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J&K Braces For 10-Day Wet Spell

Couple Swept Away In Udhampur Flash Flood

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir is set to witness a fresh 10-day wet spell, with the Meteorological Department (MeT) forecasting widespread rainfall and warning of heavy to very heavy showers, flash floods, landslides and water-logging between August 9 and 11.

The advisory came as a couple was swept away in a flash flood while attempting to cross the Kaghote nallah in Udhampur district on Friday.

Officials said Baldev Kumar (58) and his wife Maya Devi (53), both residents of Kaghote village in Udhampur, were washed away while crossing the Kaghote nallah on Friday.

Police, assisted by local residents, immediately launched a search and rescue operation. One body was recovered in the evening, while efforts were continuing to trace the other missing person.

According to the MeT Department, August 8 is likely to witness one or two spells of light to moderate rain and thundershowers at many places, with brief intense showers expected at a few locations.

The weather is expected to intensify between August 9 and 11, when most parts of the Union Territory are likely to receive light to moderate rain and thundershowers. Heavy to very heavy rainfall has been forecast for a few districts of Jammu division, while | [More on P6](#)

The Great NEET Betrayal: Experts, Middlemen and Millions

How NEET Experts Sold India's Biggest Medical Exam

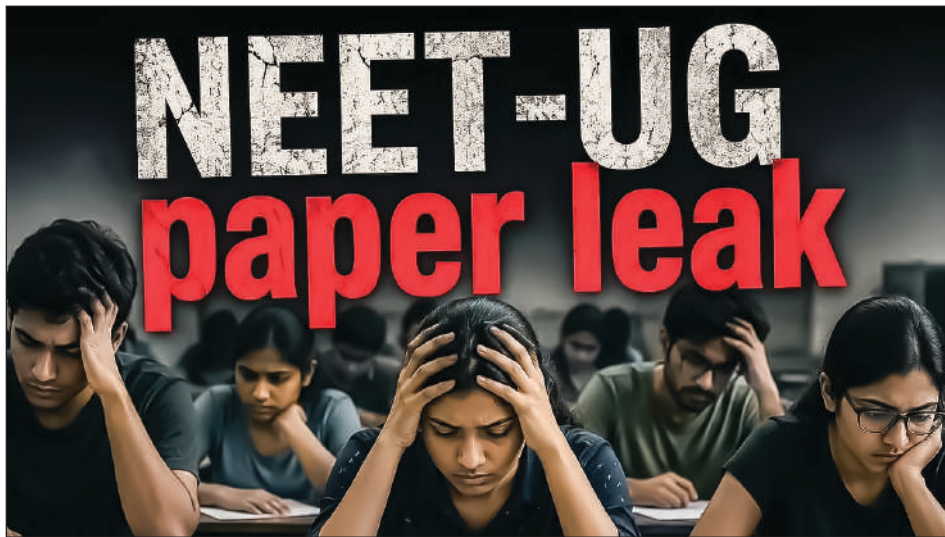
KO Web Desk

New Delhi: A sprawling conspiracy involving secret coaching classes, handwritten question notes, Telegram leaks, destroyed mobile phones and digital forensic trails has been laid bare by the CBI in its chargesheet in the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak case, exposing how three National Testing Agency (NTA) subject experts allegedly betrayed the country's biggest medical entrance examination for massive financial gain.

The 13 accused, including three NTA-appointed subject experts, now face charges that could result in life imprisonment and fines of up to 1 crore under the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Digital Trail Cracked the Conspiracy
One of the strongest pieces of evidence is not from the examination hall but from a residential society's access-control app in Pune.

According to the CBI, the



app recorded biometric entries of students attending "special coaching classes" at the residence of chemistry expert P V Kulkarni, days before the May 3 examination. The digital records matched call detail records and mobile phone locations of students and their parents, confirming their presence at Kulkarni's residence where leaked questions were allegedly dictated. Experts Swore Secrecy,

Then Leaked Papers

The chargesheet says the three experts—P V Kulkarni (Chemistry), Manisha Gurunath Mandhare (Biology) and Manisha Sanjay Havaladar (Physics)—had all signed confidentiality undertakings promising they would:

Not engage in coaching,
Keep question papers under lock and key,
Retain no notes or copies,
Maintain complete secrecy.

Instead, investigators allege they did exactly the opposite.

Kulkarni allegedly conducted special coaching sessions at his Pune residence.

Mandhare reportedly trained selected students while supplying confidential biology questions.

Havaladar allegedly circulated leaked physics questions directly and through associates.

The CBI has treated the trio

as "public servants" because they were entrusted with confidential examination material by the NTA.

How the Questions Were Smuggled Out

The chargesheet paints a detailed picture of how the leak allegedly occurred.

During question-setting sessions inside the NTA's highly sanitised facility in Delhi's Okhla, the experts allegedly reconstructed the papers from memory after returning to their hotel rooms.

Kulkarni is accused of scribbling abbreviated questions and answer options on rough sheets before secretly carrying them out as tiny paper chits. Simpler questions were memorised and rewritten later.

Mandhare and Havaladar allegedly relied largely on memory, reproducing questions on notebooks and textbooks once back in their hotels.

Because the experts worked on different days during March and April, investigators say they had ample time to reconstruct large portions of the paper before returning to Pune.

85% Match | [More on P6](#)

J&K Notifies New Legal Metrology Rules

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir Government has notified the Jammu and Kashmir Legal Metrology (Enforcement) Rules, 2026, replacing the existing licensing regime with a simplified registration system in a move aimed at reducing the regulatory burden on businesses while strengthening consumer protection.

Under the new rules, manufacturers, dealers and repairers of weights and measures will no longer be required to obtain licences. Instead, they will be issued registration certificates, eliminating the need for periodic renewals.

The rules also do away with mandatory pre-registration inspections, a measure expected to expedite approvals and lower compliance costs for businesses.

The notification introduces several other regulatory changes, including mandatory use of special accuracy weighing instruments for precious metals, prescribed verification fees for various categories of weights and measures, and fixed compounding fees for offences under the Legal Metrology Act, 2009.

Officials said the reforms are intended to simplify compliance procedures while providing a clearer legal framework for enforcing standards related to weights and measures.

The new rules form part of a broader reform agenda undertaken by | [More on P6](#)

'Anti-Woman Slogans'

9 BJP Anantnag Leaders Suspended

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: BJP on Friday removed nine office-bearers and suspended their party membership following allegations of anti-woman slogans during a rally in Jammu and Kashmir, Anantnag district.

"It has come to the notice of the District Unit, BJP Anantnag, that an unauthorised Tiranga Rally was held at Housing Colony Khanabal, Anantnag, on August 5, 2026. The said rally was neither organised nor authorised by the BJP District Unit Anantnag, nor had it obtained the requisite permission from the District Administration," BJP's Anantnag district president Rakesh Koul said in an order.

He said the district unit has taken serious note of "objectionable and derogatory remarks"

allegedly made against women during the rally.

"Such conduct is wholly unacceptable and is against the values, discipline, dignity, and principles of the Bharatiya Janata Party," he said.

Koul said the party has decided to initiate strict disciplinary action against those found responsible for organising and participating in the unauthorised rally.

"In view of the above and pending further inquiry, the following office bearers are hereby removed from all their party posts and responsibilities with immediate effect and their primary membership of the Bharatiya Janata Party is suspended until further orders," he said.

The action has been taken against Nisar Ahmad Bhat, district | [More on P6](#)

Fruit Trucks Get Priority On NH-44: CM Omar

Inspects Rain-hit Stretches, Orders Faster Repairs

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday said fruit-laden trucks from Kashmir and petroleum tankers from Jammu are being given priority on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway (NH-44) to ensure uninterrupted transportation of horticultural produce and essential supplies despite disruptions caused by recent heavy rains.

The Chief Minister made the remarks after reviewing the



condition of the rain-hit highway during a road journey from Jammu to Srinagar, inspecting vulnerable stretches

along the Udhampur-Ramban sector that witnessed landslides, mudslides and shooting stones over | [More on P6](#)

Use AI To Boost Governance: Omar

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday said Artificial Intelligence (AI) must be used to improve people's lives rather than remain confined to research, asserting

that the technology should strengthen governance, enhance public service delivery and create new economic opportunities. Launching the J&K Artificial Intelligence | [More on P6](#)

Safety Inspection of Katra-Srinagar Rail Section Concludes

Observer News Service

Jammu: Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS), Northern Circle, Dinesh Chand Deshwal on Friday completed the statutory safety inspection of the Katra-Srinagar section of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL), expressing satisfaction with the construction quality and safety standards of the strategically significant rail corridor.

The inspection covered the entire stretch from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra to Srinagar, where the CRS reviewed operational preparedness and safety measures in view of the



region's challenging terrain and weather conditions.

Senior railway and project officials, including Jammu Divisional Railway Manager Vivek Kumar, accompanied the

CRS during the inspection.

According to officials, the inspection included a detailed review of the railway track, tunnels, bridges, stations and other | [More on P6](#)

28 JKAS Officers Promoted Across 3 Grades

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: In a major administrative decision aimed at strengthening the Jammu and Kashmir Administrative Service (JKAS), the Jammu and Kashmir Government on Friday approved the promotion of 28 JKAS officers to the Super Time Scale, Special Scale and Selection Grade through separate orders issued by the General Administration Department (GAD).

According to Government Order No. 1374-JK(GAD) of 2026, Pawan Singh Rathore has been promoted to the Super Time Scale of JKAS (Level-14:

1,44,200 to 2,18,200). The promotion has been granted notionally with effect from September 26, 2025, while it will take effect on a regular prospective basis, subject to the outcome of pending court cases.

In a separate order, Government Order No. 1375-JK(GAD) of 2026, the government promoted nine JKAS officers to the Special Scale (Level-13: 1,23,100 to 2,15,900).

The officers promoted are Dr. Sunil Sharma, Zahoor Ahmad Magray, Syed Sajad Qadri, Masarat Hashim, Sonali Arun Gupta, Atul Gupta, Ritu Mahajan, | [More on P6](#)

FIR Against Mehbooba, Iltija

Even Jail Won't Stop Our Struggle: Mehbooba

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti on Friday alleged that she and her daughter Iltija Mufti were being targeted for raising their voice on Article 370 and urged party workers to continue the "peaceful and democratic" struggle for the resolution of the Kashmir issue, even if they were jailed.

Her remarks came a day after an FIR was registered against the mother-daughter duo at Kothibagh Police Station over allegations of assaulting an on-duty police officer during a protest in Srinagar. Iltija Mufti was also summoned by police for questioning on Friday.

Addressing party workers at the PDP headquarters, Mehbooba said Iltija would



cooperate with the investigation and that she too would appear before the police if summoned.

"Iltija has been called to the Kothibagh police station. She will go. If they call me tomorrow, I will also go. But whether I or Iltija are inside jail or outside, you must not abandon Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's vision and roadmap for resolving the Kashmir issue. | [More on P6](#)

HC Quashes Shopian Man's PSA Order

M Ahmad

Srinagar: The High Court of J&K and Ladakh on Friday quashed the order under the Public Safety Act (PSA) against a Shopian resident, holding that he had almost undergone the period of detention.

A Division Bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Sanjeev Kumar and Justice Mohd Yousuf Wani passed the judgment while allowing an appeal filed by Ubaid Yousuf Kuttay, challenging the Single Bench judgment dated 8 November 2025, which had dismissed his

petition.

Kuttay had been detained pursuant to detention order No. 189/DMS/PSA/2024 dated September 12, 2024, issued

by the District Magistrate, Shopian, under Section 8 of the PSA on the ground of security of the State.

The Division Bench, after examining the facts and legal circumstances of the case, allowed the appeal, filed by Kuttay through his counsel advocate B A Tak, and set aside the earlier judgment of the single bench.

"We are also of the opinion that it is not | [More on P6](#)



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2

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have changed my name from (old name) HIELAL AHMAD MATTOO (New Name) HILAL AHMAD MATTOO

If any person is Having any objection, he/she may contact Passport Office, Srinagar, within 7 days. After 7 days no objection will be accepted.

Address: HILAL AHMAD MATTOO
H. No. 2, Victory Cross, Hazari Bazar, Rainawari, Srinagar – 190003, Jammu & Kashmir, India.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Bilal Ahmad Sheergoirie S/o Ghulam Mohammad Sheergoirie, R/o Mulgam, Tehsil Kunzer, District Baramulla, hereby declare that my daughter Aiman Bilal was born at home on 16-02-2013. Due to inadvertence, her birth could not be registered with the Registrar of Births & Deaths, Block Kunzer, within the prescribed time. I now intend to register her birth and obtain a Birth Certificate from the competent authority. If any person has any objection regarding the registration of the birth of Aiman Bilal, they may file the same before the concerned authority within the stipulated period. Otherwise, the birth shall be registered in accordance with law. If you need this in an even shorter format suitable for publication in a classified/public notice column, I can Prepare a shorter format suitable for publication in a classified/public notice column.

fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Haji Sonaullah Qadri, S/O Kh. Assadullah Qadri, R/O Raipora, Palhallan, have misplaced my cheque book of my bank account bearing number K.C.C 0620020450000532 held at Jammu and Kashmir Bank, Branch Palhallan, on 07.08.2026. I request the bank authorities to kindly treat the said cheque book as cancelled/closed with immediate effect.

