

Weather Improves; Schools Reopen Today

Jhelum, Tributaries Recede; JKBOSE Exams To Be Held As Scheduled



KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Government and recognised private schools across Jammu and Kashmir will reopen on Monday after the administration decided against extending the summer vacation further, citing improving weather conditions.

Officials in the School Education Department said all educational institutions have been directed to resume normal academic activities from July 27. The decision was also confirmed by the office of Education Minister Sakina Itoo.

The schools had remained closed since July 6 after the government announced summer vacations due to an intense heatwave. The break was subsequently extended three times because of continued high

temperatures, heavy rainfall, flash flood warnings and adverse weather conditions.

Meanwhile, the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (JKBOSE) said the Class 11 Annual (Private) and Bi-Annual Examination 2026 will be conducted as per the notified date sheet on Monday.

In a statement, the Board said all arrangements had been put in place to ensure the smooth and fair conduct of the examinations. It added that revised dates for papers postponed earlier would be notified separately.

The reopening comes as weather conditions across the Union Territory have stabilised, with river levels showing a declining trend.

According to the Irrigation and Flood | [More on P6](#)

PM Announces High-Powered Task Force For NTA Reforms

KO WEB DESK

Srinagar: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday announced the constitution of a high-powered task force, headed by Infosys co-founder Nandan Nilekani, to recommend reforms for examinations conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA), with a focus on transparency, technology and structural improvements.

The announcement came a day after the Centre accepted key demands of the month-long student agitation over alleged examination irregularities and NEET paper leaks. The protests concluded on Saturday following the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

In a video message shared on social media, Modi said the government had already taken strict action against those accused of compromising students' future and was working to build a more secure and



credible examination system.

"The Government of India is continuously taking various measures for the future of students. Those who tampered with the students' future are languishing in jail. We have already established fast-track courts. We are also moving towards enacting new legislation in Parliament that incorporates stringent

legal provisions. However, we must look to the future. Our examination system needs to be reliable and transparent, and it must make maximum use of technology," the Prime Minister said.

He said the task force would recommend measures to establish a robust and foolproof examination system by maximising the use of technology.

"A high-powered task force on examination reforms under the leadership of Nandan Nilekani has been constituted," Modi said, adding that the government would implement its recommendations to strengthen the integrity of future examinations.

According to the Prime Minister, the multidisciplinary panel will focus on revamping NTA examinations from both technological and structural perspectives.

The task force comprises Nilekani, former ISRO chairman S. Somanath, former Intelligence Bureau director Tapan Deka, IIT Madras Director V. Kamakoti, former Education Secretary Anita Karwal and logistics expert Amrit Lal Meena.

The panel is expected to recommend measures to prevent paper leaks, strengthen digital security, improve monitoring mechanisms and make the examination process more transparent and | [More on P6](#)

Amarnath Yatra Crosses 4 Lakh Mark



Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: The Amarnath Yatra this year achieved a significant milestone on Sunday as the total number of pilgrims who paid obeisance at the south Kashmir cave shrine crossed the four-lakh mark.

"By Lord Shiva's divine grace, the holy Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra has crossed a remarkable milestone, and more than 4 lakh pilgrims have already completed the sacred journey. Till now, 4.14 lakh devotees have received darshan. I bow with reverence to Baba Amarnath for this blessing and extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped make this journey a truly divine experience for all," LG Manoj Sinha posted on his official X handle.

With the four-lakh mark achieved in just 18 days, the annual pilgrimage is poised to break all previous records in terms of number of devotees as the yatra will culminate on August 28.

While a total of 4.14 lakh pilgrims performed the yatra in 2025, the number was 5.12 lakh in 2024. The all-time high turnout of pilgrims was registered in 2011 when 6.30 lakh pilgrims performed the yatra.

True Knowledge Lies In Humility, Service: LG Sinha

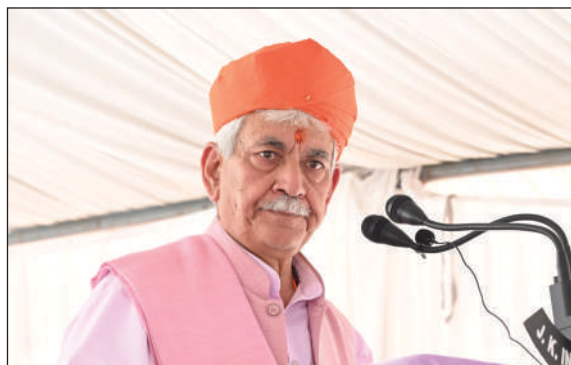
Calls for Balance Between Spiritual, Physical Well-Being At Harbah Festival

Observe News Service

Srinagar: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday said spiritual values must guide both individual and institutional conduct to build a peaceful, prosperous and compassionate society, while urging the youth to remain connected with the country's cultural and spiritual heritage.

Addressing the annual Harbah Festival at Teerathraj Lok Bhawan in Anantnag after paying obeisance to Mata Sidh Lakshmi, the Lieutenant Governor said the festival was a profound occasion of devotion, gratitude and inner reflection.

He extended greetings to devotees participating in the annual Hawan and said the sacred site, with its serene surroundings, represented India's



timeless spiritual tradition.

"Every stone, every stream, and every breath here conveys the immortal consciousness of our Sanatan culture and spiritual heritage, which has guided humanity for centuries along the path of truth, compassion and dharma," he said.

Referring to the historical significance of the shrine, Sinha said the place was known as Lokpunya,

as mentioned in Kalhana's Rajatarangini. He said the annual Hawan and flag hoisting were reviving the values of devotion, service, sacrifice, patience and social harmony.

Highlighting the challenges posed by modern life, the Lieutenant Governor said that while science and technology had brought people closer, they had also contributed to growing loneliness and

social divisions.

"The Harbah Festival reminds us that true devotion manifests as service to humanity, mutual respect and selfless love," he said.

Sinha stressed that spiritual values should remain the foundation of society and called for greater emphasis on unity, compassion and respect for all.

He also outlined three priorities for building a stronger society, saying spiritual values should guide personal and institutional conduct, mental and spiritual well-being should receive equal importance alongside physical health, and young people should be encouraged to serve the nation with dedication and selflessness.

Calling upon the youth of Jammu and Kashmir, the Lieutenant Governor urged them to pursue modern education | [More on P6](#)

CB Chargesheets 3 In ₹23 Lakh Fake Job Scam

Accused allegedly forged appointment orders, ID cards and verification documents to dupe job seekers

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Crime Branch, Jammu and Kashmir, has filed a chargesheet against three persons in connection with an alleged fake government recruitment racket in which job seekers were duped of ₹23 lakh on the false promise of securing government jobs.

The chargesheet was filed before the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Srinagar, in FIR No. 01/2026 under Sections 420, 467, 468, 471 and 120-B of the Ranbir Penal Code (RPC). The accused have been



identified as Ghulam Mohammad Sheikh alias Gulzar of Palpora Pamposh Colony, Noor Bagh in Srinagar, Mohammad Yousuf Wani of Kunzer in Baramulla district, and Mohammad Abdullah Mir of Shivath in the Sumbal area of Bandipora district.

According to the Crime Branch, the case was registered | [More on P6](#)

Mehbooba's Jantar Mantar Remarks Spark Row

NC accuses PDP of justifying force; PDP alleges AI distortion

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti's remarks comparing Gen-Z protesters at Delhi's Jantar Mantar with protesters in Kashmir have triggered a sharp political row, with the ruling National Conference (NC) accusing her of justifying the use of force against Kashmiris and the PDP alleging that her comments were distorted using Artificial Intelligence (AI).

During her visit to Jantar Mantar earlier this week, Mehbooba opposed police action against student protesters in Delhi



but said the situation in Kashmir had been different as security forces were fighting militancy. Her remarks were widely interpreted by political opponents as defending the use of force, including pellet guns, during protests in the Valley.

The National Conference reacted strongly, posting on its | [More on P6](#)

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Scholarships This Week

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

Scholarship Name 1: SOF Defence Services Academic Excellence Scholarship (DSAS), 2026-27

Description: SOF Defence Services Academic Excellence Scholarship (DSAS), 2026-27 is being offered by the Science Olympiad Foundation (SOF) to students pursuing their studies in Classes 1 to 10. This aims to reward the academic achievements of students coming from the families of the Indian Defence Services and Internal Security Services.

Eligibility: Application is open to Indian residents pursuing their studies in Classes 1 to 10. They must belong to a family of a serving or retired Defence Services/Internal Security Services personnel.

Prizes & Rewards: One-time cash award of 5,000 and a certificate.

Last Date to Apply: 31-12-2026

Application mode: Offline Application Only

Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/SDSAS7

QR Code: <https://d1e9eg0t055l3.cloudfront.net/static/images/scho-media/sof-defence-services-academic-excellence-scholarship-dsas-2026-271784610057.png>

Scholarship Name 2: Luxury Connect Business School Scholarship Program 2026-27

Description: The Luxury Connect Business School Scholarship Program 2026-27 is an initiative by Luxury Connect Business School (LCBS) to support aspiring professionals planning to pursue careers in the luxury industry. Students admitted to the MBA in Luxury Brand Management or the Advanced Diploma in Luxury Retail Management & Client Experience can receive tuition fee waivers for their studies at LCBS, making specialised luxury education more accessible.

Eligibility: For an MBA in Luxury Brand Management Must have completed a bachelor's degree from a recognised university/institution.

Final-year UG students may also apply, subject to LCBS admission norms and submission of final academic documents before enrolment.

Annual parental income from all sources must not exceed INR 8,00,000.

For the Advanced Diploma in Luxury Retail Management & Client Experience Must have passed Class 12 or equivalent from a recognised board.

Must be a second-year/final-year UG student or a graduate. Candidates with prior exposure to retail, hospitality, fashion, lifestyle, beauty, luxury sales, customer service, or related sectors are encouraged to apply.

Annual parental income from all sources must not exceed INR 8,00,000.

Prizes & Rewards: Tuition fee waiver up to INR 2,00,000 for MBA or up to INR 25,000 for Advanced Diploma, based on graduation percentage.

Note: Scholarships apply only to students who secure admission to the eligible LCBS program and fulfil all applicable eligibility criteria.

