



No 5- Dal Lake Boulevard Srinagar, 190001, Kashmir

Srinagar | Sunday | 19-07-2026

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

uate students pursuing finance-related courses pursue their dreams of a promising career and a better future.
Eligibility: Students enrolled in the first year of BBA, BFA, B.Com. (H, E), BMS, IPM, B.A. (Economics), BBS, or any other finance-related degree courses are eligible. Applicants must have secured at least 80% marks in Classes 10 and 12 (70% for PwD students). The annual parental income must not exceed INR 6 lakh from all sources. Open for Indian nationals only.
Prizes & Rewards: Scholarship from INR 40,000 to INR 5,50,000 per year for 3 years.
Last Date to Apply: 31-08-2026
Application mode: Online applications only
Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/RKMSp6
QR Code: <https://d4e9eg0t05513.cloudfront.net/static/images/scho-media/raman-kant-munjal-scholarships-2026-271783991967.png>

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED TO ATTACH WITH Sahayikas (ANGANWADI HELPERS APPLICATION FORM

1. Application Form
2. Domicile Certificate.
3. Panchayat Voter List of Electoral Ward as a proof of Residence.
4. Panch Ward certificate issued by BDO or Municipality Ward Certificate issued by Executive Officer Municipality Committee concerned
5. Age Certificate.
6. Qualification Matric , Middle ,
07. Annexure C of the Notification (Affidavit).

MBC- 9797102088

Div Com Reviews Preparations for Independence Day Celebrations

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Friday chaired a high-level meeting to review the preparedness of various departments for the forthcoming Independence Day celebrations, emphasizing the need for advance planning, inter-departmental coordination, and timely mobilization of resources to ensure the smooth conduct of the national event.

The meeting was attended by Inspector Gener-

al of Police (IGP) Kashmir, V.K. Birdi, Deputy Commissioners of all districts, and Heads of Departments (HoDs) of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Roads & Buildings (R&B), Power Development Department (PDD), Education, Culture, Jal Shakti, Health, Information, Hospitality & Protocol, Traffic Police, Fire & Emergency Services, Doordarshan, SKICC, and other concerned departments.

The Divisional Commissioner conducted a comprehensive review of arrangements relating to security, logistics, protocol, medical and emergency services, venue management, full-dress rehearsals, event execution, and post-event coordination.



To ensure seamless arrangements, Garg directed the Chief Engineer, R&B, to make comprehensive arrangements for tentage, seating, stage and dais, besides installing LED screens

was instructed to facilitate the showering of flower petals through drones during the celebrations.

The Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation, was directed to ensure proper sanitation, adequate toilet facilities, and effective dewatering arrangements in the event of rainfall.

The Police Department was instructed to put in place foolproof security arrangements to ensure the peaceful and smooth conduct of the Independence Day function.

The Information Department was directed to install a synchronized public address system in coordination with the R&B Department and Police to ensure uninterrupted proceedings besides installation of hoardings.

The Divisional Commissioner further directed the Departments of Culture, Youth Services & Sports, and the J&K Sports Council to prepare cultural programmes and performances.



Children's Joy Radiates at Chinar Book Festival

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Hundreds of schoolchildren visited the Chinar Book Festival here on the very first day of the fair.

The book festival began on Saturday at the Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC), situated on the banks of the famous Dal Lake.

The children were overjoyed to find themselves surrounded by books.

They also participated in a drawing competition, sketching mountains, tricolour, and various other things.

The festival was inaugurated by Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

Over 200 publishers and book stalls displaying titles in English, Urdu, Kashmiri, Hindi and several other Indian languages are featuring in the festival, which will end on July 26.

As per PTI, many children bought books on science, general knowledge and fantasy, apart from their school curriculum books.

Zainab, a seventh-grade student from a government school in Srinagar, said this was her first time visiting a book fair, and she was delighted to see so many books in one place.

She purchased storybooks, while some books were distributed to the

There was also a selfie point right by the banks of Dal Lake where children were taking selfies while standing next to a cutout of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

On Saturday, 24 bilingual books, prepared during the first Go-



On Saturday, 24 bilingual books, prepared during the first Gojri translation workshop held during the previous edition of this fair, were also released.

children free of cost by the organiser, National Book Trust.

Massarat, a teacher from Ganderbal—located 35 kilometres from Srinagar—also came to visit the book fair.

She mentioned that the children were very happy with the fair.

jri translation workshop held during the previous edition of this fair, were also released.

A set of books based on Kalhan's famous work "Rajatarangini" was also released by the LG on the first day.

Young Thinkers Meet held in Srinagar

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Himalayan Policy and Research Foundation (HPRF) on Saturday organised a day-long Young Thinkers Meet at the Government College of Education, Srinagar, with the participation of more than 50 research scholars from across the region.

According to the organisers, the event provided a platform for scholars to present research on govern-

ance, disaster management, peace education, the rural economy, the Himalayan ecosystem, culture and heritage, and contemporary geopolitical and geoeconomic issues.

The inaugural session was addressed by HPRF Editorial Board member Irshad Ahmad, who highlighted the importance of encouraging policy-oriented research rooted in the region's social, economic, cultural and environmental realities.

Vice-Chancellor of Cluster University Srinagar, Prof Mohammad Mubin, who chaired the inaugural session, stressed the need to protect the Himalayan ecosystem, including its lakes, water bodies, forests and other natural resources. Principal of Government College of Education, Srinagar, Prof Seema Naz attended as Guest of Honour. Dr Tawseef, Dr Wajahat and HPRF Director Fasil Ali Dar also addressed the participants.

NIT Hosts Seminar on Smart Automation in Energy & Manufacturing

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Under the "Alumni Back to Classroom (ABC)" initiative, Office of the Dean, Alumni and International Affairs (A&IA), National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar, in collaboration with the Alumni Association (AANITS), jointly organised a seminar on "Transforming India's Energy and Manufacturing Landscape Through Smart Automation".

The seminar featured Er. Amit Kumar, a distinguished alumnus of NIT Srinagar and Business Unit Head – Metering & Protection Systems at Schneider Electric India, as the keynote speaker.

In his message, Director, NIT Srinagar, Prof. Binod Kumar Kanaujia, said the institute remains committed to strengthening industry-academia collaboration through meaningful alumni engagement.

He said accomplished alumni serve as role models for students and play a vital role in exposing them to emerging technologies, innovation, and industry best practices. He encouraged students to make the most of such interactions to prepare themselves for future leadership roles.

Registrar, NIT Srinagar, Prof. Atikur Rehman, said the Alumni Back to Classroom initiative reflects the institute's vision of building a strong and vibrant alumni network that contributes to academic excellence and professional development.

He appreciated the participation of alumni and industry experts in mentoring students and sharing practical insights from the corporate world.

INَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

آئے تھے ہم مثل بلبل سیر مگھن کر چلے

سنبھال مائی تو ہمارے اپنا ہم تو اپنے گھر چلے

With Profound Grief And Sorrow,
We Inform the Sad Demise of

GHULAM HASSAN DAGGA
R/O Kawdara, Srinagar.
who Left For Heavenly Abode On
Thursday 16 July 2026

May Almighty Allah bless the departed soul and
Grant Him Highest Place in Jannat Ul Firdous and
also grant patience to the Family members,
Relatives and Friends.

FINAL CONGREGATIONAL FATEH KHAWANI
On (Sunday)
19 JULY 2026
At
10:30 AM
At Their Ancestral Graveyard Malkha,
Near Police station Nowhatta, Srinagar

BEREAVED FAMILY
Remembered with
Infinite love and
respect by all.
The
DAGGA FAMILY

CONTACT DETAILS
Abdul manan:-
7006139536
(Son)
Gowhar Ahmad:-
9541095338
(Son)

CONDOLENCE NOTICE

It is informed with profound grief and sorrow to all relatives, friends, and neighbours about the sad demise of Late Ghulam Hassan Khanyari, R/o Shah Faisal Colony, Upper Soura, Srinagar, who departed for his heavenly abode on 17th July 2026, corresponding to 2nd Safar-ul-Muzaffar, 1448 Hijri. Taziyat (condolence gathering) will be observed for three (3) days only. Ladies are kindly requested not to bring any eatables with them.

BEREAVED FAMILY:
Mohammad Iqbal Khanyari (Son)
Mohammad Yasir Khanyari (Son)
Abdul hie Khanyari (Son)
Abdul Qayoom Khanyari (Son)
Sajjad Ahmad Khan (Son-in-law)
Contact No.: 7006077796

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INTIQAL-E-PUR MALAL
Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilayhi Raji'un

It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of Mr. Manzoor Ahmed Gabroo, beloved son of Late Abdul Gabroo, resident of Pathar Masjid, Islam Yarbail, near Mujahid Manzil, on 18 July 2026.

May Allah (SWT) forgive all his shortcomings, shower His infinite mercy upon him, expand his grave with light, and grant him the highest place in Jannat-ul-Firdous. May Allah grant Sabr-e-Jameel (beautiful patience) to his family during this difficult time.