Haji Sonaullah Qadri
Account Number : 0620020450000532

fko

Subject:- Grant Of Registration of the Proposed Travel unit under the name & Style "M/S Hawkeye kashmir Tour and travels.situated at Divdragar Tangmarg

PUBLIC NOTICE

Whereas I, Mr. Suhail majid khan S/o:- Abdul Majid khan Address:- Divdragar Tangmarg Phone number:- 8803792073 intend to apply in the Department of Tourism for registration of my proposed travel unit under the name & style of M/S Hawkeye kashmir Tour and travels.situated at Divdragar Tangmarg KASHMIR under tourist trade act 1978/82/2011-12.

Whereas I will submit state subject / Domicile certificate , Qualification Certificate, pan cardr \ Experience Certificate(Minimum 5years). Police character certificate, Bank statement (minimum balance 10000), site plan, Affidavit, Rent deed duly attested by sub Registrar, printing material (Latter head / Visiting card) Photograph of the unit (indoor and outdoor) and Two passport size photographs to the department of Tourism as per prescribed checklist I Prior to Registration of my unit as an Excursion Agency. / Adventure Tour Operator Now as per J&K Registration of Tourist Trade Act 1978/82/2011/12) before my case is processed for my registration by the Competent Authority, the matter is hereby notified for information of general public/ Financial Institutions/Bank/ Organisation, etc for objection, if any and the same should reach to the Deputy Director Tourism Registration(email id: ddtregl23@gmail.com) within a period of 7days from the publication of this notice in a leading newspaper/newspapers of the valley. No objection beyond a period of 7 days shall be entertained.

fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have passed/appeared in Class 10th annual under Roll No. 624438 Session Annual Year 1986 through the J&K Board of School Education. The error has been committed against my Father's Name as AB. REHMEN MIR instead of AB. REHMAN MIR. Now I have applied for correction in The J&K Board of School Education Magam. If any person has any objection in this regard may file the same in the office of the Assistant Secretary JKBOSE MAGAM within seven days from the date of the publication of this notice. After the expiry of the said period, no objection will be entertained. This is published for the information of the general public. The correction particulars be recorded as under:

Name: MOHD. SIDDIQ MIR
Father's Name: AB. REHMEN MIR
Mother's Name: KHATIJIA
Date of Birth: 20-03-1970
Residence: DEVBUGH
Mobile No. 9797285299

bmg



PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Iftikhar Ahmed S/o Mohd Farooq, R/o Tangdar, Karnah, District Kupwara, hereby notify the general public that my name has been incorrectly recorded in my Aadhaar Card bearing No. 3323 8669 7619 as "Iftikhar Ahmad" instead of my correct name "Iftikhar Ahmed". Henceforth, Iftikhar Ahmed shall be treated as my true and correct name for all official purposes. If any person has any objection to this correction, they may raise the same before the concerned authority within the stipulated period. Otherwise, the correction shall be deemed genuine and valid.

bko

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have passed/appeared in Class 10th annual under Roll No. 64438 Session Annual Year 1986 through the J&K Board of School Education. The error has been committed against my Father's Name as AB. REHMEN MIR instead of AB. REHMAN MIR. Now I have applied for correction in The J&K Board of School Education Magam. If any person has any objection in this regard may file the same in the office of the Assistant Secretary JKBOSE MAGAM within seven days from the date of the publication of this notice. After the expiry of the said period, no objection will be entertained. This is published for the information of the general public. The correction particulars be recorded as under:

Name: MOHD. SIDDIQ MIR
Father's Name: AB. REHMEN MIR
Mother's Name: KHATIJIA
Date of Birth: 20-03-1970
Residence: DEVBUGH
Mobile No. 9797285299

bmg



Monthly Fee Structure of students of Syed Qasim Public School Tilagam Pattan (Session 2026-2027)

S.No	Class	Admission Fee	Monthly Tuition Fee
01	L.K.G	Nil	500
02	U.K.G	Nil	520
03	1st	Nil	560
04	2nd	Nil	600
05	3rd	Nil	640
06	4th	Nil	660
07	5th	Nil	680
08	6th	Nil	710
09	7th	Nil	750
10	8th	Nil	790

fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Rafiq Ahmad Ahenger, S/o Gulam Mohmad Ahenger, R/o Ompora, Tehsil & District Budgam, Jammu & Kashmir, do hereby inform the general public that my name has been wrongly recorded in my Aadhaar Card bearing No. 4861 9398 2030 as "Rafiq Ahmad Ahanger" instead of my correct name "Rafiq Ahmad Ahenger". Further, my father's name has been wrongly recorded as "Ghulam Mohammad Ahanger" instead of the correct name "Gulam Mohmad Ahenger".The correct particulars are:Correct Name: Rafiq Ahmad AhengerCorrect Father's Name: Gulam Mohmad AhengerAddress: Ompora, Tehsil & District Budgam, Jammu & KashmirAny person having any objection regarding the aforesaid correction may contact the undersigned within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which no objection shall be entertained thereafter. Rafiq Ahmad Ahenger mcb
S/o Gulam Mohmad Ahenger
R/o Ompora, Tehsil & District BudgamJammu & Kashmir

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Abdul Hameed Dar, S/o Wali Mohammad Dar, R/o Nasrullahpora, Tehsil & District Budgam, Jammu & Kashmir, father and natural guardian of my daughter, do hereby inform the public that my daughter's name has been wrongly recorded as "Binti Ul Islam" in her Aadhaar Card (Aadhaar No. 9552 2745 3707), whereas her actual and correct name is "Bint Ul Islam".?I am applying for the correction of my daughter's name in her Aadhaar Card and all other official/legal records to "Bint Ul Islam".If any person, authority, or organization has any objection to the said correction of name, they may submit their written objection to the concerned issuing authority within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice.?Abdul Hameed Dar(Father / Guardian)R/o Nasrullahpora, Tehsil & District Budgam, J&K mcb

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Fancy, W/o Abdul Rashid Najar, R/o Shogapora, Budgam, Jammu & Kashmir, do hereby inform the general public that my name is wrongly recorded as "Fancy Jan" in my savings/ bank account maintained with Jammu & Kashmir Bank, Branch Budgam, under Account No. 0078040150001404.?My actual and correct name is "Fancy".I have applied to the Bank authorities for the correction of my name from "Fancy Jan" to "Fancy" in the records of the aforementioned bank account.If any person, institution, or authority has any objection regarding this name correction, they may file their written objection with the Branch Manager, Jammu & Kashmir Bank, Branch Budgam, within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. Fancy W/o Abdul Rashid Najar mcb
R/o Shogapora, Budgam, J&K

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is information for the general public that I ISHFAQ SULTAN BHAT S/O MOHD SULTAN BHAT applied for fresh ,DEE (D) class contractor card. If any body having any objection regarding the same they may submit their objection written to the Chief Engineer Civil investigation wing JKPCD, Bemina Srinagar within a period of 7 days from the date of this notice. No objection will be entertained after that. ISHFAQ SULTAN BHAT S/O MOHD SULTAN BHAT R/O SHOPRI BAGH BUDGAM. mcb

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is information for the general public that I ISHFAQ SULTAN BHAT S/O MOHD SULTAN BHAT applied for fresh ,DEE (D) class contractor card. If any body having any objection regarding the same they may submit their objection written to the Chief Engineer Civil investigation wing JKPCD, Bemina Srinagar within a period of 7 days from the date of this notice. No objection will be entertained after that. ISHFAQ SULTAN BHAT S/O MOHD SULTAN BHAT R/O SHOPRI BAGH BUDGAM. mcb

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is information for the general public that I SHABIR AHMAD MIR S/O MOHAMMAD SULTAN MIR applied for fresh ,DEE (D) class contractor card. If any body having any objection regarding the same they may submit their objection written to the Chief Engineer Civil investigation wing JKPCD, Bemina Srinagar within a period of 7 days from the date of this notice. No objection will be entertained after that. 1. SHABIR AHMAD MIR S/O MOHAMMAD SULTAN MIR R/O KULHAMA CHECKPORA BADGAM. mcb

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Riddhi Sahima Verma, D/o Manish Verma, R/o Rajbagh District, Srinagar J&K (UT), hereby inform that the name my name has been wrongly recorded as "Riddhi Verma" in Aadhaar Card No. 8001 6909 1714. My correct name is "Riddhi Sahima Verma." I am applying for correction of my name in Aadhaar records. Any person having any objection may file the same before the concerned authority within seven days from the date of publication of this notice. Riddhi Sahima Verma D/o Manish Verma R/o Rajbagh, Srinagar rdi

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that the name Iftikhar Ahmad mentioned in Aadhaar Card No. 3323 8669 7619 is incorrect. The correct name is Iftikhar Ahmed. Iftikhar Ahmed S/o Mohd. Farooq R/o Tangdar, Karnah, District Kupwara MFS

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Zahoor Ahmad Mahajan, S/o Mohd Yousf Mahajan, working in SKIMS hereby give notice that my father's name has been incorrectly recorded in my HRMS Portal as:

Mohd Yousuf Mahajan
The correct name is: **Mohd Yousf Mahajan.**
I request that the above correction be made in all concerned official records. Any person having any objection to this correction may submit his or her in Administrative Office (Personal) of SKIMS within 7 (seven) days from the date of publication of this notice. If no objection is received within the stipulated period, the correction shall be deemed accepted and processed accordingly.

Zahoor Ahmad Mahajan
S/o Mohd Yousf Mahajan

Media line addvt

**OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL
GOVERNMENT DEGREE COLLEGE TANGDHAR KARNAH**

Website <https://gdctangdhar.edu.in>

Contact No. 919596522354

GDCTK/2026/ Dated: / 08 /2026

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Expression of Interest, quoting the rates of discount for supply of books to GDC Tangdhar, are invited from the reputed Book Sellers / Publishers registered with the Book Federation of India / Book Association of India. The Expression of Interest accompanied with CDR of Rs. 5000/- (Rupees Five Thousand only) pledged to the Principal GDC Tangdhar must reach to this office by or before 27-08-2026 upto 4:00 Pm. The related documents along with T&Cs in this regard can be obtained from the Establishment Section of the College or can be downloaded from the college website during the working hour's w.e.f 08-08-2026.

DIPK-4245/26 DATED: 07-08-2026 Principal GDC Tangdhar.

School Education Department

Civil Secretariat, J & K

Ms. Diksha
D/o Ashwani Kumar
R/o 226, Ward No.2 Mirpur
Ram Nagri Parole Nagri Parole.

Subject: Final Notice.

Whereas, vide this department's notice issued under Endorsement No. Edu-Lect/119/2026-01(7764759) dated 03.07.2026 among others, you were directed to submit your Mobile Number and valid E-mail address to this department either in person or in the official E-mail of this department within 15 days from the date of issuance of this notice; and Whereas, you have not submitted the requisite details to this department till date. Therefore, in light of the above, you are hereby once again asked to submit your details viz. Mobile Number and valid E-mail address in the School Education Department, (Gazetted Section) Civil Secretariat, Jammu, in person or on E-mail ID: school-edu@jk.gov.in within 15 days from the date of issuance of this notice failing which your candidature shall be cancelled .

Dr. Deep Novel Kour (JKAS)
Deputy Secretary to the Government,
School Education Department

No. Edu-Lect/119/2026-01(7764759)
DIPK-4265/26
Dated:07.08.2026

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B) DIVISION PULWAMA

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

NIT No: fresh.95/EEP/RNB of 2026-2027/4820-30

Dated: 06/08/2026

For and on behalf of the **Lt. Governor Union Territory of J&K**, e-tenders are being invited on an **item rate basis/percentage age basis** (as applicable) from approved and eligible Contractors registered with the J&K Government, CPWD, Railways, and other State/Central Governments for the following works:

S. No	Name of Work	Major Head of Account	Est. Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	EMD in shape of CDR/ FDR/BG	Class of Contractor	Time of Completion (In days)	Cost of T/Doc. (Rs.)	AAA No / Dt
1	Macdamisation of interior links of village Achan including Masjid Sharief Sheikh Mohalla Bangam and Barzal Link Road.	MH:C&T 2026-27	58.90 lacs	2% of Adv cost	AAY	20 Days	1600/	AAA: 119-SE/PS Of 2026 Dt 15-07-2026
2	Macadamisation /Upgradation of IR Town Pulwama.	MH:C&T 2026-27	39.78 lacs	2% of Adv cost	BEE,AAY	15 Days	1100/	AAA: 111-SE/PS Of 2026 Dt 06-07-2026

Position of funds :- Accorded **Project Authority= PW(R&B) Department Kashmir**

The bidding documents, which would include qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications/drawings, a bill of quantities (B.O.Q), a set of contract terms and conditions, and other details, can be viewed/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in on the dates listed below: -

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	06 /08/2026
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	06 /08/2026 from 04.00 PM.
3	Bid submission Start Date	06 /08/2026 from 04.00 PM.
4	Bid Submission End Date	12 /08/2026 upto 4.00 PM.
5	Date & time of opening of Bids (Online)	13/08/2026 at 11:00 AM in the office of EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B) DIVISION PULWAMA.