The maximum tuition fee waiver of up to INR 2,00,000 is applicable only for the Offline (Campus) MBA in Luxury Brand Management program, where the course fee is INR 9.5 lakh.

Last Date to Apply: 26-08-2026

Application mode: Online applications only

Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/LCBSASP2



QR Code: <https://d1e9eg0t055l3.cloudfront.net/static/images/scho-media/luxury-connect-business-school-scholarship-program-2026-271784610098.png>

Scholarship Name 3: Kotak Kanya Scholarship 2026-27

Description: Kotak Kanya Scholarship 2026-27 is a collaborative CSR initiative of Kotak Mahindra Group companies and Kotak Education Foundation, offering financial assistance to meritorious girl students from underprivileged backgrounds. Girls who have passed Class 12 and secured admission to a professional graduation course receive INR 1.5 lakh* per year until they complete their degree.

Eligibility: Open to meritorious girl students across India who have scored 75% or more (or equivalent CGPA) in Class 12 boards.

Secured admission to the first year of a professional graduation programme (Engineering, MBBS, Architecture, Design, Integrated LLB, and more) at an NIRF/NAAC-accredited institute for the academic year 2026-27.

Annual family income must not exceed INR 6,00,000.

Children of Kotak Mahindra Group, Kotak Education Foundation, and Buddy4Study employees are ineligible.

Prizes & Rewards: INR 1.5 lakh* per year, till completion of the professional graduation degree.

*Disclaimer: Subject to terms and conditions, at the discretion of Kotak Education Foundation.

Last Date to Apply: 20-08-2026

Application mode: Online applications only

Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/KKGS5

QR Code: <https://d1e9eg0t055l3.cloudfront.net/static/images/scho-media/kotak-kanya-scholarship-2026-271784610111.png>

Scholarship Name 4: Satya Scholarship Program 2026

Description: The Satya Scholarship Program 2026, an initiative by Nehru Sidhant Kender Trust, offers 100% tuition fee coverage and accommodation support to meritorious

Class 12 graduates from Punjab pursuing 3–5-year undergraduate or integrated master's programmes in Commerce, Engineering, and Medical & Health Sciences at select institutes – ensuring financial barriers do not stand in the way of higher education.

Eligibility: Open to first-year students in 3 to 5-year undergraduate or integrated master's courses in BBA, B.Com, B.Tech, B.E. (all streams), B.Sc. (Engineering), BCA, B.Arch, MBBS, BDS, BPT, B.Sc. (Nursing), B.Sc. (Allied and Healthcare). Must have passed Class 12 Board Exam from a recognised board in Punjab with at least 60% aggregate.

Students from Punjab in 38 selected institutes in Ludhiana or top 50 NIRF-ranked institutions in India are eligible.

Annual parental income must not exceed INR 8 lakh; guardian income limits apply for orphans.

Applicants must be Indian citizens and not recipients of any other educational scholarship.

Note: Preference for girl students, sportspersons, persons with disabilities (PwD), orphans, and children of single parents.

Prizes & Rewards: 100% annual course fee coverage for the entire course duration, with additional support for hostel, accommodation, and meals as per program guidelines.

Last Date to Apply: 30-07-2026

Application mode: Online applications only

Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/SAT3

QR Code: <https://d1e9eg0t055l3.cloudfront.net/static/images/scho-media/satya-scholarship-program-20261783398813.png>

Scholarship Name 5: Schaeffler India Hope Engineering Scholarship Program 2026

Description: The Schaeffler India Hope Engineering Scholarship Program 2026 supports female first-year engineering students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, with special consideration for students with disabilities (PwD). Established in 2019, the program offers selected scholars financial assistance of INR 50,000 per year, along with mentorship support from Schaeffler India profession-

als to help them succeed academically and build strong engineering careers.

Eligibility: Open to female students across India enrolled in the first year of an engineering program at any UGC/state/AICTE-recognised college.

Applicants must have secured at least 60% marks in Class 12 (Science stream) in the academic year 2025-26. For PwD applicants, the minimum required marks are 40% in Class 12 (Science stream).

The annual parental income of the applicant must not exceed INR 5,00,000.

Children of employees of Schaeffler India or Buddy4Study are not eligible.

Note: Preference will be given to students with disabilities and students pursuing the following engineering branches: Automobile, Mechanical, Mechatronics, Electrical and Electronics, Electronics and Communication, Production, Instrumentation, Computer Science Engineering & Information Technology

Prizes & Rewards: Selected students will receive a scholarship of INR 50,000 per year for four years.

Last Date to Apply: 15-08-2026

Application mode: Online applications only

Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/SIHE17

QR Code: <https://d1e9eg0t055l3.cloudfront.net/static/images/scho-media/schaeffler-india-hope-engineering-scholarship-program-20261783398824.png>

Scholarship Name 6: uGSOT Scholarship Program 2026

Description: The uGSOT Scholarship Program 2026 by upGrad School of Technology (uGSOT) aims to support Class 12 passed science students across India who wish to pursue B.E/B.Tech in Computer Science in specialisations like GenAI & ML, Quantum Computing, and Full Stack Development.

Eligibility: Open to PAN India students planning to pursue B.E/B.Tech in Computer Science in any of the following specialisations:

- GenAI & ML
- Quantum Computing
- Full Stack Development

Applicants must have passed Class 12 in the Science stream with PCM/PCMB.

Students must have passed Class 12 in the academic year 2025 or 2026.

Applicants must have scored at least 50% marks in Class 12.

Prizes & Rewards: Discount on the uGNET fee based on 12th scores

Scholarships opportunity upon admission

Students qualifying the uGNET exam and securing their admission seat will become eligible for Merit-Based Scholarship, Girls in Tech Scholarship, Need-Based Scholarship, Ronnie Screwvala Scholarship for Tech Innovators and Defence Scholarship offered by upGrad School of Technology covering up to 100% of the tuition fee based on their overall profile score.

Note: The final scholarship amount may depend on the student's performance, admission confirmation, seat availability, and the scholarship terms defined by the program.

Last Date to Apply: 13-08-2026

Application mode: Online applications only

Short Url: www.b4s.in/observer/UGST1

QR Code: <https://d1e9eg0t055l3.cloudfront.net/static/images/scho-media/ugsot-scholarship-program-20261782798685.png>

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his Mann Ki Baat programme, described the eco-friendly wagu craft as a symbol of Kashmir's cultural heritage and praised local artisans working to revive it. KO Photos Abid Bhat

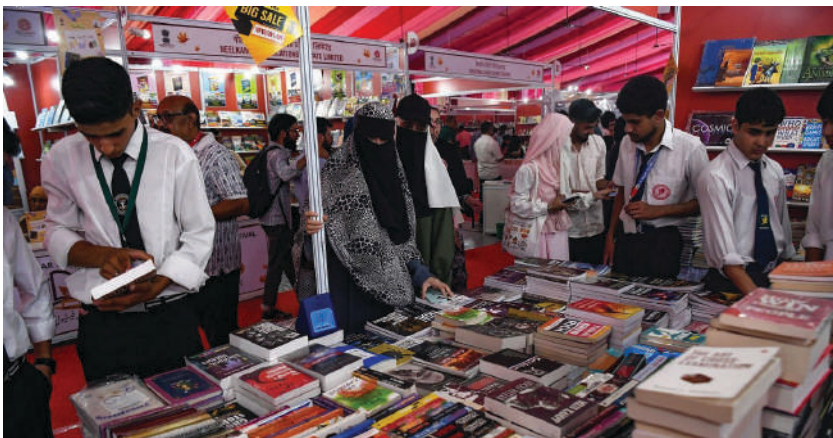
Readers Turn Out in Large Numbers as Chinar Book Festival Concludes

Syed Mohammad Burhan

S
RINAGAR: The third edition of the Chinar Book Festival concluded on Sunday after a successful nine-day run at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC), attracting thousands of book lovers and further cementing Kashmir's reputation as a growing centre for literature and learning. Among the festival's standout attractions were books by Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, which witnessed an overwhelming response and drew large crowds at several religious book stalls.

Organised by the National Book Trust (NBT) in collaboration with the National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL) and the District Administration Srinagar, the festival was held from July 18 to July 26 along the scenic banks of Dal Lake.

The nine-day literary event brought together nearly 200 publishers and featured more than 250 book stalls offering thousands of titles across genres. Visitors also attended literary discussions, book launches, cultural programmes, children's workshops and interactive sessions with noted personalities, including astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla, filmmaker Imtiaz Ali



and veteran actor Rakesh Bedi.

Even as intermittent rainfall marked the final days of the festival, the venue continued to witness a steady flow of visitors, with book stalls remaining crowded and readers of all ages exploring the wide range of titles on display.

Several exhibitors said the persistent rain had some impact on overall footfall during the concluding days. However, they described the public response as highly encouraging, adding that the turnout would likely have been even greater had the weather remained favourable.

Alongside mainstream publishers, the festival also hosted a large number of religious book stalls that attracted a steady stream of visitors interested in Islamic history, philosophy, spirituality and contemporary thought.

Among the busiest was the stall of Muttahhari Fikri & Saqafati Markaz, where books by Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei drew sustained attention throughout the nine-day festival.

According to the organisers, more than 1,000 copies of The Loving Father, a book on Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, were

sold during the festival, making it one of the best-selling titles at the stall.

Amir Ali Parry, a volunteer at Muttahhari Fikri & Saqafati Markaz, said the response exceeded all expectations.

"What surprised us the most was that it was not only people from the Shia school of thought who purchased the book. The majority of buyers were from other communities and schools of thought who wanted to know more about Ayatollah Khamenei's personality and ideas," he said.

Parry said another title that received an overwhelming response was Cell Number 14, a diary recounting Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei's imprisonment before the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

"We sold hundreds of copies of Cell Number 14 during the festival," he said.

He added that Ayatollah Khamenei's books remained a major attraction throughout the event, drawing readers from across the religious spectrum.

"Even tourists visiting Kashmir purchased these books. The interest came from people of different faiths and backgrounds, which was remarkable to witness," Parry said.

Another religious stall that witnessed heavy footfall was the Imam Hussain Mujtaba stall, where volunteers said thousands of visitors stopped to browse and purchase books during the festival.