Brothers: Mushtaq Ahmed Gabroo and
Fayaz Ahmed Gabroo
Sister: Shaheen Khan

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

AIRPORTS
SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311 ✈

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

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

☾☼
HIJRI CALENDAR
04 Safar
1448

PRAYERS
FAJR 3: 5
ZUHR 12:37
ASR 5: 34
Magrib 7: 44
ISHA 9: 20

This Day In History

- 711- Muslim forces under Tariq ibn Ziyad defeat the Visigoths led by their king Roderic
- 1195 Battle at Alarcos: Almohads led by Abu Yusuf Yaqub al-Mansur defeats army of Alfonso VIII of Castile
- 1324- Mansa Musa, ruler of the Mali Empire, arrives in Cairo on his way to Mecca, with a procession of 600,000 men, 12,000 slaves and 80 camels carrying 136 kg (300 pounds) of gold each
- 1380- Thomas of Buckingham's invasion army lands on Calais
- 1524- Peasants' War begins in Germany's Black Forest
- 11551- Treaty of Karlsburg: Arch Duke Ferdinand of Austria recognized as King of Hungary and Transylvania
- 1572- Battle at Saint Ghislain: Spanish army beats The Genlis' mercenaries
- 1595- Astronomer Johannes Kepler has an epiphany and develops his theory of the geometrical basis of the universe while teaching in Graz, Austria
- 1639- French troops occupy Salses, at Perpignan
- 1696- Russian Tsar Peter I's fleet occupies the southern mouth of the Don River and gains access to the Sea of Azov, after the surrender of the Ottoman Azov garrison
- 1702- Great Northern War: Swedish troops under King Charles XII occupy Kraków, Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth
- 1850 - Airship Elizabeth leaves in storm for Fire Island, crashes (42 die)
- 1860 - 1st railroad reaches Kansas
- 1863 - Battle of Buffington's Island (St George Creek), Ohio
- 1864 - Third Battle of Winchester, VA (Stephenson's Depot)
- 1870 - France declares war on Prussia; Franco-Prussian war begins
- 1912 - A meteorite of estimated 190kg mass explodes over Holbrook in Navajo County, Arizona, causing approximately 16,000 pieces of debris to rain down on the town
- 1918 - World War I: German armies retreat across Marne River in France
- 1963 - NASA civilian Test pilot Joe Walker in X-15 reaches 105 km
- 1967 - US launches Explorer 35 for lunar orbit (800/7400 km)
- 1969 - Apollo 11 goes into Moon orbit

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Gula Bhat S/o Ghulam Mohammad Bhat, R/o Mullabangil, Tehsil Tangmarg, District Baramulla, hereby inform the general public that my name and my father's name are wrongly recorded in my Aadhaar Card bearing No. 4016 8540 1643 as Gulle Bhat S/o Ghulam Mohd Bhat instead of my correct name Gula Bhat S/o Ghulam Mohammad Bhat. I have applied for correction of the above details as per my Domicile Certificate and other records.

Any person having any objection may submit the same before the concerned authority within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. If no objection is received, the correction shall be treated as genuine.

Sd/-
GULA BHAT
S/o Ghulam Mohammad Bhat
R/o Mullabangil, Tangmarg, Baramulla, J&K UT

fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified for the information of the general public that the ownership of the electricity connection bearing Consumer ID: 0201020007614 is proposed to be transferred from Mohammad Ramzan Bhat S/o Jamal Bhat R/o Brein Nishat, Srinagar, to Bashir Ahmad Bhat S/o Mohammad Ramzan Bhat R/o Brein Nishat, Srinagar.

Any person having any objection to the proposed transfer of ownership may submit a written objection, along with supporting documentary evidence to the KPDC Sub Division, Dalgate, within 7 (seven) days from the date of publication of this notice.

If no objection is received within the stipulated period the ownership of the said electricity connection shall be transferred in favour of Bashir Ahmad Bhat in accordance with the applicable rules and regulations.

x

Kashmir's Real Pollution Is Us

The mountains are drowning in waste, and no dustbin will fix what starts at home.



Farah Zaidi

“
Picture a Kashmir where dropping a bottle on the roadside draws the same public disapproval as damaging someone else's property. That single shift would accomplish more than hundreds of awareness campaigns combined.

Kashmir once had to prove its beauty was real. Now it has to prove that beauty is worth protecting.

Over the past few weeks, social media has filled with disturbing footage from corners of the valley that used to feel untouched.

Images showed meadows strewn with disposable plates, rivers choked with plastic bottles, and abandoned campsites buried under mounds of food packaging.

Gurez, Warwan and a string of newly popular destinations have become casualties of the attention they worked so hard to attract.

The public response has followed a predictable script, pointing fingers at tourists, the government and plastic itself. But the real problem lies elsewhere.

Kashmir does not have a plastic problem. It has a civic consciousness problem.

As people who spend much of the year traveling through the region with Kashmir Off Road, we watched this crisis build way before it went viral.

We drove into valleys where almost no tourists had ever set foot and still found bottles, wrappers and discarded waste scattered through streams and forests.

In 2021, while exploring the ancient Kalaroos Caves, we found plastic waste buried deep inside the cave system itself.

Those caves have never been a picnic stop for mass tourism.

Nobody dumped that trash there by accident or in a crowd. Somebody carried it in, admired the place, and left without feeling any obligation to keep it clean.

That memory has stuck with us because it exposed something uncomfortable.

The real issue isn't where the garbage comes from. It's why people feel comfortable walking away from it.

That difference changes the whole debate.

Decadal discussions about waste have centered on banning plastic, raising fines or organizing clean-up drives. Each step has some value, but none of them touches the behaviour that creates the mess in the first place.

Plastic doesn't throw itself onto a mountainside. People do, and people repeat behaviour that society tolerates without objection.

Littering has become ordinary in our part of the world.

We mindlessly toss a bottle from a car window, leave food scraps after a picnic, and walk away from a campsite without cleaning it up.

These acts barely register as wrong anymore. And let's not blame environmental policy for it when it's a failure of culture.

Societies teach their children what to respect. Families teach kids to greet elders, to remove shoes before entering a home, and to follow dozens of customs that define who they are. But how often does anyone teach a child that a river merits the same



respect as a living room, or that a meadow isn't a dumping ground simply because nobody happens to be watching?

Schools handle math, language and science well enough, but civic responsibility mostly stays trapped inside textbook chapters, memorized for an exam and forgotten within days.

The real classroom sits outside school walls: at home, during family picnics, inside cars, and on trekking trails.

Children absorb far more than they hear. If they watch adults toss waste out a car window or abandon plastic after a meal, no environmental campaign will undo that lesson. Behaviour gets inherited rather than instructed.

And that's the reason this crisis grows larger summer after summer.

As travel expands and more visitors discover Kashmir's landscapes, the environmental toll expands right alongside it.

The damage no longer stays confined to famous tourist spots. Places that stayed pristine for generations now surface on social media feeds, pulling in visitors faster than any community or local administration can prepare for them.

Infrastructure alone won't solve this. Nobody can install a bin on every mountain, or can station sanitation crews across every alpine meadow.

Nature shouldn't need constant human supervision just to stay clean.

The only lasting fix puts the responsibility on in-

dividuals for the waste they create. That shift starts before any government policy takes effect.

It starts with parenting, education, community expectations, and turning littering into something socially unacceptable rather than socially invisible.

Picture a Kashmir where dropping a bottle on the roadside draws the same public disapproval as damaging someone else's property.

That single shift would accomplish more than hundreds of awareness campaigns combined.

Stewardship is measured before the cleanup begins, through the choices and habits that keep the damage from happening in the first place.

The tragedy is that Kashmir still holds landscapes capable of stopping the world in its tracks. The real question is whether future generations inherit those landscapes or only photographs of what they used to look like.

A wrapper dumped in a meadow, a bottle floating in a stream, and a plastic bag caught in a tree branch tell a story about the people who left them behind.

Maybe the most dangerous pollution is the belief that somebody else will always clean up the mess.

Until that belief changes, no ban, campaign, or government initiative will accomplish enough.

The day people stop treating nature as somebody else's job is the day Kashmir starts to heal.

The author is co-founder of Kashmir Off Road. She can be reached at farahzaidiali@gmail.com.

The Land No One Defends

Shamilat land was supposed to belong to entire villages, and that shared ownership is precisely why nobody has stopped it from being stolen piece by piece.



Mohammad Amin Mir

Picture a plot of land that technically belongs to hundreds of families at once. Nobody owns it individually, so in practice, almost nobody defends it.

That's the trap Shamilat land has fallen into across Jammu and Kashmir, and it explains why government property meant for grazing animals, burying the dead, and building village pathways keeps shrinking, wall by wall and shed by shed.

The land is officially protected under Section 4 as government property held for the collective good. On the ground, that protection has turned out to be paper-thin.

A boundary creeps forward a few feet here, a structure rises without permission there, and over the years these small violations harden into permanent occupation.

Nobody notices the theft happening in real time because it never happens all at once.

The Revenue Department gets blamed for this, mostly because it's the agency with its name on the land records.

That blame is only partly fair.

Revenue officials handle demarcation, maintain records, and start eviction proceedings, but they're operating without backup

from two departments that touch this problem just as directly.

The Rural Development Department oversees the Panchayats sitting closest to these villages. Urban Local Bodies approve the construction permits that decide whether encroachment gets built on top of or blocked outright.

When these three agencies work on separate tracks, encroachers slip through the space between them.

It helps to remember what's actually at stake here.

Villages rely on Shamilat land for grazing livestock, cremation grounds, footpaths, ponds, and public spaces that have nowhere else to exist.

Towns keep expanding, open space keeps shrinking, and that makes this land more valuable with each passing year, not less.

There's an environmental angle too, and it's a serious one.

Open community land recharges groundwater, protects biodiversity, and soaks up floodwater that would otherwise flood nearby homes.

Beyond bureaucratic failure, losing this land is an ecological crisis for community.

So how does encroachment actually happen? Usually through a combination of small failures rather than one dramatic crime.

Monitoring stays weak, so early violations go unnoticed. Departments fail to talk to each other, so a complaint filed in one office never lands on the desk of the person who could act on it.

Eviction cases drag on for years while occupation silently solidifies. Land records go outdated and stop matching what's actually sitting on the property.

Political pressure gets applied on behalf of well-connected occupiers, often out of public view. And plenty of residents simply don't know this land carries protected status at all, which



means some encroachment spreads through ignorance as much as intent.

