with a new one.

Public audits are missing, honest accounting is scarce, and the most basic question any institution must answer remains unresolved: what did you actually produce?

The government is spending 39.60 crore to pursue a target of 2,000 startups and provide seed funding to 25 ventures a year, a figure the policy itself labels "manageable." Even so, officials have already extended the application deadline twice as they work to attract more applicants.

That tells you something. Jammu and Kashmir has 855 registered startups. The figure is celebrated in press releases, showcased at events and cited as proof that the ecosystem is flourishing.

A registration, however, is only a starting point. Companies are built through customers, revenue, products and growth.

Ask a harder question: how many of those 855 startups have built a product used by a million people? Which one attracted substantial private investment because investors believed in the business, rather than because a government grant was available? Which founder from Kashmir gets a call from investors in Bangalore or Mumbai seeking insight into this market?

The answers expose the gap between what is being counted and what is actually being built.

I am a veterinarian. I founded Truevet to develop plant-based alternatives to antibiotic feed additives in livestock, a hard science problem with a commercial solution.

Then I founded HelpRush, a real-time marketplace that verifies and dispatches skilled workers in Srinagar.

Today, the platform has 2,500 verified professionals, two patents filed, recognition from the Directorate of Industries and Commerce, and a 40 percent repeat-customer rate within its first four months.

The company achieved these milestones through product development, customer trust and execution, while operating without government grants and without spending on customer marketing. Its growth stands as a testament to entrepreneurial persistence, resourcefulness and market demand.

And I am not alone in that experience. Ask any founder in this valley who is actually in the market, and not attending workshops, collecting certificates, or posing at startup melas, and they will tell you the same thing.

The system was not designed for people building real things. It was designed to look like it was.

That is beyond an accident. It is what happens when you put the wrong people in charge of the wrong decisions.

Entrepreneurship is forged through a specific type of suffering. Founders spend years dealing with customers who say no, investors who don't call back, employees who leave, products that fail, and bank accounts that get dangerously thin.

That experience builds a judgment you cannot acquire from inside an institution. You either have it or you don't. And you only get it by being in the arena.

JKEDI is governed largely by career government employees, people whose professional lives have unfolded within systems that deliver a salary on the first of every month regardless of outcomes.

Success is often measured through programs conducted, reports submitted and funds disbursed. Personal incentives remain largely insulated from the consequences of failure, creating a very different mindset from the one required to build and scale a startup.

That is not a character flaw. It is a formation, and it is precisely the wrong formation for deciding which Kashmiri founders deserve public money and which ideas have what it takes to survive the market.

The result is entirely predictable. Safe applications get funded. Founders who know how to fill forms win over founders who know how to build things. Events multiply, photographs accumulate, reports get filed, the institution looks active, and the valley's most capable builders either figure it out on their own or leave.

The world has solved this problem. The answer is always the same.

Estonia has fewer people than Jammu and Kashmir. It produced Skype, Wise and Bolt, companies used by hundreds of millions of people worldwide.

The difference came from policies drafted and driven by people who understood what it takes to build a company. Government events played only a supporting role.

Y Combinator has launched companies worth hundreds of billions of dollars. It works because it takes equity in the companies it backs, wins when founders win, and has every reason to care about outcomes and no reason to hide behind activity reports.

In every ecosystem that produced something real, the institutions back-

ing founders had skin in the game. They faced consequences when their choices were wrong.

In JKEDI's model, there are no consequences. The budget renews, the staff remains, the press releases keep coming, and Kashmir keeps waiting for a breakout company that never arrives.

What needs to change is the governance rather than the budget.

JKEDI must be restructured under an independent board where government is one voice among several instead of the only voice. Active founders who are currently building, experienced operators who have survived real markets, and investors who have written real cheques must hold genuine decision-making authority.

Founders need a decisive voice, an equal seat at the table and direct influence over the allocation of funds.

Public funding should be tied to outcomes that reveal genuine progress. The measures are straightforward: revenue generated, private capital attracted, products that won and retained real customers, and jobs created through the growth of private companies.

Those indicators capture the strength of an entrepreneurial ecosystem far more accurately than expanding administrative structure or additional program staff.

If that reform is not possible within the current structure, and there are good reasons to believe it may not be, then the honest debate is about whether this institution in its current form is the right vehicle at all.

Twenty-two years and crores of public money is a long enough trial period.

Kashmir has given the world poets whose words outlived empires, mystics whose thought shaped civilizations, craftspeople whose work hangs in museums across the world, and scholars whose contributions echo through centuries.

The same valley can give the world founders whose companies are used by millions.

But not like this.

Not through an institution that measures its success by how many workshops it ran while founders who were actually building went unnoticed, unsupported and underfunded.

The talent is here, the hunger is here, and even the problems worth solving at scale are here.

What is missing is an institution honest enough to ask itself the question every startup must eventually face: what have you actually built?

Twenty-two years in, JKEDI owes Kashmir an answer.

The author is a veterinarian and the founder of Truevet, a livestock health startup, and HelpRush, a real-time verified home services marketplace live in Srinagar and expanding across India. He writes in a personal capacity.

KO VIEW

A New Campus Vision

Attendance and enrollment figures have become a growing concern in many higher education institutions.

Students are making choices based on the realities they face outside campus gates. Many young people see education as valuable, but they also want a clear connection between what they learn and the opportunities that await them after graduation.

This moment presents a chance for universities and colleges in Kashmir to rethink their purpose.

Higher education has mostly faced criticism for producing graduates who spend years searching for jobs instead of creating opportunities for themselves and others. A changing economy demands a different approach.

According to the India Skills Report 2025, employability remains a concern among graduates despite rising levels of education. Several national surveys have also shown that a large number of young people struggle to find work that matches their qualifications. Employers frequently point to skill gaps, limited practical exposure, and a lack of industry experience.

A university education should prepare students for life, work, and leadership. That goal becomes easier to achieve when classrooms expose students to entrepreneurship, innovation, financial literacy, digital skills, problem-solving, and real-world projects.

Such subjects should become a regular part of the curriculum rather than remaining limited to occasional seminars or annual events.

Many campuses already host startup incubation centers and entrepreneurship cells. Those initiatives have value, and they have introduced students to new possibilities. Greater impact comes when entrepreneurial thinking becomes part of everyday learning.

Students should have opportunities to build products, test ideas, interact with businesses, and solve local challenges as part of their academic journey.

Research from organizations such as the World Economic Forum and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development highlights the growing importance of adaptability, creativity, critical thinking, and entrepreneurial skills in modern economies. Employers increasingly seek graduates who can identify opportunities, work in teams, communicate effectively, and turn ideas into action.

Kashmir is at an important point in its economic journey. Buzz about startups, innovation, technology, and self-employment have become more visible than ever before. Educational institutions can play a central role in translating those conversations into meaningful outcomes.

Stronger partnerships with industry, regular internships, project-based learning, and curriculum reforms can help bridge the gap between education and employment.

Students enter universities with hopes, ambitions, and expectations. Education becomes truly meaningful when it equips them with confidence, practical skills, and a sense of direction.

Campus life should serve as preparation for the challenges and opportunities that await beyond graduation.

Educational institutions have long embraced the ideal: "Enter to learn, leave to serve." Giving that motto fresh meaning in today's world begins with classrooms that prepare students not only to seek opportunities but also to create them.

No Social Media Before 16

As more countries restrict social media access for teenagers, India faces a crucial choice: protect childhood while embracing technology, or continue treating digital exposure as an unavoidable part of growing up.



Prof. M. Aslam

I have listened to radio news for most of my life. Every now and then, a brief news item sparks a larger question. One such report recently caught my attention: Malaysia has decided to bar children under the age of 16 from registering on social media platforms.

That announcement may sound dramatic to some people. To me, it sounds like a serious attempt to address one of the defining challenges of modern childhood.

Children today grow up in a world very different from the one their parents experienced. Social interaction, entertainment, learning, advertising and peer pressure now arrive through the same small screen. A child can move within minutes from a homework video to harmful content, manipulative advertising, online bullying or contact with strangers.

Technology has opened remarkable opportunities, though it has also exposed young minds to influences that previous generations never encountered at such scale. Many governments have started responding to this reality.

Australia became the first country to formally pursue restrictions on social media access for children under 16. Its approach delays access until a child reaches the prescribed age threshold. Britain followed with its Online Safety Act, designed to make the internet safer for children and adults. France and Spain have examined similar measures, while several Southeast Asian countries have begun moving in the same direction.

