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The Kashmir That Still Believes

At Hazratbal on Eid Milad-un-Nabi, generations of Kashmiris gathered around an old promise of spiritual solace, even as faith itself becomes a source of debate among the young.

Haziqah Showkat

Srinagar: The women had gathered beneath the pale light of Hazratbal, their hands raised in prayer as the Prophet Muhammad [PBUH]'s relic was displayed.

Some wept openly, others bowed their heads, murmuring prayers for children, parents and lives caught in difficult seasons.

Thousands had come to the shrine in Srinagar for Eid Milad-un-Nabi, turning the Prophet's birthday into a day of devotion, reunion and emotional release.

Among them was Halima, a woman in her 70s who has spent more than 55 years attending Milad at the shrine.

She cannot read or write. Her granddaughter holds two master's degrees.

Halima describes the young woman as deeply learned, argumentative and capable of finding an explanation for almost everything.

But depression has left her confined to her room, and that is one problem Halima says her granddaughter has struggled to explain.

The family has tried everything, Halima said.

On the Prophet's birthday, she came to Hazratbal with another appeal to God: bring her granddaughter back to herself.

herself.

Her prayer held the force of a lifetime spent in Kashmir through the violence and uncertainty that followed the 1990s. Curfews, political upheaval and years of security restrictions had tested families in ways that extended well beyond physical hardship.

Halima said spiritual healing gave her generation a way to preserve its sense of balance.

"We have seen terrible times throughout our life," she said. "But one thing which kept our sanity intact is the spiritual healing which days like these bring."

The shimmering shrine represents a simple proposition for Halima: Human beings can feel powerless before circumstances that exceed their understanding, while faith gives them a place to turn.

Her granddaughter belongs to a generation that has grown up with a different intellectual inheritance.

Some young Kashmiris question shrine traditions, reject the sanctums their elders revere and regard gatherings such as Milad through a more skeptical lens.

Halima's story therefore contains a larger generational tension: an older Kashmir still drawing strength from inherited faith while some of its



Devotees raise their hands in prayer as the sacred relic of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) is displayed at Dargah, Hazratbal. KO Photo

young people search for other ways to understand themselves and the world.

Hazratbal displayed a vivid view of that divide on Wednesday.

Among the worshippers was Showkat Hussain, a man in his late 50s who had travelled from Pattan. He spent the previous night at the shrine,

immersed in prayer and what he described as spiritual solace.

Getting there had taken effort, he said, because members of his family have increasingly turned away from shrine gatherings.

Some relatives who travelled to the Gulf returned with different views about such practices. Hussain said that left him

feeling increasingly alone in preserving a tradition he still considers central to his life.

He spoke of a generation that, in his view, had become more hot-headed and self-assured while losing some of the humility associated with older Kashmiri religious culture.

"These places keep you grounded," | More on P6

Devotion Marks Eid-e-Milad In Kashmir

Sameer Hussain

Srinagar: Kashmir witnessed Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi (PBUH) celebrations with religious fervour on Wednesday, with thousands of devotees participating in processions and gatherings across several districts to commemorate the birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

In Srinagar, men, women, youngsters, elderly devotees and children joined processions from different areas, reciting durood and naats and raising religious slogans.

Children dressed in traditional attire accompanied their families, while youngsters and elderly devotees walked alongside them, giving the celebrations a strong family and community character.

Devotees were heard chanting "Sarkaar Ki Aamad Marhaba" as the processions passed through streets and markets.

In Baramulla, a major procession was taken out from the Syed Janbaz Wali shrine through the Main Market towards Dargah Aaliha Asar-e-Sharief. Large numbers of devotees participated in the procession.

Ganderbal also witnessed processions at several places, with children and adults joining the religious observances.

In Anantnag, gatherings and processions were held at prominent religious places, including Khiram Dargah Shareef, Kabamarg, Reshmool, Aishmuqam and Seer Hamdan.

Thousands joined a Milad procession from Khanqah-e-Hyderi in Aishmuqam.

Across the Valley, devotees carried religious flags and walked in groups while reciting durood, naats and religious slogans.

The celebrations also saw significant participation from families, with parents bringing their children | More on P6

6 Dead, 3 Injured In Poonch Road Accident

LG, CM Express Grief
KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Six people, including two women, were killed and three others injured when a vehicle veered off the road and plunged into a ditch in the Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, officials said.

The accident occurred around 5.30 pm in Seri Chouhana village in the Sheldhar area of Surankote when the driver of a Maruti Eco lost control of the vehicle while it was heading towards the village, they said.

"An unfortunate accident occurred this evening, resulting in on-the-spot death of six persons and injuries to three others," Poonch Deputy

Commissioner Ashok Kumar Sharma said.

A rescue operation was launched immediately and the injured were rushed to the district hospital, officials said.

The deceased were identified as Mohd Shafiq (32), Nazakat Hussain (34), Sheraz Ahmed (30), Mohd Fareed (21), Musarat Naz (19) and Zulfat Bi (25).

The injured were identified as five-year-old Irshan Ahmed, Mohd Amin (30) and Tahir Ahmed (25). The child, who was critically injured, was referred to Government Medical College hospital for specialised treatment.

Chief Medical Officer, Poonch, Dr Pervaz Khan said information about the accident was received through the Police Control Room. | More on P6

Advanced Care Must Become A Right, Not A Privilege: LG Sinha

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday called for making advanced quaternary healthcare accessible to all citizens, saying such care should no longer remain a privilege limited to the wealthy or metropolitan cities.

Addressing the Quaternary Healthcare & Research Summit in Srinagar, Sinha said Jammu and Kashmir and the country must now move beyond tertiary healthcare and develop quaternary-level treatment and research facilities to ensure equitable access to advanced medical care.

"Quaternary care should not be a privilege reserved for the economically rich section of



society. It must become a right of citizenship and a guarantee of the nation," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor called for establishing a Quaternary Care Corridor in Jammu and Kashmir to connect district hospitals and tertiary care centres with quaternary institutions, enabling faster access to diagnostics, imaging and specialist

consultations.

He also stressed the need to integrate telemedicine and AI-enabled diagnostic tools into the healthcare system and called for expanding fellowship and training opportunities in specialised fields including organ transplantation, oncology, genomics and critical care.

"Advanced care is impossible | More on P6

Cabinet Reshuffle

NC Renews One-Berth Offer To Congress

Agencies

Srinagar: Ahead of the reshuffle-cum-expansion in the council of ministers, the ruling National Conference (NC) has renewed its offer of a berth to ally Congress, sources disclosed.

Sources familiar with the development said that the NC leadership has formally approached the Congress with the earlier offer of allotting a berth in the council of ministers.

"The NC discussed the matter with All India Congress Committee (AICC) General Secretary in-charge for Jammu & Kashmir and Rajya Sabha MP, Syed Naseer Hussain. He is

understood to have told them that he would respond after consulting the high command," sources said.

According to sources, during his recent visit to J&K with Divya Maderna, AICC co-in-charge for J&K, Hussain is believed to have discussed the proposal with the party leadership.

J&K Congress leadership, however, is understood to have been lukewarm to the proposal and instead pushed for two berths in the council of ministers along with adjustment of its leaders as heads of different boards.

The Congress high command is expected to take a final call on NC's offer tomorrow.

At the time | More on P6

A Minor Girl Puts Kashmir's Family Courts to the Test

An unpaid maintenance order involving an eight-year-old has pushed a Srinagar family's struggle before the High Court, raising questions about whether family courts are easing the burden of litigation or adding to it.

Haziqah Showkat

Srinagar: Twice a month, ZG, 8, walks into a family courtroom in Srinagar with her mother.

The journey has become part of her life. There is the trip to court, the wait for the case to be called and the possibility of returning home without the money her father was ordered to pay for her schooling and upbringing.

Six months ago, a family court issued an interim maintenance order in ZG's favour.

The money remains unpaid. Her case has now reached the High Court of Jammu and



Kashmir and Ladakh, where Justice Rahul Bharti is examining a question that extends well beyond one child's support order: how often should a

family have to return to court when the hearing itself serves little purpose?

The dispute turns on Section 13 of the Family Courts Act, 1984.

Parliament created family courts as a more accessible forum for disputes involving marriage, children, maintenance and other domestic concerns. The law limits automatic legal representation and gives judges a more direct role in helping parties resolve their disputes.

The petition filed on ZG's behalf argues that family courts in Jammu and Kashmir have given Section 13 a meaning that places a heavier burden on litigants.

According to the petition, courts have treated the provision as a basis for insisting on personal attendance at hearings even when | More on P6

Kashmir Heat Set To Intensify, Plains May Touch 35°C

Ali Mustafa

Srinagar: Temperatures are likely to rise further across Kashmir over the next three to four days, with the plains, including Srinagar, expected to experience heatwave-like conditions and maximum temperatures approaching 35 degrees Celsius, a weather forecaster said on Wednesday.