The fallout touches everyone: lost space for schools and clinics, avoidable court battles, and a clear signal to the next occupier that getting away with it is entirely possible.

Technology has actually given the Revenue Department a real edge here.

GIS mapping, satellite imagery, and drone surveys can flag unauthorized construction with a precision paper records never managed.

But a satellite photo means nothing sitting in a folder. Someone still has to act on what it shows, and that follow-through has been the missing ingredient for years.

Panchayats could be doing so much more than they currently are. They are physically

present in these villages every single day, which makes them the first to spot trouble before it reaches a district office.

Give them the authority to report early, block unauthorized construction before it takes root, and turn reclaimed land into playgrounds and community centers, and you've turned passive witnesses into genuine protectors.

Municipalities hold their own piece of the puzzle too.

Approving building permits without checking them against government land boundaries basically legalizes encroachment after the fact. Coordinating with revenue authorities before signing off on any development plan would shut that loophole almost immediately.

None of these fixes work in isolation, though.

Joint inspections, shared digital databases, and regular meetings between departments would turn three separate agendas into one functioning system, with District Collectors holding everyone accountable on a fixed schedule instead of an occasional one.

Public awareness plays a bigger role than most people assume.

Residents who understand the legal status of this land, its environmental value, and the penalties attached to illegal occupation become genuine allies rather than bystanders watching from the sidelines.

Civil society groups and local schools can spread that understanding further than any government notice ever could.

Fairness still has to guide enforcement. Land records need real verification, notice periods have to mean something, and residents facing eviction deserve an honest chance to respond before anything gets torn down.

Genuine boundary disputes look nothing like deliberate land grabs, and treating them the same way destroys public trust fast.

Eviction without a follow-up plan solves almost nothing. Reclaimed land needs immediate, visible public use through parks, health centers, and schools, because empty ground practically invites the next occupier to try their luck.

This land belongs to villages rather than to whichever department happens to spot the violation first.

Protesting it will take Revenue, Rural Development, and Urban Local Bodies finally working as one team, backed by honest technology and residents who know exactly what they stand to lose.

The author is a policy commentator and legal researcher based in Jammu & Kashmir. He can be reached at miramin354@gmail.com

Healing Beyond the Headlines

Recovery from a life-threatening illness became a tribute to the physicians and caregivers who never stopped believing healing was possible.



Syed Nissar H Gilani

Six months ago, my gut failed without warning.

That sentence still stops me. A body that had walked five to seven kilometers every day, that had never touched a cigarette or a drop of alcohol, crumbled within days of a bout of food poisoning that struck while I was travelling.

I lost ten kilograms so fast that the face looking back at me in the mirror belonged to a stranger.

I am telling this story publicly because I think it says something about what Kashmir's hospitals can do when the stakes are highest, a fact that gets buried under decades of coverage that treats this region as nothing but a flashpoint.

Consider the life that crisis interrupted.

I was born in September 1946 and spent thirty-one years in the administrative services, retiring in 2004 at fifty-eight. But retirement never slowed me down.

I travelled internationally, lectured hundreds of in-service trainees, taught local law at the university level, and presided over a martial arts association for two decades.

I translated Sir Francis Younghusband's 1908 work, earning

recognition from the Uttar Pradesh government, and published more than a hundred and fifty articles on local history, administration, and my family's lineage back to Central Asia.

Alongside all of that, I anchored a health program on Doordarshan for forty-five years, a run that forced me to read more medical literature than most graduate students ever touch.

So when I say the failure of my own digestive system shocked me, understand that I came to this crisis with real medical fluency, and it still nearly broke me.

The doctors at the small hospital where the episode first struck acted fast, and that fast action bought me the time I needed.

But the real turning point came when I was transferred to the Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences.

The gastroenterologists there left nothing untried in bringing a failed gut back to function, and I owe particular gratitude to my old friend Dr. Omar Javed Shah, the institution's former director, whose guidance became a beacon through the worst of it.

Here is the part outsiders rarely hear: SKIMS performed at a level that would hold up anywhere, run by physicians trained to a standard that has nothing to do with the region's reputation for instability.

My survival is a direct product of that competence.

But what happened after discharge is where the argument sharpens.

Beyond a single miraculous intervention, recovery comes from sustained, disciplined follow-through, and that follow-through has to happen somewhere.

Mine happened at home, with my



THE DOMINANT STORY IS DISCORD, AND THAT STORY IS REAL, but it sits alongside a public institution capable of pulling an eighty-year-old man's failed organs back into function and sending him home to rebuild his own strength.

family's unwavering support, but it built on a framework the doctors gave me.

I approached eating with what I call a doubly cautious method: hung curd as a daily anchor for gentle probiotics, half a mutton kabab or

twenty grams of dry mutton at dinner, a few spoons of steamed rice.

Each step was modest, but every one of them was deliberate.

I added daily facial massages, done by my helper in upward, outward strokes, to coax blood flow

back into features the illness had hollowed out.

When long hours of sitting brought on mild swelling in my legs, I elevated them, worked my ankles to activate circulation, and kept walking even after a late nap rather

than let stillness take hold.

None of this works without the platform SKIMS built under me. That is the point critics of Kashmir's coverage keep missing.

The dominant story is discord, and that story is real, but it sits alongside a public institution capable of pulling an eighty-year-old man's failed organs back into function and sending him home to rebuild his own strength.

Both stories are true at once. Leaving one out distorts the region as badly as leaving out the other would.

I hosted a prayer luncheon for friends and family a few weeks ago, managing the whole affair myself, the same hospitality I always took pride in.

My appetite has returned, my mind stays sharp, and my numbers look good. I lost ten kilograms, but I never lost my stride.

What I gained was proof, hard-won and specific, that a body treated with respect, backed by family and by physicians who refuse to give up, can rebuild itself even late in life.

Above everything, my gratitude goes to Almighty Allah, who controls this vast universe and who restored my breath and my body.

Still, I want the doctors named here to stand alongside that gratitude, because institutions built by human hands did the work too.

God helps those who help themselves, and in Kashmir, sometimes the help arrives wearing a white coat inside a hospital the rest of the world never bothers to mention.

— The author is a former civil servant from the administrative services. He can be reached at nisargilani5774@gmail.com.

The Letter I Never Wrote

Unable to finish a letter, a man spends the night untangling love from fear before deciding that some truths belong only to the spoken voice.



Faizaan Bashir

I sat by the window long after the city outside had gone still, a blank sheet of paper glowing under the lamp, and for a long while I simply watched the light fall across my own hands.

I had meant to write to Ja'ana for weeks, to tell her everything that lived inside me, but the words kept scattering like birds startled off a branch the moment I reached for them.

I thought instead of the way she laughed with her whole face, and the way her silences could fill a room more completely than her words ever did.

I loved her the way a traveller loves the first light after a long night on the road, a feeling closer to arrival than to romance.

I knew myself well enough to admit I was a man who read too much into a glance, into the pause before she answered a message, into the smallest shift in her voice on the phone.

I could become obsessed with the meaning behind her moods. I could cry with her, laugh with her, laugh only because she existed, and still feel that all of it fell short of what I carried for her.

I wanted only to stay close enough to hear her heartbeat, and that wish felt more sacred to me than any vow spoken inside a temple or signed at a courthouse.

There were nights her brief replies left me uneasy in ways I understood were not always fair to her. My peace had come to depend too much on her mood, and I could see the danger in

that even while I struggled to loosen my grip on it.

I remembered reading about Bukowski and the bird the poet said lived in his chest, the one he drowned nightly in whiskey rather than release. I understood that bird well. For me, though, it was her I could never quite let go of, and never quite hold either.

I could be difficult, I knew, prone to questions that left her feeling cornered, prone to a type of watching that could feel like a cage rather than tenderness. But underneath all of it sat only the fear of losing her, and a wish to know her so completely that I might lift some of what troubled her before it ever reached her.

She had asked me once, gently, why I needed so much reassurance, and I had struggled to answer without sounding wounded.

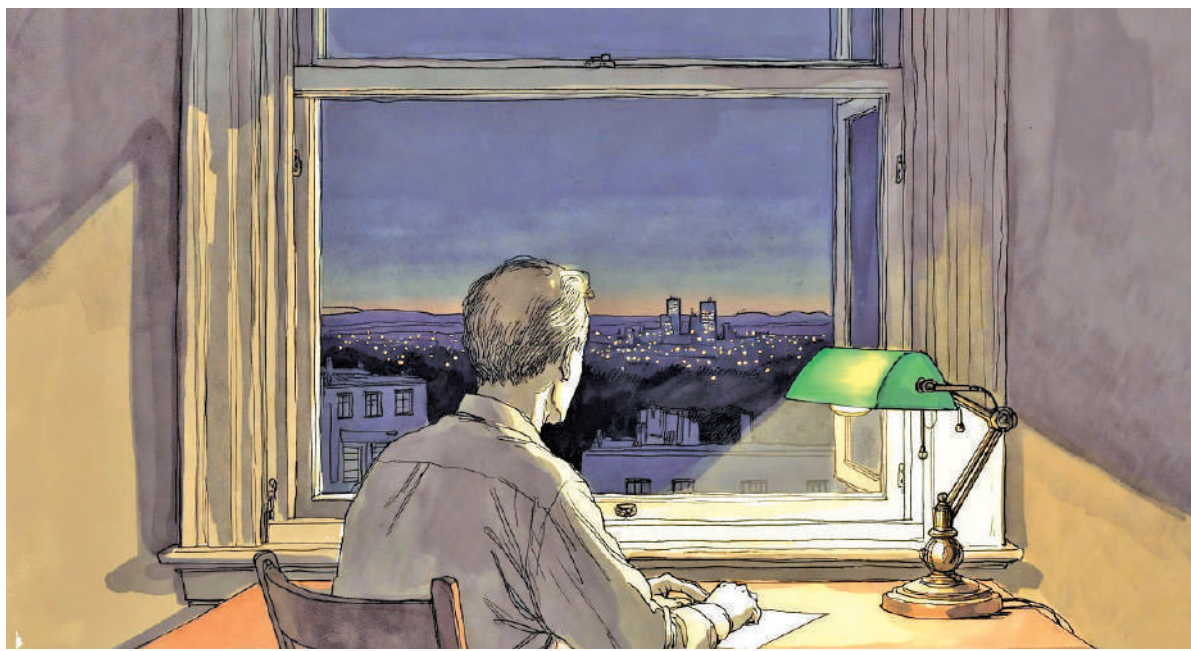
Sitting alone now, I thought of what I would tell her if she asked again. I would tell her she had full right to scold me, to correct me, to step back when she needed room, and that none of it would frighten me the way her silence did.