Malaysia joined this growing international effort on June 1, 2026. The country announced plans to prevent children under 16 from opening social media accounts and placed legal

obligations on major platforms to verify users' ages.

Three features stand out: platforms must provide parental control tools, direct communication between children and unknown adults faces restrictions, and design features that encourage compulsive and prolonged use among children face prohibition.

Those measures target the very mechanisms that keep young users glued to screens for hours.

Implementation will present challenges, with age verification emerging as perhaps the most significant hurdle. Malaysian authorities are expected to rely on systems such as My Digital ID and electronic know-your-customer verification. Questions about penalties, compliance standards and enforcement will emerge as the policy develops.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese framed the issue correctly when he said that responsibility rests primarily with social media companies, which must demonstrate that they are taking reasonable steps to prevent underage access.

Canada has also entered this debate with a proposed Digital Safety Act that would ban social media use for children under 16 while imposing stronger platform responsibilities.

Canadian officials have cited the serious consequences associated with online harms and argued that child protection can no longer remain a secondary concern. Austria, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Poland, Spain and Turkey have also moved toward restrictions or are actively considering them.

This growing international consensus needs careful attention in India.

India's experience with digital technology during the Covid-19 pandemic gives important lessons. Educational institutions closed for long periods, forcing millions of students into online learning almost overnight. Mobile phones suddenly became essential educational tools. Schools, colleges, teachers, parents and students attempted to adapt to an unprecedented situation.

Many of those efforts emerged under extraordinary circumstances. Virtual classes replaced real classrooms, and online examinations entered the discourse before suitable sys-



tems existed. Teachers learned digital instruction while simultaneously conducting it. Universities postponed examinations and suspended evaluation work as they struggled to respond.

Schoolchildren experienced perhaps the greatest disruption. Many spent months inside their homes while attempting to learn through screens. Mobile phones became constant companions. A temporary solution gradually evolved into a permanent habit.

Several years later, the consequences need honest review.

I increasingly see children spending less time reading books, writing by hand and engaging in activities that demand patience and concentration. Endless scrolling rewards speed, stimulation and instant gratification. Deep reading demands focus. Creative thinking grows through observation, reflection and sustained engagement with ideas. Childhood flourishes when curiosity receives time and space.

Technology remains a powerful educational resource, and nobody should ignore its benefits, but the challenge lies in ensuring that children use digital tools without becoming dependent on them.

India reportedly plans a three-tier framework for social media restrictions among minors. Children aged 8 to 12 would

face the strongest restrictions. Those between 12 and 16 would operate under moderate limits, while teenagers aged 16 to 18 would receive greater access.

This graded approach recognizes that digital maturity develops gradually rather than appearing suddenly on a child's sixteenth or eighteenth birthday.

Such an approach holds promise if policymakers ground it in careful planning and practical implementation. India can learn from international experience while designing solutions suited to its own social realities, educational needs and technological infrastructure. Blind imitation rarely produces good policy. Thoughtful adaptation often does.

The broader question extends beyond social media. Society has embraced digital learning platforms, mobile applications and online engagement with remarkable enthusiasm. Much less attention has gone toward understanding how these technologies influence learning habits, behaviour and personality development, especially during the formative years of childhood.

Public policy should place children's intellectual growth and emotional well-being at the centre of this discussion.

Technology should serve childhood, but childhood should never serve technology.

Malaysia's decision has reignited a debate that many countries can no longer postpone. India now stands at an important stage. The choices made today will influence how an entire generation learns, thinks, communicates and grows.

That reality alone makes this conversation one of the most important public policy discussions of our time.

The author is former Vice Chancellor, IGNOU, New Delhi. He is a Member of the Collegium of Eminent National Scientists constituted by ICSSR, Fellow, EDI, World Bank; Distinguished Fellow, AGRASRI, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh; and Patron, Hope Foundation, Vadodra. He can be reached at profaslam10@gmail.com.

Kashmir's Forgotten Australians

A haunting photograph from Alice Springs has reopened a forgotten trail linking Kashmir's forced labour system to the Muslim camel caravans that built Australia's outback.



Haziqah Showkat

The photograph surfaced in Alice Springs nearly a century after it was taken.

An Afghan man kneels in prayer on the desert ground in central Australia in 1934. Sunlight falls across his white clothes as the vast interior stretches behind him in silence.

The image rests today inside the Norman Ellison collection at the National Library of Australia, though the man himself survives without a recorded name.

A South Asian storyteller researching Australia's "Afghan cameleers" discovered the photograph during a recent reporting trip through the outback. Her investigation soon uncovered a startling personal link.

A distant relative of hers had once worked among the cameleers who crossed Australia's deserts with camel caravans during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

That discovery opens a larger historical question with deep roots in Kashmir.

Who exactly were the men Australia called "Afghans"?

Australian archives, colonial shipping records, mosque registries, migration histories and oral testimonies reveal a workforce assembled from across British India, Afghanistan and Central Asia. Historians now identify Pashtuns, Punjabis, Sindhis, Baloch men, Kashmiris, Persians, Turks and Egyptians among the cameleer communities that transformed inland Australia between the 1860s and 1930s.

The label "Afghan" functioned as a colonial shortcut. Australia collapsed dozens of ethnicities, languages and regions into one convenient racial category.

That simplification buried another forgotten history beneath it.

Several cameleers traced their origins to Kashmir and the wider Himalayan frontier at the precise moment when the valley itself suffered under one of the harshest systems of forced labor in South Asia.

The overlap between Kashmir's

begar system and Australia's camel economy reveals a hidden migration route extending from the valley to the Australian interior through the machinery of empire.

During the nineteenth century, the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir operated under Dogra rule after the Treaty of Amritsar in 1846 transferred Kashmir to Gulab Singh under British supervision. Economic extraction intensified rapidly. Heavy taxation devastated agriculture while entire communities endured compulsory labour service under the begar system.

Historian Mridu Rai described the Dogra state as a deeply exploitative political order that treated Kashmiri Muslim peasants as a labour reserve for imperial frontier expansion. British military interests along the northern frontier increased the demand for transport workers across Gilgit, Baltistan and the mountain passes bordering Central Asia.

Young Kashmiri men hauled ammunition, grain, timber and military supplies through brutal terrain at extreme altitudes. Several colonial officials documented deaths from starvation, exposure and exhaustion along these routes.

Walter Lawrence, the British settlement commissioner whose 1895 book *The Valley of Kashmir* remains one of the most detailed colonial accounts of the region, described widespread suffering under begar and recorded how entire villages dreaded state labour demands.

Many families watched sons disappear into the northern frontier system.

Some returned years later, others vanished permanently into imperial labour routes extending far beyond Kashmir.

At the same historical moment, another frontier economy emerged thousands of kilometres away in colonial Australia.

European settlement pushed aggressively into Australia's interior after the 1850s, though exploration efforts repeatedly collapsed in the desert climate.

Horses struggled in the heat while bullock teams failed across vast arid distances. British authorities soon turned toward camel transport after expeditions returning from India and Afghanistan praised the endurance of camels in desert terrain.

The first large camel shipment arrived in Australia in the 1860s.

Thousands followed.

Colonial agents recruited experienced camel handlers through the ports and frontier zones of British India, especially through Karachi,



A Kashmiri villager recruited through Karachi could arrive in Australia as an "Afghan." Census officials simplified him into a racial type. Future generations inherited the label while the original geography faded from memory.

which functioned as one of the empire's most important maritime gateways.

Shipping manifests and migration records show Muslim cameleers boarding vessels from Karachi and Bombay before disembarking in South Australia and Western Australia.

Several historians argue that the recruitment system drew labourers from the same frontier circuits tied to Kashmir, Punjab and Afghanistan.

Professor Christine Stevens, whose research remains foundational to Australian cameleer history, documented how many "Afghan" cameleers actually originated from present-day Pakistan and northwestern India rather than Afghanistan itself.

Historian Philip Jones similarly described the cameleers as a culturally mixed workforce assembled through imperial trade networks rather than a single ethnic community.

Kashmir appeared inside those circuits through both coercion and mobility.

The same mountain routes used for begar labour connected Kashmir to Rawalpindi, Peshawar and caravan networks stretching toward Afghanistan and the Arabian Sea.

Recruitment agents searching

for camel workers moved through those commercial arteries throughout the late nineteenth century.

Historical accounts suggest that a young Kashmiri labourer seeking to escape taxation, famine or compulsory service could find opportunities within this frontier economy that was helping drive Australia's inland expansion.