Altaf Bukhari Slams PDP over 'Misleading' Politics

Agencies

Srinagar: : Apni Party president Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari on Sunday launched a scathing attack on the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), accusing its leadership of indulging in "opportunistic politics" and demanding a clear public stand on its leader's controversial remarks describing Kashmir's protesters as militants.

Calling upon the PDP leadership to make its position clear, Bukhari said the party owes an explanation to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He asserted that it is now for the PDP leaders to decide where they stand on the issue.

"If they have any conscience, they should clearly state whether they support or reject their leader's remarks describing Kashmir's protesters as militants. At the very least, they owe that much to their own dignity, credibility, and the people they claim to represent," he said.

Notably, Bukhari has been consistently advocating for dialogue between the Centre and the people of Jammu and Kashmir for the redressal of issues and grievances. Earlier this month, he had reiterated that lasting peace in the region can only be achieved through meaningful dialogue.

Youth Dies, Teenager Injured in Motorcycle Collision

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A young man lost his life while an 18-year-old girl was injured after two motorcycles collided on Chanapora Bridge in Srinagar on Sunday, officials said.

According to officials, the accident involved a motorcycle bearing registration number JK04-4193 and another motorcycle that has not yet been identified.

The deceased was identified as Imad Aijaz, son of Aijaz Ahmad Mughal, a native of Karnah who was currently residing at Sebdan in Budgam. Officials said he succumbed to his injuries on the spot following the impact of the collision.

The injured pillion rider, Muskan, 18, daughter of Danish Hussain Shah, originally from Tangdhar and presently living in Bemina, sustained injuries in the accident. She was shifted to Government Hospital Barzulla for treatment.

Officials said the rider of the second motorcycle fled the spot immediately after the collision along with the vehicle.

Police have taken cognisance of the incident and initiated an investigation to identify the absconding rider and determine the circumstances that led to the accident.

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

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	FAJR	4: 00
	ZUHR	12:37
	ASR	5: 33
	Magrib	7: 40
	ISHA	9: 14

This Day In History

- 1214 - 1st battle of Bouvines - King Philips II of France vs Holy Roman Emperor Otto IV and King John of England;as a result John lost Normandy and his other possessions in France (hence his nickname Jhn "Lackland")
- 1914 Felix Manalo registers the Iglesia ni Cristo with the Filipino government.
- 1917 - World War I: Allied troops reach the Yser Canal in the prelude to the Battle of Passchendaele
- 1922 - International Geographical Union forms in Brussels
- 1941- Japanese forces land in Indo-China
- 1943 - 772 British bombers attack Hamburg
- 1965 - President Lyndon B. Johnson signs a bill requiring cigarette makers to print health warnings on all cigarette packages about the effects of smoking.
- 1967 - Arabs Federation premier Hoesain Al Bayoomi resigns
- 1970 - France performs nuclear Test at Mururoa atoll
- 1975 - The British government closes its consulate in Angola following increasing fighting between the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola and South African troops
- 1976 - Japanese ex-premier Tanaka arrested (Lockheed Affair)
- 1982 - Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's first visit to the US in almost 11 years
- 1986 - Iraqi jets attack central Iranian city of Arak; Iran threatens missile attack of gulf states supporting Iraq
- 1987 - First expedited salvaging of Titanic wreck begins by RMS Titanic, Inc.
- 1990 - Tom Moody scores 100 in 26 mins in county cricket, world record
- 1990 - White-Russia declares independence
- 1991 - TV Guide publishes its 2000th edition
- 1992 - Astros begins 26-game road trip to make room for Rep National Convention
- 1992 - Nelson Mandela says a general strike will go ahead to protest for the removal of South African President F. W. de Klerk from power and for free elections
- 1993 - Mafia bombs historical buildings in Rome/ Milan/Vatican City, 5 killed
- 1995 - Korean War Veterans Memorial is dedicated in Washington, D.C.
- 1997 - Si Zerrouk massacre in Algeria; about 50 people killed.
- 2002 - Ukraine airshow disaster: A Sukhoi Su-27 fighter crashes during an air show at Lviv, Ukraine killing 85 and injuring more than 100 others, the largest air show disaster in history.
- 2003 - A group of 321 Filipino armed soldiers called "Magdalo" took over the Oakwood Premier Ayala Center in Makati City to show the Filipino people the alleged corruption of the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo administration
- 2005 - STS-114: NASA grounds the Space shuttle, pending an investigation of the external tank's continued foam-shedding problem
- 2007 - Two News helicopters from Phoenix, Arizona television stations KNXV and KTVK collide over Steele Indian School Park in central Phoenix while covering a police chase; there were no survivors. Worst civil aviation incident in Phoenix history.
- 2013 - 100 people are killed and 1,500 injured in a crackdown against protesters in Cairo, Egypt
- 2013 - 1,000 inmates escape from a prison in Benghazi, Libya
- 2013 - First Przewalski's horse (whose wild populations were believed extinct in 1969) is born via artificial insemination at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute as part of a worldwide effort to rebuild the wild herds
- 2014 - Liberia shuts down most of its borders with fears about the spread of Ebola epidemic
- 2014 - Obama reaffirms Israel's "right to defend itself", but condemns civilian casualties in Gaza
- 2017- Amazon founder Jeff Bezos briefly becomes world's richest person at \$91.4B USD, overtaking Bill Gates for half a day
- 2020- WHO head Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus states that COVID-19 is "easily the most severe" global health emergency the WHO has faced

Kashmir Beyond Orientalism

Edward Said exposed the politics of Orientalism. That achievement should not discourage Kashmir from confronting the habits that continue to invite criticism.



Wajahat Qazi

Orientalism, a hoary discipline and a corpus of texts that probed into the vitals of non-Western societies, was poignantly and trenchantly critiqued by the late great Edward Said.

The intellectual of intellectuals and scholar of scholars postulated, rightly, that Orientalism sought to denigrate non-Western societies by positing the 'East' as the 'West's' 'exotic other.'

Defined by a certain essentialism that held there was an irreducible essence to both the East and the West, and that the West was superior, this was brilliantly dissected, analyzed, and adumbrated by the great Edward Said.

Some attributes in the Orientalist schema about the peoples of the East were that they were 'lazy', 'indolent', 'sensual', and 'childlike', among other things.

The great Edward Said also stated that Orientalism became entangled with power and thereby morphed into a handmaiden of imperialism and colonialism.

This corpus of study became the predicate that justified colonial intervention in non-Western societies.

So far, so good. Said, the genius, was spot on. But, for a moment and for the sake of hypothesis, let's subtract Orientalism's entanglement with power and colonialism/imperialism.

Minus this, were Orientalism's assessments and assertions correct about non-Western societies?

Granted that some of the scholarly edifice of colonialism was built on stereo-

types, but stereotypes are premised on half-truths.

There, then, by inference, must have been something right and some truth to Orientalism. If there is some truth to Orientalism, what is that?

I will use Kashmir as a 'case study' for teasing out elements of truth in Orientalist tropes, given that it is my referent.

In the main, Orientalists who wrote about Kashmir mentioned and drew attention to some defining traits of Kashmiris. These are: Kashmiris were a quarrelsome people, quick to temper and argument, Kashmiris lied, and they were lazy.

Can any of us Kashmiris realistically claim or assert that any of these characterizations are incorrect?

Yes, there will be variations and differing intensities, but can any of us claim that there is a robust work ethic in Kashmir?

This is not, for one moment, to suggest that we give up on or jettison the traditions and values that give us meaning and an anchor.

No. Not at all. Tradition and values that make us who we are are the sine qua non of our existence.

All that is being suggested here is that we introspect and jettison aspects that are insalubrious and ungainly: laziness, poor work ethic, indolence, and other negative character traits that we all know about.

This task falls on all of us, but more so on the intelligentsia.

But, in actual and real terms, what is observed is that those who know about Orientalism, for example, use it as a crutch to 'talk back at the Orientalists' by 'returning the proverbial gaze.' Is this enough?

No. It is not.

If meaningful reform of our society is

“We might have become a ‘car-owning society’ (alas); we may live in houses (some palatial, others relatively modest); some of us may mimic and ape the West in snazzy coffee shops and wear blue denims, but in some important parameters of life, we are and remain the same.

That we are scrupulously honest? That we are not a quarrelsome people?

In all likelihood, the answers to these questions would correspond to Orientalist assertions about us.

The aim of this essay is not to reinforce or validate Orientalist assertions and characterizations of us Kashmiris. The larger idea is a wake-up call.

Just a glimpse around us and our 'habitus' is enough to assert that, 'the more things have changed, the more they have remained the same.'

We might have become a 'car-owning society' (alas); we may live in houses (some palatial, others relatively modest); some of us may mimic and ape the West in snazzy coffee shops and wear blue denims, but in some important parameters of life, we are and remain the same.

It is high time, then, that we change and evolve into a dynamic society and culture that can hold its own.

the 'name of the game,' then any critique of it, well-meaning or motivated, has to be taken on board.

The natural follow-up to this has to be, to repeat, introspection and an across-the-board effort at reform. Is this possible? Definitely.

At the risk of sounding somewhat pompous, Kashmiris are an intelligent people (in relative terms). But this intelligence has to be used in directions that redound to broader and wider reform of our society.

Maybe a good starting point would be to understand Orientalist tropes about us and prove them wrong!

The author holds a Distinction in International Relations from the University of Aberdeen and combines scholarship with real-world engagement. He has worked in academia and media, including as Associate Editor at Kashmir Observer.

A Queue Too Long

Understaffed registration offices, overburdened officials and the absence of basic public facilities have turned a routine legal process into an exhausting test of patience.



Suhail Gaznavi

The long line outside a registration office in Kashmir often tells a full story before anyone even reaches the counter.

People stand with folded documents and hopeful eyes, watching the slow shuffle of the queue in the cold.

These are citizens trying to register a sale deed, a will, a family agreement or a small transfer that should take a short time.

The process carries high stamp duty and registration fees. The experience does not match the price.

The system feels stretched thin. Offices are understaffed. Sub-Registrars in several districts handle two posts at once under "additional charge" arrangements. One officer is expected to manage work in two locations in the same day.

This expectation strains the officers and brings the entire process to a crawl.