Perhaps this was simply what it meant to stay open to another soul, to let someone see the frightened parts along with the calm ones. I liked to think that human beings had once been made whole and then divided, and had spent their lives searching for the missing half ever since.

I hoped she would never call me possessive for feeling this way, or broken. I wanted her to look past the words to the fear underneath them, to understand that my intensity came from how much I needed her near, and had nothing to do with any wish to own her.

I thought of all the things that could take her from me, and it wasn't rivals or distance that frightened me most, but the slower thieves: circumstance, time, the pull of ambition, and the weight of status.

None of it impressed me. Whatever she was worth to me could hold its own against mountains of wealth, though I was honest enough with myself to admit that wealth still had its



The lamp burned low, and outside the window the first grey light of morning began to climb over the rooftops. I set down the pen I had barely used and looked at the blank page one last time.

place in a life.

A small smile crossed my face there in the lamplight, thinking of the secret I wanted to give her. She had likely understood me more than she ever let on. She had probably seen through the eccentricities to the plain, ordinary fear of a man trying to hold on to what he loved. I didn't want to control her. I wanted only to stop a passing doubt, or a misread silence, from becoming the thing that finally pulled us apart.

I had spent years studying human feeling, its strange turns, its unpredictability, and the darker corners of the human mind. I read Dostoevsky the way other men read scripture. I had learned from Carl Jung and from those who carried his ideas forward,

Jordan Peterson and Marie-Louise von Franz among them, and I had come to understand a great deal about the human condition through Robert Louis Stevenson.

I had tested all of it against the life I had actually lived, and had come to believe one thing above the rest: a person unaware of what moved him would always be moved by what he could not see.

I trusted feeling over fact. Figures and evidence stirred something in me far weaker than love or hatred ever could, because the latter were alive in a way the former rarely managed to be.

There was a force inside longing and jealousy that I respected, because it explained so much about

why people behaved the way they did, leaping toward conclusions before they understood the hidden fears that had pushed them there. I wanted badly to spare the two of us that fate.

I was insecure, and I feared abandonment, and both feelings had roots that reached back further than I could always trace, roots that continued to shape the man I had become and probably always would.

But I knew one thing with total certainty: I loved with everything in me, and loyalty was the truest strength I had.

The rest, I believed, we could work through together.

My mind turned then from love and fear toward something more solid. A partner, I believed, owed honesty and accountability, the ability to provide, protect, and hold real responsibility.

I cared about those things deeply, and didn't want my intensity mistaken for weakness. A man should build an identity, manage the practical business of living, think ten years ahead and prepare for what was coming. I believed all of it, held it close as a kind of code.

And still I believed something else

moved beneath the surface of every relationship, forces both around two people and inside them, always working to wear down the bond between.

Two people had to stay awake to that, and stand against it side by side. That, to me, was what made love sacred, a thing that chose, again and again, to endure rather than dissolve.

I thought of the old vow: till death do us part. Wise words, I thought, not sentiment dressed up for a wedding day. Modern life whispered that desire should always come first, but I had watched where that road led people, and it rarely led them anywhere warmer.

Two swans, I had read once, stayed together until death separated them. I wanted that same devotion for the two of us, a refusal to grow indifferent once the early wonder faded into the ordinary pulse of shared life, as it always eventually would.

What held two people together wasn't constant excitement, I thought, but the choice to stay close even when the miles between them grew wide, even when the days turned plain.

Her happiness meant more to me than my own comfort, and that, I believed, was the real shape of love: two souls growing into one another, flaws intact, nothing hidden and nothing smoothed over.

I wanted to know all her freckles, all her scars, the smile that reached her eyes and the silence her heart still struggled to put into words. I wanted her to see through me the same way I hoped to see through her.

The lamp burned low, and outside the window the first grey light of morning began to climb over the rooftops. I set down the pen I had barely used and looked at the blank page one last time.

I would not write to her after all. I would tell her myself, in the morning, over coffee, in my own voice, the same words I had turned over all night.

I love you, I would say. That was as good a place as any to begin.

— The author holds a Master's degree in History and can be reached at peerfaizaanbhashir@gmail.com.

Khamenei: US Can't Be Trusted, Trump's Signature 'Worthless'

Agencies

Tehran: Warning the United States of "unforgettable lessons" if it continued its military campaign against Iran, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Sayed Mojtaba Khamenei on Saturday declared that US President Donald Trump's signature was "utterly worthless and invalid", accusing Washington of repeatedly violating the Pakistan-mediated Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The strongly worded statement, read out on Iranian state television, marked Khamenei's first public message since the latest phase of the war began. It came hours after an Iranian negotiator announced Tehran was suspending its commitments under the interim agreement signed with Washington about a month ago, saying repeated US violations had rendered the deal meaningless.

The MoU had been brokered by Pakistan in an effort to bring a permanent end to the conflict.

Khamenei said Washington's repeated breaches had once again demonstrated that the United States could not be trusted.

"Today, the Great Satan has once again revealed its true and unmasked face," he said.

"This dark experience of crime and broken promises serves as yet another solid



document of America's dishonesty, irrationality, untrustworthiness and vileness."

He said the latest US attacks showed that "bullying, hegemony and savagery" were inseparable from American conduct and asserted that the American president's signature was "utterly worthless and invalid".

Referring to the ongoing conflict, Khamenei said Iran and the broader "Resistance Front" had "unforgettable lessons" in store for Washington.

"Now that the American enemy is seeking to foment war and suffer heavier costs and further humiliation, it should know that the dear nation of Iran and the Resistance Front hold unforgettable lessons for it," he said, praising what he

described as the courage of Iran's armed forces and the people of southern Iran during recent attacks.

His remarks came as Washington and Tehran exchanged another round of strikes targeting military positions and critical infrastructure, with the battle over the Strait of Hormuz entering its seventh consecutive day after the collapse of last month's ceasefire.

The US Central Command (CENTCOM) said its latest overnight strikes targeted "surveillance sites, military logistics infrastructure, underground weapons storage, and maritime capabilities" inside Iran.

Calling national unity Iran's foremost priority, Khamenei urged citizens to preserve what he described as "sacred unity" and avoid divisions despite any criticism of government officials.

Maintaining cohesion across society and the government was essential to safeguarding Iran's independence and dignity in the face of the "criminal and deceitful American enemy," he said.

"The dear nation... will remain alert and active on the scene to ensure the protection of the interests of Islamic Iran," Khamenei said.

While acknowledging that some citizens may hold sincere criticisms of officials, he

cautioned against allowing differences to undermine national solidarity.

"Those who may have criticisms must be careful not to cause a fracture in national unity and social cohesion," he said, adding that criticism should contribute to "progress and flourishing".

"The enemy must not sense any sign of weakness from us. Whenever we fully observe these precautions, he will inevitably be forced into retreat and defeat," he said.

Khamenei also hailed the massive turnout at the funeral of his predecessor, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, describing it as "a historic epic and an unprecedented public outpouring".

He said millions who gathered in Tehran, Qom, Mashhad and other cities had demonstrated "appreciation, loyalty, insight and profound affection" for the late leader, while leaving Iran's enemies "astonished, confused, angry and fearful".

The Iranian leader also thanked religious scholars, political leaders, military institutions and representatives of the Axis of Resistance for participating in the funeral ceremonies, expressing hope that all those who stood in solidarity with the event would be blessed with divine favour.

STATEHOOD PROTEST

Add Art 370 Or Count Us Out: Mehbooba To NC

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) on Saturday said it will join the National Conference's proposed protest in New Delhi on July 20 seeking restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir only if the demand for restoration of Article 370, release of political prisoners and lifting of the ban on Jamaat-e-Islami are also included in its agenda.

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti, in a letter to National Conference president Farooq Abdullah, said the party had deliberated on the invitation to participate in the Jantar Mantar protest and concluded that it would not be appropriate to join a demonstration focused solely on the restoration of statehood.

"After careful consideration and deliberations with my senior colleagues, I have come to the conclusion that it would not be fit for us to participate in a protest whose raison d'etre is solely and exclusively the demand for statehood," Mehbooba said.

She argued that protesting only for statehood would "legitimise and sanitise" the Centre's August 5, 2019 decision to revoke Jammu and Kashmir's special status.

"Protesting in unison solely for statehood would only legitimise and sanitise the illegal act of revoking Jammu and Kashmir's special status and could be viewed as a direct endorsement of August 5, the darkest day in our collective history," she wrote.

The National Conference has invited political parties across Jammu and Kashmir to join its

protest at Jantar Mantar on the opening day of Parliament's Monsoon Session to press for restoration of statehood.

Mehbooba said reducing the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir to the demand for statehood alone would amount to "a grave injustice, a disservice and a sheer betrayal."