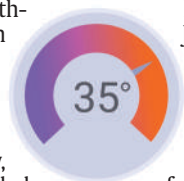
Srinagar recorded a maximum temperature of 32.7 degrees Celsius on Wednesday, while Kupwara recorded 32.3 degrees Celsius and Qazigund 31.6 degrees Celsius. Kukernag recorded 30.8 degrees Celsius, Banihal 30.1

degrees Celsius and Bhaderwah 30.2 degrees Celsius. Batote and Pahalgam recorded maximum temperatures of 28 degrees Celsius and 26.8 degrees Celsius, respectively.

Gulmarg, one of Kashmir's popular tourist destinations, recorded a maximum temperature of 23.4 degrees Celsius.

In the Jammu region, Jammu city recorded 35 degrees Celsius, while Katra recorded 32.7 degrees Celsius.

According to the forecast, temperatures are expected to continue rising over the next few days, with the heat likely to be most intense | More on P6



Five OGWs Arrested In Kulgam

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: Security forces on Wednesday arrested five overground workers of terrorists during an anti-terrorist operation in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said.

Security forces carried out a cordon-and-search operation in the Bugam area of Kulgam district based on specific intelligence input, they said. Five suspects were apprehended during the operation. On their questioning, the security forces recovered a cache of arms and ammunition, including four pistols, two hand grenades and some live rounds, the officials said.

Further details of the operation are awaited. | More on P6



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2

IICT, Netflix Announce 100 Scholarships

New Delhi, Aug 26 (PTI) The Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT) and Netflix have announced scholarships for 100 students and working professionals from across the country, offering up to 80 per cent financial support for six programmes in animation, visual effects, gaming and related creative technologies. The scholarships are part of the Netflix India Storytelling Initiative launched earlier this month following a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said on Wednesday. Modi met Sarandos on August 5 and highlighted India's "rich tradition of storytelling" and its pool of creative talent, saying these could be

leveraged to strengthen the country's position as a global hub for content creation. The Netflix India Storytelling Initiative was launched following the meeting to invest in India's creative talent pipeline and equip the next generation of storytellers with industry-relevant skills across the Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC) ecosystem, the ministry said in a statement. Under the latest initiative, scholarships will be offered for two one-year diploma programmes and four six-month certificate courses at IICT. The diploma programmes are Interactive Comics and Sequential Arts and Visual Effects Mastery, while the certificate courses cover Virtual Art Department



Content Creation, Media Tech Workflow, Art of Character Animation, and E-Sports and Gaming Management. The ministry said the curriculum for IICT's Visual Effects Mastery and Media Tech Workflow programmes has been designed with inputs from Netflix to align them with contemporary industry workflows and global standards.

The scholarships will be open to both students and working professionals from across India. IICT, set up as India's national centre of excellence for the Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics and Extended Reality (AVGC-XR) sector, is an initiative of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry in partnership with the Maharashtra government,

FICCI and CII. The institute currently operates from the National Film Development Corporation Complex on Pedder Road in Mumbai. Its permanent campus is being developed on a 10-acre site at Film City in Goregaon. Information and Broadcasting Secretary and IICT Board Chairman Chanchal Kumar said the institute was conceived as a bridge between India's creative talent pool and the changing requirements of the global AVGC-XR industry. "Partnerships with leading global players are an important part of building that bridge," Kumar said, adding that such collaborations would bring industry knowledge into classrooms and help develop a workforce for India's growing creative economy.

From Lungs To Brain: Delhi's Pollution May Have A Deeper Health Cost

Press Trust Of India

For Delhiites, the health cost of breathing polluted air may go beyond coughing, breathlessness and heart problems, with a Delhi University review suggesting that prolonged exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5) could also affect the brain. Studies reviewed by DU professors have linked long-term exposure to particulate matter with changes in brain structure, memory, attention and other cognitive functions. Researchers said PM2.5 can trigger inflammation and oxidative stress, affect the energy-producing system of brain cells and interfere with the blood-brain barrier, which normally protects the brain from harmful substances. Some of the smallest particles may also reach the central nervous system through the nose and the olfactory pathway, the review said. The review, conducted by DU professors from the Department of Environmental Studies, examined 129 peer-reviewed articles on the neurological effects of particulate matter and found growing evidence linking long-term exposure to PM2.5 with cognitive impairment and structural and functional changes in the brain. "Air pollution is no longer only a lung and heart problem; it is increasingly a brain-health problem. Research now links long-term particulate-matter exposure with cognitive decline, impaired neurodevelopment and biological processes associated with Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases," Vandana Mishra, one of the researchers associated with the study,

said. Mishra added that fine particulate matter has even been seen to breach the blood-brain barrier, a dangerous side effect of pollution. One key concern highlighted in the review is that prolonged exposure to air pollution has been associated with changes in the physical structure of the brain. "A growing body of evidence strongly demonstrates that chronic exposure to ambient air pollution, particularly PM, leads to region-specific structural and functional alterations in the human brain, spanning across developmental and ageing stages," the study says. Neuroimaging and other studies have reported reductions in brain volume and cortical thickness, particularly in areas such as the frontal and temporal lobes that are involved in cognition. These structural changes have been associated with problems in memory, attention and executive functions such as planning and decision-making, the study adds. The review also cites evidence of changes in the hippocampus, a region important for memory, as well as disruption in connections between different areas of the brain. In older adults, long-term exposure has been associated with reduced brain volume and impaired hippocampal function. At the same time, changes in the prefrontal cortex and increased white-matter abnormalities have also been reported. The researchers caution that such findings should not be interpreted as proof that air pollution alone causes neurological diseases. Much of the existing evidence concerns structural and cognitive changes rather than confirmed cases of diseases such as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's.

The findings also raise particular concerns for children and young people because their brains are still developing. The review cites studies reporting reduced grey and white matter volumes in children exposed to air pollution, along with possible effects on IQ, attention and behavioural regulation. Research on prenatal and early-life exposure has also linked pollution exposure with impaired cognitive development and lower intelligence scores in children. The review notes that early-life exposure can affect biological pathways involved in brain development and synaptic plasticity, the process through which connections between brain cells are formed and strengthened. The concern is not limited to children. The review cites evidence of subclinical neurodegenerative changes in otherwise healthy young adults, suggesting that prolonged pollution exposure could potentially contribute to premature ageing of the brain. According to the review, several processes may work together to cause the neurological effects. PM2.5 exposure can activate microglia, the brain's immune cells, leading to inflammation. Persistent inflammation can affect nerve cells and their connections. Pollution can also cause oxidative stress, damaging proteins, fats and DNA, while affecting mitochondria, which provide energy to cells. The hippocampus and prefrontal cortex may be particularly vulnerable because they have high energy requirements and play important roles in memory, learning and decision-making.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, SONAULLAH SHIEKH S/O SHABAN SHIEKH, R/O OGMUNA, hereby inform the general public through this notice that my original 10th Class Marks Sheet and Certificate, issued by the Jammu & Kashmir Board of School Education (JKBOSE), bearing Roll No. 348246, for the Session/Year April–May 1991, have been damaged. I therefore intend to apply to the concerned authority for the issuance of Duplicate 10th Class Marks Sheet and Certificate in lieu of the damaged original documents. If anybody has any objection regarding the issuance of the duplicate documents, they may approach the concerned authority within the prescribed period.

SONAULLAH SHIEKH
S/O SHABAN SHIEKH
R/O OGMUNA

FKO

PUBLIC NOTICE

I Saleema Akhter W/o Late Abdul Majeed Bhat R/o Iqbal Colony 90 feet Soura Srinagar hereby inform that my Husband Dr Abdul Majeed Bhat who was the Registered Consumer of PDD Sub Division Hawal having Electric Connection bearing Consumer no.0204040018824 expired few years ago. Now intended to transfer the said electric connection in my name "Saleema Akhter". My two sons Javeed Saleem and Imtiyaz Ahmad have no objection in this process. If any person or party has any objection in this transfer. They may file their objection in writing in the office of the AEE Sub Division Hawal within 7 (seven) days from the Date of Publication.No objection shall be entertained after stipulated Time Period.

Saleema Akhter
W/o Abdul Majeed Bhat
R/o Iqbal Colony 90 feet Soura srinagar
For any Query:6005502274

Media time advt

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have lost my number plate of my vichle bearing JK05J 0638 while traveling in magam to narbal. Now I have applied for the duplicate of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them ni the concern police station/ARTO within seven days.After that no objection shall be entertained.

Sd/-
Musadiq Nazir
S/o Nazir Ahmad Wani
R/o Watamagram Budgam

x

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have changed my name from Tasaduq Hussain Dob 01-04-1986 toTasaduq Hussain Waza DOB 10-02-1990. In future, I will be known as Tasaduq Hussain Waza.Dob 10-02-1990 If any person has any objection, he/she may contact the Passport office Srinagar within 7 days. After 7 days, no objection will be accepted.

FKO

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the general public that Sabiha Hafeez, D/o Hafizullah Bhat, R/o Ichgam, Budgam, has applied for the grant of a licence for dealing in Pesticides, Fertilizers and Seeds. Any person having any objection to the grant of the said licence may submit their objection before the concerned authority within the prescribed period. No objection received after the stipulated period shall be entertained.