People who need a simple registration often wait for several weeks, even when their paperwork is clear and complete. The pressure on the officers is visible and the frustration among citizens is growing.

The scene outside many offices turns harder during winter.

Elderly men lean on walking sticks, women hold onto children, and patients arrive with reports tucked into bags. Many stand under the open sky, facing biting winds.

Registration requires personal appearance, which means the most vulnerable people have no option except to stand through the cold and the heat. A basic waiting hall could protect them. Warm seating could support them. A sheltered space could spare them from shivering on wet ground.

The absence of these small comforts turns a routine civic task into an ordeal.

This is a region where winter often drops below freezing and roads remain slippery for hours. The sight of senior citizens waiting outside for long stretches raises a simple question: if citizens

are paying significant fees for a public service, why are they treated this way?

A registration office is not a charitable space. It is a paid service point of the state. People contribute through taxes, duties and daily compliance. They ask for efficiency and respect in return.

Senior citizens deserve particular attention. Their presence is mandatory for many registrations. This means an eighty-year-old father finalizing a family settlement must stand outside as the wind cuts across the courtyard.

Many of these citizens have served the administration or the economy through their own professions. They carry a lifetime of contribution.

The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act makes their dignity a legal responsibility. The current experience in many offices falls far short of this principle.

The solution is not complicated. It only needs intent. The administration can fill full-time Sub-Registrar posts so offices stop depending on officers already carrying double loads. It can strengthen manpower in districts where work has outgrown staff. It can redesign buildings with proper waiting halls, weatherproof seating and clean spaces that match the climate of the region.

A streamlined appointment system can reduce unnecessary crowding. These steps call for investment, though they also restore faith in institutions.

People in Jammu and Kashmir have learned to face many layers of administration across decades. They show patience in situations that test daily routines and family responsibilities.

Registration should not become another burden in that list.

A reliable system that respects time and dignity feels like a basic right. The fees citizens pay indicate that they are already contributing to this vision.

The queues in the cold are a reminder that reforms are overdue. A democratic system earns trust when its smallest services function smoothly. A person registering a will or a land deed is exercising a lawful right. The state's role is to support that right through competent staff and humane facilities.

Kashmir's landscape is known for its harsh winters and long distances. A little warmth in public offices can change how people feel about the state that governs them.

The government has the authority and tools to make this happen. A responsive administration can turn long lines into short waits and replace frustration with confidence.

— The author is an advocate at J&K High Court. He can be reached at suhailadv13@gmail.com.

Hope After the Sirens

Living through attacks and disasters taught me that recovery begins when we acknowledge emotional pain.



Musaib Bilal

When the Pahalgam attack took place earlier last year, I was full of life, attending youth conferences, leading discussions, and speaking on education, women's hygiene, and emotional well-being.

That evening, my friend and I were on a live session about tourism in Kashmir, talking about how travellers saw our valley as a "piece of the moon."

Midway through the conversation, the news broke that there had been an attack. We went silent, and within minutes, we ended the session.

What I felt first was anger. Then panic. What would this mean for our future, for the sense of peace we were finally learning to build?

I remember thinking: why does every spark of hope in Kashmir have to fight so hard to stay lit?

For generations, people here have been conditioned to survive. We have lived through upheavals, curfews, communication blackouts, and natural disasters. Survival became our default mode. But survival leaves scars that seep into how we think, feel, and raise our children.

Drug addiction, depression, and suicides are no longer rare incidents. They've become symptoms of an emotional epidemic that nobody wants to name.

After the attack, I met a local official and asked him what we were doing about the mental health crisis. He had no answer. Our priorities always lie in security, infrastructure, and relief. Mental health still feels like a distant privilege. But when we neglect it, everything else falls apart.

Soon after the April attack, we faced another blow. Continuous rains triggered flood-like conditions across parts of Kashmir, reviving memories of 2014 when homes, schools, and entire neighbourhoods were swallowed by water. I saw the same fear again: children crying, elders staring helplessly at rising waters, families trapped with no supplies. Relief camps were set up quickly, but no one talked about emotional care. Shelter and food took priority. Healing minds was never part of the plan.

When crises hit, conversations rarely go beyond ration, water, and safety. But disasters fracture the sense of safety people hold inside. What happens to the boy who wakes up screaming after seeing his house collapse? Or the mother who can't sleep because silence reminds her of the flood's roar? Or the young man whose only dream of stability is washed away overnight?

Those wounds don't vanish when the water recedes. They stay in our bones.

Kashmir's mental health infrastructure is painfully limited. For millions of people, we have only a handful of psychiatrists and psychologists, most based in Srinagar. Rural areas barely have access to basic counselling. Even in peaceful times, the waiting lists are long.

During crises, help disappears altogether. Families facing trauma are left with silence as their only counsellor. And silence, I've learned,

“As someone who has lived through both fear and hope, I've realized survival is not enough. A community can rebuild its homes, but remain broken inside. Healing begins when we tend to our minds with the same urgency as we do our wounds.

can be brutal.

When trauma is untreated, it multiplies. Parents who have lived through conflict, violence, or floods carry invisible wounds into their parenting. Fear, hyper-alertness, and emotional numbness spill into family life. Children grow up believing the world is dangerous, that it's safer to suppress feelings than express them.

Trauma becomes hereditary. It travels from one generation to the next, shaping how we love, trust, and dream. This is how an entire society begins to live half-alive: physically present, emotionally absent.

To heal, we must change how we respond to crisis. Relief camps should include counsellors as naturally as they include doctors. Schools reopening after disasters should offer group sessions where children can talk about their fears through storytelling, art, or play. Simple acts, like listening, acknowledging, and validating pain, can do more for recovery than we realize. Mental health is part of the crisis response itself.

Healthy coping is learning how to live with the memories without letting them consume us. For that, we need communities that talk about pain instead of hiding it. We need teachers trained in psychological first aid, social workers equipped to spot trauma, and parents who reassure children that fear is normal after chaos. These are human solutions.

The drug crisis in Kashmir is a grim example of what happens when emotional wounds go untreated. The number of substance abuse cases has surged dramatically in recent years. The government's own data shows over 70,000 people currently battling addiction. Many started using drugs as a way to "forget" anxiety, fear, or grief.

In the absence of therapy, they turned to substances for escape. What could have been

treated with counseling turned into a public health disaster.

But hope lives in small actions. A few NGOs in the valley now run community counseling programs where trained volunteers offer psychological first aid. Parents' groups have begun sharing resources on coping mechanisms and emotional literacy. These may seem like modest efforts, but they are shifting the culture from silence to conversation.

The world has been no stranger to catastrophe. Floods in Pakistan and Bangladesh, earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, wars in Gaza and Ukraine carry the same psychological toll.

A Kashmiri mother watching her house disappear in floodwater shares the same pain as a Gazan child trembling at the sound of sirens.

Trauma has no geography, and healing shouldn't either.

That is why mental health first aid must become as common as physical first aid in every relief effort, everywhere.

Governments and policymakers have to think beyond rebuilding roads and homes. They must fund therapy, create mental health units in disaster response teams, train community leaders to offer psychological care, and make counseling free and accessible after emergencies. The mind, too, deserves recovery.

As someone who has lived through both fear and hope, I've realized survival is not enough. A community can rebuild its homes, but remain broken inside.

Healing begins when we tend to our minds with the same urgency as we do our wounds.

The author is a speaker, and mental health advocate pursuing a Bachelor's degree at Amar Singh College. He can be reached at musaibbilal.216061@gmail.com.

The Taste of Lal Chowk

A return to Srinagar's historic marketplace recalls a childhood filled with crowded buses, bustling bazaars, and the unforgettable taste of white barfi.



Mushtaq Hurra

I recently stepped into Lal Chowk, Srinagar, with a simple errand, to buy household items, but the streets swallowed me in their energy. Cars honked, scooters darted past, and people flowed through the narrow lanes like a restless river. I moved from one shop to another, small stalls and grand stores alike, bargaining, scanning, hunting for the right thing. Hours passed, but the heritage city's hum kept me moving, alive in



WE TOOK A BUS INTO THE CITY. I SAT ON MY FATHER'S LAP, my head against his chest, as the rickety bus shook over potholes. Dust and smoke drifted in through the windows. Passengers chatted, laughed, and smoked without concern.

its chaos and charm. By the time I finished, I was tired, hungry, and still half-drained from the cold and lack of rest. I had skipped lunch, and my stomach reminded me forcefully. I needed a snack, and I needed it quickly. As I walked, the glitter of shop windows caught my eye. Clothes for children hung neatly on mannequins,

soft blankets were rolled against shelves, and expensive outfits shimmered under the light. I could almost forget my hunger looking at them, and I felt a tug of nostalgia. Beyond a bustling bazar, Lal Chowk was always a canvas of memory and desire for me, alive with sounds, smells, and motion. Then I saw Shakti Sweets. The sight made my mouth water instantly. I entered, and the place was full of people, waiters carrying trays heaped with steaming chhola, puris, and other spicy snacks. The smell of cardamom, cinnamon, and cumin filled the air.

While I waited for my plate, my eyes fell on the colourful barfi in the display. I was transported back to childhood.

I remembered the first time my father took me to Srinagar. My mother had prepared me carefully the night before, giving me a bath, oiling my hair, and dressing me in my best clothes. I barely slept.

The next morning, I hurried into my outfit and slipped on my favourite shoes. They were yellow with

Passengers chatted, laughed, and smoked without concern.

There was warmth radiating from the bus bonnet, and the chatter around me made the journey lively. Even with every jolt, my father's lap felt safe and secure.

We stopped at Batamalo, not Lal Chowk as I thought. My father smiled when I asked.

We began walking, and he shopped for sweaters, tweed shirts, trousers, plastic shoes, glass bowls, spices, lotus stems, and even sheep trotters.

He bargained skillfully, and each bag felt like a mountain of joy. The shopping wasn't for necessity alone but for delight and happiness. My father had a way of turning ordinary errands into extraordinary memories.

Finally, he led me to Lal Chowk. We entered a confectionery, and I watched as he ordered half a kilogram of white barfi. I grew impatient while he bargained, eager to taste the sweets.

Then he handed me a soft, milky square. It melted on my tongue instantly. The sweetness filled my senses, a taste I had never known before.