In light of Circular issued by Finance department Vide No:FD-code/290/2026 Dated 22.05.2026 and circular issued by worthy Chief Engineer PW(R&B)Department South Kashmir Vide order No:CE/R&B/SK/WS/2095-2111 Dated: 05.06.2026, the following conditions are mentioned below:-

1. **Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document/Tender Fee to be deposited in Cash in Centralized Designated Pooling JK Bank Account Bearing No: 0470010200000099, IFSC: JAKA0LALANG).**

2. **All the bidders must deposit Earnest money /Bid security equal to 2% of advertised cost in Cash in Centralized Designated Pooling JK Bank Account Bearing No: 0470010200000099, IFSC: JAKA0LALANG)**

3. **The Successful bidder will have to provide performance security @ .5% of contract value to be deposited in Cash in Pulwama MC Holding Account Executive Engineer R&B Pulwama Bearing Account no. 0054010200003470 ,IFSC: JAKA0GOLDEN), which shall be released after successful completion of DLP /maintenance period**

The date and time of opening of Bids shall be notified on Web site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the office of **EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (R&B) DIVISION PULWAMA.** The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of opening of bids.

All other terms and conditions shall be available in website www.jktenders.gov.in

Head Draftsman

Technical Officer

Executive Engineer,
R&B Division Pulwama

DIPK-4262/26 dated: 07-08-2026

از نیابت پبلکلسن

مضمون درخواست ختائب فاطمہ بیگم زبیر محمد نظام محمد داس کانت پرا داری پور تحصیل پٹن ہرماصول فرمائے حکم باہت حاصل کرنے فوٹگی سرٹیفکیت بئن محمد نظام محمد دواہ

اشہتار ہرما د آگاہی ہر خاص و عام

مندرجہ عنوان الصد میں ایک درخواست ہرما د عطا فوٹگی سرٹیفکیت پیش کی ہے جو کہ سرٹیفکیشن ڈائیر کاروائی ہے سال کا کاٹھ ہر محمد نظام محمد داس دوسرہ 1999-12-27 کو فوٹ ہو چکا ہے لہذا اگر کسی شخص یا شخص کو سرٹیفکیت زبیر بٹ اڈا کرنے میں کوئی عذرا یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ چاروں کے اندر دفتر نمائش پیش کریں۔ معیا انگریز نے بعد کوئی بل عذرا یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

تخیر الصد

نائب تحصیلدار

fko



SMC Launches Online Community Hall Booking Portal

Agencies

Srinagar: In a major step towards enhancing citizen-centric services and promoting digital governance, the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) on Friday launched an online portal for booking all 35 community halls under its jurisdiction, enabling residents to reserve a hall in just two minutes from anywhere without visiting the SMC office.

The web-based portal was formally launched by SMC Commissioner Faz Lul

bookings have been discontinued," he said.

He said that under the earlier offline system, obtaining a booking often took more than a week due to manual processing and paperwork. "That delay is now a thing of the past. The new digital platform offers instant service and greater convenience to citizens," he added.

The newly launched portal enables users to check hall availability, book community halls online, make digital payments and receive



New Access Roads, Parking Facilities to Improve Hospital Connectivity in Srinagar

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo on Friday inspected the newly created alternate entry gate and additional parking space at Bone & Joint Hospital, Barzulla.

The DC also took an onsite review of the ongoing Sunner Kul Bund road development works being executed to streamline traffic movement around SMHS Hospital and Super Specialty Hospital.

The inspection was undertaken as part of the District Administration's sustained efforts to improve traffic management and strengthen infrastructure around major healthcare institutions to ensure hassle-free access for patients, attendants, healthcare workers, ambulances and other emergency services.

At Bone & Joint Hospital, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the newly developed alternate entry gate along with the connecting link road and associated infrastructure aimed at facilitating smooth entry and exit of vehicles. He also inspected the additional parking space created to address parking constraints and reduce congestion around the hospital premises.

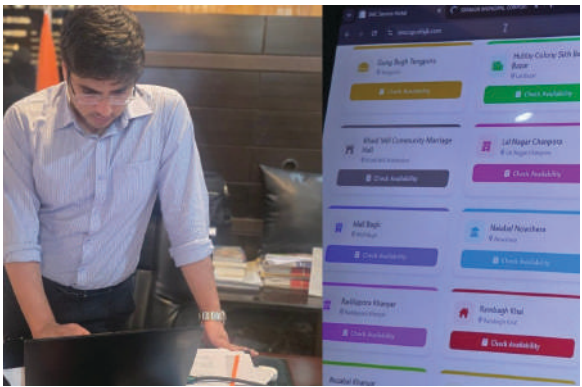
The alternate entry and parking facility would significantly ease vehicular movement, particularly during peak hours, besides ensuring uninterrupted passage for ambulances and other emergency vehicles.

At Bone & Joint Hospital, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the newly developed alternate entry gate along with the connecting link road and associated infrastructure aimed at facilitating smooth entry and exit of vehicles

ments to work in close coordination to ensure early operationalisation and efficient utilisation of the facilities.

On the occasion, the DC said that the road development forms part of the broader mobility improvement and traffic regulation plan along the Nawab Bazar-Kaksarai-Darish Kadal corridor aimed at streamlining vehicular movement through the Sunner Kul route. He said the Bund road, along with the dedicated parking facility being developed around the high-priority healthcare zone comprising SMHS Hospital, Super Specialty Hospital and the Dental Hospital, would help prevent roadside congestion and facilitate smoother access for patients, attendants, healthcare workers and emergency vehicles through the Sunner Kul corridor.

The DC stressed the need for timely completion of the remaining works while maintaining quality standards and directed the concerned depart-



Haseeb, who said the initiative would eliminate the need for citizens to visit the SMC office for booking community halls, as all bookings will now be processed exclusively through the online platform.

Haseeb told news agency Kashmir Dot Com that the new system has been introduced to make the booking process faster, more transparent and hassle-free for the public.

"People no longer need to visit the SMC office to book community halls. They can now complete the entire process online within two minutes. Offline

instant booking confirmations, significantly reducing processing time while ensuring transparency and efficiency.

Officials said the initiative is part of SMC's broader efforts to modernise civic services through digital technology and improve the overall experience for citizens.

The online booking system is expected to benefit thousands of residents by providing a simple, secure and user-friendly platform for reserving community halls for social, cultural and family functions without the need for physical visits or lengthy paperwork. (KDC)

Think Before You Click Kashmiris Urged to Verify Blinkit Orders after Pork Listing Row

Agencies

Srinagar: Amid widespread outrage over the alleged listing of pork products on Blinkit's newly launched platform in Kashmir, consumers across the Valley have been urged to carefully verify the contents of their online shopping carts before placing orders.

The controversy erupted after screenshots circulating on social media purportedly showed pork products being offered for delivery through the quick-commerce platform, drawing strong reactions from religious organisations and trade bodies, which termed the listings insensitive to the religious and cultural values of Jammu and Kashmir.

The incident has triggered concerns among consumers, with business representatives advising people to remain vigilant while using online delivery applications and to thoroughly check product descriptions before

confirming purchases.

Several trade organisations have also demanded that Blinkit immediately remove the controversial listings, conduct a comprehensive review of its product catalogue and introduce region-specific safeguards to ensure that products prohibited or offensive

Kashmir market must respect local religious and cultural sensitivities. They have sought stronger safeguards to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents.

Consumer representatives have advised people to remain alert while placing online orders, particularly during the initial phase of Blinkit's opera-

The incident has triggered concerns among consumers, with business representatives advising people to remain vigilant while using online delivery applications and to thoroughly check product descriptions before

to the religious sentiments of the local population are neither displayed nor offered for delivery in Kashmir.

The Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), Kashmir Trade Alliance (KTA) and Muttahida Majlis-e-Ulema (MMU) have all expressed concern over the issue, maintaining that companies entering the

tions in Kashmir, and to immediately report any objectionable or inappropriate product listings to the platform.

The controversy has also renewed calls for e-commerce companies to adopt region-specific catalogues and content filters instead of relying on uniform nationwide product listings in culturally sensitive markets. (KNT)

PUBLIC NOTICE
I have changed my name from (old name) HILAL AHMAD MATTOO (New Name) HILAL AHMAD MATTOO
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NORTHERN RAILWAY						
E-Tender Notice						
Sr.DEN-C/FZR acting for and on behalf of the President of India invites Open E-Tenders against the below-mentioned works and available on www.ireps.gov.in with closing date 28.08.2026 up to 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids only up to the closing date and time. Manual offers are not allowed against these tenders, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments towards the tender document cost and Earnest Money only through the payment modes available on www.ireps.gov.in portal, like Net Banking, Debit Card, Credit Card, etc. Manual payments through Demand Draft, Banker's Cheque, Deposit Receipt, FDR, etc. are not allowed. For more information, log on to www.ireps.gov.in .						
Tender Type	Tendering Section	Bidding System	Date of Uploading Tenders	Bid Starting Date	Bid Closing Date/Time	
Open	Works	Single Packet System	06.08.2026	14.08.2026	28.08.2026 15:00 Hrs.	
S.N.	Tender No.	Details of Tender				
1	80-2026-27 Sr-DEN-C- FZR	Supply of 60,000 cum 65 mm gauge stone ballast (Mechanically broken) and loading into rail rakes/BOBs at the goods siding, Hoshiarpur on JRC-HSX section under ADEN/JRC.				
		Advertised Value (Rs.)	Earnest money (Rs.)	Validity of Offer	Period of Completion	
		71443800.00	1428900.00	60 Days	08 Months	
Similar nature of work: -"Supply of machine crushed stone ballast for Railways/Highway/Roads".						
Note1. Before bidding, bidders to check for any corrigendum issued against tender.						
Tender Notice No:- 80-2026-27-Sr-DEN-C-FZR Date: 06.08.2026						
Serving Customers With A Smile						
						27/35/2026

NORTHERN RAILWAY							
E-Tender Notice							
Sr.DEE/G/FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders (www.ireps.gov.in) against below titled Tenders. Bidders will be able to submit the original/revised bids up to closing date and time only.							
Tender No.	Name of work		App. Cost. (in Rs.)	Earnest Money (in Rs.)	Completion Period	Opening of tender	Website Particulars
251-Elect-T-05-2026-27	Electrical works in c/w balance works for Civil, Electrical and S&T of 08 nos. of Amrit Bharat Scheme Stations (Dhandari Kalan, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala, Phillaur, Phagwara, Firozpur Cantt., Moga and Fazilka) over Firozpur Division		3,22,82,427.01/-	6,45,700/-	06 Months	31.08.2026 after 15:00 Hrs.	www.ireps.gov.in
Open Tender Notice No. 251-Elect/T, Notice No. 05-Elect/2026-27 Dated : 07.08.2026							2741/2026
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE							

14 years of Mashq-e-Arba'een

A Brief History

Mashq-e-Arbaeen is an annual community-led exhibition that commemorates and pays tribute to Imam Hussain (AS) and the Martyrs of Karbala through artworks, calligraphy, poetry, elegies, oral narratives, photography, and other creative expressions.

The first Mashq-e-Arbaeen exhibit titled "Dar'ke Azadari, a One Day Open-Air Exhibition" was held on October 28, 2013. Since then, Mashq-e-Arba'een has cultivated a forum for emotional and artistic expression, community building, intergenerational dialogues, and mourning traditions.

This year, Mashq-e-Arba'een completes 14 years of its exhibit and continues the effort of collective commemoration. Spanning various venues such as the Library Lawns at the University of Kashmir, Art Harbour, and Kashmir Emporium, Mashq-e-Arba'een returns to Mahatta Art Gallery, a space dedicated to cultural preservation.

Sessions' Schedule

August 1	02:00 pm	Inauguration
August 1	3-5 pm	Dastaan-e-Azadari Rizvi S. Ilyas
August 2	11-1 pm	Farsh-e-Aza Dabistan
August 2	2-4 pm	Tabat Khwani Rashid Maqbool
August 3	11-1 pm	Karbala, the City of Hussain: A Visual Narrative Mubashir Hussain
August 3	2-4 pm	Ziyarat-e-Arbaeen: Live from Karbala Syed Shahriyar
August 5	11:00 am	Film Screening: Marzia Aga
August 5	2-4 pm	The Karbala Paradigm: A Critical Writing Workshop Khairunnisa Aga
August 5	4-5 pm	Karbala and Mysticism Syed Maqsood H. Jafri
August 6	4-5 pm	Artist Speaks: Quranic Art Arshad Sauleh
August 7	3-5 pm	Emotions and Azadari Saeeda Nida Zahra
August 8	12-1 pm	Discussion with Sabahat Mir
August 8	3-5 pm	Women's oral recitation Syeda
August 9	3-5 pm	Closing Session

A community oriented exhibition of art, photography, calligraphy, poetry, and more.