Applicant: Sabiha Hafeez
D/o: Hafizullah Bhat
R/o: Ichgam, Budgam

BMG

PUBLIC NOTICE

1, Mohd Arif Khan S/O Shadi Khan, Prop. of M/S Mohd Arif Khan, am holder of A Class Contractor Card bearing Registration No. PWD(R&B) J/A/UT/203/2019-20, valid up to 31-08-2028, issued by PW (R&B) Jammu. I hereby intend to upgrade my A class card from M/S Mohd Arif Khan to private limited namely Eleven UK Infra Private Limited.

If anyone has any objection regarding the aforesaid upgradation, he/she may submit his/her objection in writing before the Office of the Chief Engineer, Irrigation & Flood Control Department, Srinagar, within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. No objection shall be entertained after the expiry of the stipulated period.

Mohd Arif Khan
S/O Shadi Khan
Prop. M/S Mohd Arif Khan

BMG

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, NOUMAN NISSAR NAJAR S/o NISSAR AHMAD NAJAR, R/o Bandipayeen, Tehsil Wagoora, hereby inform the general public that my date of birth has been wrongly recorded as 21-07-2016 in the records of Shah Rasool Memorial Welkin Educational Trust, Sopore. My correct date of birth is 21-07-2014.

I have applied for correction of my date of birth from 21-07-2016 to 21-07-2014. Any person having any objection to the said correction may submit the same before the concerned authority within the prescribed period.

NOUMAN NISSAR NAJAR
S/o Nissar Ahmad Najar
R/o Bandipayeen, Tehsil Wagoora

FKO

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public through the medium of notice that I Yasmeena Zehra d/o Ghulam Mohi uddin Joo R/o diver Yakhman Pora is born on 30_06_2010.Now i want to obtain date of birth certificate.

.If anybody has any objection he/she may contact BDO Singpora concerned within seven days from the date of publication of this notice.No shall be entertained thereafter.

Yasmeena Zehra
D/O Ghulam Mohi Uddin Joo
R/O Diver Yakhmanpora

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I have lost the Number Plate of my Scooty TVS Jupiter Bearing regd no: JK01AK 5513 while travelling in Nowgam Srinagar. Now I have applied for the duplicate of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the concerned Police Station/ARTO within seven days.. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Imtiyaz Ahmad Wani
S/o Mohammed Amin Wani
R/o Lasjan Srinagar

fko-r

PUBLIC NOTICE

I want to change the name on electricity bill bearing consumer ID No: 0206050002866 from Gh Mohd Bhat S/o Ab Gani Bhat to Afroza Bano W/o Late Gh Mohd Bhat R/o Check-i-Kawoosa. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the office of the PDD Sub Division Narbal Budgam within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Afroza Bano
W/o Late Gh Mohd Bhat
R/o Check-i-Kawoosa

BMG

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, SHABNUM ALI, son of Ali Mohd Bhat, resident of Khaipora Payeen, Tehsil Tangmarg, District Baramulla, hereby inform the general public that my name has been incorrectly recorded in my Aadhaar Card bearing No. 7176 3965 5691 as SHABNAM ALI. My correct name is SHABNUM ALI, as recorded in my Domicile Certificate. I have applied for correction of my name in the Aadhaar Card from SHABNAM ALI to SHABNUM ALI.

Any person having any objection to the proposed correction may submit the same to the concerned authority within the prescribed period.

SHABNUM ALI
S/o Ali Mohd Bhat
R/o Khaipora Payeen, Tehsil Tangmarg, District Baramulla

FKO

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that my name and parentage has been wrongly mentioned on electricity connection bearing consumer ID no.0206020020349 as Fidah Hussain s/o Gh Hassan instead of Fida Hussain Sofi s/o Gh Hussain Sofi .Now I want to apply for its correction.If anybody has any objection he/she may contact PDD subdivision concerned within seven days from the date of publication of this notice.No shall be entertained thereafter.

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Massive Fire Damages Seven Houses

Observer News Service

Srinagar: A massive fire swept through a congested locality in Srinagar's Watal Kadal area on Wednesday evening, damaging at least seven houses and causing minor damage to two others, officials said.

The blaze rapidly engulfed several residential structures, prompting the immediate deployment of fire tenders to the area. Fire and Emergency Services person-

nel launched an operation and managed to bring the flames under control, preventing the fire from spreading further in the densely populated neighbourhood.

Officials said seven houses were directly affected in the incident, while two adjoining houses suffered minor damage due to heat, smoke and water used during the firefighting operation.

No immediate reports of casualties were available.

The cause of the fire is being ascertained, officials added.

Altaf Bukhari Urges Youth to Pursue Entrepreneurship

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Apni Party President Altaf Bukhari has urged the youth of Jammu and Kashmir to explore entrepreneurship and create their own livelihood opportunities.

He also called upon the government to provide all possible support and a conducive environment to help young people establish and sustain their businesses.

He was speaking on the occasion of the inauguration of 'The Story,' a contemporary jewellery store, in the Rainawari area of Srinagar.

Altaf Bukhari said that he feels encouraged whenever he sees young people taking the initiative to start their own businesses and build livelihoods through their own efforts.

"Even if a business starts on a small scale, the initiative itself is commendable. It not only creates a source of livelihood for the entrepreneur but can also generate employment opportunities for others," he said.

He said that Jammu and Kashmir has limited employment

opportunities, therefore self-employment is important for the younger generation.

"Given the limited job opportunities available here, I have always encouraged our youth to think beyond seeking jobs and instead explore opportunities to create their own ventures.

At the same time, Apni Party president stressed that encouraging entrepreneurship cannot be the sole responsibility of young people.

He called upon the government to ensure a supportive ecosystem for aspiring entrepreneurs.

'The Story' is a modern retail establishment offering designer jewellery and other lifestyle and fashion products.

On the occasion, Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari was accompanied by several senior party colleagues, including party's District President Srinagar and Constituency In-charge Central Shalteng Zaffar Habib, Provincial Youth President Kashmir Jibran Dar, Joint Secretary District Srinagar Khurshed Ahmad Makhdoomi, Mudasir Malik, Abrar Ahmed, Javaid Bangroo, and others.



Devotees offer prayers as the sacred relic of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) is displayed at the revered Hazratbal Shrine. KO Photo Abid Bhat.

Road Cave-In Sparks Safety Concerns in Nishat

Locals seek immediate repairs, proper assessment of underground damage

Agencies

Srinagar: A portion of the main road near Police Station Nishat in Srinagar has caved in, creating a deep pit along a busy stretch used by pedestrians and motorists, prompting locals to seek immediate repairs.

The damaged portion is located opposite the local Jamia Masjid and near several business establishments, making it a potential safety concern, particularly during periods of heavy traffic.

Locals from the area told KNO that temporary barricades have been placed around the affected portion to prevent vehicles and pedestrians from approaching the

“**We appeal to the administration and concerned departments to take immediate measures and ensure the road is restored properly**

damaged area.

They said a permanent solution is needed at the earliest to prevent the affected section from further deteriorating.

The residents urged the concerned authorities to ascertain the cause of the cave-in and check

whether any underground water, drainage or sewerage infrastructure had been damaged or was contributing to the erosion.

Firdous Ahmad, a local, said the condition of the road needs urgent attention. "The damaged portion could become more dangerous if it is not repaired in time. We appeal to the administration and concerned departments to take immediate measures and ensure the road is restored properly," he said.

The residents called upon the Srinagar district administration and concerned civic and engineering agencies to undertake an immediate technical assessment and carry out the necessary restoration work.

Milad Procession Held in Srinagar as Hafta-e-Wahdat Begins

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Week of Unity (Hafta-e-Wahdat) celebrations commenced across the Kashmir Valley on the occasion of Eid Milad-un-Nabi (PBUH) under the auspices of Jammu & Kashmir Anjuman-e-Sharie Shian.

The celebrations began, as per tradition, from Khanqah Mir Shams-ud-Din Araqi (RA), Zadibal, Srinagar, where a grand Milad procession was taken out under the leadership of Anjuman President Aga Syed Hassan Mosavi Al-Safavi.

The procession passed through Alamgari Bazaar and Mirza Kamil Chowk, Hawal, before culminating at Imambara Gulshan Bagh, Botakadal. A large number of students of Hawzas-e-Ilmiyya, students of religious makhtabs, members and workers of the organisation, as well as a large gathering of devotees participated in the procession.

Prior to the procession, a Milad gathering was held at Khanqah Mir Shams-ud-Din Araqi (RA), where Aga Syed Hassan addressed the gathering on the significance and virtues of Eid Milad-un-Nabi (PBUH) and highlighted various dimensions of the exemplary life and teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Aga Syed Hassan said

that love for the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is not merely a verbal claim; rather, true love is demonstrated by adherence to Islam, the Shariah and the Seerah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). He stressed that unless a Muslim strives to mould his or her life in accordance with the exemplary conduct of the Prophet (PBUH), the claim of love remains incomplete.