That moment, the flavour, the warmth of my father beside me, and the hum of the city became a memory I still carry decades later.

Returning to Lal Chowk today, the sights and smells brought those childhood moments back.

The bustling streets, the glittering shops, and the aroma of spices and sweets reminded me of the magic of small things.

A single square of barfi, a father's hand, and a crowded street are the moments that make a city live in your memory.

Lal Chowk is a place where joy, love, and memory meet, and where the spirit of childhood still warms my heart.

— The author is a teacher and regular columnist from Bandipora. He can be reached at mushtaqhurra43@gmail.com.

The Heart of a Father

A routine cardiology appointment becomes a moving reflection on changing roles, where a daughter gently guides the father who once guided her.



Muntashir Kifayat Hussain

I have four daughters. Saying that still fills my chest in a way nothing else does.

Life in Kashmir rarely moves gently. News, worry, and work crowd the days. Inside all that, my daughters bring a kind of ease.

When they walk into a room, the air changes. Voices soften, tea tastes better, and the house feels held together.

I teach at a boys' high school. My days are spent with young men learning how to take space in the world. My evenings belong to my daughters.

We talk about books and poems. They ask questions, they correct me, and they remind me of things I forget.

Over time, I have come to see them as many people at once: mothers who worry, teachers who explain, and guides who push me forward.

One early morning, I left home with my eldest daughter for Karan Nagar in Srinagar. I had an appointment with a cardiologist. The city was still waking up.

Shop shutters stayed half-closed. The roads felt open and unsure. My daughter kept talking, moving from poets to philosophers, my favorite ground.

We talk like this at home. That day, I sensed she was also protecting me, keeping my mind busy.

Hospitals in Kashmir carry more than patients. Years of tension leave marks on the body. Doctors say heart problems are rising here, helped along by stress, smoking, and long uncertainty.

These facts sound distant until your own heart becomes part of them.

I asked my daughter what the heart does in the body. She went silent. Her eyes filled before she could stop them. After a pause, she said it pumps blood.

Class ten biology, spoken with care. She picked up her phone and typed fast. Soon her sister called, upset that she had been left behind. I recited a line of poetry about heartache. It landed harder than I meant. She began to cry.

Raising daughters here sharpens your understanding of the world. Kashmir teaches children early about danger. Society adds another burden for girls. Many families still spend more on sons, calling daughters temporary.

I have heard this from friends without shame. Numbers support what daily life shows. Girls leave school earlier. Dreams are adjusted. Expectations are narrowed.

My daughters know all this.

They also know how to love fully. Poets have always understood this better than policy reports. Munawwar Rana writes that homes light up when daughters learn to walk and grow empty when they leave. Ghalib reminds us how loud the heart feels until you look inside and find only a drop of blood. Poetry stays close to truth.

The clinic was on the fifth floor of a tall building. Lifts trouble me. Closed spaces tighten my breath. My daughter held my hand and guided me inside. The doors closed, the numbers rose, and fear loosened. She stood calm beside me, as if this was ordinary.

The waiting room felt gentle. Many men sat with daughters. Medicine lists rested in their hands. Voices stayed low. When my turn came, the doctor adjusted my medicines and warned me again about smoking.

Outside, my daughter repeated every instruction and saved reminders on my phone. Back in the car, I reached for a cigarette. She caught it and tossed it out the window.

I smiled. My mother once did the same to me.

At some point, children begin to care for their parents. Daughters seem to reach there early.

On days when I feel small or worn down, they hold me steady. They argue with my despair. They bring me back.

— The author is a teacher at Boys High School Narabal in Budgam.



THE CITY WAS STILL WAKING UP. SHOP SHUTTERS STAYED HALF-CLOSED. The roads felt open and unsure. My daughter kept talking, moving from poets to philosophers, my favorite ground

The Burden of Being Chosen

Delayed marriages, rising expectations and relentless social scrutiny are changing how Kashmir's young adults experience love, family and self-worth.

Marriage remains a central marker of social stability, particularly for women, in Kashmir. Families often weigh government employment against private jobs, inherited property against earned income, and appearance against ideas of respectability.



Sheikh Arsh

The matchmaker steps into the house once again, adjusting her dupatta and letting out a tired breath, a small sign of how familiar this visit has become.

Insha knows what comes next. She reaches for clothes that signal tradition, aware that this visit, like so many before it, carries unspoken rules.

At 35, she finds herself caught in a system that measures her worth through narrow ideas of marriageability that still shape Kashmir's social life.

The tension rises in her chest as the conversation begins. Insha's frustration spills beyond the room and into a larger unease with customs that leave little space for choice.

Marriage here often arrives wrapped in authority, guided by elders, matchmakers and long-standing assumptions about how a woman should look, speak and live.

Four years earlier, the matchmaker had crossed a threshold that reached deeper than Insha's home. Along with introductions came a list of instructions meant to improve her chances.

She remembers being told to control her

laughter, limit her voice, and erase parts of herself from public view, including photographs on social media.

These changes were framed as guidance, presented with concern. "The list was supposed to make me more eligible," Insha says, repeating a word that now feels heavy with judgment.

The process stretched on, one proposal giving way to another, each ending under a different form of scrutiny.

Over time, the strain settled into her body and mind. Insha entered a severe depressive episode that required medical care. The treatment altered her physical health, including weight gain, which she says only reinforced the feeling of being disqualified.

Wedding prospects narrowed further as health became another mark against her.

Marriage remains a central marker of social stability, particularly for women, in Kashmir. Families often weigh government employment against private jobs, inherited property against earned income, and appearance against ideas of respectability.

According to local studies and health professionals, delayed marriages have become more common over the past decade, driven by unemployment, prolonged education and economic uncertainty.

Social expectations, however, continue to demand early and ideal matches, creating pressure that many struggle to manage.

Insha encountered suitors who found her too modern and others who found her too plain.

Each rejection carried its own reasoning, leaving her suspended between competing ideals.

The process drained her family, who assessed proposals through the same measures that judged her.

Conversations at home began to circle around job titles, salaries and assets, rein-

forcing the sense that love and companionship had little place in the discussion.

In Srinagar, Unaiz arrives home from work to find his mother waiting near the kitchen counter, worry etched across her face. He sets down his office bag and asks what is troubling her, though the answer feels familiar.

The matchmaker has returned with another list of prospects and another account of why nothing has worked.

Families have raised concerns about his job at a small private company, questioned the family's wealth, commented on his appearance, including his baldness. The pattern feels endless to Unaiz's mother.



Personal choices, ambitions, and emotional well-being often clash with expectations shaped by old ideas of security, family honour, and social standing.

The mother-son exchange has become part of daily life over the past two years. Unaiz listens, reassures her and turns away, weighed down by a process that has stripped marriage of anticipation.

He tells her to leave the matter to Allah, a phrase that offers comfort while also marking his withdrawal. Years of being evaluated on income, status and looks have dulled his desire to engage.

Marriage, once imagined as a shared beginning, has come to feel like an administrative task.

Insha and Unaiz's stories show a tension many families in Kashmir face today.

Personal choices, ambitions, and emotional well-being often clash with expectations shaped by old ideas of security, family honour, and social standing.

Mental health experts say anxiety and depression are rising among young adults under these pressures, even as open conversations about well-being remain rare.

Each visit from a matchmaker sends the same message: adapt, tolerate, and follow the rules.

Years pass, confidence fades, and lives stay on hold, waiting for approval that may never come.

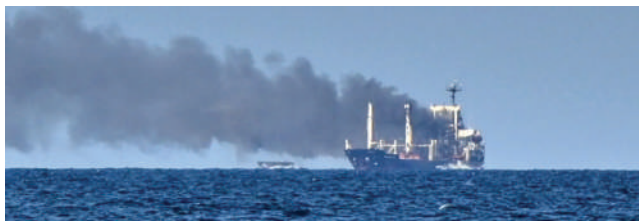
In these rooms, a question grows: can marriage in Kashmir value people for who they truly are, beyond checklists and conditions?

Meanwhile, Insha smooths her dupatta, straightens her posture, and practices a smile, bracing herself for the sudden knock that announces the next visit.

— The author is a senior journalist and former Multimedia Lead at Kashmir Observer. She can be contacted at sheikharshoo@gmail.com.

MEA Advises Indians Against High-Risk Jobs on Black Sea Vessels

Five Indian seafarers killed since April as attacks on merchant ships intensify



KO Web Desk

Srinagar: The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Sunday advised Indian nationals to carefully assess security risks before accepting jobs on commercial vessels operating in or transiting the Black Sea and nearby conflict-affected waters, citing a sharp increase in attacks on merchant shipping.

The advisory comes amid escalating missile and drone strikes on commercial vessels since April 2026, which have claimed the lives of five Indian nationals, the ministry said.

The MEA urged seafarers to obtain detailed information from employers, recruitment agencies and ship operators about a vessel's route, ports of call, security arrangements, insurance coverage and emergency response procedures before taking up employment.

It also advised Indian crew members to ensure their employment contracts comply with international maritime standards and include

adequate provisions for medical care, evacuation, repatriation and compensation in the event of an emergency.

The ministry asked seafarers to keep their families informed of their travel plans, remain in regular contact and follow security advisories issued by the Directorate General of Maritime Administration (DGMA), the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, and other government authorities. It specifically referred to the DGMA's security advisory issued on July 23.

The MEA further urged Indian nationals requiring assistance to stay in touch with Indian diplomatic missions in the region, including the Indian Embassies in Russia and Ukraine, and seek consular support whenever necessary.

The advisory reflects growing concern over the deteriorating security situation in the Black Sea, where the ongoing conflict has increasingly exposed commercial shipping and civilian crews to missile and drone attacks.

Swift Strickers Rainawari FC Enters Kashmir Super League 2026

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Swift Strickers Rainawari FC has become the second franchise to join the Khyber Cement Kashmir Super League (KSL) 2026, organisers announced on Saturday.

The franchise is backed by Swift Multi-Ventures Pvt. Ltd., an FMCG sales and distribution company, which signed the franchise agreement with Kashmir Super League Founder Mushtaq Bashir.

The agreement was signed by Yasir Hayat on behalf of Swift Multi-Ventures Pvt. Ltd. and Bashir, formally bringing the Rainawari-based outfit into the league for the upcoming season.