Researchers note that the movement was facilitated by imperial networks linking British India and Australia. British India supplied transport routes and recruitment channels, the wider empire generated demand for labour, Australia relied on that workforce to support exploration and development in its interior, and the cameleers played a significant role in opening up and sustaining access to vast parts of the continent.

Camel caravans hauled wool, mining machinery, telegraph wire, food supplies, timber and water across enormous distances. Muslim cameleers serviced remote goldfields, supplied isolated settlements and supported expeditions that mapped the interior.

The Overland Telegraph Line, completed in 1872, relied heavily on camel transport systems linking South Australia to Darwin.

Australia's famous passenger train known today as "The Ghan" still preserves a shortened

version of "Afghan," the racial label attached to the cameleers who opened inland transport routes.

Australian historian John Berger estimated that roughly 20,000 camels entered Australia during the camel transport era alongside as many as 4,000 cameleers. Their settlements stretched across Marree, Oodnadatta, Broken Hill, Coolgardie and Alice Springs.

With their arrival in the land of kangaroo, mosques emerged in the desert, date palms rose beside railway settlements, and prayer grounds appeared across the outback.

Archival photographs show Muslim cameleers standing beside camel trains in flowing robes beneath Australian skies that resembled the deserts of Central Asia more than the landscapes of Kashmir they once knew.

But the burden of racism remained ever present, following them like the crack of a Dogra whip.

Australia's federation period produced the White Australia policy, one of the most aggressive racial exclusion systems in the British Empire. Muslim cameleers faced segregation, legal restrictions and intense hostility despite their central economic role.

Ghantowns emerged on the edges of settlements where cameleers established their own communities

beyond white residential districts. Several married Aboriginal women and formed enduring family networks that survive today across Australia.

Descendants now revisit those histories with growing urgency.

Anthropologist Anna Kenny documented how cameleer families preserved fragments of language, memory and migration history across generations. Oral testimonies recorded in South Australia mention ancestors arriving through Kashmir, Punjab and frontier towns tied to British India.

One notable example was Monga Khan, a cameleer whose family roots lay in Mirpur, now in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

More than a century later, his image featured prominently in a national Australian multicultural campaign highlighting the often-overlooked history of migration to the continent.

That rediscovery comes during a larger historical reassessment unfolding across both Australia and South Asia.

Australian museums increasingly acknowledge Muslim cameleers as foundational figures in inland development. At the same time, Kashmiri scholars continue revisiting the violence of Dogra rule and the vast human displacement generated through begar.

But those accounts rarely meet.

The silence surrounding Kashmiri participation in the cameleer networks shows a broader disappearance produced by empire itself. Colonial systems frequently erased precise identities while transforming workers into anonymous labour categories.

A Kashmiri villager recruited through Karachi could arrive in Australia as an "Afghan." Census officials simplified him into a racial type. Future generations inherited the label while the original geography faded from memory.

The photograph from Alice Springs now interrupts that forgetting.

A Muslim man kneels alone in prayer beneath the Australian desert sky in 1934. His image captures the emotional geography of a lost migration stretching from Kashmir's mountains to Australia's inland frontier.

Somewhere behind that photograph stands another buried story. A village in Kashmir once waited for a son who never returned.

— *With a background in Law and EdTech, the author engages with the deeper structures that shape society.*

Big Tech's Classroom Takeover

Based on internal documents and court filings, a New York Times investigation examines how major tech firms engaged students during school hours.



Syed Sammar Mehdi

Joanna Houston knew her son spent time on YouTube at school, but the scale simply surprised her.

School records showed that her sixth-grade son in Richmond Hill, Georgia, watched more than 1,500 noneducational YouTube videos on his Chromebook between August and January.

Much of that viewing took place during school hours, turning a device intended for learning into a portal for entertainment.

Houston's discovery shows a growing concern inside American schools. Teachers, parents and administrators increasingly describe classrooms as battlegrounds where lessons compete with notifications, videos and social media feeds designed to capture attention.

Newly disclosed internal documents, reviewed by The New York Times through lawsuits filed by more than 1,400 school districts, provide an

unusually detailed look at how major technology companies pursued young users during the school day.

The records show social media platforms reaching students in classrooms while educators, parents and company safety teams voiced concerns about academic disruption.

Snapchat sent prompts encouraging teenagers to post updates during school hours. Meta recruited high school students to promote Instagram among their peers. TikTok weighed proposals that would limit notifications during class time and ultimately moved in another direction. Google employees discussed ways to increase YouTube viewing during weekdays, even as education teams worried that students drifted from schoolwork into unrelated content.

The disclosures came as schools rethink their relationship with technology.

Smartphone bans have spread through districts nationwide. Administrators are reassessing digital learning tools that became central during the pandemic. Public debate, once focused largely on mental health, now centers on attention, concentration and learning.

School districts argue that platforms built around engagement have imposed substantial educational costs. Teachers describe constant competition with apps that provide an endless stream of personalized entertainment.

Court filings suggest the



financial stakes could prove enormous. Breathitt County Schools in rural Kentucky served as the first major test case.

The district sought funding for long-term educational and mental health programs. Meta, Snap, TikTok and Google eventually agreed to pay a combined \$27 million to settle the case.

Several larger districts continue to pursue claims worth hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars.

The documents also illuminate how companies viewed teenage users.

Years before social media faced widespread public scrutiny, executives openly discussed the importance of attracting adolescents.

Shortly after Snapchat launched in 2012, co-founder Evan Spiegel celebrated the app's popularity among high school students and highlighted heavy activity during school hours.

Meta pursued students through a structured ambassador program. Internal documents described schools as a critical pathway to winning teenagers. Student representatives received branded merchandise and gift cards while promoting Instagram among classmates.

Google's approach centered on education technology. Chromebooks became a fixture in American schools during the past decade, particularly after remote learning expanded device use. Internal presentations

described schools as an opportunity to introduce children to Google's broader ecosystem.

Tension emerged inside the company itself.

Education teams promoted instructional content and classroom tools. Other employees focused on increasing YouTube viewership. Internal presentations showed how students searching for educational videos could quickly receive recommendations for entertainment content.

Warnings also surfaced inside social media companies.

At Snapchat, employees questioned features that encouraged students to post during the school day. At TikTok, safety teams pushed proposals that would disable notifications for minors during school hours. Internal discussions weighed those concerns against business goals tied to user engagement.

One TikTok employee summarized the likely reaction from educators while discussing a feature that urged users to post within minutes.

"Teachers are going to hate it," the employee wrote.

School leaders frequently expressed similar concerns. Administrators described bullying, inappropriate images and disciplinary challenges linked to social media use. One superintendent characterized Snapchat as the leading source of student drama.

The documents reveal another dimension of the industry's influence: partnerships with parent

organizations.

TikTok provided millions of dollars to the National PTA through sponsorship agreements tied to online safety programs and public outreach efforts. Internal communications discussed improving public perception among parents during a period of growing scrutiny.

Those relationships sparked debate among local leaders who participated in sponsored events.

Some welcomed resources devoted to internet safety, others questioned whether the programs served educational goals or corporate interests.

The lawsuits will play out over years.

Schools have already begun making decisions of their own: phone restrictions are expanding, digital policies are tightening, and classroom technology faces fresh examination.

Students entered the digital age carrying powerful devices into school. Internal records now suggest that classrooms also became one of the technology industry's most valuable frontiers in the competition for attention.

— *This story is based on reporting by Jennifer Valentino-DeVries for The New York Times. Excerpts are included for informational and journalistic purposes, with full credit to the original source. The author is a trainee journalist at Kashmir Observer.*

J&K Bank Wins IIBF Award of Excellence

Recognition reflects Bank's strong commitment to continuous professional development of employees

Observer News Service

Srinagar: J&K Bank has been conferred with the prestigious 'Excellence in Continuous Professional Development' Award by the Indian Institute of Banking & Finance (IIBF) in recognition of its sustained commitment to employee learning, skill enhancement and professional development.

DGM & Zonal Head (Mumbai) Farhan Irfan Kawoosa received the award on behalf of the Bank during a gala event organised by the IIBF in Mumbai.

Commenting on the achievement, MD & CEO Amitava Chatterjee said, "We are deeply honoured to receive this recognition from the Indian Institute of Banking & Finance, an institution that has played a pivotal role in advancing professional excellence in the banking sector. I sincerely thank the organisers for this acknowledgement. This award belongs to every member of the J&K Bank family



whose commitment to learning, self-improvement and professional excellence has made this achievement possible."