MASHQ-E-ARBA'EEN

Annual Exhibition 2026

AASHURA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

1st-09th August, 2026 | Timing: 11:00 am - 5:00pm

Mahatta Art Gallery, The Bund, Residency Road, Srinagar

Our Artists & Creatives

Aarif Hussain

Arc of Salvation
Resurrection Series (I, II, & III)
Flying Verse

Adhama Zehra

Salam Series (I & II)

Arshad Sauleh

Quranic Verses with Landscape Series (I, II, III, & IV)

Farhana Hassan

Haybat minna zilla
"Kullu yaa'minin Ashura, kullu arqin Karbala"

Ghulam Hussain Wani

The Garden of Remembrance

GM Guru, Waqar Bashir & Rizvi S Ilyas

Musalla

Hammad

Inherited Grief Series (I & II)

Ishfar Ali

Prophetic Hadeeth of Imam Hussain

Ifsha Zehra

"I saw nothing but beauty" Series (I & II)

Irfan Hussain

The Final Battle
The Water Bearer
The Conqueror of Euphrates
The Final Farewell

Irshad Mir

The Edge of Truth

Latif Mir

Sajinat-ul-Najat (The Ship of Salvation)
Untitled
Shadow of Agba

Masood Hussain

Imam Hussain(as)

Mohammad Ashraf Munshi

Resonance

Mohammad Iqbal

Where Light Entered

بند - The Bond

Mujtaba Ali

Shabeeb-e-Hussain
Servant of Imam

Rizvi S Ilyas

Khak'gah

Rizvi S Ilyas & Mohammad Aslam

Hand of Fatimah(as)

Rutba Showkat

Sogga-e-Sakino
Household of Purity

Syed Murtaza Hussain Rizvi

Zuljanab

Syed Shahriyar

The Last Journey Series (I, II, III, & IV)

Syeda Uzma

Untitled

Toiba Khatoon

Untitled

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- PDD: 0194-2450213
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- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081
- Ambulance: Kashmir EMS Service: +91 94841 00200

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- PAMPORA: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

HIGHWAY STATUS



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

HIJRI CALENDAR

24 Safar
1448

PRAYERS

FAJR	4: 13
ZUHR	12:37
ASR	5: 27
Magrib	7: 30
ISHA	9: 00

This Day In History

- 1220- Sweden is defeated by Estonian tribes in the Battle of Lihula
- 1303- Crete earthquake strikes with estimated magnitude of 8, triggering a major tsunami that damaged the Lighthouse of Alexandria and swept ships 2 miles inland in Egypt
- 1509- Emperor Krishnadeva Raya is crowned, marking the beginning of the regeneration of the Vijayanagara Empire in Southern India
- 1549- Henry II of France declares war on England and orders the siege of Boulogne
- 1567- Duke of Alva's army enters Brussels, Belgium
- 1570- Peace of Saint-Germain-and-Laye, more freedom for Huguenots
- 1576- Cornerstone laid for Tycho Brahe's observatory in Uraniborg, Denmark, when built becomes the world's most advanced research institution
- 1605- The city of Oulu, Finland, is founded by Charles IX of Sweden.

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Kashmir’s Family Secret

Some of the deepest wounds suffered by young Kashmiri women are inflicted inside their own homes, while relatives and neighbours choose silence over intervention.



Dr. Fiaz Maqbool Fazili

KO VIEW

Kashmir Needs Fellowships

Countries all over the West figured this out years ago. They noticed talented graduates slipping away, and instead of just watching it happen, they built fellowship programs that gave young researchers a real reason to stay. Clear funding, defined roles, strong mentors, the whole system worked because someone actually designed it to work. So the question worth asking is simple: if the West could crack this problem, why has Kashmir struggled so much with the very same thing? Part of the answer comes down to coordination, or the lack of it. Universities in the valley operate, classrooms fill up, and professors teach their courses. Nobody has connected these pieces into something bigger, though. There’s no central plan pulling talent toward research, mentorship, or long-term academic careers. Everything runs in isolated pockets instead of working together as one system. Trust plays a role too, as institutions in Kashmir often hesitate to hand real responsibility to young scholars. Hiring remains vague, contracts stay short, and promising graduates rarely get a clear sense of what their future could look like if they stayed. Compare that to a Western fellowship model, where a young researcher knows exactly what she’s signing up for, how long the position lasts, and what doors it might open next. That type of clarity builds confidence, and Kashmir simply hasn’t built that clarity yet. This is exactly why so many students end up with nothing solid to fall back on once they graduate. A young woman finishes her degree in Srinagar, and she quickly discovers that the ecosystem meant to catch her just isn’t there. She wanted to teach, or research, or build something meaningful in her own valley. Instead, she finds short-term contracts, confusing hiring processes, and institutions that can’t offer much guidance about what happens next. Nobody says this out loud, but every ambitious student in the valley seems to understand it anyway. Building a real career usually means leaving home. Students who dream about staying and contributing keep running into walls that other places have already learned to knock down. Over time, that realization turns into real frustration, and scholars trained with public money and community pride end up boarding flights to Delhi, Bengaluru, or cities much farther away in Europe and the United States. Here’s the hopeful part, though. Kashmir already has what it needs to fix this. Talented graduates exist in large numbers, and universities are already running, with classrooms and labs sitting there ready to be used properly. What’s missing is a plan that ties these pieces together, along with enough trust in young people to actually let them lead. Picture a fellowship system that places young researchers directly inside colleges, government offices, labs, and cultural institutions across the valley. Open applications and fair pay would draw serious candidates instead of just the well-connected few. Mentors from Kashmir and from outside could help these fellows grow while linking their work to bigger networks beyond the region. Projects could focus on education, climate change, public health, technology, and local governance, areas where fresh thinking is genuinely needed. Fellowships work like infrastructure, the same way roads and electricity keep a place running smoothly. Build that infrastructure well, and Kashmir finally gets to keep the people capable of shaping its next chapter, right there at home, doing work that means something in the place that raised them.

“Too many people believe change isn’t possible. They’ve seen too many bad decisions, too many rigged processes. But if we keep thinking that way, nothing will change.”

“We need to shift to data. Real performance metrics, not vague impressions. That means tracking who delivered results, met deadlines, led teams, and solved problems.”

ity have taught people to survive through networks, not rules. Interference in transfers and postings is common. Rules get bent. People learn not to complain. But change has to start somewhere. The first step is leadership that genuinely believes in merit, and shows it. That means saying no to pressure, protecting whistleblowers, and publicly celebrating honest success stories. The second step is investing in tools that can track and compare performance objectively. We also need legal reforms: laws that clearly spell out how promotions must be made, what “merit” means in each role, and how decisions can be challenged. Some global systems, like the U.S. Office of Personnel Management or the Singapore Public Service Commission, offer examples of how to do this. We don’t have to invent everything from scratch. Let’s imagine a timeline. In the next three years, we could roll out digital HR systems in departments like education and revenue. We could train managers to use data

The biggest obstacle to building a meritocracy isn’t money. It isn’t even politics. It’s cynicism. Too many people believe change isn’t possible. They’ve seen too many bad decisions, too many rigged processes. But if we keep thinking that way, nothing will change. The truth is, the roadmap is already there. The question is whether we have the will to follow it. If we start today, by fixing what we can, by pushing for fair rules, by refusing to take or offer backdoor help, we can move toward a future where Kashmir runs on talent, not ties. We owe that to the next generation. Meritocracy isn’t just a dream. It’s a plan we can build, step by step, role by role, and system by system. The only thing missing is the choice to begin.

The author is a senior consultant surgeon, who writes frequently on healthcare reforms. He can be reached at drfiazfazili@gmail.com.

Apples & Aftermath

As pesticide use rises sharply, experts are calling for health monitoring and tighter oversight to understand its impact on fertility, cancer, and endocrine disorders.



Dr. Waseem Ahmad

In the villages of Pulwama and Shopian, apples are a badge of pride and progress. Families have tended these orchards for generations. They know how to prune branches, read the sky for hail, and time the harvest to perfection. But lately, a darker knowledge has taken root. Mothers speak in hushed tones about daughters who can’t conceive. Young men queue at clinics for unexplained spinal pain. In one village of 1,400 homes, 15 cancer cases have emerged in just a few years. I began noticing these patterns during training sessions and outreach camps held in South Kashmir. Women from orchardist households would stay behind after the formal sessions ended. “Why are we seeing so many girls who can’t get pregnant?” one woman in Shopian asked. “Our mothers never talked about this. It’s something new.” They are right. It is new, and it’s spreading. In Srinagar’s diagnostic labs, young radiologists are

alarmed. They perform 20 to 25 scans a day, often over grueling 12-hour shifts. Over half of their patients now come from South Kashmir, and a worrying share show early signs of spinal degeneration, liver stress, and even brain tumors. Lab technologists, too, are seeing a surge in hormonal disorders: thyroid dysfunction, PCOD, early menopause. These complaints form a pattern, and all arrows point back to the orchards. What changed? Ten years ago, an average orchardist used just three or four sprays a year, mostly harmless horticultural oil and occasional antifungals. Today, farmers apply up to 20 chemical treatments per season, and the sprays are no longer benign. Systemic pesticides, synthetic fungicides, and a newer, more dangerous entrant, Plant Growth Regulators (PGRs), have transformed apple farming. These are not your grandfather’s sprays. PGRs are powerful synthetic chemicals designed to force larger fruit, earlier blooming, and higher yields. They also come with a well-documented risk: they disrupt human endocrine systems. According to Dr. Ghulam Hassan Mir, one of Kashmir’s most respected plant pathologists, many of these PGRs are not meant for widespread use in residential areas. “The chemicals being sprayed now are strong, systemic, and often unregulated,” he told me. “Some of them interfere directly with hormones. And we’re using them in orchards that are just steps from homes.” The science is clear.

Exposure to certain PGRs and systemic pesticides is associated with reduced fertility, hormonal imbalances, and an elevated risk of cancers. In farming communities where these chemicals are used heavily, the consequences are showing up in medical records, if anyone bothers to look. The problem is, almost no one is looking. There is no health registry that tracks environmental exposure in South Kashmir. There is no centralized data on the rising incidence of endocrine disorders, cancers, or fertility problems in orchard districts. Public health departments are slow to respond, and agriculture departments often avoid confronting the pesticide lobby. And so, the burden falls on women undergoing invasive fertility treatments, on men too young to need spinal scans, and on children growing up surrounded by toxins they can not see. This is a systemic failure. We cannot separate agriculture from health. What we grow, how we grow it, and what chemicals we allow into our soil and water will always show up, first in test tubes, then in hospital beds. Right now, South Kashmir’s apple economy is thriving on paper. But in its villages, the cost is becoming unbearable. So what can we do? First, we need regulation, with teeth. The government must urgently audit and limit the sale and use of PGRs and systemic pesticides, especially in high-density farming zones near homes and schools. Second, we need information. A region-wide health surveillance program should be launched immediately to track

disease clusters and correlate them with occupational exposure, soil residue, and groundwater toxicity. Third, we need education. Farmers are not villains. They’re victims of a system that rewards short-term yield over long-term sustainability. Most orchardists I meet are unaware of what exactly they’re spraying, or the cumulative health risks it brings. Outreach campaigns must be launched for local health workers, Panchayat leaders, and district officials. Fourth, we must invest in safer alternatives. Integrated pest management, organic farming incentives, and crop diversification may not offer quick profits, but they are the only path forward if we want our people to thrive alongside our apples. Finally, we must talk. Health workers, environmental scientists, farmers, and policymakers must begin meeting regularly to share data, concerns, and solutions. No one sector can fix this alone. What’s happening in South Kashmir is a warning, for any region that believes economic success can be separated from ecological balance. If we continue to prioritize fruit size over family health, market yield over medical ethics, we risk destroying the very communities that sustain this valley’s economy. The orchard is Kashmir’s pride. But if the price of that pride is rising illness, shrinking fertility, and early death, we must stop and ask: What are we really cultivating?

The author is an agricultural scientist from South Kashmir. He can be reached at waseembhatspn@yahoo.com.

My Tiny Therapists Have Four Paws

International Cat Day is the perfect moment to celebrate the surprising ways pets help people heal from emotional struggles.



Khushboo Javed

My new SSRIs and therapy are my two cats for a panic disorder which could not be treated in a decade given the ignorance prevailing around the subject, at least in 2015. And of course due to the many curveballs life nonetheless kept throwing at me.

Two Felis catus boys have turned my life into a comedy. My beloved Estha the Silver, who in his true spirit is a sensitive human, and Rahel the Golden, whose soul animal is a monkey. And I am a human with the soul of a cat. Some attitude and a lot of curiosity. Thus works this equation. They came to me only 56 days old.

Two cats have made me a responsible human. I had been turning and tossing the idea of a pet in the court of my head for over two years now. Last May, I settled on visiting a pet shop to explore, come back home and give it a final call. Never in my wildest dreams had I thought I would be back home on that rainy day carrying a cardboard box with two kittens inside it.