Extending greetings to the Muslim Ummah on the auspicious occasion of Eid Milad-un-Nabi (PBUH), Aga Syed Hassan said that the blessed month conveys a message of following the Qur'an and Sunnah, promoting brotherhood and unity among Muslims, and standing united against anti-Islamic and hegemonic conspiracies. He further said that the source of the strength and dignity of Muslims lies in their love for the Holy Prophet (PBUH), and that attempts to weaken this bond of devotion have historically remained among the objectives of the enemies of Islam.

Addressing the Milad procession, General Secretary of Anjuman-e-Sharie Shian, Aga Syed Mujtaba said that in the contemporary era, the most effective response to conspiracies and hostile designs against Islam lies in Muslim unity, solidarity and genuine adherence to the Seerah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

PUBLIC NOTICE

My name has been wrongly mentioned on aadhar card as Shagufta Sajad instead of correct name is Shagufta Akhter. Now I want to apply for its correction. If anybody has any objection he/she may contact concerned authorities within seven days from the date of publication of this notice. No objection shall be entertained thereafter.

Shagufta Akhter

D/O Sajad Ahmad R/O Mushkoo Drass Kargil

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NCISM, MoA, Government of India

NOTICE

All India Quota (AIQ) Seats of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani & Homoeopathy

UG (BAMS/BSMS/BUMS/BHMS) Courses and PG (MD/MS) Courses of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani & Homoeopathy (ASU&H) for A.Y. 2026-27

- All eligible candidates who have appeared and qualified NEET-UG 2026 and aspire to take admission in undergraduate BAMS/BSMS/BUMS/BHMS courses are hereby informed that AACCC UG Counseling for the Academic Year 2026–27 is going to be held for the allotment of All India Quota (AIQ) Undergraduate seats as per schedule which shall be uploaded on the official AACCC website www.aaccc.gov.in.
- All eligible candidates who appear and qualify AIAPGET 2026, scheduled to be held on 22 August 2026, and aspire to take admission in Postgraduate MD/MS (ASU&H) courses are hereby informed that AACCC PG Counseling for the Academic Year 2026–27 is going to be held for the allotment of All India Quota (AIQ) postgraduate seats as per schedule shall be published on the official AACCC website www.aaccc.gov.in.
- AACCC/NCISM will conduct counseling for admission to AIQ seats in ASU&H UG and PG courses offered by Government/Government-aided Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy institutions, National Institutes, Central Universities and Deemed Universities.
- Counseling for admission to AIQ seats in UG and PG courses of private Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy institutions will be conducted by the respective State/UT counseling authorities, as applicable.
- Candidates wishing to participate in AACCC UG/PG Counseling 2026 are required to register themselves on the official AACCC website within the prescribed schedule.
- Candidates are required to pay the applicable non-refundable registration fee and refundable security deposit at the time of registration, as per their respective category and the applicable counseling scheme.
- Detailed information regarding the counseling schedule, counseling scheme, information bulletin, eligibility criteria, registration process, fee structure and other admission-related guidelines for UG (BAMS/BSMS/BUMS/BHMS) and PG (MD/MS–ASU&H) courses for the Academic Year 2026–27 will be made available on the official AACCC website. **Candidates are advised to regularly visit the official AACCC website for the latest updates and important notifications regarding UG and PG Counseling 2026–27.**

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- BIJBERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORE: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153



HIGHWAY STATUS

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

 HIJRI CALENDAR 13 Rabi-ul-Awwal 1448	PRAYERS	
	FAJR	4: 30
	ZUHR	12:33
	ASR	5: 14
	Magrib	7: 09
	ISHA	8: 33

- 663 - Battle of Baekgang: Tang Chinese and Silla Korean forces defeat Korean Baekje forces and their Yamato Japanese allies on the Geum River in Korea. Last Japanese invasion of Korea for 900 years.
- 1799 - British invasion army lands in North Holland
- 1813 - Battle of Dresden; Napoleon defeats Austrians
- 1828 - Uruguay gains independence during Brazil-Argentina peace talks
- 1828 - The Russians defeat the Turks at the Battle of Akhalzik.
- 1883 - Krakatoa volcano, west of Java in Indonesia, erupts with a force of 1,300 megatons and kills approximately 40,000 people.
- 1900 - Battle of Bergendal: General Buller defeats the Boer under general Louis Botha
- 1913 - Swedish engineer Gideon Sundback of Hoboken applies to patent all-purpose zipper
- 1916 - Romania declares war on Austria-Hungary
- 1928 - Kellogg-Briand Pact, 60 nations agree to condemn 'recourse to war for the solution of international controversies'.
- 1941 - Shah of Iran Rez Sh h Pahlavi abdicates throne in favour of his son Mohammad Reza Pahlavi
- 1942 - Cuba declares war on Germany, Japan & Italy
- 1945 - US troops land in Japan after Japanese surrender
- 1955 - "Guinness Book of World Records" 1st published
- 1958 - USSR launches Sputnik 3 with two dogs aboard
- 1962 - Mariner 2 launched; first probe to fly by Venus
- 1962 - USSR performs nuclear test at Novaya Zemlya USSR
- 1979 - 1st Earl Mountbatten of Burma, cousin of Queen Elizabeth II and last Viceroy of India, is killed along with three companions, two of them children by the IRA when his boat is blown up near Sligo, Ireland
- 1982 - Soyuz T-7 returns to Earth
- 1984 - USSR performs underground nuclear test
- 1984 -War Against Indiscipline is launched by the Buhari regime in Nigeria
- 1985 - 20th Space Shuttle Mission (51-I)-Discovery 6-launched
- 1985 - General Ibrahim Babangida overthrows Major General Muhammadu Buhari's regime in Nigeria
- 1990 - Market prices plunge as OPEC nears informal agreement to increase output to cover shortfall due to invasion; cash market trading experiences abrupt decline.
- 1991 - Moldavia declares independence from USSR

From KO Archives

Commandos Deployed In Sensitive Areas

Observer News Service

JAMMU- The Union Home Ministry has made all possible security arrangements to ensure incident free Lok Sabha elections in the state with the deployment of trained commandos of different para-military forces for the protection of VVIPs and candidates visiting sensitive areas of the state, especially Doda, Udhampur, and Rajouri-Poonch areas in the Jammu region.

According to well placed official sources, these measures have been necessitated in the wake of escalation of attacks on security posts and VDC and SPO pickets in these areas and Kupwara, Handwara and other places in the Kashmir valley.

The sources said that trained foreign infiltrators, who had withdrawn from Kargil, had reportedly managed to re-infiltrate in the Kupwara and Poonch sectors with a 'definite plan of escalating violence and subversion in the state during the coming Lok Sabha elections.' They had formulated a special contingency plan of subversion and were waiting for the green signal from their masters from across, they sources said.

Besides deployment of commandos and additional troops in sensitive areas, the Village Defence Committees (VDCs) have been equipped with highly sophisticated and automatic weapons to counter possible attacks during the forthcoming elections, the sources said and added that constant vigilance was being exercised in sensitive border areas of the state.

(Kashmir Observer, August 27, 1999)

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The Dark Side of Classroom Authority

Allegations of sexual abuse by teachers expose the terrible consequences of abused authority and the safeguards schools must build before a crisis erupts.



Amaar Mir



person, while a school review can reveal gaps that put other students at risk. Holding abusers accountable also shields the teaching profession.

Thousands of teachers give their students patience, skill, and genuine care. One accused teacher damages one classroom, while the rest of the profession stands apart.

At the same time, teachers should draw a clear line between professional loyalty and hiding misconduct.

The profession earns respect only when educators accept both the power and the duty that come with their role.

Schools hold a unique place in family life. Parents hand their children over because learning depends on a bond between home and school.

That bond gives teachers real influence, especially with younger students who find it hard to question an adult in charge. That power makes student protection a moral duty more important than any form or file.

A job title is irrelevant when misconduct occurs. A school must value a student's safety above its own reputation. The same fairness protects the accused: evidence, a fair investigation, and due process must guide every charge.

A healthy society manages both at once. The deeper question is what type of place a school chooses to be when power is misused.

A school worthy of public trust keeps students safe, respects fair process, and faces misconduct with clarity. It listens when students speak, examines failures with honesty, and builds stronger safeguards after painful cases.

A teacher's first duty is to expand a student's world through knowledge, confidence, and character.

When an educator is proven to have sexually exploited a student, that duty has been horribly broken.

Justice must address the individual crime, while schools should examine the conditions that allowed power to become a tool of harm.

The classroom should teach students how to understand the world and trust their own voice.

That trust begins with adults who treat power over a student as a responsibility to carry with care.

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A school worthy of public trust keeps students safe, respects fair process, and faces misconduct with clarity. It listens when students speak, examines failures with honesty, and builds stronger safeguards after painful cases.

KO VIEW

A Warning From Nepal

Nepal's unsettling scenes should feel deeply personal in Kashmir. The images of streets swallowed by torrents, homes threatened by surging water and communities confronting sudden destruction are a reminder that the Himalayas are entering a more dangerous chapter, where old assumptions about seasons, rainfall and mountain stability are losing their reliability.