She maintained that the restoration of Article 370 remained central to the political aspirations of the people and said seeking anything less would amount to "a shameful surrender" of their rights and dignity.

The PDP chief also said the demand for statehood alone echoed the BJP's narrative of pushing Article 370 into the background. She added that the mandate received by the National Conference in the Assembly elections was not merely for restoration of statehood.

Referring to her earlier proposal for a broader political platform, Mehbooba reiterated her appeal to NC president Farooq Abdullah and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to convene an all-party meeting, including representatives from civil society, to discuss issues affecting the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

She said such a process should begin by seeking the release of political prisoners and revocation of the ban on socio-political organisations, including Jamaat-e-Islami.

Mehbooba also said the restoration of statehood should not be viewed as a one-time objective but as part of a sustained political process that the Chief Minister should lead to restore public confidence. (With PTI inputs)

Delhi Court Grants Bail to Khurram Parvez, Irfan Mehraj in UAPA Case

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: A Delhi court on Saturday granted bail to Kashmiri human rights activist Khurram Parvez and journalist Irfan Mehraj in a case registered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in connection with an alleged NGO terror funding case. Principal and Sessions Judge Pitamber Dutt of the Patiala House Court passed the order. The detailed bail order and conditions were not immediately available.

The order paves the way for Parvez's release in the second UAPA case against him. The Delhi High Court had granted him bail in another UAPA case in June.

Parvez, Programme Coordinator of the Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS) and Chairperson of the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD), and Mehraj, an independent journalist and former researcher with JKCCS, had been in judicial custody in connection with the case.

Mehraj was arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in Srinagar on March 20, 2023, under the UAPA in the alleged NGO terror funding case, which was registered by the agency in October 2020.

According to the NIA, the investigation concerns the alleged involvement of certain valley-based NGOs, trusts and societies in funding activities linked to terrorism. The agency has claimed that some organisations collected funds within India and from abroad under the guise of charitable and welfare activities, including public health and education, while allegedly developing links with proscribed terrorist organisations such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Hizbul Mujahideen (HM).

Iran Attack Kills 2 US Troops; 1 Missing

The US military says two troops are dead and one is missing after Iranian attacks on a base in Jordan. They are the first US deaths due to direct Iranian fire since the opening days of the war. A statement says they were killed Friday as the US and partner forces defended

against Iranian ballistic missile and drone attacks. These are the first US deaths due to Iranian fire since the opening days of the war. It says four other service members who were medically evacuated to Jordanian hospitals were later discharged. The dead were not identified.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Heat Peaks In

with several stations recording temperatures well above normal. Kupwara recorded 35.6°C, Ganderbal and Baramulla each registered 34.5°C, Shopian recorded 34.4°C, Pulwama 33.4°C, Kokernag 33.1°C, Bandipora 32.7°C, Qazigund 32.6°C, Kulgam 31.9°C, Pahalgam 28.9°C, and Gulmarg 25.6°C, all above their respective normal temperatures.

In Jammu division, Jammu city recorded 35.0°C, followed by Kathua at 34.8°C, Samba at 34.1°C, Poonch at 33.9°C, Udhampur at 31.8°C, Bhaderwah at 31.4°C, Rajouri at 31.1°C, Katra at 31.0°C, Kishtwar at 30.3°C, Banihal at 30.2°C, and Batote at 27.5°C.

In Ladakh, Nubra Valley recorded the highest temperature at 36.7°C, followed by Kargil at 35.8°C and Leh at 33.4°C.

Meanwhile, the MeT has forecast a significant change in weather from July 19 to July 23, with generally cloudy skies and intermittent spells of rain and thundershowers across Jammu and Kashmir. Heavy rain, brief intense showers and torrential downpours are expected at a few places, mainly during the late afternoon, evening and late night to morning hours.

A special warning has been issued for Reasi and Udhampur districts, where heavy to very heavy rainfall is expected, with isolated places likely to receive extremely heavy rainfall.

Other districts including Jammu, Kathua, Samba, Rajouri, Doda, Ramban and Kishtwar are also likely to receive heavy to very heavy rain during the period.

The department has warned of flash floods, landslides, mudslides, a significant rise in water levels of rivers and tributaries, minor flooding and waterlogging in low-lying areas, particularly during periods of intense rainfall.

Weather conditions are expected to improve between July 24 and July 27, although a few places may continue to receive brief spells of rain or thundershowers.

The MeT has advised people to remain vigilant, avoid unnecessary travel to vulnerable areas during heavy rainfall, and follow official weather advisories. Farmers have also been urged to suspend agricultural operations during the forecast period in view of the expected adverse weather.

Govt Extends

across the Kashmir Division and Winter Zone of Jammu Division by three days in view of the prevailing heatwave and an adverse weather forecast.

According to the order, schools that were scheduled to reopen on July 20 will now remain closed until July 22. Classes will resume on July 23, subject to any further orders issued by the government.

The decision was taken as a precautionary measure following the prolonged spell of extreme heat across the Valley and weather advisories issued by the Meteorological Department.

Officials said the move aims to ensure the safety and well-being of students, teachers and other school staff amid the prevailing weather conditions.

The extension comes as Srinagar on Saturday recorded its hottest day of the season, with the maximum temperature touching 35.9 degrees Celsius, while the MeT has forecast widespread rain, thunderstorms and heavy showers across Jammu and Kashmir from July 19 to July 23.

The department has also warned of the possibility of flash floods, landslides and waterlogging in vulnerable areas.

The School Education Department has advised parents, students and school managements to follow official advisories and await further instructions. It said any further decision regarding the reopening of schools, depending on the weather situation, will be communicated through subsequent orders.

Amarnath Yatra Suspended

the India Meteorological Department's forecast of heavy rainfall and adverse weather across Jammu and Kashmir over the next few days.

The decision came after 16,039 pilgrims paid obeisance at the holy Amarnath cave shrine on Saturday, taking the total number of pilgrims who have completed the pilgrimage since its commencement on July 3 to 3,76,779.

According to official figures, Saturday's pilgrims included 11,785 men, 3,527 women, 235 children, 103 sadhus, 19 sadhvis, five transgender devotees and 365 security personnel.

Meanwhile, the 17th batch of 3,632 pilgrims arrived in Kashmir after leaving Bhagwati Nagar Yatri Niwas in Jammu early Saturday under multi-layer security arrangements.

Officials said the Baltal-bound convoy, carrying 1,008 pilgrims, departed at 2:40 a.m. while the Pahalgam-bound convoy, with 2,624 pilgrims, left at 3:12 a.m. The pilgrims travelled in 148 vehicles, including 82 buses, 17 medium motor vehicles, 47 light motor vehicles and two two-wheelers.

The batch comprised 2,650 men, 858 women, 104 sadhus, 19 sadhvis and one child. With their departure, the total number of pilgrims who have left the Jammu base camp for the ongoing pilgrimage has reached 1,12,760.

In an official statement, the administration said the Amarnath Yatra from both the Pahalgam and Baltal routes will remain suspended from Sunday, July 19, in view of the adverse weather forecast.

"In view of the forecast of inclement weather over the next few days and considering the safety and well-being of the pilgrims, the Shri Amarnathji Yatra shall remain temporarily suspended from both the Pahalgam and Baltal routes with effect from July 19, 2026," the statement said.

Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg said no onward movement of pilgrims would be allowed from the Baltal and Nunwan/Chandanwari base camps from Sunday.

He said the pilgrimage would resume only after a comprehensive assessment of weather conditions and confirmation that both routes are safe for pilgrims. Fresh updates regarding the resumption of the Yatra will be issued in due course.

The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Yatra has also been suspended temporarily as a precautionary measure following the weather advisory.

Authorities said the decision was taken in the interest of public safety and advised devotees to avoid undertaking the pilgrimage until further orders. Pilgrims have been asked to follow official communication channels for updates on the resumption of both yatras. (KNO)

Chinar Book Festival

civilisation through generations.

"Together, we share the responsibility to restore Jammu and Kashmir as a leading hub

for education, literature and youth empowerment," he said.

Highlighting the festival's growing stature, Sinha said it had become a national platform for ideas, debates and knowledge exchange rather than merely a venue for book sales and launches. He noted that workshops, panel discussions and literary conversations held during previous editions had infused new energy into the region's literary traditions.

He also appreciated efforts to revive the ancient Sharada script and highlighted initiatives such as Tamil-Kashmiri literary dialogues, saying they reflected the spirit of "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat" by strengthening connections across regions, languages and generations.

Emphasising that the success of a book festival should not be judged by commercial sales, Sinha said its true value lies in the conversations and ideas it generates.

"If a discussion that begins at this festival reaches a college or university, or if a young person finds a book here that changes the course of their life, that will be the greatest achievement of the Chinar Book Festival," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor urged students to read at least one book beyond their textbooks every month and encouraged aspiring writers to write at least one page every day.

He said the festival should become a platform connecting local libraries and small-town book clubs so that the celebration of literature and knowledge continues throughout the year.

During the visit, Sinha toured various book stalls, interacted with exhibitors and released several publications in different languages. He also asked the organisers to plan a similar book festival in Jammu.

Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, National Book Trust Chairman Prof. Milind Sudhakar Marathe, Commissioner Secretary, School and Higher Education, Ram Niwas Sharma, National Book Trust Director Yuvraj Malik, Chinar Book Festival Chief Convener Dr Amit Wanchoo, National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language Director Dr Md Shams Eubal, senior officials, literary personalities, students and book lovers attended the event.

CBSE Class 10

the results of both board examinations stands at 96.78 per cent, up from 93.6 per cent recorded in the first edition.

More than 1.49 lakh students appeared in the compartment category, of whom over 52 per cent successfully cleared the examination.