On that cold day, only the two of them were present at the shop. My heart sank when I saw how tiny and scared they were. They had only each other for comfort, brothers from the same litter, together since before birth. I did not have the heart to think that they will be separated.

Examining their new home, they looked nervous. In the evening, as I hopped on my bed, Rahel nevertheless came up to me right away but Estha took his time. In the middle of the night, I found them both

sleeping around me. They had taken me for their mother. Mama-gatos! I tried to give them a separate bed but each time they came back to me. Eventually, I stopped.

So far twice they appeared in my dreams as humans. Peculiar. In the first one, they were two Chinese looking 8-month-old round and chubby babies, giggling happily. The second one was a disaster, very much cat-like. They were 4-year-old boys. Estha was a little gentleman. Rahel was him: naughty. He told me many lies. He said Estha and him are not actually brothers. That Estha is rich and he himself came from a poor family. "My grandfather made me work very hard and carry things so heavy that I have a broken neck," Rahel told me. "And I am about 2 months younger to Estha. They lied to you. We are not brothers."

By that logic, the time I adopted them, Rahel was not even born then. "So were you scared the day I was at the shop?" I asked Rahel.

"Yeah, it was scary. But then . . ."

He replied. But then . . . But now . . . Now, as they put it, at age 5 months, he has a house, a passive income, staff who works for him and he can eat and sleep all day.

"So what is their daily routine?" My friend asked.

"They wake up at 5 AM. Eat. Play until 9 AM indoors and outdoors. Sleep but sacredly remember that they are supposed to have their boiled egg at 11. After that they will go back to sleep, around 4 PM third meal and then wakey wakey at 6:30 PM. Last meal at 9 PM. They play and chase each other until 10 and off to sleep again."

"My God. Should have been 'a cat's life' that we all need. But the idiom goes 'a dog's life', the miserable one," my friend remarked with the shock on her face.

Recently, Rahel brought me a gift. Aw! A beautiful yellow autumn leaf in this summer season tucked between his teeth. I will sideline the facts that prior and post this episode, respectively, he came with a tissue paper and a cockroach. Cockroaches are a big sport to Rahel. When he comes indoors without Estha, I get



“ANOTHER AMAZING THING ABOUT CATS IS THEIR STRONG CIRCADIAN RHYTHM. You would think they read the clock. They wake up at the same time, eat and play at the same time and if I happen to miss their timing, they meow-meow at me.

a feeling that he must have traded off Estha for two cockroaches with some unknown ghost.

Cockroaches are worrisome to me since Rahel tortures them before eating them and has taught Estha

the same. It is hard to convey to Rahel that cockroaches are growing in political importance and it could bring us trouble.

One of the most amazing qualities to cats is the sportsmanship

to them. Since they are both prey and predator, they are highly alert animals. They wrestle each other, fight as if they were holding fencing swords in their little paws. Puss in Boots is no exaggerated depiction of a cat. They play hide-n-seek behind the curtains. But above all, they deserve a football team of their own.

My babies have a toy ball to play with and they are too legendary to miss. I am getting them a cat-sized football and jerseys even if it means asking my friend to bring them along from Europe on his next visit home, since here I have been unsuccessful in finding any.

Maybe then I'll have my own versions of Haaland and Lamine Yamal.

My kittens are too proud of their flexibility and proprioceptive sense that they almost have zero sense of survival. But when I, a human, showed a little bit of flexibility, it didn't go well with them. It was when I rose for a chakrasana.

As I made a full curve, my pony-tail hanging, Estha stood away alert, looking suspiciously at me. Clearly, he thought something had possessed me. Then slowly, he paced towards me and stood right beneath my head, looking up at me while I was looking down at him.

Another amazing thing about cats is their strong circadian rhythm. You would think they read the clock. They wake up at the same time, eat and play at the same time and if I happen to miss their timing, they meow-meow at me.

Another pleasing trait to them is their cleanliness. No doubt they are considered taahir in Islam as well as scientifically. Time to time they lick their bodies clean. They cannot stand any foreign particle on their bodies even if it be water.

They love to watch you work. Whether you are cleaning, cooking, typing, they want to be there. Their innocent presence alone makes my work easy.

They have associated kitchen with food, laundry with where treats are stored. When I open doors to these places, they come hurriedly. If I say football, they understand it is time to go the guestroom and play with the ball. They have associated the

wash basin with water where sometimes their paws are cleaned and they hate it. Water is their nemesis. And so are other cats. Cats don't like other cats. They have trust issues.

Similarly, you also begin to understand them without a common language. Rahel is a big yapper when he needs attention. I have to hold him like a baby, rub his belly, massage his chin, sometime narrate a story and that keeps him at ease. Believe it or not, Estha simply comes and rubs his body against mine, claiming, 'You are mine'. Estha only meows consistently when something is out of place. For example, if I haven't cleaned the litter box (which I do twice a day). That cute meows of his mean 'I am not comfortable using it'.

Rahel has a way of getting himself into a situation without a clue of how to get out of one. Estha after playing with his teaser often came with its string tied around his neck so that I could free him. This is relatively easy to understand and explain compared to when Rahel started to cry on the stairs with Estha helplessly standing beside him. As I rushed, I found Rahel lay down, his pink nose turned red because he had strangled himself with an umbrella. An umbrella. I will not even try. It is very hard to explain how he had done it.

For my daily dose of anxieties, these kittens have become a therapy, a shift towards responsibility, movement and above all, after all, an innocent presence. In the morning, they wake me up early which is hard for a person with anxiety issues to practice. But no more, thankfully. I have to be mentally present to feed them, to keep everything clean, to make sure I have their supplies and their vaccines are administered in time.

Introverted Monsieur Estha the Silver and extroverted General Rahel the Golden, sometimes during sleep they curl around each other and leave the aura of a yin and yang behind.

Be blessed, my precious boys! Happy International Cat Day!

— The author can be reached at khushboojaved3@gmail.com.

The Fence We Didn't See Coming in Kashmir

A Kashmiri physician returns home after twenty years and discovers the barrier his cousin once joked about had nothing to do with marriage.



Dr. Akhtar Purvez

Twenty years fell away the moment my cousin's car turned onto the road where I grew up. Then, just as fast, I saw how much had changed.

The lane that once held a bicycle and two neighbours' cars now filled with motorbikes and sedans, bumper to bumper, horns layered into one long complaint.

Fields I remembered as orchards had become rows of concrete houses. A hill station whose slopes I had once thought incapable of disappointing me wore litter along its ridgelines.

I catalogued all this the way any visitor does, tallying loss in the physical world.

The deeper loss, the one that actually explained what had happened to my family, took longer to surface.

I was staying, again, with the cousin whose jokes had followed me through my engagement decades earlier.

Whenever he saw me in the months before my wedding, he would shake his head with mock sorrow and announce to whoever was listening that our doctor was about to be caught in kandi' zaal.

The whole family knew what that meant.

A zaal is a fishing net, cast into water where fish keep swimming, unaware, until there's nowhere left to

go. A kandi' zaal is worse.

It's the barbed wire strung around orchards to keep animals from the fruit. Get caught in it, and the struggle only drives the barbs deeper.

According to my cousin, that was marriage. He didn't mean unhappiness. He meant something narrower: a married man's life bends toward a new center. Spontaneous visits to parents thin out, evenings with siblings grow rare, and cousins and old friends turn from daily companions into occasional guests.

I took it as teasing then, but I wonder now whether he was really talking about himself, sensing he was about to lose the cousin he had shared his whole boyhood with, and dressing that fear up as a joke because young men rarely say such things plainly. His fear, however, proved wrong for me.

When I met the young physician who became my wife, marriage felt like the opposite of a smaller life. She had an intellect that never needed announcing itself, a generosity that drew out the best in anyone near her.

I knew immediately that our life together would become a long exchange of ideas, one that would keep teaching me things for decades. I believed it would add to what already sustained me rather than replace any of it.

Two decades on, I still believe that. What I hadn't predicted was what happened to my cousin's family instead.

His children had grown into thoughtful, capable adults who loved their parents without question. But they lived two hours away, and two hours turned out to be enough to change everything.

They visited when they could. The small, unplanned exchanges that once held a family together, the shared meals, the unannounced drop-ins, the small decisions made together simply because the family happened to be home, had thinned to almost nothing.



Love remained intact, but presence had gone.

Standing in that house, I finally understood the joke my cousin made two decades earlier.

The barrier he had imagined circling my marriage had appeared instead between generations, households, and people who still loved one another and simply lived too far apart to prove it daily.

I trace the start of this to the 1990s, when Kashmiri parents, desperate to protect their children during the region's hardest years, sent them elsewhere in India for school and safety.

Temporary absences became careers, and careers became marriages, mortgages, and new cities. Even those who remained in Kashmir began

living more independent lives.

Phones and video calls made staying in touch effortless, and that ease made physical presence feel optional like never before.

Love didn't shrink, but the mechanics of modern life changed how it gets lived out.

I have watched the same pattern play out far from Kashmir, in America and elsewhere: societies remarkably good at shortening the distance between continents while letting the distance between a parent's front door and a grown child's grow without anyone quite noticing.

We speak instantly over oceans and still postpone the hour-long drive to see someone who raised us.

Kashmiris still quote the old Persian

line, written centuries ago by a poet who looked at this valley and said that if paradise exists on earth, it is this, it is this, it is this.

The mountains hold their place, the rivers still run their old course, and spring still returns with blossoms no generation has managed to improve upon.

Paradise, I think now, was never only about landscape. It depended on families choosing one another on wedding days and on the ordinary days that make up nearly all of life.

I think of my cousin's joke differently now. He feared marriage would take me from him. Neither of us guessed the real threat would come from something larger and slower: a modern world that teaches people to



I trace the start of this to the 1990s, when Kashmiri parents, desperate to protect their children during the region's hardest years, sent them elsewhere in India for school and safety

live apart while telling them they have stayed close.

The task ahead is simpler than restoring the past, since the past is gone.

It's crossing the short distances still standing between one home and the next, before we mistake the ease of a phone call for the presence it can never replace.

— The author is a physician, poet, and clinical researcher from Kashmir based in Virginia, United States. He can be reached at mansbal@yahoo.com.

Security Forces Hold Anti-Terror Drill in Rajouri



Press Trust Of India

Rajouri: Security forces and emergency services on Friday conducted an anti-terror mock drill on the Jammu-Rajouri-Poonch National Highway in Rajouri district to test and strengthen their response mechanism ahead of the annual Shri Budha Amarnath Yatra beginning on August 17.

The exercise was carried out at Bagnoti Rajal in the Nowshera area, where a simulated terrorist attack on the highway was staged, officials said.

As part of the drill, two mock terrorists were shown attacking the highway before security personnel swiftly responded, neutralised both attackers and secured the area, they added.

The joint exercise involved

the Jammu and Kashmir Police, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), Fire and Emergency Services, and the Health Department, they said. The agencies rehearsed coordinated action, including rapid deployment, area sanitisation, casualty evacuation and emergency response.

Officials said the drill was aimed at enhancing inter-agency coordination and sharpening operational preparedness to deal with any terror-related contingency during the annual pilgrimage.

The Shri Budha Amarnath Yatra passes through the Jammu-Rajouri-Poonch axis, with security agencies undertaking extensive measures to ensure the safety of pilgrims and maintain smooth movement along the route.

PGTI Eyes Annual J&K Open Golf Tournament

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: The Royal Springs Golf Course (RSGC) in Jammu and Kashmir's summer capital here is a paradise of golf, and there is no golf course in the world as stunning, beautiful, and spectacular, Commissioner, PGTI's 72 The League, Amrit Mathur, said on Friday.

Addressing the concluding ceremony of the Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) tournament at the Royal Springs Golf Course (RSGC) here, Mathur said the PGTI wants to make the tournament an annual event in Srinagar.

"The Royal Springs Golf Course is a paradise. It is a paradise of golf. There is no golf course in the world as stunning, beautiful, and spectacular as this," he said.

He said the PGTI wants to make the tournament an annual event here, and also to make Srinagar a golf destination in India.

"Along with this event, development activities related to golf, such as golf academies and coaching for youngsters, will take place. We will be engaged with the Jammu and Kashmir government to take these things forward. We want golf to



grow, youngsters to play, and Srinagar and Jammu and Kashmir to grow together with India," he said.

Mathur expressed gratitude to the J-K government and its tourism department.

"PGTI is very happy that this tour and the first event of this season, 2026, was in Srinagar. I want to thank all the players, the media for their support, and the course authority for providing fantastic conditions to the players. That is essential

for the good performance of players, and we are all thankful that the course was in such fantastic condition, and that is why there was such good quality of golf played," he added.

He said 132 players, including foreigners, played in the tournament.

"I want to thank the foreign players who came here. I am sure they enjoyed the hospitality, warmth, and friendly nature of the people here," the commissioner said.