Speaking on the occasion, Hayat said the company was committed to supporting initiatives that inspire young people and promote sporting excellence.

"The Kashmir Super League provides an excellent platform for nurturing football talent and encouraging teamwork. We are proud to introduce Swift Strickers Rainawari FC and look forward to contributing to the growth of football in the region," he said.

Welcoming the new franchise, Bashir said the company's vision aligned with the league's objective of providing local footballers with greater opportunities.



"We are delighted to welcome Swift Multi-Ventures Pvt. Ltd. to the Kashmir Super League family. Their philosophy of empowering and elevating talent complements our mission of taking football in Jammu and Kashmir to greater heights," he said.

Organisers said Swift Multi-Ventures has established itself as a leading distribution company with partnerships across several national and international brands and has built a strong presence through its

supply chain and customer service network.

With the addition of Swift Strickers Rainawari FC, the league now has two confirmed franchises for the 2026 season.

The organisers said the Khyber Cement Kashmir Super League 2026, powered by Athwas Retail & Athwas Hyundai, aims to provide a professional platform for local footballers to showcase their talent before fans, scouts and the wider football community.

Declare Rain-induced Damage In Poonch, Rajouri A 'Natural Calamity': Cong

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: Senior Congress leader Shahnawaz Choudhary on Sunday urged the Centre and Jammu and Kashmir government to declare the widespread rain-induced damage in the border districts of Poonch and Rajouri a "natural calamity".

Calling the scale of disaster "unprecedented", Choudhary, President of the Poonch District Congress Committee (DCC), was disappointed that neither Chief Minister Omar Abdullah nor Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha had visited the affected areas to assess the ground situation or offered condolences to the families who lost their loved ones.

Choudhary, former AICC secretary, also demanded that the Centre and the UT government announce a special relief package for the affected families.

"The people of the Pir Panjal region feel abandoned at a time when they need the government's support the most," Choudhary said addressing a press conference in Surankote, the worst-hit area of Poonch district, which accounted for the majority of the 18 rain-related deaths reported in the district since July 19. Five persons are still missing.

Besides the loss of lives, hundreds of families have been rendered homeless, more than 100 houses have been completely damaged, over 200 houses have suffered partial damage, while around 18 families have lost

their land and became landless, leaving them without any source of livelihood, he said.

He said the existing SDRF compensation norms are wholly inadequate to address the losses suffered by the victims.

The Congress leader demanded a special relief package comprising Rs 20 lakh for every fully damaged house, Rs 10 lakh for every partially damaged house, Rs 5 lakh for families who have lost their household belongings, and Rs 20 lakh as ex gratia to the next of kin of each deceased person.

He urged the Centre to sanction a special financial package for relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction in the affected areas of Poonch and Rajouri districts.

Criticising the BJP, Choudhary said the BJP failed to raise the issue forcefully before the Centre or secure any meaningful relief for the victims.

He also demanded that a substantial allocation from the chief minister's Relief Fund be made exclusively for the affected areas of Pir Panjal to ensure timely rehabilitation of the victims.

Highlighting the urgent need for reconstruction, he demanded immediate restoration of damaged roads, bridges and other public infrastructure to reconnect remote villages.

He called for a detailed assessment of damaged educational institutions and the reconstruction of all affected schools at the earliest so that children's education is not disrupted.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE



Farmers salvage flood-hit tomatoes from submerged floating vegetable gardens in the interiors of Dal Lake following heavy rainfall. KO Photo By Abid Bhat

Weather Improves;

Control Department's gauge update issued at 9 pm on Sunday, the River Jhelum was receding at all major monitoring stations. The water level at Sangam stood at 14.35 feet, Munshibagh at 17.04 feet and Asham at 12.43 feet, all showing a decreasing trend. Water levels at Pampore also declined, while Wular Lake remained stable.

Among the tributaries, Vishow Nallah at Khudwani, Rambiyara Nallah at Wachi, Doodhganga at Barzulla and Sindh Nallah at Doderhama were all flowing below flood declaration levels and continued to recede. No gauge reading was available for Lidder Nallah at Batkoot.

Weather forecasters have predicted largely stable conditions over the next week.

According to independent weatherman,

Faizan Arif, most parts of Jammu and Kashmir are expected to witness predominantly dry weather on Monday, with only brief showers at isolated places. Similar conditions are likely on July 28 and 29, although parts of the Jammu region may receive early morning monsoon showers and isolated afternoon thundershowers.

Scattered rain is expected at some places on July 30, mainly over the Jammu region. Between July 31 and August 2, intermittent showers are likely across parts of the Union Territory, though continuous rainfall is not expected.

Despite the improving outlook, forecasters have warned that the risk of localised flash floods remains high due to the possibility of intense short-duration downpours. They said isolated cloudbursts cannot be ruled

out and advised people to avoid taking shelter under trees or near electric poles during thunderstorms.

The advisory also cautioned travellers about the possibility of landslides and shooting stones in vulnerable hilly areas, urging residents to remain alert even as the overall weather situation improves.

PM Announces

reliable for students.

PM Hails Revival

the 'Vagu' mat was once a common feature in almost every Kashmiri household, its use had declined over the years. The Prime Minister lauded Srinagar-based artisan Ghulam Hussain and his daughter, Tanzila, for taking up the mission of reviving the traditional craft.

"While it used to be found in every Kashmiri household, its usage had declined over the last few years. Amidst that, Ghulam Hussain ji from Srinagar and his daughter, Tanzila ji, took a pledge to reviving the tradition of the 'Vagu' craft," he said.

Praising their dedication, Modi said that when talent is combined with determination, every challenge becomes easier to overcome. He described the ongoing efforts to revive the 'Vagu' mat as an inspiring example of preserving Kashmir's traditional craftsmanship and passing it on to future generations. (KNT)

True Knowledge

while remaining rooted in their cultural and spiritual traditions.

"True knowledge is realized through humility, and its strength becomes sacred when used in the service of others," he said.

Among those present were Padma Shri Brij Lal Bhat, ISKCON Projects Director Swami Sriram Charana Aravinda Dasa, DIG South Kashmir Javid Iqbal Mattoo, SSP Anantnag Amod Ashok Nagpure, Deputy Commissioner Anantnag Bilal Mohiuddin Bhat, President of the All Minority Employees Association Kashmir Sanjay Koul, senior police and civil administration officials, members of the Teerathraj Sidh Lakshmi Peeth Trust, and a large number of devotees.

CB Chargesheets

following a written complaint alleging that Sheikh collected 23 lakh from the complainants by falsely promising to arrange government jobs for them.

During the investigation, the EOW found that the accused allegedly issued forged appointment orders, identity cards, licences, appointment letters, and fake police and CID verification documents to make the job offers appear genuine.

The investigation further revealed that the three accused acted in connivance to deceive the complainants and illegally obtain money under the pretext of providing government employment.

After collecting sufficient evidence, the Crime Branch filed the chargesheet before the court for trial.

The EOW has advised the public to remain vigilant against fraudulent recruitment schemes and report cases of economic fraud to the Senior Superintendent of Police, EOW Kashmir. Victims can also lodge complaints through the wing's official email, it added.

Mehbooba's Jantar

official X handle: "If you happen to be a Kashmiri who is protesting for his/her rights, aap pe force use karna to banta hai (it is

justified to use force against you). Wow."

NC spokesperson Imran Nabi Dar accused the former chief minister of branding Kashmiri protesters as militants.

"I am appalled beyond words. Mehbooba Mufti unabashedly and casually brands every Kashmiri protester a 'militant'. The kids, the little girls... just everyone was a militant, she says," Dar wrote on X.

"Even shame must be ashamed today. Her hypocrisy is uglier than what I believed," he added.

NC leader and Zadibal MLA Tanvir Sadiq demanded an apology from Mehbooba, questioning whether every civil protest in Jammu and Kashmir was now being equated with militancy.

"Are those who protest against reservation militants? Are those who protest for basic amenities also militants? This is shameful coming from a former chief minister," Sadiq said.

The PDP, however, rejected the criticism and accused the National Conference of circulating an AI-edited clip to misrepresent Mehbooba's remarks.

PDP leader Waheed Para said Mehbooba had merely pointed out that measures once used in Kashmir were now being extended to the rest of the country.

"They have edited the clip using AI. Mehbooba said the government justifies the action in Kashmir by claiming that there is militancy here. She said that what happened in Kashmir is now being transferred to the rest of the country," Para said.

He argued that laws such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), previously used in Jammu and Kashmir, had later been invoked against student activists in Delhi, including Sharjeel Imam and Umar Khalid.

"So, she was only pointing out that the treatment meted out to the youth of Kashmir is now being extended to the youth of the entire country. What was the justification for doing this in Delhi, where the circumstances are different?" he asked.

Joining the criticism, Apni Party president Altaf Bukhari said Mehbooba's remarks were consistent with her record as chief minister during the 2016 unrest in Kashmir.

"This is, after all, the same leader who justified the killing of Kashmiri children by asking, 'Kya woh doodh aur toffee lane gaye the?' (Had those children gone to fetch milk and toffees?)" Bukhari said.

He also recalled the use of pellet guns during the 2016 protests, saying hundreds of young boys and girls suffered permanent eye injuries.

"These are painful memories that no amount of political rhetoric can erase," he said.

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Key Road Stretch Caves in Amid Heavy Rainfall in Ramban, Restoration Underway

Press Trust of India

SRINAGAR: The recent heavy rainfall has resulted in a nearly 300-metre stretch of the Ramban-Gool road suffering a major subsidence, severing crucial road connectivity between dozens of villages and the Ramban district headquarters, officials said on Sunday.

Another massive landslide has partially blocked the flow of a river in Ramssoo tehsil of the district, posing a serious threat to a village downstream, they said.

Ramban Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Aliyas Khan on Sunday inspected restoration work at the Ramban-Gool road stretch that caved in at Pernote village during a landslide following heavy rains a day ago.

During the visit, Khan inspected the restoration works being undertaken by the Border Roads Organisation. He was informed that repairs are underway on a war footing, with the deployment of adequate manpower and heavy machinery to clear debris and restore the damaged road stretch, an official



spokesperson said.

The deputy commissioner directed the executing agency to accelerate the road restoration work to ensure early restoration of traffic on the affected stretch, the spokesperson said.