"As the banking landscape continues to evolve rapidly, continuous professional development remains central to our efforts to deliver superior customer service, drive innovation and build a future-ready institution", he added.

He further said that the recognition reinforces the Bank's resolve to invest in its human capital and nurture a learning-driven work culture aligned with its broader transformation

journey.

Notably, the recognition was based on the Bank's participation and performance in IIBF's certification, professional qualification, specialist, and leadership development programmes over the last five years. The award adds to a growing list of national recognitions received by the Bank in recent years, reflecting its strong focus on continuous learning and professional excellence to ensure sustained progress across business performance, digital transformation, customer service, and organisational development.

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Against the backdrop of blooming lavender fields adjacent to Khyber Cement's factory, the company on Thursday marked Lavender Day 2026, bringing together government representatives, industry stakeholders and members of the local community in a celebration that has now become an annual tradition.

The event was attended by Safer Shah, (DCF) Regional Director Kashmir, J&K Pollution Control Committee; Bilal Ahmad Khan, Divisional Officer Srinagar, J&K Pollution Control Committee, along with other stakeholders. The gathering marked the third consecutive year of Lavender Day celebrations at the site, underscoring a sustained commitment to environmental stewardship and community engagement.

What makes the occasion distinctive is not merely the celebration itself, but its setting. At a time when conversations around development and sustainability



are often framed as competing priorities, Lavender Park stands as a visible reminder that industrial progress and environmental responsibility can advance together. Lavender park has evolved into a symbol of how industry can contribute positively to the character and landscape of Jammu & Kashmir.

Speaking on the occasion, Safer Shah, (DCF) Regional Director Kashmir, J&K Pollution

Control Committee commended Khyber Cement for its efforts in developing and maintaining Lavender Park and appreciated the company's commitment towards promoting environmental consciousness alongside industrial growth. He also congratulated Khyber Cement on being recognized as the Best Cement Brand of Jammu & Kashmir, noting that the achievement reflects the company's dedication

to quality, leadership and responsible development.

Riaz Trambo, Director Operations, Khyber Cement, said, "The significance of Lavender Day lies in what it represents. For three consecutive years, this celebration has brought people together at a place where industry, nature and community converge. It reflects our belief that progress is most meaningful when it creates value for the region, respects its character and contributes to a future that benefits everyone"

Through initiatives that extend beyond its core business, Khyber Cement has consistently sought to demonstrate how industry can act as a catalyst for positive change while remaining rooted in the needs and aspirations of the region. For Khyber Cement, the continued observance of Lavender Day reflects an enduring commitment to creating value beyond industry, fostering an environment where economic progress, community well-being and ecological stewardship can flourish together.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

HM To Chair

pilgrimage passes off peacefully and without incident. Inputs from intelligence agencies and field-level assessments are expected to form a key part of the deliberations.

The meeting follows a high-level review chaired by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha in Srinagar on Wednesday to assess preparations for the yatra.

During the meeting, Sinha directed all departments to ensure timely completion of arrangements related to infrastructure, healthcare, sanitation, connectivity and other pilgrim-centric services.

The Amarnath Yatra is scheduled to commence on July 3 and conclude on August 28.

"Our collective goal is to ensure a safe, seamless and spiritually fulfilling pilgrimage for every devotee of Baba Barfani," the Lieutenant Governor had said, while stressing the need for close coordination, proactive planning and strict monitoring among all stakeholders.

Describing the pilgrimage as a national event, Sinha had urged all departments and security agencies to work with dedication and maintain the highest standards of efficiency and safety.

Maintain Normalcy,

Kashmir Valley, chaired a Singh, chaired a meeting attended by senior officers and ground commanders of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) here.

"On Day 3 of his Kashmir Valley tour, DG @crpf India Shri @gpsingh chaired a high-level security review meeting with senior officers and ground commanders at GC Srinagar.

"He emphasised taking proactive measures to ensure a safe and peaceful Shri Amarnathji Yatra 2026," the Srinagar Sector CRPF said in a post on X.

The meeting focused on maintaining normalcy and intensifying operations, and ensuring a safe and peaceful Amarnath Yatra, it said.

On Wednesday, the CRPF DG reviewed the force's operational preparedness for the Yatra, which is scheduled to start from July 3, and stressed the need for seamless coordination among all agencies to ensure a safe pilgrimage.

He had also chaired a meeting attended by senior officers of the CRPF, civil administration, Jammu and Kashmir Police and other agencies involved in securing the annual pilgrimage in the south Kashmir Himalayas.

The 57-day Amarnath Yatra will begin on July 3 via the twin routes -- the traditional 48-km Nunwan-Pahalgam track in Anantnag district and the shorter but steeper 14-km Baltal track in Ganderbal district -- and conclude on August 28, coinciding with Raksha Bandhan. (PTI)

J&K Statehood, Airport

and deliver governance remains constrained without full statehood.

The latest meeting with Modi comes days after Omar chaired a meeting of National Conference legislators and Members of Parliament to discuss the party's future strategy on the issue. Following the meeting, he announced that the party would intensify its efforts and stage a protest in New Delhi during the upcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament if there was no movement on the demand.

Economy, Infrastructure and Jobs

Officials said Omar also briefed the Prime Minister on Jammu and Kashmir's economic trajectory and ongoing development initiatives across key sectors.

He highlighted progress in infrastructure creation, public service delivery and welfare measures while outlining areas requiring continued support and investment.

Omar stressed the need for sustained assistance from the Government of India to accelerate economic growth, improve connectivity, generate employment opportunities, expand infrastructure and enhance public welfare across Jammu and Kashmir.

He drew particular attention to the need for fuller utilisation of the region's hydropower potential, development of new tourism circuits and continued support for farmers, artisans and micro, small and medium enterprises.

"Jammu and Kashmir is committed to being a full and productive partner in India's growth story," Omar said, adding that restoration of statehood, coupled with continued support from the Centre, would strengthen the region's

progress towards inclusive growth, prosperity and good governance.

Awantipora Airbase Proposal

Separately, Omar met Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammoohan Naidu and suggested opening the Indian Air Force-controlled Awantipora airfield for civilian operations during the scheduled closure of Srinagar airport from October 1 to October 15.

Officials said Omar raised concerns over the planned shutdown of Srinagar airport for runway repairs, noting that the period coincides with one of Kashmir's busiest tourism seasons.

The autumn tourism season, often referred to as "Golden Kashmir" because of the golden-yellow colour of Chinar leaves, attracts large numbers of visitors from across the country, particularly from West Bengal, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

Omar suggested that if the closure of Srinagar airport was unavoidable, civilian flight operations should be allowed from Awantipora during the two-week period to ensure uninterrupted air connectivity to the Valley.

Officials said the Centre would explore options to avoid a complete shutdown of Srinagar airport in October.

Tourism Recovery and Rail Connectivity

During his meetings with Union ministers, Omar said the tourism sector was still recovering from the impact of last year's Pahalgam terror attack and warned that disruption of air connectivity during one of the busiest domestic tourism periods could severely affect the local economy.

The proposal is not without precedent. Civilian flights were operated from the Awantipora airbase in 2010 when Srinagar airport remained closed for runway repairs. The Defence Ministry has also granted in-principle approval for civilian flight operations from the airfield under the Regional Connectivity Scheme.

On Wednesday, Omar met Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and sought measures to strengthen rail connectivity in Jammu and Kashmir.

While appreciating the performance and punctuality of the Jammu-Srinagar Vande Bharat Express, he requested a halt at Anantnag and urged the Railways to increase services to the Kashmir Valley, particularly in view of the proposed airport closure in October and the forthcoming apple season.

The outreach by Omar is being viewed as part of a sustained effort by the Jammu and Kashmir government to secure progress on statehood while simultaneously seeking greater central assistance for economic development, connectivity and tourism growth ahead of the Monsoon Session of Parliament.

Night Traffic

towards Banihal, Ramban, Udhampur and Jammu after 8 pm.

Officials said the restrictions have been imposed to ensure the safety of commuters during the execution of bituminous relaying works being undertaken by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).

Transporters carrying fresh perishables and livestock have been advised to plan their movement accordingly to avoid inconvenience.

Authorities have also urged commuters to check the latest traffic advisory before undertaking journeys on the highway on June 13, 15 and 17.

Trump's Dramatic

Venezuela's oil sector after capturing then-president Nicolás Maduro in January.