CPCB Report Flags Heavy Pollution in Manasbal Lake

Raises Alarm Over Drinking Water Safety



Agencies

Srinagar: Fresh water quality tests conducted by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), New Delhi have revealed alarming levels of pollution in Manasbal Lake, a key source of drinking water for nearly 50,000 to 60,000 residents of Ganderbal and Bandipora districts, intensifying concerns over public health and environmental degradation.

The water analysis was carried out on the directions of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) during the hearing of a petition filed by Kashmir-based RTI activist Dr. Raja Muzaffar Bhat, who has been seeking judicial intervention over the deteriorating condition of the lake.

The CPCB findings, placed before the Tribunal, reportedly indicate heavy pollution in the lake, raising serious questions about the quality of

water being supplied to thousands of consumers dependent on the water body for drinking purposes.

During the latest hearing, counsel representing the Jammu and Kashmir Government sought additional time to file a response to the CPCB report, following which the Tribunal deferred further proceedings.

The matter is now expected to be decided by the National Green Tribunal after considering the government's reply and the pollution assessment submitted by the Central Pollution Control Board.

Environmental activists have repeatedly expressed concern over untreated sewage, encroachments and unchecked human activities contributing to the ecological degradation of Manasbal Lake, regarded as one of Kashmir's most important freshwater lakes. [KNT]

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

J&K Braces For

isolated districts in Kashmir division are likely to witness brief intense heavy showers.

The department said intermittent light rain and thundershowers are also expected from August 12 to 17, with brief intense showers likely at a few places.

Issuing an advisory for August 9 to 11, the MeT warned that torrential rain and intense showers could trigger flash floods and landslides in vulnerable areas and cause waterlogging in low-lying localities.

People have been advised to stay away from nallahs, landslide-prone areas and other vulnerable locations during the forecast period, while authorities have been asked to remain on alert.

Meanwhile, maximum temperatures across Kashmir remained below normal. Srinagar recorded a maximum of 28.5 degrees Celsius, 1.4 degrees below normal, while Pahalgam settled at 23.5 degrees Celsius, 2.2 degrees below the seasonal average. Kupwara recorded 28.3 degrees Celsius, 2.4 degrees below normal, and Gulmarg registered a maximum of 20.2 degrees Celsius.

Jammu recorded a maximum temperature of 33.7 degrees Celsius, marginally above normal.

Light rainfall during the day was recorded at Qazigund (1.3 mm), Katra (2 mm) and Bhaderwah (1.4 mm), while several stations across Kashmir reported trace rainfall over the previous 24 hours.

How NEET Experts

With Actual NEET Paper

The leaked material recovered from students, middlemen and coaching centres was examined by an expert panel constituted by Delhi University.

The forensic comparison found that: The leaked questions matched up to 85% of actual NEET question sets.

The highest match occurred with the exact paper sets handled by the accused experts.

Sets they never accessed showed the lowest similarity.

Investigators say this provides strong scientific evidence linking the experts to the leaked papers.

Beautician Turned Key Link

Perhaps the most unusual figure in the conspiracy is Manisha Sanjay Waghmare, a beautician whom the CBI describes as a crucial conduit.

She allegedly planted students in the coaching classes conducted by Kulkarni and Mandhare.

After every session, she collected notebooks containing dictated questions, many marked "Important" and "Very Important."

Those notes allegedly travelled through a chain of middlemen to candidates across Rajasthan, Haryana and Maharashtra.

Telegram PDFs, Burnt Phones and Deleted Chats

The investigation accelerated after forensic experts recovered deleted WhatsApp conversations, Telegram PDFs and erased files from seized mobile phones.

Among the first arrests were three Rajasthan-based accused whose phones contained leaked PDFs received on Telegram on April 29, four days before the examination.

One accused, Dhananjay Lokhande, allegedly attempted to destroy his phone before investigators arrested him.

Despite the effort, digital forensic experts reportedly recovered crucial evidence from multiple devices.

Coaching Centre Also Under Scanner

The CBI has named Shivraj Raghunath Mutgaonkar, owner of a coaching institute in Latur, as an accused.

According to investigators, he obtained leaked chemistry questions through middlemen and distributed them among students in

exchange for money.

Mastermind Nabbed After Chain of Arrests

The agency launched simultaneous raids across multiple states beginning May 13.

Within days it arrested:

- P V Kulkarni
- Manisha Mandhare
- Manisha Havaladar
- Beautician Manisha Waghmare
- Coaching centre owner Shivraj Mutgaonkar

Several middlemen and facilitators from Rajasthan, Haryana, Maharashtra and Delhi.

All 13 accused are currently in judicial custody.

Life Term, 1 Crore Fine

The three NTA experts face some of the toughest provisions available under India's new anti-paper leak law.

Apart from conspiracy, cheating, criminal breach of trust and corruption charges, they have also been booked under the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, where organised paper leaks attract 5 to 10 years' imprisonment and a minimum 1 crore fine.

The criminal breach of trust charge under the BNS carries the possibility of life imprisonment.

Exam Cancelled, Minister Quit

Following nationwide outrage over the leak, the NTA cancelled the May 3 NEET-UG 2026 examination on May 12. A fresh examination was held on June 21.

The controversy also claimed a major political casualty, with Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigning after weeks of protests demanding accountability over the scandal.

The chargesheet portrays the leak not as an isolated breach but as an organised operation in which confidential examination material was allegedly reconstructed, circulated and monetised through a network of experts, middlemen and coaching operators, undermining one of India's most competitive entrance examinations.

J&K Notifies

the administration, including the implementation of the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2026, amendments to the Legal Metrology (General) Rules, 2011 extending the re-verification period for specified weights and measures, deregulation measures across selected sectors, and expansion of online services through the J&K Single Window System.

According to officials, the notification addresses several long-pending regulatory issues and strengthens the Legal Metrology Department's enforcement powers under the Legal Metrology Act, 2009.

They said the revised framework is expected to improve regulatory certainty, ensure fair enforcement and enhance confidence among businesses and consumers.

The notification marks the first comprehensive enforcement framework issued by the Union Territory under the Legal Metrology Act since the reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir, providing procedural clarity to the department's functioning while aligning the regulatory framework with the government's ease of doing business initiatives.

Fruit Trucks Get

the past week.

At Peera in Ramban district, Abdullah said the government was conscious of the ongoing fruit season and was taking measures to ensure growers' produce reached markets without delay.

"I am aware that this is the fruit season. People want their produce to reach the markets before it perishes. At the same time, the Amarnath Yatra is also underway, which has resulted in certain restrictions on the highway. Nevertheless, fruit-laden trucks are being

given priority. Petroleum tankers coming from Jammu are also being accorded priority to ensure that there is no shortage of essential supplies," he said.

Describing NH-44 as the lifeline of Jammu and Kashmir, the Chief Minister directed the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and other executing agencies to expedite restoration works and ensure smooth, safe and uninterrupted movement of traffic.

He said prolonged disruptions on the highway adversely affect fruit growers, traders and the overall economy, and stressed the need for close coordination among the NHAI, Traffic Police, district administration and other agencies to minimise inconvenience to commuters.

Abdullah instructed officials to closely monitor vulnerable stretches, deploy adequate manpower and machinery wherever required, and maintain the highest safety standards during the ongoing repair works.

He said there was no alternative to the Jammu-Srinagar highway and appealed to commuters to remain patient whenever traffic was temporarily suspended due to rain-triggered landslides or restoration work.

The Chief Minister said he had reviewed the highway situation in Udhampur and Ramban districts, held meetings with NHAI officials and personally inspected the affected locations to assess the pace of restoration.

Referring to the ongoing Amarnath Yatra, Abdullah said the pilgrimage was progressing smoothly.

"It is encouraging that a large number of pilgrims have visited the holy cave shrine this year and all of them have returned safely so far. We hope that even more pilgrims will come and complete their pilgrimage successfully," he said.

The Chief Minister's visit comes after repeated disruptions on NH-44 over the past week following heavy rainfall, which triggered landslides and mudslides at several locations and led to temporary closures of the arterial road, affecting both passenger and freight movement.

During the visit, Abdullah was accompanied by Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, senior NHAI officials, Traffic Police officers and other concerned officials. He also made a brief halt at Khajura Dhaba in Peera, where he had a traditional meal before continuing his journey to Srinagar.

Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alyas Khan, Senior Superintendent of Police Arun Gupta and other district officials were also present.

Use AI To Boost

Centre of Excellence and dedicating Project Phoenix at IIT Jammu, Omar said AI has the potential to transform governance by making it more efficient, responsive and citizen-centric.

"Artificial Intelligence must ultimately translate into better outcomes for people. The Centre of Excellence will help us build more efficient, responsive and citizen-centric governance, while Project Phoenix will create new opportunities for artisans, self-help groups, startups and MSMEs to access wider markets," the Chief Minister said.

He said AI should be integrated into key sectors such as healthcare, education, agriculture and disaster management to improve service delivery and support informed decision-making.

Referring to the recent cloudbursts in Rajouri and Poonch, Omar said AI-enabled early warning systems could help identify localised risks and issue timely alerts, potentially saving lives during natural disasters.

The Chief Minister also highlighted the technology's potential in agriculture and horticulture, saying AI could assist farmers by providing timely information on crop diseases, treatment options and the scientific use of agrochemicals

to improve productivity.

Omar said Project Phoenix would complement the government's Mission YUVA initiative by strengthening market access, mentorship and incubation support for startups, artisans, self-help groups and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

He said the initiative would further strengthen Jammu and Kashmir's innovation ecosystem by enabling local entrepreneurs to access new markets and technology-driven opportunities.

The Chief Minister said the Centre of Excellence and Project Phoenix marked an important step towards leveraging emerging technologies for inclusive development and improving governance across Jammu and Kashmir.

Even Jail Won't

Article 370 is a part of that roadmap," she said.

The former chief minister accused the BJP-led Centre of trampling the Constitution by abrogating Article 370 in August 2019 and expressed confidence that the decision would eventually be reversed.

She called on PDP workers to remain steadfast in the party's campaign for the restoration of Article 370, saying the movement would continue irrespective of the legal action against its leaders.

"If you have to save the real Jammu and Kashmir, its land and resources, then you have to remain steadfast. Whether I or Iltija are here or not, the PDP will continue its peaceful and democratic struggle for the restoration of Article 370," she said.

Mehbooba alleged that the PDP had been consistently targeted since the constitutional changes of 2019, claiming that leaders speaking in favour of Article 370 were being treated as criminals.

"Our party was broken and new parties were created. Those parties defended the abrogation of Article 370. Talking about Article 370 has become a crime, while those who speak about it are branded criminals," she alleged.

She also claimed that the PDP was the only political party protesting for the restoration of Article 370, while other parties were limiting their demands to the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood.

Referring to the FIR, Mehbooba defended her daughter and denied allegations that Iltija had attacked police personnel.

"Iltija did not have a weapon or even a stone in her hands. A lady officer asked a constable to drag her away. When someone grabs a girl by the collar, how will she react?" she said, while alleging that the incident was being used to divert attention from the issue of Article 370.

The FIR was registered following the PDP's protest in Srinagar earlier this week to mark seven years since the abrogation of Article 370. Police have accused the two leaders of assaulting an on-duty officer during the demonstration, allegations the PDP has denied.

9 BJP Anantnag

general secretary; Khurshed Ahmad Sofi, district secretary; Aabida Rafiq, district secretary; Irshad Ahmad Malik, constituency president; Shangus (Anantnag East); Mohammad Maqbool Ganie, former district vice president; Waheed Ahmad Itoo, constituency president; Pahalgam; Nisar Ahmad Hakeem, district secretary; Feroz Ahmad Hajam, district secretary, Kisan Morcha, and Sabrooz Akhter, district secretary, Mahila Morcha.

Koul also said Alveer Ahmad Dar and Fancy Akhter are not associated with the Anantnag district unit in any capacity and do not hold any organisational post or responsibility.

Political parties in the Valley had lashed out at the BJP after purported videos of the said rally went viral on social media.

Jammu and Kashmir Minister Sakina Itoo on

Thursday said slogans raised during the BJP rally were "derogatory" and an "insult" to mothers and sisters in the Valley. She demanded registration of an FIR against those responsible.

HC Quashes

the number of acts that are determined for detention of an individual but it is the impact of the act which is material and determinative," the Division Bench said, adding, "....the impugned detention order appears to have been passed on vague, unverifiable and bald allegations unsupported with any evidence or material. It is unsafe to consider such vague allegations as constituting a past act for deriving any inference about the future course of probable conduct on the part of detainee (Kuttay)."

Consequently, the court quashed the detention order and directed that Kuttay, a resident of Chotipora, Shopian, be released from preventive detention in the case, provided he is not involved in any other case.

28 JKAS Officers

Mohammad Anwar Banday and Dr. Mohammad Tanvir.

Dr. Sunil Sharma has been granted notional promotion with effect from May 15, 2026, while the remaining officers have been promoted on a prospective basis.

Consequent upon their promotion, Dr. Sunil Sharma, Sonali Arun Gupta, Ritu Mahajan and Mohammad Anwar Banday have been designated as Special Secretaries in their respective departments. The remaining officers will continue at their present places of posting until further orders.