The second board examination was introduced this year in line with the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which aims to reduce the pressure of a single high-stakes examination by giving students an additional opportunity to improve their scores.

The main Class 10 board examination was conducted from February 17 to March 11, while the second examination was held between May 15 and May 21.

Under the new system, the better score obtained by a student in either of the two examinations is considered while preparing the final result. (PTI)

Kashmir's Global

varieties to Lulu Hypermarket stores in the United Arab Emirates.

One shipment, experts say, will not redefine Kashmir's economy, though it shows a larger ambition.

Growers, exporters and government agencies have spent several years preparing for a market where success depends on flawless quality, reliable cold chains and deliveries measured in hours rather than days.

That ambition grows from the central place horticulture holds in Kashmir's economy.

Apples dominate the landscape and remain the region's economic engine. Research published in the International Journal of Novel Research and Development estimates that the apple industry contributes nearly 8 percent of Jammu and Kashmir's gross domestic product, generates about 10,000 crore in annual revenue and supports roughly 35 lakh families.

Government and academic estimates place Kashmir's contribution to India's apple production at about 77 to 78 percent.

Horticulture, which also includes cherries, walnuts, pears and saffron, contributes close to 9 percent of the regional economy, according to the Directorate of Horticulture.

But strong production has never guaranteed strong returns. Heavy dependence on domestic wholesale markets has often left growers exposed to sharp price swings and post-harvest losses.

A NITI Aayog roadmap prepared under its Vision 2047 framework estimates that Jammu and Kashmir loses nearly 500,000 tonnes of apples and another 500,000 tonnes of vegetables every year after harvest.

Those losses exceed 3,060 crore annually, with apples accounting for roughly 1,500 crore and vegetables contributing a similar amount.

Research from other parts of the world points toward the same solution.

A 2026 review published in the European Journal of Nutrition and Food Safety found that developing regions with weak cold-chain systems lose between 10 and 50 percent of horticultural produce after harvest.

Another peer-reviewed study based on responses from 300 farmers, traders and logistics operators in India concluded that modern cold storage ranks among the strongest drivers of higher farm incomes because it sharply reduces spoilage and preserves quality.

Those findings have encouraged growers in Kashmir to improve the way they cultivate fruit.

Orchardists in Shopian, Pulwama, Baramulla and Budgam have adopted high-density plantations, precision pruning, controlled irrigation and integrated nutrient management to improve the quality of their fruit.

The focus extends beyond bigger harvests because export markets reward cherries and plums with consistent size, colour, firmness and sweetness.

The varieties selected for the Gulf shipment highlight that approach.

Areko belongs to a newer generation of European sweet cherries prized for their deep red colour, large size, firm texture and sweetness that survives long-distance air freight. Scentrose plums combine aroma, balanced sweetness and firmness, qualities that international retailers seek before signing premium supply contracts.

But producing excellent fruit represents only one part of the equation.

International buyers also expect rigorous

food safety standards, careful grading and packaging that protects delicate produce through long journeys.

APEDA began laying that foundation after opening its regional office in Srinagar in 2021.

Training programmes introduced growers to Good Agricultural Practices, phytosanitary standards, export-grade packaging and quality control. Investment expanded into packhouses, pre-cooling facilities and cold storage, addressing many of the infrastructure gaps identified by NITI Aayog.

Those preparations gradually opened overseas markets.

Earlier consignments of cherries, apples, walnuts and saffron reached buyers in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Kingdom, building confidence among importers before premium cherries and plums entered supermarket shelves in Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

APEDA Chairman Abhishek Dev has described the strategy as sustained investment in quality, infrastructure and market development, with Jammu and Kashmir treated as a priority region for agricultural exports.

Growers connected to the export supply chain have already seen the financial appeal.

Export buyers paid nearly 60 percent more for cherries and about 120 percent more for plums than prevailing domestic prices.

Those premiums depend on maintaining fruit quality through an uninterrupted cold chain because even brief changes in temperature can reduce freshness and market value.

Chile's experience illustrates how valuable that investment can become.

The country built one of the world's leading premium cherry export industries by treating logistics with the same importance as cultivation.

Chile now exports more than 15,000 tonnes of air-flown cherries to China during a season through an integrated cold-chain network that reduced transit times from about 35 days to 21.

Shipping companies created dedicated charter services, while airlines introduced charter flights capable of transporting nearly 90 tonnes in a single trip.

Careful planning transformed a highly perishable crop into one of the country's strongest agricultural exports.

Kashmir stands at a much earlier stage of that journey.

The Gulf presents an attractive destination because demand continues to grow alongside investment in food logistics.

The Gulf Cooperation Council fruit and vegetable market is valued at nearly \$17 billion and is projected to reach about \$21 billion by 2030.

The United Arab Emirates imports close to \$2 billion worth of fresh fruit and vegetables annually. Dubai strengthened that position further with the launch of its fresh food hub in 2024, which manages more than \$9 billion in food trade through advanced cold-chain corridors linking Jebel Ali Port and Dubai International Airport.

India already supplies roughly 11 percent of the UAE's fresh fruit imports, giving Kashmir access to buyers who already source Indian produce on a large scale.

Boxes of cherries and plums that left the valley this month marked a small beginning, with larger ambitions for Kashmir's fruit growers waiting in the seasons ahead.

Heavy Rain Alert for Udhampur, NH-44 May Witness Disruptions

Observer News Service

UDHAMPUR: The District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) of Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district on Saturday issued a high-weather alert, warning of heavy to very heavy rainfall between July 19 and 23, with the most intense spell expected from July 20-23, officials said.

Citing a forecast from the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) Srinagar, the advisory accessed by KNS, cautioned that isolated areas could experience brief intense showers, thunderstorms, and gusty winds, potentially triggering flash floods, landslides, mudslides, waterlogging, and a sharp rise in water levels of rivers and streams, particularly in low-lying and vulnerable belts.

"The situation is likely to worsen between July 20 and 23. We have directed all concerned departments—including PWD, PMGSY, Police, Health, SDRF, and Agriculture—to remain on high alert and ensure rapid response



mechanisms," a senior DDMA official told KNS.

The advisory flagged major disruption risks on NH-44

(Jammu-Srinagar highway), as well as the Ramnagar-Basantgarh-Latti road and other link roads, due to landslides, shoot-

ing stones, and slippery road conditions.

Hilly terrains in Ramnagar, Chenani, Latti-Dudu, Panchari,

Moungri, and Basantgarh have been identified as high-risk zones for mudslides and rockfalls.

In a directive to the farming community, authorities have advised all agriculturists and orchardists to halt all farm operations—including harvesting, spraying, and irrigation—from July 19 to 23 to prevent damage to crops and livestock.

As per KNS, the DDMA has appealed to the general public to avoid unnecessary travel, especially in hilly areas, and to confirm road status before undertaking any journey on NH-44 or other district roads. People have also been advised to stay away from landslide-prone spots, nallahs, and riverbanks.

The District Emergency Operation Centre (DEOC) can be reached at 01992-272727 and 01992-272728, while the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) is available on the nationwide helpline 112.

"The administration is fully prepared. We urge citizens to cooperate and follow safety advisories," the official added.

LG Sinha to Lead 'Mulaqat' Interfaith Dialogue in Baramulla Today

SRINAGAR: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha will lead "Mulaqat", an interfaith dialogue initiative here in North Kashmir on Sunday. According to the details available with KNO, the event is aimed at promoting peace, harmony and mutual understanding among different sections of society.

LG Sinha will attend the event at Dak Bunglow as the chief guest, with organisers stating that all necessary arrangements, including security preparations, have been finalised for the programme. Chairman of the organising body, Wajahat Farooq, said the first edition of "Mulaqat" will be held in Baramulla under the chairmanship of the Lieutenant Governor, following which the initiative will be extended to other districts of the Kashmir Valley.

"The programme will bring together religious leaders, civil society representatives, government officials, youth and the general public for meaningful dialogue aimed at strengthening peace, harmony and understanding," Farooq said.

The organisers said the platform will focus on encouraging dialogue among communities and creating greater awareness about the importance of tolerance, coexistence and social unity. (Observer News Service)

NC Leaders Head to Delhi for Statehood Protest

SRINAGAR: Ahead of its proposed programme in New Delhi over the demand for statehood, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, NC president Dr. Farooq Abdullah, and several legislators left for New Delhi on Saturday to participate in the event.

Omar Abdullah and his father left Srinagar in the afternoon and reached the national capital to take part in the proposed protest programmes over the demand for statehood.

Sources in the National Conference told KNO that they were awaiting permission to hold a sit-in over the demand but expressed hope of receiving it. They added that the protest could take place either at Jantar Mantar-the designated venue for protests-or at Ramila Maidan, which hosts the annual Ramilla as well as major political rallies. The NC had proposed to stage a protest on July 20, the first day of the Monsoon session of Parliament, to press for the restoration of statehood. It had sent invitations to 52 political as well as religious personalities to participate in the protest programme. While the BJP declined the invitation and proposed to hold a Secretariat gherao on the same day, Kashmir-based smaller political parties like the PDP, PC, and others decided against participating on the grounds that the demands for the restoration of Article 370 and Article 35A have been ignored. (Observer News Service)

Crisis in Hill Council Kargil

SRINAGAR: The ruling National Conference on Saturday expelled Chief Executive Councillor of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Kargil, Dr. Mohd Jaffer Akhoun, from the party for refusing to honour the pre-election commitment of transferring power to the Congress. The National Conference General Secretary, Ali Muhammad Sagar, as per KNO, ordered Akhoun's removal from the party's basic membership for six years, citing anti-party activities and indiscipline.