The post comes after the US and Iran traded strikes for a second straight day. The American attack, which lasted into Thursday morning in Iran, appeared more intense and widespread than the day before.

The latest comments followed a second day of direct military exchanges between the United States and Iran, raising concerns that a fragile ceasefire could unravel and push the region closer to a broader conflict.

Trump's threats on Thursday, while stark, represented his latest verbal escalation in the Iran war. In April, he warned Iran that "a whole civilisation will die tonight, never to be brought back again" if it didn't agree to his terms, before extending a ceasefire in the war.

Mixed Signals From Washington

Trump's threat to take control of Iran's

energy sector marked one of his most aggressive statements since hostilities resumed.

The comments also highlighted what analysts describe as a widening gap between the administration's diplomatic rhetoric and military posture.

For weeks, Trump repeatedly said that negotiations with Tehran were progressing and that a settlement could be reached soon. As recently as this week, he indicated that an agreement remained possible.

Yet within days, the US president shifted to threatening new strikes against Iranian infrastructure, including power plants, bridges and oil facilities, while warning that time for diplomacy was running out.

The rapid changes in tone have fuelled uncertainty among allies and adversaries alike about Washington's long-term objectives.

Iranian officials have repeatedly cited Trump's shifting positions as evidence that the United States lacks a coherent strategy toward the Islamic Republic.

Tehran Questions US Intentions

Iran's Foreign Ministry said the latest American attacks had effectively rendered a nearly two-month ceasefire meaningless.

"The illegal and criminal attacks perpetrated by the United States in recent hours not only constitute a flagrant violation of international norms and principles but also render the ceasefire practically meaningless," the ministry said in a statement.

Senior Iranian officials argued that Washington's alternating threats and diplomatic overtures reflected confusion rather than strength.

Ebrahim Azizi, chairman of the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, said Iranian military operations had left the U.S. administration "confused and bewildered".

"The crushing blows and strong retaliation of the Armed Forces and the great nation of Iran have confused and bewildered the US president," Azizi said.

He said Trump's latest threats were inconsistent with efforts to pursue negotiations and reflected growing frustration in Washington after failing to achieve its objectives through military pressure.

"The enemy has reached an impasse concerning its policies and has been forced to change its approach," Azizi said. "Nonetheless, it is still trying to compensate for its losses through wild gestures and abrupt decisions."

Iran Closes Hormuz

confrontations between the long-time adversaries since the outbreak of the conflict earlier this year, raising fears of a broader regional war and fresh disruption to global energy supplies.

Multiple explosions were reported across Iran's southern Hormozgan province, including Bandar Abbas, Qeshm, Sirik and Minab, shortly after midnight local time, according to Iranian media. Air defence systems were activated across several areas as military activity intensified in the Persian Gulf.

The US military confirmed a new round of operations against targets in southern Iran, according to statements carried by Iranian media, while Tehran said the attacks focused on areas around the Strait of Hormuz and strategic facilities in Hormozgan province.

Hours later, Iran's Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, the country's highest operational military command, announced the closure of the Strait of Hormuz to all maritime traffic.

"Any vessel attempting transit through the Strait of Hormuz will be targeted," the headquarters said in a statement, describing the measure as a response to what it called continued US aggression.

The narrow waterway between Iran and Oman carries roughly one-fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments, making any disruption a major concern for energy markets. Oil prices rose as traders assessed the risk to global supplies, although U.S. officials said commercial traffic through the strait was continuing.

Iran Announces Retaliatory Strikes

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said it launched a two-wave retaliatory operation against American military installations across the Persian Gulf.

The force said it struck 18 targets belonging to the US military at Ali Al Salem and Ahmad

Al Jaber air bases in Kuwait and Sheikh Isa Air Base in Bahrain, describing the attacks as retaliation for strikes on Iranian military positions and infrastructure near Bandar Abbas.

Separately, Iran's army announced a drone strike against the headquarters of the US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain, claiming to have targeted communications facilities and radar systems associated with Patriot air defence batteries.

Iranian media also reported missile and drone attacks against US naval assets operating near the Strait of Hormuz, with preliminary reports suggesting at least one American warship sustained damage. The Pentagon has maintained silence about the Iranian strike on American warships.

The IRGC Navy separately said it had struck two oil tankers allegedly attempting to transit the strait in defiance of the closure order and warned that any vessel approaching the waterway could be treated as cooperating with hostile forces.

Trump Claims

US President Donald Trump told Fox News that American military operations against Iran would soon conclude, claiming Iranian officials had asked Washington to halt the attacks.

Trump said US forces had launched 49 Tomahawk cruise missiles against Iranian targets and warned that further strikes could follow if Tehran refused to reach an agreement with Washington.

He also said Israel had played no role in the latest attacks.

Iranian state media rejected Trump's claims as "completely false", denying any contact with US officials and accusing Washington of attempting to justify the latest military action.

Iran's Khatam al-Anbiya Headquarters said the US decision to halt some attacks was the result of a "powerful and decisive response" by Iranian forces and warned that military operations would continue.

Region on Edge

The latest exchange of strikes further undermined efforts to preserve a ceasefire reached earlier this year and highlighted the continued volatility of the conflict, which has already disrupted energy markets and shipping routes across the Gulf.

Iranian officials warned that any country directly participating in military operations against the Islamic Republic would face a proportional response, raising concerns that the confrontation could expand beyond the United States and Iran.

As reports of air strikes, missile launches, drone attacks and naval engagements multiplied across the region, Gulf governments and global markets braced for the possibility of a wider conflict centred on one of the world's most strategically important waterways.

Aim Is To Make

Shopian.

The Lieutenant Governor said investments in sports infrastructure, grassroots competitions and community engagement have helped boost the popularity of hockey across the Union Territory. He said synthetic hockey turfs at Srinagar, Pulwama and Poonch have opened new opportunities for aspiring players from both urban and remote areas.

He also said modern synthetic hockey turfs are being constructed at Bandhu Rakh and K.K. Hakku Stadium in Jammu, which will further strengthen training facilities, coaching programmes and talent identification efforts.

Congratulating the winners and participants, Sinha said the tournament offered young athletes an opportunity to showcase their skills and realise their sporting potential.

He appreciated the efforts of the J&K Sports Council, Badal Hockey Club and Hockey Jammu & Kashmir for organising the event and promoting the sport among youth.

Reaffirming the government's commitment to supporting young talent, the Lieutenant Governor said efforts are being made to provide opportunities and resources that enable youth to contribute to the country's development.

Among those present were Commissioner Secretary Youth Services and Sports Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Akshay Labroo, Secretary J&K Sports Council Nuzhat Gul, officials of Badal Hockey Club, coaches, students and teachers.

Custody Battles:

allegations and claimed they were the result

of matrimonial discord. He argued that the child had been influenced against him and cited what is commonly referred to as "Parental Alienation Syndrome" (PAS), a theory that one parent manipulates a child into rejecting the other parent.

In an attempt to facilitate a possible reconnection between the father and daughter, the Bombay High Court had directed that the child undergo evaluation by a four-member panel of psychologists, including experts based in the United States.

SC Sets Aside Expert Panel

A bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and Nongmeikapam Kotiswar Singh found fault with the High Court's approach and set aside the direction relating to the expert panel.

The court observed that in matters involving children, particularly those who are alleged victims under the POCSO Act, the welfare, dignity, emotional security and psychological wellbeing of the child must outweigh the claims and interests of litigating parents.

"It is by now well settled that in matters concerning custody and access, the rights and claims of litigating parents remain subservient to the welfare and best interests of the child," the bench said.

The court warned that repeated interactions with multiple experts could expose a child to further trauma and amount to "secondary victimisation".

Guidelines for Future Cases

While deciding the case, the Supreme Court framed broad guidelines for courts dealing with similar disputes in future.

It held that psychological evaluations of children should not be ordered routinely and that judges must record specific reasons demonstrating why such an exercise is necessary.

The court also said repeated or overlapping assessments should ordinarily be avoided and that any evaluation, if required, should generally be conducted by an independent court-appointed psychologist rather than a panel of experts.

The bench stressed that the process must remain child-centric and welfare-oriented and should not become an adversarial exercise aimed at gathering evidence.

Instead of subjecting the child to further evaluation at this stage, the Supreme Court directed the family court to first assess the mental and psychological condition of both parents.

A court-appointed psychologist will interact with the parents and consult the psychologist currently treating the child before submitting a report to the family court.

Based on that report, the family court will decide whether any further psychological assessment of the child is necessary.