Whatever the precise causes behind Nepal's latest crisis, one lesson already stands clear: when nature strikes with force, it rarely follows the script humans have written for it.

The mountains have their own language, and climate change is making that language harder to ignore.

Kashmir has heard these warnings before. Floods have repeatedly tested Srinagar and other towns. Sudden cloudbursts have turned streams into torrents. Unseasonal rain, shrinking snow cover, rising temperatures and changing weather patterns have begun altering agriculture, water supplies and the pulse of life in the valley.

Glaciers and snowfields in the wider Himalayan system are also retreating, putting another question mark over the water future of millions.

The danger lies partly in the way development continues as though the old climate still exists. Roads climb steeper slopes, buildings spread along waterways, drainage channels shrink or disappear, wetlands face pressure, and construction often proceeds with little attention to the natural paths taken by water.

A mountain stream remembers its route even when a concrete wall forgets it.

That is where Nepal becomes a lesson for Kashmir. The answer lies beyond another project, road or concrete embankment.

Kashmir needs a sweeping review of its development model, infrastructure plans and everyday relationship with nature. Planners should ask where water will go during an extreme downpour, what happens when a river rises beyond its recorded level, and how much pressure a hillside can absorb before it gives way.

The same questions belong in ordinary life.

Wetlands should remain open, drainage channels should remain functional, forests should remain protected and rivers should have room to breathe.

Every new structure in a vulnerable zone adds another calculation to a future emergency.

There is an old saying that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Climate change has given that proverb a Himalayan scale.

Kashmir still has time to learn before a larger disaster writes the lesson in stone. The choice is between planning for the mountains we have today and preparing for the mountains climate change is creating.

The chickens, as the saying goes, eventually come home to roost. Kashmir would be wiser to repair the coop before the storm arrives.

A charge of sexual abuse against a teacher breaks one of the most basic promises a school makes: that children will be safe there.

Families send their children to school with trust, believing those walls will protect them and help them grow.

When that trust is broken, the student suffers, the family grieves, the school is shaken, and the damage reaches far beyond one classroom.

Teaching has always held a responsibility far greater than any job description. Islamic tradition places this role especially high. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) described his own mission through teaching, linking education to guidance, character, and care.

That idea still matters today because teachers help young people understand respect, confidence, limits, and their place in the world.

This is exactly why such charges cut so deep.

The adult meant to teach students about boundaries stands accused of crossing those lines. The person brought in to guide becomes, in this account, the one who causes terrible harm.

If a court finds these charges true, the act is both a serious crime and a deep betrayal of everything teaching stands for.

The law must come first. Every accusation calls for a proper investigation, student safety, and a fair hearing for the accused. Evidence must guide the process, while only a court can decide guilt.

Public anger cannot replace justice. Schools must cooperate with investigators, protect students, and let the facts speak.

The student must stay at the center throughout.

Sexual violence can shake a young person's confidence, damage relationships, disrupt learning, and destroy their sense of safety. Society often adds to this pain by blaming the victim.

A Decade of UPI

What began as a payment system is becoming an economic gateway for Kashmir's merchants, entrepreneurs and small businesses.



Ansar Hussain

A QR code at a roadside stall says something profound about India's economic transformation, so does a fruit grower receiving payment directly from a buyer or an artisan collecting an advance from a customer hundreds of miles away.

UPI has made such transactions routine, while giving India a chance to build something bigger: a financial system where access to opportunity begins with something as simple as receiving a payment.

The Unified Payments Interface, launched by the National Payments Corporation of India on April 11, 2016, under Reserve Bank of India oversight, began with a straightforward idea: moving money should be as easy as sending a message.

It brought banks and payment applications onto one interoperable platform, allowing people to transfer money through a mobile number, UPI ID or QR code without being tied to one bank, application or banking hour.

A decade later, the scale is extraordinary. UPI processed about two crore transactions worth Rs 0.07 lakh crore in FY 2016-17. By FY 2025-26, that had become more than 24,162 crore transactions worth over Rs 314

lakh crore.

In July 2026 alone, 741 live banks supported 2,365.84 crore transactions worth nearly Rs 29.88 lakh crore.

The numbers are impressive, but the real revolution lies at street level.

A large retailer and a roadside vendor can accept money through the same infrastructure. Small businesses can collect payments without costly equipment, reduce cash handling and build a digital record of their activity.

That record can become valuable financial evidence when a business seeks formal credit. Jammu and Kashmir shows why this matters.

Geography has long influenced access to markets and banking services. Mountain terrain, scattered settlements and severe winters make physical movement harder, while much of the economy rests on fruit growers, artisans, small traders, transporters and tourism businesses.

UPI changes the equation. A hotelier can collect from a tourist, a handicraft seller can receive money from a customer in another state and a fruit grower can receive payment from a buyer without depending on physical banking access.

Distance still exists on the map, but it has less impact in a digital transaction.

J&K Bank's figures show how rapidly this system is taking root.

Its UPI customer base rose from 9.98 lakh in FY 2021-22 to 31.23 lakh by July 31, 2026.

The bank added 5.42 lakh users in FY 2025-26, a 22.6 percent increase, followed by another 1.77 lakh users during the first four months of FY 2026-27.

Transaction volumes have surged even faster, as J&K Bank processed 11.17 crore UPI transactions worth Rs 13,838 crore in FY 2021-22.

By FY 2025-26, the figures had reached 178.76 crore transactions worth approximate-



J&K Bank's figures show how rapidly this system is taking root. Its UPI customer base rose from 9.98 lakh in FY 2021-22 to 31.23 lakh by July 31, 2026. The bank added 5.42 lakh users in FY 2025-26, a 22.6 percent increase, followed by another 1.77 lakh users during the first four months of FY 2026-27.

ly Rs 2.21 lakh crore. Volume rose more than 39 percent over the previous year and value nearly 34 percent.

The momentum has continued. During the

first quarter of FY 2026-27, the bank processed 54.07 crore transactions worth Rs 65,608 crore, with volume up about 25 percent year-on-year and value up 30 percent. July alone recorded 19.24 crore transactions worth Rs 22,315 crore.

Non-financial digital transactions tell the same story of expanding use.

J&K Bank processed 84.77 crore such transactions in FY 2024-25, rising 72.23 percent to 146 crore in FY 2025-26. July 2026 alone accounted for 16.65 crore.

Merchant adoption is substantial too. More than 6.83 lakh QR customers were registered with the bank by July 31, 2026, including over 52,000 additions during the first four months of FY 2026-27.

Roughly 65 to 70 percent of deployed QR codes were active, representing about 4.8 lakh active QR-enabled customers.

That is where UPI's larger economic promise begins.

A QR code can help a small entrepreneur collect money, establish a transaction history

and potentially demonstrate the viability of a business to a bank.

Under Mission YUVA, the J&K government's flagship employment programme, J&K Bank serves as the principal financial partner, giving new enterprises a route into digital commerce from the beginning.

The next challenge is inclusion.

Feature-phone users, senior citizens, women-led businesses, small merchants and communities with weak connectivity must gain easier access. Cybersecurity must keep pace with the system's enormous scale. Consent-based digital cash-flow information should support responsible lending, while emerging tools such as delegated payments, biometric authentication and recurring mandates should remain simple and customer-focused.

Cross-border interoperability could further help tourists, businesses and the Indian diaspora.

Branches also retain an important role. Digital banking expands reach, while human assistance can help customers adopt services, resolve problems and build confidence.

UPI's first decade changed how India pays. Its second should answer a larger question: can the infrastructure that democratized payments also democratize economic opportunity?

Kashmir is a useful place to test that proposition.

When a fruit seller, taxi operator, artisan or young entrepreneur can turn a payment record into a pathway toward customers and formal finance, a QR code stops being a payment tool.

It becomes an entry point into the economy.

The author is Multimedia Editor at Kashmir Observer.

Kashmir's Dead Are Waiting for Permission

The dispute over a few feet of earth is exposing a larger struggle in Kashmir over common land, waqf property and the informal power of local committees.



Mohammad Ilyas Bhat

The old man came to my door one morning, worried and shaken. He had come to ask for something no one should have to ask for: permission to bury a beloved.

He had lived on our street for more than 60 years. His hands trembled as he stood there, and his voice shook even more.

"Beta, please help me get the permission," he said.

He was pleading to bury his own family member.

Thirty-two years earlier, he had paid about ₹3,000 to the local graveyard committee. At the time, the payment seemed straightforward.

He was contributing to the place where members of his community would eventually be buried, as his father had done and as families around him had done for generations.

The receipt became his evidence that he had a place there.

Then death came.

The ground he expected to find ready for his family had become a disputed patch of Kahcharai, or common grazing land. The land legally belonged to the community, but a local committee had assumed control over access to it.

The old receipt, his decades in the neighbourhood and his connection to the graveyard were suddenly insufficient.

He had spent most of his life in the same place. Still, when his family needed a few feet of earth, he found himself asking other people for permission.