As per the five-year power-sharing pact between the NC and the Congress, the chair of the CEC was to rotate between the two allies, with the NC holding the position for the first two-and-a-half years, followed by the Congress for the remaining tenure. (Observer News Service)

NC Leader urges Centre to Table J&K Statehood Restoration Bill in Monsoon Session

Observer News Service

JAMMU- NC leader Rattan Lal Gupta launched a scathing attack on the BJP-led Union government over the continued delay in restoring Jammu and Kashmir's statehood.

Two days ahead of his party's proposed protest in Delhi next week, senior National Conference (NC) leader Rattan Lal Gupta on Saturday urged the Centre to introduce and pass the Statehood Restoration Bill during the Monsoon session of Parliament.

As per PTI, Jammu NC president Gupta emphasised that the demand transcends political affiliations and represents the collective aspiration of J&K people. "Any further delay will only deepen public disappointment and raise serious concerns about the Centre's commitment to democratic values and the federal structure of the country," he said.

Addressing a meeting of party functionaries at Sher-e-Kashmir Bhavan in Jammu ahead of the proposed protest in Delhi on July 20, Gupta launched a scathing attack on the BJP-led Union government over the continued delay in restoring Jammu and Kashmir's statehood, saying the people have been subjected to "broken promises, constitutional discrimination" despite fulfilling every condition laid down by New Delhi.

He said the Centre has repeatedly shifted the goalposts on the issue of statehood. "First, we were told that delimitation had to be completed. Then it was said Assembly elections must be held. Later, peace and normalcy became the excuse. Today, all these conditions stand fulfilled."

"...tourism is witnessing unprecedented growth and crores of devotees are undertaking the Vaishno Devi and Amarnath Yatras

peacefully. What excuse remains now?" he asked.

Gupta said the BJP owes an answer to the people of J&K for "reneging on repeated public assurances" made by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Union Home Minister Amit Shah regarding the restoration of statehood.

He urged both the PM and the home minister to demonstrate their commitment by introducing and passing the Statehood Restoration Bill during the Monsoon session of Parliament starting on July 20.

Referring to the statehood protest in Delhi, Gupta said the agitation is aimed at reminding the BJP leadership of its solemn commitments.

"We will continue to hold the BJP accountable until it honours the promise repeatedly made by the Prime Minister and the Home Minister to restore full statehood without any further delay," he said.

Paras Health Launches PARAS RATNA to Celebrate Excellence & Employee Recognition

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Paras Health has announced the launch of PARAS RATNA, its flagship Rewards & Recognition Programme, reaffirming the hospital's commitment to recognising employees who consistently demonstrate excellence, innovation, teamwork, ownership, and an unwavering dedication to compassionate patient care.

The programme has been introduced to honour individuals whose exceptional contributions strengthen the organisation's culture and support its mission of delivering world-class healthcare services across the Himalayan region.

Announcing the initiative, Dr. Murtuza Habib, Vice President & Facility Director, Paras Health Srinagar, said that every achievement at Paras Health is a reflection of the collective commitment, shared purpose, and dedication of its people.

"PARAS RATNA is more than a recognition initiative;



it is a celebration of excellence, ownership, innovation, collaboration, teamwork, and commitment. It recognises the extraordinary efforts of our people who go above and beyond every day to deliver compassionate, patient-centred care while contributing to the growth and success of Paras Health," he said.

Dr. Habib highlighted that the strength of Paras Health Srinagar lies in its team of

dedicated professionals who are united by a common purpose—to serve patients with compassion, uphold the highest standards of clinical and service excellence, and strengthen the trust placed in the institution by communities across the region.

He noted that the launch of PARAS RATNA reflects the organisation's continued focus on creating a workplace where exceptional performance is recognised, celebrated, and inspires others to excel. The programme aims to foster a culture of appreciation that encourages innovation, strengthens collaboration, and reinforces a sense of belonging among employees.

Govt Polytechnic for Women Sgr Signs Strategic MoU with J&K Hoteliers Club



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Government Polytechnic for Women, Srinagar formalised a strategic industry-academia partnership with the Jammu & Kashmir Hoteliers Club through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The signing ceremony took place on campus and was attended by heads of departments, teaching and non-teaching staff, and students of the Department of Travel & Tourism.

The MoU was signed in the presence of a distinguished delegation from the Jammu & Kashmir Hoteliers Club. The delegation included Jinab Mushtaq Ahmad Chaya (President, J&K Hoteliers Club), who also graced the occasion as the Chief Guest; Mr. Tariq Rashid Ghani (Junior Vice President); Mr. Naseer Khan (Treasurer); and Mr. Murad Kapra (Joint Treasurer).

Both parties underlined the mutual importance of close collaboration between academia and industry to boost the employability, professional competence, and practical exposure of students in Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality Management. The agreement provides a framework for cooperation that will enable experiential learning, internships, industry visits, guest lectures, faculty ex-

change, joint workshops, and other skill-oriented initiatives designed to bridge classroom learning with real-world hotel and tourism operations.

Principal, Government Polytechnic for Women, Er. Imtiaz Ahmad, welcomed the partnership and highlighted the college's commitment to preparing students for industry demands by integrating hands-on training and sectoral exposure into the curriculum. Jinab Mushtaq Ahmad Chaya lauded the institute's efforts in women's technical education and expressed the Club's readiness to support capacity building, mentorship, and employment pathways for students.

While speaking on the occasion, Jinab Mushtaq Ahmad Chaya, President J&K Hoteliers Club, said, "This partnership is a significant step towards empowering young women with the practical skills and industry exposure required to excel in the hospitality and tourism sector. The Hoteliers Club is committed to providing mentorship, internships, and real-world training opportunities that will bridge the gap between academic learning and professional practice. Together with Government Polytechnic for Women, Srinagar, we will work to create sustainable career pathways and strengthen the local tourism ecosystem."

SCERT Strengthens Mathematics Education through Capacity Building Programme

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Reinforcing its commitment to competency-based and learner-centric education, the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), J&K, Divisional Office Kashmir concluded a three-day Capacity Building Programme (CBP) on Experiential Learning in Mathematics.

The programme was organized by the Department of Education in Science and Mathematics, SCERT Divisional Office Kashmir, under



the leadership of Syed Shabir Ahmad, Joint Director, SCERT, Divisional Office Kashmir.

The programme was designed in the cascading mode of professional development, wherein Master Resource Persons (MRPs) from various District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) and Schools of Kashmir Division were trained to further conduct similar capacity-building programmes for Mathematics teachers in their respective districts. This multiplier approach is expected to ensure wider dissemination of innovative pedagogical practices and strengthen classroom teaching across the Union Territory in line with the vision of the Na-

tional Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF).

Speaking on the occasion, Joint Director, SCERT Divisional Office Kashmir, appreciated the efforts of the Department of Education in Science and Mathematics for organizing the programme and reaffirmed SCERT's commitment to continuous professional development of teachers. He expressed confidence that the cascading approach would significantly enhance the reach and impact of experiential peda-



gogy, ultimately contributing to improved learning outcomes in Mathematics across schools of Jammu & Kashmir.

The training programme was coordinated by Gulzar Ahmad Dar, Senior Academic Officer, SCERT J&K, who emphasized that experiential learning is central to developing conceptual understanding, critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving abilities among learners. He highlighted that the cascading model adopted by SCERT would enable the knowledge, skills and innovative teaching practices acquired during the programme to reach thousands of Mathematics teachers through district-level training initiatives.

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NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

For and on behalf of the Managing Director, Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDC), e-bids are invited from reputed Contractors having Valid A-Class Electrical Contractor License or equivalent license issued by Chief Electrical Inspector of J&KPPD/Relevant issuing authority/ registered Firms/Bidders enlisted with CPWD/MES/Railways for the following work

1	Name of the Work	Annual Maintenance Rate Contract (AMRC) for Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of HT/LT Line Materials, Sub-Station works, Streetlighting etc in the jurisdiction of KPDC, Rajbagh for the period August 2026 to July 2027 or till Finalization of Next Rate Contract
3.	Estimated Cost	Rs 60.00 Lacs

The tender document is available on website <http://jktenders.gov.in>. Interested bidders may view or download the e-Bid document, seek clarification and submit their e-Bid online up to date as per the details mentioned in the table below :

A	Date & Time of Downloading of Standard Bidding Document	The Standard Bidding Document can be downloaded over http://jktenders.gov.in from 20-07-2026; 10:00 AM
B	Clarifications Start Date	20/07/26, 10:00 AM
C	Clarifications End Date	22/07/26, 04:30 PM
D	e-Bid Submission (Start) Date & Time (Submission of e- tender fee, EMD and other supporting documents in PDF/XLS format)	22/07/26, 05:00 PM
E	e-Bid Submission (End) Date & Time (Submission of e- tender fee, EMD and other supporting documents in PDF/XLS format)	11/08/26, 02:30 PM
F	Online e-Bid Opening Date & Time	13/08/26, 02:30 PM
G	Venue of Opening of Technical & Financial e-Bids	Office of the Executive Engineer, KPDC, ED-2 nd , Rajbagh, Srinagar
H	Cost of e-Bid Document (e-challan/TR)	Rs. 2000/- (Rupees Two Thousand Only) (Non-Refundable)
I	Amount of EMD/Performance Security Deposit	EMD for Rs 120000/- (Rupees One Lac Twenty Thousand Only) to be furnished and uploaded by all bidders for tender participation and Performance Security Deposit for an amount equal to 5% of the value of contract (to be furnished by L1 only)