The judgment also cautioned against the routine use of the term "Parental Alienation Syndrome", observing that it is not a recognised diagnosable syndrome and that claims of alienating behaviour must be established through evidence rather than assumption.

LPG Bookings

petroleum products.

According to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Oil Marketing Companies are actively managing supplies across the country to prevent any disruption and ensure uninterrupted availability of fuel and cooking gas.

Official figures released by the ministry indicate that domestic LPG bookings touched 1.40 crore over the last three days, reflecting a significant surge in demand.

However, authorities maintained that supply networks remain fully functional, noting that 1.49 crore LPG cylinders were delivered during the same period, exceeding the number of bookings received.

The ministry also reported the sale of around 22,340 tonnes of commercial LPG over the past three days, while approximately 1.91 lakh units of 5-kilogram LPG cylinders were supplied across various regions.

Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, said refineries across the country continue to operate at optimal capacity and that adequate stocks of petroleum products are available to meet consumer requirements.

The statement appears aimed at easing concerns arising from the recent spike in demand, with officials emphasizing that the country's fuel supply chain remains stable and capable of meeting current consumption levels. [KNT]

Early Diagnosis Key to Better Outcomes for Neurodiverse Children: GMC Experts

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Stressing the critical importance of timely diagnosis and support for children with developmental and neurodevelopmental conditions, the Department of Community Medicine, Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar, has launched a public awareness campaign highlighting the life-changing benefits of early intervention during a child's formative years.

The campaign, titled "Don't Lose the Golden Years", emphasises that the first five years of a child's life represent the most crucial phase of brain development. Medical experts have warned that delays in recognising developmental concerns can result in missed opportunities for improvement, while timely intervention can significantly enhance communication, learning abilities, social interaction, independence, and school readiness.

According to the advisory, accessed by Kashmir Observer, chil-

dren diagnosed with conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Intellectual Disability, Speech and Language Delays, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Learning Disabilities, Cerebral Palsy, and other developmental disorders benefit greatly when therapeutic support is initiated early.

Health experts said that many families unknowingly lose valuable time by focusing solely on school admissions rather than seeking professional intervention. Parents often spend years searching for so-called "normal" schools, paying hefty admission fees, comparing their children with peers, or hoping developmental concerns will resolve on their own, they said.

"One of the most common mistakes is waiting for the child to 'grow out of' the problem. During this period, the brain's capacity to adapt and learn is at its peak. Delaying intervention may mean losing precious developmental opportunities that can never be fully

regained," the advisory states.

Medical professionals associated with the campaign stressed that enrolling a child in a mainstream school without addressing developmental challenges may create additional difficulties. Many neurodiverse children struggle academically, experience frustration, lose self-confidence, and face social challenges when their specific needs are not adequately addressed.

The campaign highlights that intervention should precede integration into mainstream educational settings. Experts argue that a child does not necessarily need a prestigious school at the outset, but rather the right therapeutic and educational support tailored to their developmental requirements.

The awareness material further underlines that every month matters in early childhood development. "Developmental delays identified at the age of two can often be improved substantially, while delays recognised at three years still respond well to inter-

vention. However, delays identified at four or five years of age may require more intensive and prolonged support, making early recognition all the more important, it states.

Health specialists advise parents to shift their focus from asking, "Which school should my child attend?" to a more important question: "What intervention does my child need right now?"

The campaign outlines several forms of evidence-based support that can help children reach their full potential, including speech therapy, occupational therapy, behavioural therapy, physiotherapy, special education services, and structured parent training programmes.

Experts also emphasized that schools, while important, cannot replace specialized therapies. Effective support for neurodiverse children requires a combination of early diagnosis, individualized treatment plans, active parental involvement, special education support, and gradual inclusion in

mainstream educational environments when appropriate.

"The ultimate goal is not merely admission into a school but ensuring meaningful participation, learning, communication, and independence. Every child deserves an education, but every child also deserves support that matches their unique needs," the advisory notes.

The Department of Community Medicine, GMC Srinagar, urged parents, caregivers, educators, and healthcare professionals to work together in identifying developmental concerns at the earliest stage and ensuring timely access to intervention services.

Health experts reiterated a simple yet powerful message: "Early Intervention Today, Better Independence Tomorrow". They urged families not to allow social pressure or stigma to dictate decisions regarding their children's development, but instead to rely on scientific evidence and professional guidance to secure the best possible future for their children.

Lightning Sparks Forest Fire in Doda's Lal Draman

DODA: A massive bolt of lightning struck a pine tree in the Sazaan area of the picturesque Lal Draman belt in Doda district on Thursday, triggering widespread panic among residents and causing damage to nearby forest land and standing crops.

Officials told KNO, that while the high-intensity strike damaged several adjoining coniferous trees and flattened natural vegetation in the vicinity, there was no loss of human life or property reported in the incident. The sudden thunderclap and subsequent smoke from the forest area caused immediate panic among the local farmers working in the fields.

"We heard a deafening sound that shook the ground underneath us. Within seconds, we saw thick smoke rising from the pine trees. It was terrifying," said Abdul Razaq, a local resident who witnessed the strike.

Another resident, Asha Begum, described the chaotic moments following the weather event. "The impact was so severe that everyone in the nearby fields started shouting and raising an alarm, alerting others to run for safety. We dropped everything and rushed towards our houses to take shelter," she said. Local administrative and forest officials reached the spot shortly after the incident to assess the quantum of damage caused to the forest resources and the private agricultural land.

Meanwhile, the Meteorology Department (Met) has issued a fresh weather advisory for the region, warning of highly volatile weather conditions over the next few days.

"People are strongly advised to stay indoors and avoid taking shelter under isolated trees or standing in open fields, especially during periods of gusty windstorms, severe thunder and lightning activity," a Met official said.

The district administration has urged residents, particularly those living in the upper reaches of the mountainous district, to remain vigilant and adhere to safety protocols during inclement weather conditions. (Observer News Service)

Health Sector Priority of CM Omar's Govt: Minister Sakina

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Reiterating the Jammu and Kashmir government's commitment to strengthen healthcare and education sectors, Health and Medical Education Minister Sakina Itoo on Thursday said that improving healthcare facilities remains the priority of the government led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

As per KNO, she was speaking to reporters during her visit to Beerwah in central Kashmir's Budgam district, where she, along with MLA Beerwah Shafi Ahmad Wani, inaugurated and laid foundation stones for several developmental projects aimed at improving public infrastructure and essential services in the area.

Itoo said significant investments were being made in medical infrastructure and human resources across J&K.

Speaking about the government's healthcare initiatives, Itoo said that several newly established Government Medical Colleges (GMCs) had in already been equipped with advanced diagnostic and treatment facilities, including Cath Labs and MRI units in last 19 months, and other critical healthcare infrastructure.

"The health sector is a priority area for the CM Omar Abdullah-led government. That is why Cath Labs, MRI facilities, and other modern healthcare infrastructure have been added to some of the newly-established GMCs, and the process is being extended to other institutions as well," she said.

The minister emphasised that the government was committed to ensuring better healthcare access and quality treatment for patients across Jammu and Kashmir.

"Every possible step is being taken to strengthen the healthcare system and provide better medical facilities to the people. Our focus is not merely on constructing buildings but on creating healthcare institutions that are fully functional and capable of delivering quality services," she said.

Addressing demands for a



trauma hospital in the Magam-Beerwah belt, Itoo acknowledged the genuine need for such a facility in the area. However, she said that the government was presently focused on implementing already sanctioned projects.

"There is certainly a requirement for a trauma hospital in Magam. We understand the public demand and the importance of such a facility. However, at present, two trauma hospitals have been sanctioned by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, one for Uri and another in the Rajouri sector. Our immediate priority is to ensure that these projects are completed successfully. In the next phase, areas like Magam will also be considered," Itoo said.

The minister stressed that the government's approach was centered on establishing hospitals that are adequately staffed and equipped rather than limiting development to infrastructure alone.

"We want hospitals with doctors, paramedical staff, equipment and proper infrastructure, not just buildings. Healthcare institutions must be capable of serving patients effectively," she said.

On the education front, Itoo said that the government had initiated measures to address the shortage of teaching staff in schools by seeking the defreezing of teacher posts that had remained frozen for several years.

"We have moved a file for the defreezing of teacher posts in J&K. These posts were frozen long ago. Once approved, they can be referred to the Services Selection

Board (SSB), which will not only improve staffing in schools but also generate employment opportunities for youth," she said.

The minister also referred to concerns arising from the earlier decision to merge or club schools across various districts, saying that public demand for reversing the process has been increasing.