His story raises a question that many communities across Kashmir have little appetite for confronting: Who owns a graveyard?

The answer sounds simple until the question reaches the ground itself.

in community life.

They belong to the living and the dead at the same time. Families maintain them, committees administer them and communities depend on them. But the land itself remains subject to the legal status attached to it.

A committee can manage a graveyard without owning it. A president can oversee burials without gaining a landlord's authority. A register can record local practice without becoming a title deed.

These distinctions become crucial when common land enters the picture.

Kahcharai land holds a specific legal status. Its classification in revenue records gives it a public character, and long use by villagers does not automatically transform it into private property.

Courts in Jammu and Kashmir have addressed this question directly.

In *Inhabitants of Village Kukroosa v. State of J&K*, decided by the Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court in 2023, villagers had used Kahcharai land as a graveyard.

The court held that the villagers had no legal right to change the use of the land merely because burials had taken place there over time. Its recorded classification remained decisive.

The principle has also appeared in the Supreme Court's ruling in *Jagpal Singh v. State of Punjab*, which called for protection of village common lands against illegal occupation. Long possession alone could not turn common land into private property.

That verdict creates an important distinction for Kashmir's graveyards.

A burial ground can have a genuine history of community use while still raising questions about the legal status of the underlying land.

Those questions require revenue records, historical documents, waqf records and, where necessary, judicial determination.

A committee's word cannot substitute for that process.

The problem grows more complicated when informal arrangements accumulate over years.

One family takes a section, another claims the adjoining piece. A railing goes up around a grave, followed by concrete work. Over time, a path becomes a private entrance, while a wall divides one portion from another.

Each alteration may look small when viewed on its own. Together, they can transform a shared burial ground into a collection of private territories.

The change can happen gradually enough for a community to accept it as normal.

By the time someone challenges it, the landscape itself appears to support the claim.

That is where Kashmir's older burial traditions provide a striking contrast.

Consider Malkha, the historic graveyard in Srinagar. Historical accounts attribute its establishment to Mir Muhammad Hamadani, the son of the celebrated saint Mir Syed Ali Hamadani.

According to one account, Mir Muhammad Hamadani purchased the Malkha tract centuries ago and dedicated it as waqf for the burial of Muslims.

The account places the purchase price at 29.50 rupees of that era and describes the land as an enormous orchard covering roughly 1,000 kanals.

Those figures should be checked against archival records before they are treated as settled fact. The larger principle, however, is clear: land was set aside for a community whose future members the donor would never meet.

The gesture was meant for far more than a single family.

A person buying land for a burial ground could have chosen to reserve it for his descendants. Instead, the land was dedicated to people who would come generations later, people whose names, families and social standing were unknown to him.

That idea stands in sharp contrast to the growing practice of marking



Kashmir needs a systematic survey of its major graveyards, particularly places where competing claims, private enclosures or unauthorized construction have emerged. Such a survey could bring together revenue records, waqf documentation, historical deeds and current physical boundaries.

burial spaces according to family identity and private influence.

Malkha's landscape creates that tension visibly.

Railings and individual enclosures can give particular graves a sense of separation and permanence. A burial ground established for collective use begins to acquire the visual language of private possession.

The contradiction goes beyond property law. It touches the meaning of burial itself.

Islam places profound emphasis on the equality of human beings before death. Wealth, status and social influence lose their practical force once a person enters the grave.

A powerful and a poor household eventually need the same basic thing: a place in the earth.

That makes a graveyard an unusually powerful public space.

The wealthy and the poor lie beside one another. The prominent and the forgotten occupy the same earth. Family names lose their practical authority once the grave closes.

The physical landscape can either strengthen that idea or contradict it.

A grave marked by elaborate iron-work beside another identified only by a simple stone tells one story. A family receiving access because it has connections while another family searches for permission tells another.

The second story is increasingly common in parts of Kashmir.

The old man's experience captures the imbalance especially well.

His decades-old payment established a connection to the graveyard in his mind. His neighbours had used the same place for generations. His life in the locality gave him a sense of belonging that seemed obvious until a committee questioned his claim.

A well-connected family can often find someone willing to intervene when such disputes arise.

A phone call can reach a committee member, a relative can speak to the president, and a personal connection can settle a disagreement before it develops into a formal dispute.

An ordinary family facing death has a very different experience.

Someone must find the committee member, explain the family history, produce an old receipt, and establish that the deceased belonged there.

Grief becomes an administrative exercise.

The family must prove its connection to the ground at precisely the moment when its attention should be elsewhere.

That is where a dispute over burial land becomes a question of public administration.

Graveyards need proper and professional management.

Paths have to be maintained, boundaries need protection, new burials have to be recorded, and encroachments need attention. Someone has to coordinate the practical work that keeps a burial ground usable.

Community committees can perform all of those functions. But their authority has limits.

Management does not confer ownership. A committee register does not automatically establish title. A handwritten allocation of burial spaces does not create a proprietary right.

A board bearing the words *Maqboozah Ahli Islam* cannot, by itself, determine the legal status of the land beneath it.

Those questions belong to the documentary record.

Revenue records can establish land classification, registered deeds can show transfers, waqf documents can record dedications, and court orders can settle disputed claims.

The difference between these forms of evidence and informal authority becomes particularly important when public or common land is involved.

Kahcharai land cannot become private simply because a family has used a portion for years. Waqf land cannot become personal property because a committee has administered it for decades.

Community use can establish a history that needs investigation, but history alone cannot answer questions that the law assigns to records and formal proceedings.

The administration therefore faces a task that extends well beyond individual disputes.

Kashmir needs a systematic survey of its major graveyards, particularly places where competing claims, private enclosures or unauthorized construction have emerged.

Such a survey could bring together revenue records, waqf documentation, historical deeds and current physical boundaries.

Officials could then establish which burial grounds rest on

common land, which have genuine waqf status, which have private or formally dedicated ownership, and which require further legal determination.

The survey would also have to examine the physical changes that have taken place over time.

Who built the walls? Who installed the railings? Who authorized concrete construction? Who allocated burial spaces? Who collected money? Where did that money go?

Those questions matter because community committees often operate in a space between social trust and formal oversight.

Families contribute money because they believe the committee acts for the common good.

That trust becomes vulnerable when financial records remain inaccessible or when decisions about burial access become discretionary.

Transparent accounts could change that dynamic. Clear rules could change it further.

A graveyard could have written procedures governing burial eligibility, fees, record-keeping and land use. Revenue and waqf authorities could verify the legal status of the land. Committees could continue managing daily affairs while remaining accountable to the community and the law.

Such measures would also protect committee members from accusations that arise when rules remain informal.

The central question is simple: Who has the legal authority to decide who can be buried where?

The answer cannot depend on who happens to occupy the committee presidency.

That position can change from one election or appointment to another. The land's legal status remains.

The old man understood this intuitively. His plea for permission was also a plea for recognition that his relationship with the community meant something.

He had spent 60 years living among the same people. Thirty-two years earlier, he had paid for his place in a communal institution. He had kept the receipt. But when the moment came, the receipt could not settle the question.

That experience reveals a deeper transformation.

A graveyard can remain publicly identified as a community space while functioning through layers

of private influence. The sign above the entrance can say one thing while the boundaries inside tell another story.

Kashmir has seen this pattern in many forms: common resources gradually divided through informal possession, public spaces altered through private construction and community institutions increasingly governed through personalities rather than rules.

Burial grounds expose the contradiction with unusual force because the people affected by the dispute have already lost the ability to speak.

The dead cannot approach a committee president. They cannot produce a receipt or contest a wall built over communal land. Their families must speak for them. That makes the responsibility of the living heavier.

A society's treatment of its burial grounds says something about how it understands community itself.

Shared land represents an agreement among people who accept that some spaces belong to everyone. Waqf represents an agreement between generations, in which land is dedicated for a purpose that extends beyond the donor's lifetime.

Private enclosure reverses that direction.

It takes something intended for collective use and makes it increasingly particular.

The transformation can seem harmless when it begins with a railing around a grave. It becomes more consequential when the railing becomes a boundary, the boundary becomes a claim and the claim becomes a refusal to recognize someone else's place in the community.

That is why the dispute over a few feet of earth deserves attention far beyond the graveyard gate.

The administration has the legal instruments to investigate these claims. Revenue authorities can examine classifications. Waqf authorities can verify endowments. Local officials can inspect unauthorized construction. Courts can determine disputed rights. Communities can demand transparent records from the committees entrusted with their burial grounds.

The objective should be straightforward: establish the legal status of the land, protect genuinely communal and waqf property, remove unauthorized private occupation where the law calls for it, and create rules that allow families to bury their dead without pleading their case to an informal authority.

Such a system would also preserve the legitimate role of local committees.

Management works best when people know the boundaries of their authority. A committee can maintain the graveyard, record burials and serve families while leaving ownership questions to the legal and documentary framework that governs the land.

The old man from our street is still waiting.

His story begins with a payment made three decades ago and ends, for now, with an appeal at someone's door.