Emphasising public safety, he appealed to the residents and

commuters to avoid visiting or moving closer to the subsidence-affected area, as the ground remains unstable and vulnerable to further sliding.

He urged the public to cooperate with the agencies engaged in the restoration operations.

The district administration,

in coordination with the Border Roads Organisation and other line departments, is closely monitoring the situation, the spokesperson said.

Senior National Conference leader and Banihal MLA Sajad Shaheen said the closure of the vital Gool-Ramban road has left

thousands of passengers, students, employees, patients and families stranded.

He urged the Northern Railway to immediately restore the special Katra-Banihal rail service, which was discontinued a few months ago.

"The resumption of this train service will serve as a vital lifeline for people and provide much-needed relief until road connectivity is restored," he said.

The legislator said a massive landslide has partially blocked the flow of the Bishlari river near Kralna-Sarbagni village in Ramssoo tehsil, creating a temporary lake and posing a serious threat to the entire Kralna village.

"The situation demands immediate attention before it escalates into a major disaster. I urge the Ramban district administration, the State Disaster Response Force, disaster management authorities and all departments concerned to expedite rehabilitation and mitigation measures on a war footing to safeguard lives and properties, and ensure safety of the affected residents," he said on X.

Landslide Disrupts Traffic on Drung-Tangmarg Road



BARAMULLA: Vehicular movement on the Drung-Tangmarg road in north Kashmir's Baramulla district was suspended on Sunday after a landslide struck the route, blocking traffic.

Officials said the landslide deposited debris and rocks on the road, rendering the stretch unsafe for vehicular movement. As a precautionary measure, traffic was suspended until the road is cleared.

As per KNT, Road restoration teams have been pressed into service to remove the debris and restore connectivity at the earliest.

Authorities have advised commuters to avoid the affected route and follow traffic advisories until the road is declared safe for movement. (Agencies)

Kargil Vijay Diwas Observed with Patriotic Fervour in Baderwah

BHADERWAH: Kargil Vijay Diwas was observed with great patriotism and solemnity in Baderwah to commemorate the valour, courage and supreme sacrifice of the brave soldiers who laid down their lives in the 1999 Kargil War.

The commemorative programme was jointly organised by 4 Rashtriya Rifles (4RR) and 33 Battalion CRPF in collaboration with the Baderwah Administration.

The event witnessed the participation of Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Baderwah, Sunil Kumar Bhutyal, Commanding Officer of 4RR, Commanding Officer of 33 Battalion CRPF, Tehsildar, SDPO, BMO, ex-servicemen, NCC cadets and a large gathering of citizens.

The dignitaries paid rich tributes to the martyrs of the Kargil War, recalling their unmatched bravery, unwavering commitment and selfless devotion to safeguarding the sovereignty and integrity of the nation. They emphasised that the sacrifices of the brave soldiers continue to inspire generations and reinforce the spirit of patriotism and national unity.

Ex-servicemen and NCC cadets also joined the tribute, reflecting the collective respect and gratitude of the community towards the armed forces. (Observer News Service)

Speaker Reaffirms Government Commitment to Development

BUDGAM: Speaker, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather on Sunday visited Arampora and Nambalhar areas of the Charar-e-Sharif Assembly Constituency, where he held an extensive public interaction with the local residents to listen to their grievances, developmental aspirations and suggestions for overall progress of the area.

During his visit, the Speaker paid obeisance at the revered shrine of the renowned Sufi saint Hazrat Abdul Samad Mir (RA) at Nambalhar, where the annual Urs Mubarak is being observed. He offered prayers and paid rich tributes to the saint, praying for lasting peace, communal harmony and prosperity across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Speaker addressed a huge gathering and interacted with the local residents at Arampora.

During the interaction, the residents apprised the Speaker of several long-pending developmental issues requiring immediate attention. Prominent among their demands was construction of a bridge over Nallah Shaliganga to connect Tehsil Khansahib with Tehsil Chadodora.

The people also highlighted the need for improved road connectivity, augmentation of drinking water supply, strengthening of power infrastructure and upgradation of other essential public amenities.

The Speaker gave a patient hearing to every representation and assured the people that all their genuine demands would be taken up with the concerned departments for appropriate action. He said that developmental priorities would be pursued in a phased and planned manner, ensuring that projects of public importance receive due attention and are implemented without unnecessary delay.

The Speaker emphasized that the bridge over Shaliganga would serve as a vital link, significantly improving the inter-tehsil connectivity, facilitating the transportation of agricultural produce to markets, reducing travel time and creating new economic opportunities for the farmers and traders. He said that the bridge would immensely benefit thousands of residents living on both sides of the nallah. (Observer News Service)

District Admin Rajouri facilitates PM's Virtual Interaction under Viksit Vibrant Village Programme

RAJOURI: The district administration Rajouri today facilitated the virtual interaction of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with participants of the Viksit Vibrant Village Programme from the Conference Hall of the PWD Dak Bungalow, Rajouri.

The programme was attended by Deputy Commissioner Rajouri Abhishek Sharma; Additional District Development Commissioner, Malikzada Sheraz Ul Haq; Additional Deputy Commissioner Ravi Kumar Sihag; Assistant Commissioner Pan-chayat, Mohd Rafeeq; District Youth Officer, MY Bharat, Akhil Arya along with other district officers.

During the interaction, the Prime Minister engaged with participants from across the country who had earned the opportunity to visit the Vibrant Villages of Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand after excelling in the Viksit Vibrant Village Programme Quiz. Participants from different parts of India shared their experiences and insights gained during their visits to the border villages.

The interaction provided a platform for participants to reflect on their learnings and reaffirm their commitment towards the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

Addressing the participants, the Prime Minister highlighted the significance of strengthening the connection between citizens and India's border villages. He emphasised that these villages are symbols of the nation's cultural heritage, resilience and strategic importance. He also called upon educational institutions across the country to organise educational tours to Vibrant Villages and other border areas so that students can better understand their rich traditions, developmental progress and vital role in national security, while fostering a deeper sense of patriotism and national integration. (Observer News Service)

Crime Branch Chargesheets 10 Accused in Separate Fraud & Forgery Cases

Press Trust of India

JAMMU: The Crime Branch has filed chargesheets against 10 accused in two separate cases in Jammu, including a Rs 30.29 lakh investment fraud involving a Rajasthan-based company, and a forgery case involving the fraudulent procurement of permanent resident certificates using forged revenue records, an official said on Sunday.

In the first case, the official said the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Crime Branch filed a chargesheet in a fraud case involving Messrs Gold Sukh Trade India Ltd, Jaipur, in which the accused allegedly induced investors to deposit money by promising exorbitant returns and subsequently misappropriated their investments.

The case was registered in 2011 under various sections of the Ranbir Penal Code following a written complaint by Ashish Sharma at the Gandhi Nagar police station in Jammu, alleging that he was induced to invest Rs

1,20,480 by the company and its local representatives on false promises of high returns, the official said.

The case was later transferred to the Jammu Crime Branch.

During investigation, it came to fore that numerous investors were induced to invest Rs 30.29 lakh in the company's schemes through false promises of high returns.

The company, though incorporated in Rajasthan, was found to be unregistered with SEBI, RBI and the Registrar of Companies, J-K, the official said.

Based on evidence, the chargesheet was filed on Saturday against company officials Manvendra Partap Singh Chouhan, Bablu Sharma, Mahendra Kumar Nirwan, Neeraj Kant Sharma and Vinod Kundal before the court of 13 FC Special Mobile Magistrate, Jammu, the official said.

In another case, the EOW filed a chargesheet relating to the fraudulent procurement of permanent resident certificates

(PRCs) based on forged revenue records.

The case was registered in 2016 under various sections of the Ranbir Penal Code and the Prevention of Corruption Act based on a complaint by Surat Singh, alleging that the accused, in conspiracy with revenue officials, fraudulently obtained fake PRCs to purchase land and secure government jobs in J-K, the official said.

The investigation found that Sarup Singh, Bishamber Singh, Purab Singh and Suraj Singh, in conspiracy with the then-patwari Rashpal Singh, fraudulently obtained PRCs by using forged revenue documents, he said.

Forensic examination confirmed that Rashpal Singh prepared the revenue documents, which were not genuine as per official records.

The chargesheet was filed on Saturday against the accused before the court of the additional session judge, Jammu, for judicial determination, the official said.

DDC Poonch Inspects River Course Management

Observer News Service

POONCH: District Development Commissioner Poonch Ashok Kumar Sharma today conducted an extensive tour of various flood-affected areas of Poonch to assess the damage caused by recent flash floods and to review ongoing restoration and preventive measures.

During the visit, Superintending Engineer (Hydraulic) Vipan Kumar, Tehsildar Haveli Azhar Majid along with other concerned officers were present.

The DDC also interacted with the public, listened to their grievances and assured them of early restoration and relief measures.

The DDC inspected JCB machines engaged a day earlier to channelise the river flow into its proper course and directed the Superintending Engineer

(Hydraulic) to ensure that the work is carried out effectively to prevent further damage and safeguard public safety.

He also inspected the protection bund damaged in the riverbed during the recent floods. He directed the concerned Executive Engineer (Hydraulic) to expedite restoration work and complete it at the earliest. He further stressed the need for proper management of the river course to prevent recurrence of flood-related damage.

The DDC also visited the SK Bridge, Bainch-Khanetar-Kalai, Chandak riverbed and inspected ongoing protection works. He issued strict directions that no unauthorised or illegal construction activity should be permitted along the riverbed. He directed the concerned officers to take stringent action against any violations and ensure strict

enforcement of regulations in the area.

During the inspection, the DDC took strict action against illegal mining activities and seized a JCB machine and tractors found engaged in illegal mining at the spot. He directed the concerned authorities, including the Tehsildar Haveli, to initiate strict legal action and register FIRs against those involved in the illegal activity.

The DDC further visited the Power Grid Station at Chandak and reviewed the impact of recent flooding on the facility. He directed the concerned Executive Engineer (Hydraulic) to take immediate measures to strengthen the protection infrastructure around the station, including the construction of protection walls and crate works along the riverside, to prevent similar damage in the future.