Meanwhile, under Government Order No. 1376-JK(GAD) of 2026, the government promoted 18 JKAS officers to the Selection Grade (Level-12: 78,800 to 2,09,200) on a prospective basis.

The officers promoted are Akhil Sadotra, Gulzar Ahmad Bhat, Mumtaz Ahmad Pir, Rachna Sharma, Reyaz Ahmad Shah, Piyush Dhotra, Vikas Sharma, Muzaffar Ahmad Sheikh, Masood Ahmad Wani, Shafqat Majeed Bhat, Tariq Ahmad Reshi, Deepak Kumar, Suheel Ahmad Lone, Shoaib Noor, Javid Ahmad Rather, Musharraf Ali Haf, Shakoor Ahmad Dar and Mohd. Jhangir.

Following their elevation, Gulzar Ahmad Bhat, Rachna Sharma, Vikas Sharma, Masood Ahmad Wani, Suheel Ahmad Lone and Shoaib Noor have been designated as Additional Secretaries in their respective departments, while the remaining officers will continue at their existing places of posting until further orders.

The government said all promotions would remain subject to the outcome of writ petitions pending before competent courts. The orders were issued by the General Administration Department (Services), Civil Secretariat, with the approval of the competent authority.

Safety Inspection

safety-related infrastructure along the section. The CRS also assessed signalling systems, operational safety protocols, passenger amenities and emergency response arrangements.

Officials said Deshwal expressed satisfaction with the overall quality of construction and the safety standards maintained on the rail link, which is regarded as one of the country's most ambitious railway infrastructure projects.

Divisional Railway Manager Vivek Kumar said the railway administration would implement the suggestions made by the CRS during the inspection and rectify any shortcomings within the stipulated timeframe to facilitate the commencement of passenger services on the section.

The completion of the statutory safety inspection is a key milestone before the commencement of regular passenger operations on the Katra-Srinagar stretch of the USBRL project.

CM Omar Inaugurates Upgraded Residency Road–High Street in Jammu

₹9.18 crore Smart City project enhances urban infrastructure, pedestrian facilities and public amenities

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday inaugurated the upgraded Residency Road–High Street in Jammu, a landmark urban infrastructure project executed by Jammu Smart City Limited (JSL) under the Smart City Mission at a cost of ₹9.18 crore.

The project has transformed nearly 1.2 kilometres of the Residency Road–High Street corridor, covering the stretches from Raghunathji Mandir to CM House, Vivekanand Chowk to Raghunath Mandir Chowk, and



Vir Marg Chowk to Vivekanand Chowk.

As part of the upgradation, an underground communication corridor has been constructed and communication cables have been shifted underground to streamline utility infrastructure and enhance the area's visual appeal. The project also includes the development of new paver-block footpaths, a bituminous concrete road surface and RCC drains, significantly improving civic infrastructure along the corridor.

The upgraded corridor is expected to enhance pedestrian

convenience, improve traffic movement and utility management, and contribute to a cleaner, more organised urban environment while lending a renewed aesthetic character to one of Jammu city's key commercial and civic corridors.

MLA Jammu East Yudhvir Sethi, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Commissioner Secretary, Housing & Urban Development Department, Mandeep Kaur, Chief Executive Officer, Jammu Smart City Limited, Devansh Yadav, and other senior officers were present on the occasion.

Inclement Weather Stalls Tourism Boom at Kashmir's Offbeat Destinations

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Repeated cloudbursts and prolonged spells of inclement weather have dealt a blow to tourism at Kashmir's offbeat destinations, with visitor arrivals witnessing a sharp decline in recent weeks in areas such as Gurez, Keran, Sonamarg, Doodhpathri, Bangus Valley and other scenic locations.

Local residents and tourism stakeholders told KNO that the adverse weather conditions, marked by frequent rainfall, flash floods, landslides and cloudbursts, have disrupted road connectivity and prompted many tourists to either cancel or postpone their travel plans.

According to official figures, the Kashmir has witnessed around 35 cloudbursts this year, triggering flash floods and damaging roads, bridges and other infrastructure in several districts.

In the picturesque Gurez Valley near the Line of Control (LoC), hoteliers and local residents said tourist arrivals have dropped considerably over the past few weeks.

"We had expected this season to be one of the best after the steady increase in tourist arrivals over the last few years. However, the continuous rains and reports of cloudbursts have discouraged visitors. Hotels that were nearly full are now witnessing low occupancy," said Mushtaq



Ahmad, a hotel owner in Gurez.

He said several tourists cancelled their bookings after news of weather-related incidents emerged from different parts of Kashmir.

In Keran, another emerging tourist destination in north Kashmir's Kupwara district, residents said businesses dependent on tourism have suffered losses.

"Most families here earn during the summer season through homestays, transport services and small eateries. The bad weather has reduced tourist footfall significantly, affecting our income," said Shabir Ahmad, a resident of Keran.

Tour operators in Srinagar said inquiries from domestic tourists have slowed, particularly for offbeat destinations that require long road journeys.

"The concern is not just rainfall but uncertainty over road conditions. Tourists do not want to risk get-

ting stranded because of landslides or road closures. Many are choosing to stay in Srinagar or Gulmarg instead of travelling to remote destinations," said Fayaz Ahmad, a local tour operator.

The impact has also been felt in Sonamarg, where hoteliers and pony operators said the number of visitors has fallen compared to expectations for the peak tourist season.

"We were hoping for a busy August, but repeated weather advisories and intermittent road disruptions have affected business. Most tourists are making only day visits instead of staying overnight," said Ghulam Nabi, a hotelier in Sonamarg.

Officials said restoration work is underway at affected locations, with road clearance and repair operations being carried out to ensure connectivity wherever weather conditions permit.

Rs 3,003 Cr Released to J&K under NHM in 3 Years

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir received Rs 3,003.12 crore in central releases under the National Health Mission (NHM) during the financial years 2023-24 to 2025-26, while expenditure of Rs 3,247.96 crore was reported during the period, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare informed the Lok Sabha on Friday.

As per the reply by Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Prataprao Jadhav to an unstarred question raised by MPs Bhumare Sandipanrao Asaram, Sanjay Uttamrao Deshmukh and Delkar Kalaben Mohanbhai, the central release to Jammu and Kashmir stood at Rs 805.22 crore in 2023-24, Rs 1,040.76 crore in 2024-25 and Rs 1,017.14 crore in 2025-26.

The ministry, as reported by KNO, said expenditure under NHM in Jammu and Kashmir was Rs 956.95 crore in 2023-24, Rs 1,110.30 crore in 2024-25 and Rs 1,180.71 crore in 2025-26.

For Ladakh, the central release under NHM stood at Rs 120.44 crore in 2023-24, Rs 135.98 crore in 2024-25 and Rs 142.24 crore in 2025-26, totalling Rs 398.66 crore. The expenditure reported during the same period was Rs 119.67 crore, Rs 150.50 crore and Rs 138.98 crore respectively, totalling Rs 409.15 crore.

The MPs had asked whether thousands of posts of specialist doctors, physi-

cians, nurses and paramedical staff were lying vacant against the sanctioned strength in Central and state government hospitals and sought details of vacant posts, measures taken to fill them, incentives for specialist doctors and nursing staff, as well as projects and funds for new medical colleges, district hospitals and trauma care centres.

In reply, Jadhav said public health and hospitals are State subjects and the primary responsibility for strengthening the public healthcare system rests with state governments and Union Territories.

He said the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare provides technical and financial support to States and UTs, including Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, under the National Health Mission based on proposals submitted through Programme Implementation Plans.

"NHM provides several incentives to encourage doctors and healthcare workers to serve in rural, tribal and remote areas, including hard-area allowance for specialist doctors, honorarium for specialists and doctors trained in emergency obstetric care and life-saving anaesthesia skills, and incentives for doctors and Auxiliary Nurse Midwives," the minister said.

States are also allowed to offer negotiable salaries to attract specialists, while non-monetary incentives include preferential admission

in postgraduate courses for staff serving in difficult areas and improved accommodation facilities in rural areas.

Jadhav said multi-skilling of doctors and skill upgradation of existing healthcare personnel are also supported under NHM to address shortages of specialists.

He further said the Family Adoption Programme has been incorporated into the MBBS curriculum to improve healthcare access in rural areas, while under the District Residency Programme of the National Medical Commission, second- and third-year postgraduate students of medical colleges are posted in district hospitals.

On medical colleges, the minister said the Centrally Sponsored Scheme for establishment of new medical colleges attached with existing district or referral hospitals gives preference to underserved areas and aspirational districts where there is no existing government or private medical college.

He said all 157 medical colleges envisaged under the scheme have already been approved.

The ministry clarified that the expenditure figures are provisional and include expenditure against Central releases, State releases and unspent balances at the beginning of the year. The Central releases mentioned in the annexure relate to Central Government grants and do not include the State share contribution.

3.65 Lakh Cases Pending in J&K District, Subordinate Courts: Law Ministry

SRINAGAR: As many as 3,65,645 cases are pending in district and subordinate courts of Jammu and Kashmir, including 63,876 cases pending for more than five years and 20,767 cases pending for over 10 years, the Union Ministry of Law and Justice informed the Lok Sabha on Friday.

As per the reply by Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal to an unstarred question by MP Sasikanth Senthil, the figures are based on data available on the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) as on July 30, 2026.

The ministry, as reported by KNO, said that in Jammu and Kashmir, district and subordinate courts have 3,65,645 pending cases. Of these, 20,767 cases have remained pending for more than 10 years, while 63,876 cases have been pending for more than five years.

Sasikanth Senthil had asked the government about the total number of pending cases in the Supreme Court, High Courts and district and subordinate courts, including cases pending for more than five and 10 years. He also sought details of funds approved and utilised under the e-Courts Project and steps being taken to reduce pendency and strengthen judicial infrastructure.

In response, Meghwal said that as per NJDG data, 44,557 cases were pending before the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh as on July 30, 2026. Of these, 6,106 cases were pending for more than 10 years, and 7,328 cases had been pending for more than five years.

For Ladakh, the Ministry said 1,745 cases were pending in district and subordinate courts as on July 30, 2026. Of these, 12 cases had been pending for more than 10 years, while 98 cases had been pending for more than five years.

On the e-Courts Project, Meghwal said the government has approved Phase III for 2023-27 with a budget outlay of Rs 7,210 crore. The phase aims to transform courts into digital and paperless courts, expand video conferencing facilities to all courts, jails and hospitals, and integrate stakeholders of the criminal justice system. (KNO)

Apni Party Ready for Joint Fight on Statehood: Altaf Bukhari

BANDIPORA: Apni Party president Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari on Friday said his party is prepared to join hands with the National Conference and other regional parties if a united political platform is formed for the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood.

Talking to reporters on the sidelines of a party convention at Sonawari in Sumbal, Bandipora, Bukhari said the Apni Party has consistently advocated for the restoration of statehood and protection of the rights of the people, adding that several regional parties had raised the issue only years after the constitutional changes of August 5, 2019.

"If the National Conference believes a joint consultation and collective struggle is required for the restoration of statehood, the Apni Party is ready to participate and will extend its full support," he said. Commenting on the controversy surrounding PDP president Mehbooba Mufti's display of the national flag, Bukhari said the incident appeared to be inadvertent.

Referring to the FIR registered against PDP leader Iltija Mufti, Bukhari appealed to the authorities to adopt a compassionate approach, saying she should be forgiven. Drawing a comparison with the Centre's decision to withdraw cases against protesting aspirants in other parts of the country, he urged the government to show similar consideration towards the youth of Jammu and Kashmir.

Bukhari also said the Apni Party has prepared a comprehensive roadmap to address unemployment in the Union Territory and promised that the party would continue working on policies aimed at creating opportunities for educated youth. [KNT]

Labourer Found Dead in Sopore

SRINAGAR: A labourer was found dead at his residence in the Sopore area of north Kashmir's Baramulla district on Friday, officials said. An official said that the labour was shifted to Sub-District Hospital (SDH) Sopore after being found unconscious at his residence in Hardushiva.

He said doctors declared him brought dead on arrival, while his identity is yet to be ascertained. The body has been kept at the mortuary of SDH Sopore for post-mortem examination.

Police have initiated inquest proceedings and the body will be handed over to the family after completion of legal formalities—(KNO)

Pony Operator Found Dead in Reasi Water Tank

REASI: A 22-year-old pony operator was found dead inside a water tank in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district on Friday, officials said.

An official said that the body of the pony operator was recovered from a water tank in the Matyal area of Katra after police were informed about the incident.

He said the body was shifted to the Community Health Centre (CHC), Katra, for post-mortem examination, while the identity of the deceased is yet to be established.

Police have taken cognizance of the incident and launched an investigation.

Handloom Day Celebrated at Pangong's Lukung



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: National Handloom Day was celebrated with patriotic fervour in Ladakh's Changthang region, as local artisans, officials and residents participated in a Tiranga Yatra at Lukung village on the banks of the iconic Pangong Lake, marking the launch of the Har Ghar Tiranga campaign in the high-altitude region.