Between those two moments lies a much larger story about Kashmir: about common land that acquires private boundaries, institutions that gain authority through habit, records that remain buried while fences rise above the soil, and ordinary families who discover the limits of belonging when death comes.

A graveyard should ask very little of the living.

It should ask for the name of the dead, the place where they came from and the space where they will rest.

The final measure of a community may be found in what happens after a person has lost everything that once gave him status. The grave should return everyone to the same earth.

Kashmir's dead are waiting for that promise to hold.

— *The author works in agricultural seed production and is currently writing his first short story collection in Kashmir. He can be reached at mbhatilyas@gmail.com.*



The dead cannot approach a committee president. They cannot produce a receipt or contest a wall built over communal land. Their families must speak for them. That makes the responsibility of the living heavier.

Legal ownership usually comes with documents, revenue entries, registered deeds or an identifiable history of dedication.

But burial grounds in Kashmir can present a different picture.

Iron railings surround particular graves, concrete paths lead toward family sections, walls divide portions of land, and handwritten lists assign spaces to households.

Local committees keep registers, while presidents decide where a body can be buried.

Over time, Kashmir's graveyard management begins to resemble ownership.

That reality is important because burial grounds hold a special place

Srinagar Jail Escape

Two POCSO Undertrials Arrested in Rajasthan

Agencies

Srinagar: Two undertrial prisoners facing separate cases under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, who had escaped from Central Jail Srinagar on August 23, have been traced to Rajgarh in Rajasthan's Churu district and arrested, officials said.

The two have been identified as Farman Khan, a resident of Rajasthan, and Mukhtar Ahmad Gujjar, a resident of Anantnag.

According to officials, Srinagar Police, with assistance from Rajasthan Police, traced the duo to Rajgarh and apprehended them after a three-day search operation.

Police parties from Srinagar have already left for Rajasthan to take custody of the two and bring them back to Srinagar.

Farman Khan was lodged

in Central Jail Srinagar in connection with FIR No. 19/2026 registered at Police Station Lar under Sections 137(2) and 87 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Sections 3 and 4 of the POCSO Act.

Mukhtar Ahmad Gujjar was facing proceedings in FIR No. 20/2026 registered at Police Station Soura under Sections 137(2) and 65(1) of the BNS and Sections 3 and 4 of the POCSO Act.

The duo had allegedly escaped from the high-security prison on August 23, following which police issued lookout notices and launched a manhunt across the Valley and beyond.

Their arrest brings an end to the immediate search for the two escapees, while investigation into the circumstances surrounding their escape from Central Jail Srinagar is continuing. [KNT]

NHAI Expert Team Probes Fatal Expressway Construction Incident in Samba

Press Trust Of India

Jammu: A three-member expert team of NHAI on Wednesday conducted a detailed technical examination of the fatal incident during construction of the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district to ascertain the cause and review the launching process.

On Tuesday, a 25-year-old labourer from Bihar was crushed to death when a span segment slipped at the construction site of Package-15 of the expressway at village Jakh in Vijaypur tehsil of Samba.

As part of the examination, three experts with extensive experience in the field were called to the site, National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) Jammu said in a statement here.

It said the expert team inspected all aspects of the



techno-mechanical failure involving the highly sophisticated launching gantry and examined the relevant design details and sequence of operations.

"Prima facie, the incident appears to have occurred due to a technical snag during the launching operation. A detailed examination is continuing to establish the precise cause of the incident and to determine the necessary corrective and preventive measures," the statement said.

It said the victim's family has been suitably compensated, and

the company has also provided employment to the next of kin.

"While such assistance cannot compensate for the loss, it has been extended in solidarity with and support for the affected family," the NHAI said.

The statement said NHAI remains firmly committed to ensuring the highest standards of safety during construction activities as well as for highway users.

"All necessary measures will continue to be undertaken to uphold safety standards across the project," it said.

UGC-NET Results To Be Announced This Week: NTA

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi, Aug 26: The results for 84 subjects of UGC-NET will be announced this week, the National Testing Agency (NTA) said on Wednesday.

"The final answer keys and results for UGC-NET (84 Subjects), CSIR-NET and ICAR AIEEA (PG) and AICE (PhD) 2026 will be published on NTA's website, this week. Candidates are advised to rely only on official communications from NTA," the agency said in a post on X.

The NTA had ordered fresh examinations for candidates who appeared for the English, Commerce and Sociology papers in June this year after an expert committee found factual, typographical, translation and language-related

errors in the question papers.

The NTA released the UGC-NET answer key on August 16, nearly two months after the examination, while issuing a special notice concerning the Sociology, Commerce and English papers.

Later, on the same day, it announced that the three examinations would be conducted afresh in September, citing the errors.

The re-examinations are scheduled for September 9 and 10, and candidates will not be required to pay an additional examination fee.

The National Eligibility Test (NET) is conducted by NTA to determine the eligibility of Indian nationals for the role of assistant professor and for the junior research fellowship (JRF) in Indian universities and colleges.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

The Kashmir That

he said. "They make you realise the ultimate truth of life."

Hussain sees Milad as part of a wider spiritual inheritance that once helped Kashmiris withstand years of upheaval. The gatherings brought people together, he said, and reminded them of goodness, humility and their connection with something larger than themselves.

The experience of the pandemic gave that belief another dimension.

A caretaker at Hazratbal recalled the period when Covid-19 restrictions emptied the shrine and other mosques and sanctums in the valley. Regular visitors, particularly people from the older generation, suddenly lost a place where they had routinely prayed, shared their worries and felt connected to a higher power.

The caretaker said many became agitated and emotionally unsettled.

The point, he explained, was never that God existed only inside a shrine. "Devotees viewed such places as sites associated with the Prophet's beloveds and with blessings that believers had sought for generations," he said. "The physical journey to a shrine gave that faith a human and communal expression."

That expression remained visible on Eid Milad.

Misbah Rashid, a 28-year-old university student, stood among the worshippers. Her presence complicated the idea of a simple generational divide.

She belongs to a younger Kashmir that has inherited new ideas and questions, while still finding value in old sacred spaces.

"Places like these make you humble, calm and soulful," she said. "That's what actually matters at a time when there is a lot of uncertainty around you."

She also spoke of the sense of community created by such gatherings.

People who might otherwise live separate lives came together around prayer, shared belief and the memory of the Prophet.

Nearby, a young man named Saqib Mir wept during the prayers.

His terminally ill mother could not come to Hazratbal. He had come on her behalf, praying for her recovery and asking God to grant her shifa.

She had once attended Milad gatherings at the shrine herself, he said, and he wanted to stand in her place.

His prayer was one among thousands.

Some worshippers came seeking relief from illness, others prayed for children, family members or personal struggles.

The shrine became a gathering point for private grief and public devotion, with thousands sharing a space where individual worries could sit alongside collective faith.

That may explain why Eid-e-Milad continues to hold such significance in Kashmir.

The day has become a celebration for children and families, with lights, prayers and festive gatherings filling the shrine precinct. But beneath that celebration lies a deeper social function.

"Kashmir has endured turmoil, trouble and trauma," says Imran Ali, a scholar part of Milad gathering at Hazratbal. "Its older religious traditions gave many people a language through which they could process suffering, seek solace and remain connected to their communities."

The young, he said, are changing that inheritance. "Some question it, while many reject it."

But others, like Misbah, are finding their own reasons to remain within it.

Halima's prayer for her granddaughter captures that tension with unusual intimacy.

An illiterate grandmother and her highly educated granddaughter live under the same roof, but see the world through very different eyes: one finds comfort in faith, the other in questions.

At Hazratbal, their worlds briefly meet.

Halima still returns to the shrine after more than five decades because she believes there is a greater power beyond the limits of human understanding. Her granddaughter searches for explanations in a different vocabulary.

On Eid-e-Milad, thousands of Kashmiris stood between those two impulses: questioning and believing, analysis and surrender, individual struggle and collective prayer.

The relic, meanwhile, was displayed. Hands

rose, and tears fell.

And for a few hours, an old Kashmir gathered around the faith that had helped it endure the years when so much else had become uncertain.

Devotion Marks

to the processions and religious gatherings to mark the occasion and remember the life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

At Hazratbal, thousands of devotees gathered for prayers and religious programmes, with the shrine witnessing a major congregation.

The Eid-e-Milad observances continued throughout the day across Kashmir, with devotees expressing their reverence for Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through prayers, processions and religious gatherings.

Advanced Care

without advanced specialists," Sinha said.

Recalling an interaction with doctors during his 2020 visit to Akhnour under the 'Back to Village' programme, Sinha said discussions around rare-disease diagnosis and the shortage of modern equipment had highlighted the gap between healthcare available at district hospitals and the level of care actually required by patients.

He said bridging this gap should be treated as a national priority.

Highlighting the expansion of India's healthcare infrastructure, Sinha said the country now has 23 AIIMS and 2,045 medical colleges, while Jammu and Kashmir has two AIIMS, 10 medical colleges, two State Cancer Institutes, a Bone and Joint Hospital, a Paediatric Hospital, 52 nursing colleges, 23 paramedical colleges and five pharmacy colleges.