Arvind Mattoo, Founder, koshurRAAG - a US-based NGO, called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Sunday and briefed him on the ongoing endeavors of his organization to promote the rich cultural heritage of Jammu Kashmir through music and related arts.

Six Persons Still Missing a Week after Murrah Flash Flood

Agencies

POONCH: A week after devastating flash floods struck Murrah village in Surankote subdivision of Poonch district, six people still remain missing, with local residents continuing search operations on their own amid the absence of large-scale recovery efforts.

The flash floods, triggered by intense rainfall, claimed eight lives and caused extensive destruction to houses, roads and other infrastructure in the village. However, six persons are yet to be traced despite the passage of seven days.

With the road leading to the affected village still blocked, residents said they have been carrying out search operations using whatever limited resources are available to them. They alleged that no major rescue machinery has been deployed to locate the missing persons.

Locals said that some human body parts have been recovered during the ongoing search, raising fears that the missing victims may have been swept away or buried under the debris brought by the

flash floods.

They said the continued closure of the road has further hampered rescue and relief operations, making it difficult to transport equipment and essential supplies to the affected area.

Meanwhile, the Jammu & Kashmir Gujjar Bakerwal Youth Welfare Conference (JKGBYWC) expressed concern over the pace of rescue and relief operations, alleging that the affected families have been left to carry out searches with limited resources despite six people remaining untraced.

As per KNT, the organization urged the administration to deploy specialized rescue teams equipped with advanced machinery to intensify efforts to recover the missing persons, restore road connectivity and electricity on a priority basis, and provide adequate compensation and rehabilitation to the affected families. The JKGBYWC also warned that if prompt action is not taken, the Gujjar Bakerwal community would be compelled to launch protests after weather conditions improve.

MD JPDCL Reviews Power Restoration Works in Flood-Hit Rajouri, Poonch

Observer News Service

RAJOURI/POONCH:

The Managing Director, Jammu Power Distribution Corporation Limited (JPDCL) Gurpal Singh undertook an extensive visit to the flood-affected districts of Rajouri and Poonch to review the progress of restoration of the damaged power infrastructure and ensure expeditious restoration of power supply in all affected areas.

During the visit, the Managing Director inspected restoration works at Muradpur, Salani, Bela, Fatehpur, Saj in Rajouri district, where JPDCL teams have been working tirelessly to restore the damaged power distribution network affected by recent

flash floods and incessant rains. He also reviewed the restoration of power supply to critical PHE installations including Sangam, Nabbah, New Bela, ITI and Old Bela, stressing that uninterrupted power to drinking water supply schemes remains a top priority.

In Poonch district, the Managing Director visited Sanai, Dhundak, Lassana, Marhote, Lathung Bridge, Surankote Town, Potha to assess the restoration efforts. He also inspected the severely affected MohraBach-hai area, where heavy downpours and flash floods had washed away road stretches and eroded the pole foundations of electricity poles, causing extensive damage to



the power infrastructure.

The Managing Director reviewed the restoration of the 33 kV and 11 kV distribution network, including 33/11 kV Receiving Stations, damaged poles, conductors

and distribution transformers. He expressed satisfaction over the significant progress achieved despite extremely challenging conditions, including difficult terrain, overflowing nallahs

and intermittent rainfall. He commended the dedication and commitment of engineers, technicians and field staff who have been working round the clock under adverse weather conditions to restore electricity supply.

Later, the Managing Director chaired a high-level review meeting at the Dak Bungalow Poonch, where he assessed the overall progress of restoration works and directed all officers to continue restoration activities on a war footing. He instructed the Chief Engineer (Distribution) to ensure immediate dispatch of poles, conductors, distribution transformers and other essential materials to the affected sites as per field requirements. He

further directed the Executive Engineers to utilise the services and resources of turnkey contractors engaged under RDSS and DA-JGUA works to accelerate restoration efforts and minimise the downtime in affected areas.

Reiterating JPDCL's commitment towards public service, the Managing Director stated that restoration of power supply to all affected villages and critical installations, including hospitals, drinking water supply schemes and other essential public infrastructure, remains the Corporation's highest priority. He assured that restoration operations would continue uninterrupted until normalcy is fully restored.

Starved But Unstoppable: Mirabai Wins Hat-Trick Of Gold At CWG

Press Trust of India

GLASGOW: Mirabai Chanu reminded the world why she remains the undisputed queen of Indian weightlifting, delivering a performance worthy of a champion as she clinched her third successive Commonwealth Games gold medal in the women's 48kg category here on Sunday.

The result was never really in doubt, the only question was how far Mirabai would push the limits. And the Manipuri superstar answered in emphatic style, rewriting the record books with a stunning display of strength and composure.

Despite not eating and drinking for days to maintain weight, the 31-year-old shattered the Commonwealth and Commonwealth Games records in the snatch, while also setting new CWG marks in clean and jerk and total.

She lifted a commanding 190kg, with a best effort of 85kg in snatch and 105kg in clean and jerk.

Tears rolled down as she stood proudly on top of the podium singing the national anthem. She was also sporting tri-coloured ribbons in her head.

"Jaldi jaldi karo, maine kuch khaaya nahi hai 2 din se (please do this quickly I haven't eaten in 2 days)," was the first thing Mirabai told reporters.

It was an emotional day for the Tokyo silver medallist who broke down again while talking about the support her mom, and coach Vijay Sharma gave.

"They have supported me through thick and thin.

"I was under a lot of pressure from family and friends, so happy to win third gold for India," she said after the win.

"I was not going to put too much effort in these Games but



I failed my first attempt. Coach and I had thought that I would do two lifts each." Her dominance was such that Ruth Asuquo Nyong of Nigeria finished a distant second

with a total lift of 168kg, a staggering 22kg behind Mirabai's winning effort.

Mirabai's competition began when everyone else in the field was done.

The journey to another golden moment was not without a scare. Mirabai endured a nervous start, failing to register her opening snatch attempt at 82kg.

But true to her champion's temperament, she quickly regained her rhythm, showing the grit and class that have defined her remarkable career. She came back to lift the 82kg with a vengeance and then went on to smash the Commonwealth record.

Even in the clean and jerk, Mirabai faced a brief moment of uncertainty, failing to complete her opening attempt. However, the Olympic medallist responded like a champion, effortlessly hoisting the same 105kg weight in her second attempt.

The lift not only secured the gold but also shattered the Commonwealth Games record in the clean and jerk category and bettered the total lift mark.

With the contest already sealed, Mirabai chose not to take unnecessary risks and skipped her third attempt, keeping in mind the Asian Games, scheduled less than two months away.

"Managing my weight is extremely difficult. For any athlete, controlling body weight takes an immense struggle. When I compete in the 48 kg category, it is difficult because I barely have any room to lose more.

"To make weight this time, I had to stop everything. I couldn't eat food and haven't drunk water for three days.

"50.5kg is my natural weight so for 49 kg, a cut 1.5kg, but for 48kg it becomes more which is really tough," she said.

Sooryavanshi's 81 Power India To 35-Run Win Over Zimbabwe

Press Trust of India

HARARE: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi slammed a 49-ball 81 as India registered a 35-run win over Zimbabwe in the third T20I to claim the series 3-0 here on Sunday.

Sooryavanshi hit eight fours and four maximums during his superb knock, while Ishan Kishan (29), skipper Shreyas Iyer (27) and Rinku Singh (25) also chipped in with useful contributions as India posted 192 for five after opting to bat.

In reply, Zimbabwe could manage just 157 for 7 with Ryan Buri (54 not out) being the top-scorer. Wessly Madhevere (28), Ben Curran (20) and Dion Myers (19) also got starts but couldn't capitalise.

Pace duo of Mayank Yadav (3/29) and Yash Thakur (2/45) shared five wickets for India.



For Zimbabwe, Brad Evans (2/41), Blessing Muzarabani (1/33), Sikandar Raza (1/40) and Wessly Madhevere (1/37) were among wickets.

Brief Score: India: 192 for 5 in 20 overs

(Vaibhav Sooryavanshi 81; Brad Evans 2/41, Blessing Muzarabani 1/33).

Zimbabwe: 157 for 7 in 20 overs (Ryan Buri 54 not out; Mayank Yadav 3/29, Yash Thakur 2/45).

A Dream Come True, Team Backed Me To Play My T20 Game: Sooryavanshi On Bagging Match, Series Awards

Press Trust of India

HARARE: After bagging the Player of the match and series awards, teen Indian batter Vaibhav Sooryavanshi rated the achievement a "dream come true" moment for him and thanked the team management for allowing him to pursue his natural T20 game.

Sooryavanshi ended the three-match series against Zimbabwe with 151 runs from three innings, averaging 50.33.

In the first T20I, the left-hander made a rollicking 19-ball 50 and he made a more sober 49-ball 81 in the third game, playing a big hand in India's 3-0 series sweep over the African side.

"It felt very good. It is a dream come true for me. First man of the match and man of the series. The preparation here



has been good," Sooryavanshi said in the post-match presentation ceremony.

"Everyone backed me, including the coach and the captain. I tried to play my usual T20 game and tried to give the team a good start and then play a long innings if I manage a good start.

"I played the U19 World Cup here (in Harare) as well and I feel good playing here. What I do in practice, I try to replicate that in the matches," he added.

India skipper Shreyas Iyer was a relieved man after the team registered its first series win under him.

India had lost to Ireland and England before arriving in Zimbabwe.

"As we saw, how fearlessly they are. A young bunch of players showing tremendous energy and intent on the field.

"To have that kind of energy is what I demand as a captain and we saw that. Special series win. Clinical. 3-0 so it's a special one," said Shreyas.

As a captain, Shreyas said, he has been trying to back all the players and give them confidence to get the best out of his wards.

"I try to make sure they are comfortable and relaxed. That's how you can get the best out of them. You see boys taking that responsibility and winning games, you need that.

"The amount of calmness that we possess and if we show the same courage going forward, it's going to be good for Indian cricket," he noted.

His opposite number Sikandar Raza, now the most capped Zimbabwe player across formats, said playing against T20 world champions India was an enriching experience for his young side.

"Our biggest takeaway is the experience. Nyamhuri, Marumani were very good. The journey started long ago. We wanted to change things in the dressing room. We wanted to bet here for each other in success and in bad times.

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