"Hundreds of schools were clubbed in the past. Today, there is growing demand from communities for declubbing these institutions so that students can access educational facilities closer to their homes. The government is examining these concerns seriously," she said.

Commenting on administrative reforms in the health and education departments, Itoo said the government had already taken steps to streamline staffing patterns by ending most attachment arrangements.

"All attached staff members in the health and education departments have been detached and sent back to their original places of posting, except for a few cases where medical grounds warranted relaxation," she said.

During her visit to Beerwah, the minister reviewed several ongoing and proposed developmental works and interacted with local residents regarding issues related to healthcare, education and civic infrastructure.

She assured the people that the government remains committed to equitable development and improved delivery of essential services across all regions of Jammu and Kashmir.

Fraud Accused Arrested After Seven Years on the Run, Says Crime Branch

Observer News Service

JAMMU: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Crime Branch Jammu on Thursday arrested an accused who had allegedly been evading arrest for nearly seven years in connection with a cheating and criminal conspiracy case registered in 2019.

The accused, identified as Riyaz Ahmad Matoo of Srinagar, was wanted in FIR No. 21/2019 registered under Sections 420 and 120-B RPC at Police Station Crime Branch Jammu.

According to officials, the accused had remained absconding since the registration of the case and allegedly avoided arrest by frequently changing his place of residence and concealing his whereabouts at different locations within and outside Jammu and Kashmir.

The arrest follows a prolonged search operation during which Crime Branch investigators tracked the accused through sustained surveillance and field inquiries.

Officials said a special team led by senior officers of the Economic Offences Wing conducted operations in Srinagar and ultimately apprehended the accused from an interior area of the city.



The case pertains to allegations of fraud and cheating being investigated by the Crime Branch. A preliminary chargesheet had already been filed before a court in Jammu against two accused persons, while the arrested accused had remained beyond the reach of law enforcement agencies.

With the latest arrest, investigators believe they have made a significant breakthrough in the case and intensified efforts to unravel the wider circumstances surrounding the alleged fraud.

As per KNT, Crime Branch officials said further investigation is underway.

Senior Superintendent of Police Faisal Qureshi appealed to members of the public to report incidents of fraud and economic offences so that appropriate legal action can be initiated against those involved.

Rajouri Man Found Unconscious inside Industrial Unit, Declared Dead

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: A young man from Rajouri district was found unconscious inside an industrial unit in the Khonmoh area of Srinagar and was later declared brought dead at a nearby health facility, officials said on Thursday.

The deceased has been identified as Syed Ali, son of Bashir Ahmad, a resident of Rajouri.

According to police sources, the man was found in an unconscious condition inside Top Mind

Industries in Khonmoh. He was shifted to Primary Health Centre (PHC) Khonmoh, where doctors declared him brought dead.

As per KNT, the body was subsequently taken for medico-legal formalities and examination.

Police personnel from Police Post Khonmoh reached the hospital and initiated proceedings to ascertain the circumstances surrounding the death.

The exact cause of death was not immediately known, and further investigation is underway.

CM Omar Seeks Extension of 'Pride of Hills' Package

Observer News Service

NEW DELHI: Jammu and Kashmir seeks a partnership to transform its resilience, resources and human potential into a stronger contribution to national growth and development, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said on Thursday as he urged the Centre to extend 'Pride of Hills' package to the Union Territory.

Abdullah was speaking at the 11th Governing Council meeting of NITI Aayog, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The meeting was convened on the theme 'Inclusive Human Development for Viksit Bharat @2047'.

Under the Centre's Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment or SAsCI, 'Pride of Hills' initiative provides financial assistance to hill states for infrastructure development.

"J&K seeks partnership and convergence to transform its resilience, resources and human potential into a stronger contribution to national growth and development," Abdullah said.



Presenting the development scenario of J&K, the chief minister said the social indicators continue to be strong, with improvements in healthcare, education, and social protection.

Abdullah, however, emphasized that development financing frameworks must adequately account for geographical disadvantages. He called for extension of the SAsCI 'Pride of Hills' Special

Development Assistance to J&K on the same principles applicable to other hill states. The chief minister pointed out that the people of J&K had overwhelmingly chosen peace, democracy and progress, creating a strong foundation for sustained development.

He highlighted significant advances in higher education, healthcare and skill development, including the operational-

ization of IIT Jammu, IIM Jammu and AIIMS Jammu, the expansion of medical colleges from three to ten, and the training of more than 90,000 youth under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana.

Referring to the growing diversification of J&K's economy, Abdullah cited record arrival of 2.36 crore tourists in 2024, the impact of the Rs 5,000-crore Holistic Agriculture Development Programme benefiting over 6.5 lakh farmers, and the contribution of nearly 8.5 lakh MSMEs to local employment and economic activity.

The chief minister also highlighted Mission YUVA as a transformative initiative to promote entrepreneurship and employment. He noted that the programme has mapped entrepreneurial potential across 24 lakh households, identified over 5.5 lakh prospective entrepreneurs and contributed to a sharp rise in the number of registered startups.

He outlined J&K's development journey and presented a set of priority proposals aimed at strengthening human development, eco-

nom growth and infrastructure.

The true measure of development lies in expanding opportunities and improving the quality of life for every citizen, he added.

On infrastructure and energy, the chief minister said J&K has vast hydropower potential of 14,867 MW and underscored the importance of strengthening the J&K-Centre Joint Venture model beyond 2028 to fully harness the resources of the Chenab and Jhelum river basins.

He also described the Udhampur-Srinagar railway line as a critical all-weather connectivity corridor and a vital lifeline for the region's apple economy.

As per PTI, Abdullah sought approval of 10 new tourism circuits under a proposed Rs 5,500-crore tourism development plan; institutional partnerships for the promotion of medicinal and aromatic plants, apples and wool; augmentation of railway services ahead of the apple season; and establishment of government medical colleges in the eight districts that currently lack such facilities.

172 FIRs Registered, 156 Drug Peddlers Arrested in Anantnag

SRINAGAR: Police in south Kashmir's Anantnag district have registered 172 cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and arrested 156 alleged drug peddlers during the first two months of the 100-day Nasha Mukh Jammu and Kashmir Abhiyan, officials said on Wednesday.

As per KNO, the campaign, launched by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, is aimed at curbing drug trafficking and substance abuse across the Union Territory.

According to police, more than 323.5 kilograms of contraband substances were seized during multiple operations across the district, while cash amounting to Rs 26.5 lakh, allegedly linked to narcotics trafficking, was recovered.

In a crackdown on the financial assets of drug traffickers, police attached properties in 29 cases valued at about Rs 12.5 crore under relevant legal provisions. Authorities also demolished four properties worth nearly Rs 3.76 crore that were identified as proceeds of narcotics trafficking.

The total value of properties attached or demolished during the period was estimated at around Rs 16 crore, police said. As part of efforts to curb narcotics cultivation, police destroyed illegal cultivation spread over nearly 350 marlas of land. More than 1,606 kilograms of narcotic substances were also destroyed after completion of legal formalities.

Police said more than 300 marlas of government land were retrieved from the alleged illegal occupation of drug peddlers as part of efforts to dismantle networks supporting narcotics trafficking.

Among those arrested were three women accused of drug peddling and four women allegedly involved in the cultivation of narcotic crops, officials said.

Police also found three government employees involved in drug-related cases and said legal action had been initiated against them in accordance with the law.

To strengthen preventive measures against repeat offenders and major traffickers, police took preventive action against 119 suspected drug peddlers under relevant laws, while three alleged habitual offenders were detained under the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (PIT-NDPS) Act. (Observer News Service)

Patients Suffer as Ashtangoo Health Centre Ambulance Used for VIP, official Duties

BANDIPORA: Residents of Ashtangoo village in north Kashmir's Bandipora district have alleged that an ambulance assigned to a local health facility has been diverted for official and VIP-related duties, forcing patients to depend on private vehicles during medical emergencies.

As per KNO, the residents claimed that the 102 ambulance attached to the New Type Primary Health Centre (NTPHC) Ashtangoo remained unavailable for patients for several months, affecting healthcare access in over a dozen villages with a population of more than 30,000.

They alleged that elderly patients, pregnant women and critically ill persons often face difficulties in reaching hospitals, particularly during night hours, due to the absence of a dedicated ambulance. "We have repeatedly requested the authorities to restore the ambulance to the health centre, but no action has been taken," a local said.