- The bidders need to submit the proof/Cost of e-Bid document as stated in the above table through e-Challan/Treasury Receipt pledged to Executive Engineer, KPDC, ED-2nd, Rajbagh, Srinagar to be Credited to M.H-0801-Power payable at Srinagar. The scanned copy of the e-Challan/Treasury Receipt must be enclosed along with the e-Bids. No Demand Draft shall be accepted. Further, No Bidder shall be exempted from depositing Cost of e-Bid document even if agency/bidder is MSME.
- All the e-Bids must be accompanied by the scanned copy of EMD in the form of CDR/FDR/Bank Guarantee for tender participation by all bidders, pledged to the Executive Engineer, KPDC, ED-2nd, Rajbagh, Srinagar. No Interest would be payable on EMD/Performance Security deposited with the Department. No Bidder shall be exempted from depositing of Earnest Money even if agency/bidder is MSME The e-Bids of the bidders not submitting the certified copies of above mentioned documents at S.No. (1) and (2) in scanned form shall liable to be rejected.
- Hard Copy of original instrument of EMD needs to be submitted only by the lowest tenderer instantly after opening of e-NIT and must be pledged to the Executive Engineer, KPDC, ED-2nd, Rajbagh, Srinagar. The same must be submitted to this office within 03 days positively for award of contract.
- The e-Bids will be electronically opened in the presence of bidder's representatives, who choose to attend at the identified venue on indicated date and time mentioned in the above table or any subsequent day to the convenience of the Tender Opening Committee. An authority letter of bidder's representative will be required to be produced.
- The Department reserves the right to cancel any or all the e-Bids/ the e-Bid process without assigning any reason thereof. The decision of department will be final and binding.
- In the event of date specified for e-Bids opening being declared a holiday/closed day for department's office then the due date for opening of e-Bids shall be the following working day at the appointed time and place.
- All the required documents excluding Price Schedule/BOQ should be uploaded by the e-Bidder electronically in the PDF format, whereas Price Schedule/BOQ should be uploaded electronically in the same BOQ sheet provided with the SBD. Also, Signed and Stamped Copy of SBD is required to be uploaded.
- To participate in e-bidding process, bidders have to get 'Digital Signature Certificate' - (DSC) Class-III (b) as per Information Technology Act-2000, to participate in online bidding.
- Hard Copy of requisite documents shall be required to be submitted only by the Lowest Tenderer with original Performance Security and e-Challan/Treasury Receipt instantly after opening of e-NIT pledged to Executive Engineer, KPDC, ED-2nd, Rajbagh, Srinagar.
- The Name of the Work/Job along with e-NIT reference should be superscripted in Bold letters on the envelope and the Name/Firm of the Lowest Bidder should be clearly written on the cover.

It may be noted that the hard copy should be an exact replica of the uploaded offer documents by the Lowest Tenderer. Documents uploaded on the website shall be treated as final.

11. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents.

No : ED-II/TS /8160-65
Dated 17-07-2026

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DT: 18/07/2026

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Executive Engineer
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Rodri Roars: Spain Ready to Dethrone Argentina

AP

NEW YORK: Spain reaching the World Cup final is still something of a novelty, given this is just the second time the country has gotten this far. Rodri sees it as the culmination of years building to this point.

Winning the Nations League in 2023 and the European Championship in 2024 set the foundation for the success the team has achieved over the past several weeks. An even bigger challenge awaits against defending champion Argentina on Sunday, and Spain's captain wants his teammates to be more eager to win than scared to lose.

"We've been gradually growing," Rodri said Friday. "We have to keep doing the same things we're doing because it has been a process for all five years."

Spain has only allowed one goal through its first seven games, including a 2-0 win over France in the semifinals. Since a stunning opening draw against Cape Verde, La Roja has outscored its opponents 13-1.

"Our goal when we got to this World Cup was to win the trophy, and we were convinced that we could achieve this," Rodri said. "We've shown that this national team has been able to defeat great opponents."

The path to the final included Mikel Merino breaking a tie and scoring late in the round of 16 and the quarterfinals. It has also including stifling defense and nine saves from goalkeeper Unai Simón.

But Rodri, the 2024 Ballon d'Or winner as the best player in the world, bristled at the notion that Spain has just one defined brand and expressed a belief about handling any kind of style.

"I don't think you've seen the same Spain across all the matches," the 30-year-old midfielder said. "I think Sunday's match will be quite different, as it will be a more physical one and we must be prepared. And I believe if we are known for something in this national team is that we know how to play different



games based on the moment. So, we can adapt to having to defend, counterattacking, to attacking. We are a very complete team, and that is why we are here."

Sixteen years removed from Spain winning the World Cup for the first time, Rodri thinks the determination of that group can be an inspiration. But he is far more focused on the individual and team development that has sparked this run to the final.

"We can even do it better," Rodri said. "I think against France, we do one of the best games we ever done as a team. But against Argentina, I think we have to rise a level because they are the champions. And I'm really confident that we can do it."

Spain's coach insists Lamine Yamal is OK

Lamine Yamal getting spotted at practice with his left thigh wrapped has caused plenty of concern about the 19-year-old budding star's status. Coach Luis de la Fuente downplayed those worries when asked repeatedly about Yamal, who took a hit to that thigh against France.

"Today he participated in the training with the other teammates, and he is fine," de la Fuente said. "He is fine. He is in optimal condition."

Yamal, who was photographed as a baby alongside Lionel Messi in 2007, is considered the potential

heir apparent to the title as the best player in the world. This final could be a passing-of-the-torch moment, but Yamal's coach does not want his player thinking like that.

"Lamine has to be Lamine," de la Fuente said. "Messi is a one-of-a-time-in-history player, and he's an example, a role model for youth and younger players: his attitude, his behavior. At his age, he's playing such a spectacular competition at the World Cup. I insist Lamine has to be Lamine Yamal himself, and the best way we can support him is by helping him be the person we know today because he has a great potential, a great future."

Not much is making de la Fuente nervous

The difficulty level, the threat of smoke in the air and the quality of the pitch are not bothering de la Fuente. Returning to New Jersey after doing a news conference and other media obligations in New York was very much on his mind Friday.

"I am nervous because we are going back by helicopter," he said. "I'm serious. We got here by helicopter, and we have to take the helicopter to go back, and that makes me really anxious. About everything else, I'm calm. I'm lucky enough to be in this situation, and I insist, we just want to enjoy this amazing moment."

Jamil's World Cup Dilemma: Heart Says Messi, Mind Backs Spain

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Indian football team head coach Khalid Jamil is torn between his heart and his mind for the FIFA World Cup final. While his heart roots for Lionel Messi and defending champions Argentina, his mind suggests Spain might just have the last laugh.

The two footballing powerhouses from Europe and South America will face off in the title clash at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey on Sunday.

"Yes, yes, my heart is with Messi and Argentina, no doubt, because my family is supporting Argentina, and I also like Messi and he has done well. I think, let's see."

"I think Spain is in good form. They have the upper hand. They are in good shape. They conceded only one goal in the tournament. They have a compact midfield and aggressive wing players, especially Yamal is a very good, speedy player," Jamil told PTI on Saturday.

On their way to the final,

Spain showcased tactical dominance in the knockout stages, culminating in a convincing 2-0 victory over France in the semi-finals. Their journey relied on a blend of youthful midfield creativity and clinical finishing.

"If Spain can score an early goal, I think the game will be theirs. But if Argentina holds Spain until the 70th minute, because they are good at comebacks and showed that against England, Egypt, it can be a different result. I think it will be an equal game," he said.

Argentina have had a fierce, high-intensity campaign so far in the tournament. They secured their spot in the title clash by defeating England in a high-stakes semi-final clash.

"I enjoyed all the matches. Every team tried very



"They also played very well; they have good defense, having conceded only one goal. Argentina is also playing well with the help of Messi," Jamil observed.

Both footballing powerhouses remained unbeaten on their way to the summit showdown, even as England and France went out in the semifinals.

"Talking about England, they played very well, but last 20 minutes was not up to the mark, but Argentina have won, that is the most important thing."

"And talking about France and Spain game, yes, Spain dominated and they deserve to be in the final."

"They are a surprise package, you could say. Initially, they didn't have a good start, but they are good and doing well, so it will be a tough match," the Indian coach noted.

Controversial Turf Faces World Cup Final

AP

EAST RUTHERFORD : Players and coaches have fielded a lot of questions about the pitch in East Rutherford, New Jersey, before and after World Cup games there. Opinions have varied.

Brazil's Vinicius Junior was not a fan. France coach Didier Deschamps called it special — and not in a good way. Norway's Ståle Solbakken was asked several times about the surface before coaching his first game on it and came away more pleased about it than he expected.

While entirely differ-

ent than the turf surface at the stadium that has been maligned by NFL players, the grass field with synthetic fibers stitched in to reduce the risk of divots and tears has drawn mixed reviews through the first seven games of the tournament there. After a nearly two-week break for staff to get it in the best condition possible, the most important game takes place there Sunday when Argentina and Spain meet in the final.

Neither team has played at the Meadowlands stadium yet, adding another element of uncertainty to the matchup.

Players and coaches say the turf plays fast — and better when it's wet

Before Norway faced Senegal in New Jersey, Solbakken compared the Meadowlands pitch to AstroTurf. He said the short, firm grass could be good for teams who like to possess the ball. Torrential rain fell before and during the game on June 22, changing the complexion of how it played.

"The pitch was much better because of the rain, because the rain made it (so) that the ball doesn't hang on your foot," Solbakken said. "It's going faster,

smoother, and that made two good teams could play to their strength, so the pitch, due to the rain, was better. I'm more suspicious if there's no rain because then it's dry and short and then it could be more difficult, but with the rain today it made the pitch much, much better."

It was dry when England met Panama in each team's final group play game. England coach Thomas Tuchel also likened it to artificial turf for the shortness of the blades of grass — very different from the field in Foxborough, Massachusetts.

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