Organised jointly by the District Administration, Changthang, and the Department of Handlooms and Handicrafts, Leh, the event was held at an altitude of over 14,000 feet and commemorated the Swadeshi Movement of 1905, which promoted the use of indigenous products during India's freedom struggle.

Deputy Commissioner, Changthang, Nitish Rajora, who was the chief guest, stressed the need to preserve Ladakh's unique handloom traditions while encouraging artisans to adopt innovation to improve the quality and marketability of their products.

He appreciated the efforts of the Department of

Handlooms and Handicrafts and the Sub-Divisional Administration for organising the celebration in one of the country's highest inhabited regions and for their continued support to local artisans and weavers.

To boost productivity in the handloom sector, the administration distributed Amber Charkhas and Fly Shuttle Looms among local weavers under various government initiatives.

The event began with a welcome address by the Assistant Director, Handlooms and Handicrafts, Leh, who outlined the significance of National Handloom Day and highlighted departmental initiatives aimed at promoting traditional crafts, skill development and artisan welfare.

A major attraction was the Tiranga Yatra, led by local artisans and handloom weavers carrying a hand-knitted National Flag crafted by women weavers of the region. Students, government officials and members of the public also joined the rally, celebrating India's handloom heritage and the spirit of patriotism.

J&K, Ladakh Likely to Face 14% Power Crunch This August

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are likely to face nearly fourteen percent power deficit against the total availability during the peak hours in the ongoing month of August.

According to the official documents figures available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Northern Regional Power Committee (NRPC) in a recent meeting has anticipated a power deficit of minus 13.9 percent during the peak hours for the month of August-2026.

The officials have projected that there will be a total of 2334 Megawatts (MWs) power availability in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh against the total anticipated requirement of 2710 MWs during the peak hours.

The committee however said that there will be surplus power of 4seven percent during the other hours except from the peak hours.

Pertinently, KNO in March this year reported that from the upcoming financial year 2026-27, Jammu and Kashmir will likely require 3813 MWs of power during the peak demand.

The authorities had further projected that in the financial year 2027-28 Jammu and Kashmir will require 3964 MWs of electricity during the peak hours followed by 4117 MWs of energy in the financial year 2028-29.

Apart from peak demand, the authorities had also projected that there will be an electrical energy requirement of 23,372 Million Units (MU) in the financial year 2026-2027.

It also said that in the year 2027-28, Jammu and Kashmir will likely require 24,559 MU of energy followed by 25,780 MU in the year 2028-29.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE FLORICULTURE OFFICER ANANTNAG (DEPARTMENT OF FLORICULTURE)

Tel. Fax: - 01932-294114 Email:- anantnag-flori@jk.gov.in

AUCTION - NOTICE

The Floriculture Officer Anantnag invites bidders to take part in the open auction of fruit crops lying at Mughal Garden Darashikoh of District Anantnag. The interested bidders are requested to check the fruit crops personally well before the date of auction and accordingly take part in the open auction. The details of the auction are as under:

S.No	Name of the Park/Garden	Reserved Bid	EMD Amount	Venue/Location	Date and Time
01	Mughal Garden Darashikoh	Rs:-4800	Rs:-500	Wazirbagh Anantnag	11-08-2026, 11:30 am

Terms and condition:

- Only those bidders can participate in the auction who are willing to enhance the government bid.
- All the bidders have to deposit EMD amount well before the conduction of auction.
- The successful bidder has to deposit the final bid amount in cash on the spot.
- During harvesting of fruit crops, if there is any kind of damage to any person or property, the successful bidder will be responsible for that.
- Auction committee has full powers to accept or reject the auction without citing any reason thereof.
- Rest of the terms/conditions will be communicated on the spot of Auction.

No: FOA/FD/1559-64

Dated:- 06/08/2026

DIPK-4281-26

DT: 07/08/2026

(Mazhar Mustafa Ansari)

Floriculture Officer

Department of Floriculture,

Anantnag

UNION TERRITORY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT CHILD PROTECTION UNIT MISSION VATSALYA BANDIPORA

(Ward No. 06 Tawheed Abad Bagh Bandipora Ring: 7006187819, 99006284658)

Email: dcpubpr05@gmail.com

NOTICE

Through the medium of this notice, all the Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) working in the field of Child Protection in District Bandipora are hereby informed to submit their work experience along with supporting documents for empanelment as member of the Sponsorship and Foster Care Approval Committee (SFCAC) within Seven (07) days from the date of issuance of this notice.

The submitted documents shall be scrutinized, and eligible NGO fulfilling the prescribed criteria shall be considered for empanelment as members of the Sponsorship and Foster Care Approval Committee (SFCAC) in accordance with the applicable rules and guidelines.

It is further clarified that the empanelled member representing the Non-Government Organisation shall serve in the Sponsorship and Foster Care Approval Committee (SFCAC) in an honorary capacity only. No honorarium, remuneration, sitting fee, financial benefit, reimbursement, or any other monetary or non-monetary benefit whatsoever shall be admissible or payable to such empanelled member by the Government or any other authority for their services as members of the Committee.

NGOs are requested to ensure that all requisite documents are submitted within the stipulated time. Applications received after the prescribed period or without the required supporting documents shall not be considered.

DIPK-4241-26

DT: 07/08/2026

District Child Protection Officer

Mission Vatsalya Bandipora

Behind the Mecca Pact: Saudi Arabia's Push for Security Balance

Agencies

WANA : Amid escalating regional tensions in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Aden, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan signed a trilateral defense pact today, designated as the "Mecca Agreement."

According to a joint statement released by Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Saudi Press Agency, the pact establishes that any armed attack against one of the three countries will be considered an attack against all three, aimed at strengthening collective deterrence.

The agreement was concluded during a one-day working visit by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Saudi Arabia, where he held a trilateral meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Pakistani

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The high-level signing ceremony was also attended by Pakistani Army Chief Asim Munir, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, and Defense Minister Khawaja Asif.

Reports indicate the discussions centered on maritime security, the fallout from recent U.S. and Israeli military engagements with Iran, and enhancing all aspects of defense co-operation to promote regional peace and stability.

Following the announcement, Ebrahim Rezaei, a representative of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, strongly criticized the accord.

Rezaei stated that paper agreements with Ankara and Islamabad cannot deliver lasting security for Riyadh, drawing a parallel to Saudi



Arabia's decades-long hosting of U.S. military forces. He urged Riyadh to fundamentally reform its regional foreign policy.

Analytical Context and Implications

Historical Pattern of Coalition Building: Analysts note that Saudi Arabia's policy of seeking external alliances has been consistent, from founding the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to counter pan-Arabism in the 1960s to aligning with Western coalitions against Saddam Hussein. However, recent efforts like military interventions in Yemen and maritime task forces in the Red Sea have seen limited success.

Political Signals: Observers view the meeting as sending two key signals: an acknowledgment by Riyadh of its vulnerable posture regarding upcoming regional developments, and a diminishing reliance on the U.S. and Western powers for absolute security guarantees.

Use of Religious Symbolism: The

decision to sign the pact in Mecca holds symbolic weight. Analysts observe that despite spending the past decade actively phasing out traditional religious symbols from public life, the Saudi leadership has quickly pivoted back to religious rhetoric in the face of perceived threats.

By projecting an image that the Two Holy Mosques are endangered, Riyadh aims to leverage Islamic identity to secure the backing of two major regional powers.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia previously signed a mutual defense agreement in Riyadh. Islamabad has also served as a mediator between the U.S. and Iran—hosting direct talks and facilitating the temporary peace memorandum known as the "Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding."

Rahul Says E20 Destroying People's Vehicles



Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday said E20 was a "big issue" and the blended fuel was stealing from people and destroying their vehicles. Gandhi alleged that "there is so much corruption" all over.

"This issue of E20 is a very big issue. Normally, we say 'daal mein kuchh kaala hai, magar ye daal hi kaali hai,'" he said in a video on X.

"Brothers and sisters, this is a matter of sequencing. In any campaign, we have to decide the sequence of affairs. Our problem right now is that there is so much corruption that there is a huge line in what we have to sequence," he said.

The Leader of Opposition said the Congress would take the matter up "in a big way" because it is "destroying people's scooters, destroying people's lives, and literally is stealing directly from them."

India to Grow Old Before it Grows Rich, Says Study

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: One in five Indians on an average will be over the age of 60, with nearly seven in 10 older adults living in rural India, a study showed on Friday.

The study released by Transform Rural India (TRI) said India is growing old before it grows rich, unlike many developed nations that became wealthy before their populations aged.

The number of working-age adults available to support each older person is projected to decline from 8.4 in 2001 to an average of 5.2 by 2026, the study said. Titled 'Demographic Transition, Evolving Families and the Future of the Care Ecosystem in Rural India', the white paper was released in connection with the TRI's India Rural Colloquy (IRC).

"By 2050, one in five Indians -- around 347 million people -- will be over the age of 60, with nearly seven in 10 older adults living in rural India. Unlike many developed nations that became wealthy before their populations aged, India is undergoing this demographic transition at much lower income levels," the study said.

Drawing on data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), Longitudinal Ageing Study in India, Census projections, Time Use Surveys and other national datasets, the white paper said India's traditional family-based care model is under increasing strain as families are smaller than before,

younger generations are leaving for work and people are living longer.

"Yet nearly 94 per cent of care for older people is still provided within households, leaving fewer family members to meet growing and increasingly complex care needs," it added.

Women spend around 305 minutes every day on unpaid care work, compared with 56 minutes by men, the study said, adding that this unequal distribution of unpaid care remains one of the biggest barriers to improving women's labour force participation.

It also noted that climate change is worsening the situation, with heatwaves and floods adding significantly to women's unpaid work.

Around two-thirds of all deaths in India are now due to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and cancer, while a growing share of the disease burden comes from years lived with disability rather than premature death, according to the study.

The white paper said India's healthcare system was largely designed around episodic interventions such as childbirth, immunisation and acute illnesses.

"The next phase of healthcare is about supporting people living with chronic illnesses, disabilities and the challenges of ageing -- something hospitals alone cannot do," it added.

TRI recommends 'neighbourhood of care' model to link existing rural institutions, including Gram Panchayats, self-help groups, ASHAs, Anganwadi centres and Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, into a single community care network.

The model seeks to make integrated care available within walking distance of every household, with the white paper saying rural India does not need to build new care infrastructure but connect the institutions it already has.

The white paper also positioned care as an economic opportunity, estimating that investing 2 per cent of India's GDP in the care economy could generate around 11 million jobs, largely for rural women.

"India has made remarkable progress in helping people survive. The next challenge is ensuring they can live well for longer. Our demographic transition requires us to redesign care delivery itself -- beyond facility-based care, it will require to facilitate as shared community function and improving sustainable living conditions," said Shyamal Santra, practice director, Transform Rural India.

"The institutions needed to make this possible already exist across rural India. By connecting them through a common care mandate, an eco-system needs to be built that supports families, caregivers, strengthens local governance and prepares villages for the decades ahead," Santra added.

Another Proposal Pushed to Rename Aligarh

Press Trust of India

ALIGARH: Aligarh Mayor Prashant Singhal has said that a proposal to rename the city to Harihar has again been sent to the state government for action. The BJP leader on Thursday told reporters that all papers concerning the proposal were sent earlier in the week.

Singhal said that in 2023, immediately after he was elected, the Aligarh Nagar Nigam had passed a resolution urging the Uttar Pradesh government to change the name of Aligarh to Harihar after Saint Swami Haridas.

He said that if he acts on the proposal, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath would be fulfilling a demand of the people who long to see the emergence of the city as a true "Sanatan City".

The first formal step to rename Aligarh was taken in August 2021, when the newly elected president of the Aligarh Zila Parishad, Vijay Singh, sent a proposal to the state.

The request was made after a demand for it was raised by the Aligarh Chatri Parishad through a memorandum.

At that time, then mayor Mohammad Furqan (BSP) urged Adityanath to defer the matter for the sake of the large Aligarh Muslim University alumni network, which has a deep emotional connect with the eponymous city.

In August 2025, Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Dev Maurya once again raised this issue during a visit to the city.

There is little evidence though that Aligarh was ever connected with the Swami Haridas, an academic points out.

Professor Manvendra Kumar Pundhir of AMU's History department, who specialises in Medieval Indian History, told PTI, "In no period of History did the city bear the name of Harihar or anything close to that."

He said that in 1803, the region, known as Kol, was conquered by British forces under Lord Lake, and the whole area was made into a district named Aligarh.

The name 'Aligarh' stemmed from the name of a small fighting fortress, which lay to the north of Kol city, Pundhir said.

The strategic fortress was built during the Lodhi period and was later named Sabitgarh after Sabit Khan, who had restored it. The name continued under the Maratha period till the late 18th century, when, under the influence of the Avadh Nawab, it was renamed Aligarh Fortress, he said.

Barring a brief period, when under the Jats, it was named Ramgarh Fortress, the fortress has carried the name Aligarh, Pundhir said.

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