Residents also raised concerns over the functioning of the health centre, alleging that some staff members report late for duty and leave before official working hours.

They claimed that medicines are not regularly available, forcing patients to purchase them from private pharmacies.

Another resident said that while the 108 emergency ambulance service remains available, it is frequently engaged elsewhere, resulting in delays in shifting patients to higher healthcare facilities.

In-charge of NTPHC Ashtangoo, Dr Saboor, confirmed that the 102 ambulance is presently stationed at the office of the Block Medical Officer (BMO), Bandipora. (Observer News Service)

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified for the information of the general public that the date of birth of Miss Lone Tabinda Tanveer daughter of Mr. Tanveer Ahmad Lone, resident of Nagbal, Sogam Lolab, Kupwara, presently studying in Class 9th at Salfia Muslim Institute Paraypora Bagat Barzulla Srinagar, has been inadvertently recorded in the school records as 02-11-2013, whereas her actual and correct date of birth is 02-09-2013.

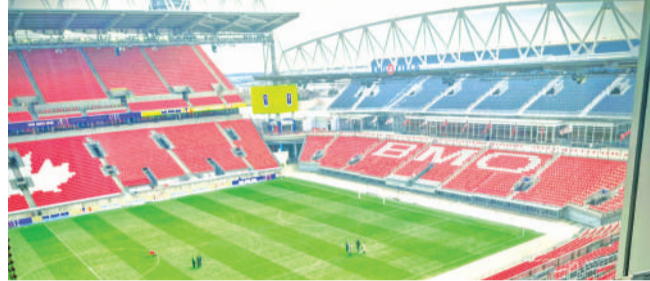
The concerned parents intend to have the date of birth corrected in the relevant school records. Therefore, if any person has any objection regarding the proposed correction of the date of birth from 02-11-2013 to 02-10-2013, he/she may submit the same in writing to Apex Model School or Salfia Islamic Private School within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. No objection received after the stipulated period shall be entertained.

Contact No.: 9906943424.

Toronto Stadium Upgrades Praised Ahead of World Cup

AP
TORONTO: Everything about the 2026 World Cup is bigger and different, and the stadium in Toronto is no exception. Upgrades to the home of Toronto FC of the MLS and the Canadian Football League's Toronto Argonauts were a part of \$100-million renovation project that includes an additional 17,000 temporary seats. "The upgrades completed, including temporary seating and permanent legacy enhancements, will make attending a match at Toronto Stadium an unparalleled experience," Sharon Bollenbach, the executive director of the FIFA World Cup 2026 Toronto Secretariat, said in a statement.

preconceived notion that they would be unsafe." However, Agius said the seats were much better than he expected. "That was the most surprising thing, the seats felt incredibly sturdy and safe, there was no perceivable movement whatsoever," he said. "The view was fantastic. I loved sitting there." The match also served as a test run for the World Cup. Toronto Stadium will host six matches, the first of which is Canada's opener against Bosnia and Herzegovina on Friday. This is not the first time the stadium has undergone a temporary expansion. In 2016, the stadium added 6,000 seats to host the Grey Cup — the CFL's



Toronto Stadium is better known as BMO Field but has been renamed during the World Cup due to sponsorship deals under FIFA naming rules. Early reviews of the renovations, which brought the capacity to the FIFA minimum of 45,000, have been favorable. On May 9, Toronto FC opened the temporary stands to fans for a match against Lionel Messi and Inter Miami. The match drew a venue-record crowd of more than 44,000. "I was definitely apprehensive about the safety of the setup," said JohnPaul Agius, who sat in the temporary seats with his family for the match. "I had seen pictures of it being built and the immediate comparison with the Rogers Stadium at Downsview" — a local temporary concert venue — "and all the complaints about it, definitely gave me a

championship — the MLS Cup and the NHL Centennial Classic. The seating is similar to the one used in 2016, with improved technology, said a spokesperson for Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment, which announced the renovations and costs in March. "I think they will do exactly what they're intended to do, which is accommodate passionate fans from all over the world in a safe manner," said Luis Miguel, who sat in the north stands for the Inter Miami match. "I believe a lot of the issues are just people online creating panic." Temporary seating has been used at previous World Cups. In 2018, Russia's Ekaterinburg Arena added 12,000 seats outside the stadium's original footprint to reach the then-minimum of 35,000 seats.

World Cup Opener Pits Mexico Against South Africa



AP
MEXICO CITY: The largest World Cup in tournament history kicks off Thursday with co-host Mexico taking on South Africa in the opening match. Amid escalating protests and social tensions in Mexico's capital, more than 80,000 fans were making their way to Mexico City Stadium — better known as Azteca Stadium. It got a much-needed facelift

ahead of the 48-team tournament that Mexico is hosting alongside the United States and Canada. The iconic venue will be the first stadium to host three World Cup openers — after doing so in the 1970 and 1986 tournaments. It is the eighth opening match of a World Cup for the Mexicans, who had previously lost five and drawn the last two, including against South Africa in the 2010 World Cup.

South Africa is playing in its first World Cup since hosting the 2010 tournament. The Bafana Bafana also played in the 1998 and 2002 editions. Mexico arrives with an eight-match unbeaten streak and has not lost since last November, when Paraguay beat them in a friendly. The Mexican side is led by the 67-year-old coach Javier Aguirre, who is in his third stint with the national team.

Ronaldo Misses Chances as Portugal Beat Nigeria

AP
LEIRIA (PORTUGAL): Portugal is heading to the FIFA World Cup on the back of a 2-1 warmup win over Nigeria and some regrets for star striker Cristiano Ronaldo. The 41-year-old Ronaldo failed to add to his men's-record international haul of 143 goals despite being presented with clear-cut chances with just the goalkeeper to beat in both halves in Leiria on Wednesday. The five-time world player of the year was substituted off in the 65th minute, having been given longer on the field than every other outfield player to start the match for Portugal. Ronaldo will be making his record-tying sixth appearance at



Francisco Conceição, one of the 11 replacements to come on for Portugal, grabbed the 75th-minute winner by cutting in from the right and curling a shot into the

far corner. Pedro Neto gave Portugal the lead in the 23rd. Akor Adams equalised for 14 minutes later for Nigeria, which had failed to qualify for the World Cup.

Bangladesh Secures Maiden ODI Series Win Over Australia

AP
MIRPUR (BANGLADESH): Bangladesh secured its first one-day international series win over Australia on Thursday. A 2 1/2-hour rain delay forced a revised DLS target of 192 in 41 overs and Bangladesh reached 195-5 with six overs to spare to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. "It's an amazing feeling," batter Najmul Hossain Shanto said. "The way we played this series, we showed a lot of courage. We have been working really hard the last few months, and we wanted to improve our game. I'm really proud to be part of this team."

and captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz shared an unbeaten 51-run stand to clinch the historic series result. "Bangladesh have outplayed us so far in this series so congratulations to them," Australia captain Josh Inglis said. Just before the end, Mehidy took a blow to the helmet from a Nathan Ellis delivery and dropped to his knees and vomited. Mehidy spurned a stretcher and was allowed to continue. He hit the winning runs, a six over fine leg. Shanto suggested he was taken to hospital afterward for observation. Australia chose to bat first and Matthew Short was out for his third consecutive duck in



The depleted Australians started the match losing three wickets without a run on the board. Half-centuries from Marnus Labuschagne (55 not out) and Xavier Bartlett (52) bailed them out to 187-8 in 42 overs. Opening batter Soumya Sarkar, the only change Bangladesh made from the team which won the first game by 86 runs, and Shanto made 42 runs each while Towhid Hridoy was unbeaten on 40 off 55 balls. Shanto had a nervy start but steadied the chase with a stand of 86 runs with Sarkar. Shanto edged Riley Meredith behind to give the fast bowler his first ODI wicket in five years following his recall. Bangladesh wobbled at 144-5 in the 27th over but Hridoy

ODIs followed by Cooper Connolly and Renshaw, also out for ducks. It was only the fourth time in ODI history that a team started off 3-0. Left-arm fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman (3-27) and Taskin Ahmed (3-33) took the wickets, and Mustafizur also had Alex Carey caught at point. When Inglis holed out at deep cover Australia had lost half its wickets for 68 runs. Labuschagne, who dropped to No. 7 in the lineup, and Bartlett revived Australia with a 103-run partnership. Labuschagne's first ODI fifty in 14 innings came after he should have been run out on 1 but Tanvir Islam missed the stumps. The third and final game will be at the same Mirpur venue on Sunday.

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