He said the expansion had strengthened primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare, but the next step should be to transform tertiary hospitals into quaternary care centres.

Sinha called upon hospitals to evolve into research institutions capable of undertaking advanced procedures and treatments, including organ transplantation, robotic and precision surgery, advanced genomics, cellular therapies and AI-supported diagnostics.

He urged hospitals to make annual budgetary provisions for specialised infrastructure and emerging technologies such as modern operating theatres, robotic surgery, gene therapy, proton-beam therapy and artificial-intelligence-based diagnostics.

The Lieutenant Governor also proposed a mission involving Himalayan states, Jammu and Kashmir, universities, hospitals, private institutions and innovators to advance biomedical research and address funding challenges.

"We must develop new inventions ourselves instead of importing innovation from abroad," he said.

Sinha further urged that hospitals be treated as strategic national assets on the lines of highways and ports, with sustained investment in their preservation and development.

He said the ultimate objective should be to create a healthcare system that guarantees equal access to advanced treatment irrespective of a person's economic status.

"We must create a robust quaternary-care framework that guarantees equal access to the son of a farmer and to a millionaire living in a city," he said.

On the occasion, Sinha released the summit souvenir and several publications.

Dr M Srinivas, Member, NITI Aayog; Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo; Dr Digambar Behera, President, National Academy of Medical Sciences; Dr Kameshwar Prasad; Commissioner Secretary, Health and Medical Education Department, M Raju; Prof M Ashraf Ganie, Director, SKIMS; heads of various institutions, researchers, scientists and senior officials were present.

NC Renews

of government formation in October 2024, the NC had reached out to the Congress with an offer of one berth in the council of ministers, but the Congress had demanded two. Later, the party publicly stated that it would not join the government until the restoration of J&K's statehood.

The fresh offer comes at a time when Omar Abdullah is planning a reshuffle and expansion in the council of ministers headed by him.

As per the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act, the council of ministers in the Union Territory can have a maximum of nine members, since its strength shall not exceed 10 percent of the total strength of the Assembly.

Sources said that Chief Minister Omar Abdullah is expected to effect a reshuffle-cum-expansion in the council of ministers in the first week of September.

"The expansion is likely to take place before the Assembly session," sources said. (KNO)

6 Dead, 3 Injured

following which the 108 ambulance service, additional ambulances and other emergency resources were dispatched to the site.

The bodies of the six deceased, including four men and two women, were brought to the district hospital, he said.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha expressed anguish over the loss of lives and directed the district administration to provide immediate assistance to the affected families.

"Pained by the loss of lives in a tragic road accident in Poonch. My thoughts are with the bereaved families. Praying for the speedy recovery of the injured. Have directed the District Administration to ensure immediate assistance is provided to those affected," Sinha said in a post on X.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also expressed deep grief over the accident and conveyed his condolences to the bereaved families.

The Chief Minister directed the authorities to ensure the best possible medical care for the injured, while the Chief Minister's Office said it was in constant touch with the concerned authorities to extend all possible assistance.

Five OGWs

The arrests come a day after eight overground workers of terrorists were arrested by security forces in three separate operations in Shopian and Pulwama districts. Srinagar, Aug 26 (PTI) Security forces on Wednesday arrested five overground workers of terrorists during an anti-terrorist operation in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said.

Security forces carried out a cordon-and-search operation in the Bugam area of Kulgam district based on specific intelligence input, they said.

Five suspects were apprehended during the operation. On their questioning, the security forces recovered a cache of arms and ammunition, including four pistols, two hand grenades and some live rounds, the officials said.

Further details of the operation are awaited.

The arrests come a day after eight overground workers of terrorists were arrested by security forces in three separate operations in Shopian and Pulwama districts.

Kashmir Heat Set

on Friday and Saturday.

Several plains of the Valley, including Srinagar, could record maximum temperatures close to or around 35 degrees Celsius during the peak period.

The weather is expected to remain predominantly dry and hot towards the end of August, with residents in the plains likely to experience warmer-than-normal afternoons.

However, temperatures in the higher reaches are expected to remain comparatively cooler than in the plains.

The anticipated rise in mercury comes amid a predominantly dry spell across the Valley, with no major change in weather conditions expected in the immediate period.

A Minor Girl

a lawyer can adequately represent a party. Rahilla Khan, the counsel arguing the case, told the High Court that the statute draws a clear distinction between legal representation and personal appearance.

Section 13 regulates the involvement of lawyers, she argued. It does not create a blanket requirement for parties to appear personally at routine hearings.

Khan set out two scenarios to explain how the provision should work.

Under the first, a litigant or minor approaches the family court personally and chooses to represent themselves. The court accepts the petition and permits self-representation. If a complex legal question later emerges, Section 13 can be invoked temporarily so the court can appoint an amicus curiae, a lawyer who assists the court on that specific issue. Once the

question is resolved, the party can resume appearing personally.

The second scenario forms the central point of ZG's petition.

When a minor and her mother approach the court through legal counsel, Section 13 comes into operation at the outset, when the court grants permission for legal representation. Once that permission has been granted, Khan argued, the provision does not require fresh activation at subsequent hearings.

Routine dates, she submitted, therefore should not automatically compel the parties to appear in person.

A court can still require personal attendance when a hearing serves a specific purpose, such as determining custody or recording evidence where personal presence is legally required.

The distinction carries practical consequences.

"A mother raising a child while waiting for unpaid maintenance pays a real price each time she returns to court," Khan told the court, pointing to lost wages, missed school days and travel expenses for hearings that can end without a ruling.

Those costs can accumulate over months. Khan said families facing such repeated appearances can eventually abandon legitimate claims because continuing the case consumes too much time and money.

ZG's case gives that argument a human face.

Her mother has already secured an interim maintenance order. The court has recognised a financial obligation toward the child. The unresolved question now concerns enforcement and the process surrounding it.

Khan also pressed the High Court to consider the larger purpose behind family courts.

"Besides this, a question arises: what is the core purpose of a Family Court if not to strip away the procedural rigidity of standard Civil Courts?" she asked.

"The legislative mandate was to create a

flexible, accessible forum for sensitive domestic matters. Yet, in practice, the current procedure has become far more rigid and unyielding than the very civil court system it was meant to reform."

That argument becomes sharper when a child stands at the centre of the case.

Family courts dealing with children are expected to act as parens patriae, a legal guardian of last resort whose first concern is the welfare of the child. The principle gives the child's interests a special place in judicial decision-making.

The petition argues that procedural rigidity can defeat that responsibility when court requirements become an obstacle to enforcing an order already granted for a child's support.

Justice Bharti has allowed the issue to receive further examination. He referred to decisions of the High Court of Karnataka, including High Court of Karnataka v. State of Karnataka and Komal S. Padukone v. Principal Judge, Family Court at Bangalore City.

Those rulings also examined the extent to which family courts can insist on personal attendance from people involved in domestic disputes.

The judge directed the Registrar Judicial in Srinagar to obtain the complete trial court record and ordered the case to continue.

The petitioners want clear rules on when family courts should ask people to appear in person and when lawyers can represent them. Such rules could help thousands of families dealing with maintenance, custody and divorce.

A court date can mean lost wages, missed school, travel costs and hours spent waiting, Khan said.

ZG's case makes that burden easy to see. She has a court order for support. Her mother keeps bringing her to Srinagar, but the money is still unpaid.

Now the High Court must decide whether families seeking help from the courts should have to keep returning simply to make an order work.

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In Orchards, Fields, Kashmir Faces Rising Bear Threat

Agencies

KULGAM: What began as an ordinary morning in an apple orchard turned into a fight for survival for 62-year-old Abdul Salam Teeli, a resident of Ahmadabad village in Damhal Hanjipora, after he was attacked by a Bear.

Teeli said he had reached his orchard around 11:30 am with his wife and daughter-in-law when he heard that a bear had attacked another person nearby.

"On hearing the cries, I tried to run away with my wife and daughter-in-law. The bear then turned towards me and attacked me as well," Teeli told KNO.

He suffered injuries to his head and was shifted to hospital for treatment. The other injured person was also taken to a medical facility.

The incident comes amid growing concern over increasing human-bear encounters across Kashmir, particularly in areas



close to forests, orchards and agricultural land.

Official figures show that 32 people were killed and 350 injured in wild animal attacks across Jammu and Kashmir over the past two years. In 2023-24,

authorities recorded 9,301 such incidents, resulting in 18 deaths and 137 injuries. During 2024-25, 6,360 attacks were reported, leaving 14 people dead and 213 injured.

Wildlife authorities have set

up more than 50 control rooms across Jammu and Kashmir to respond to wildlife emergencies. The facilities are equipped with specialised equipment, including tranquillising and net guns, protective gear, cages and surveillance devices, and are staffed by trained personnel.

An official said many attacks occur during morning hours when people head to orchards and agricultural fields, with areas having extensive forest cover and protected habitats considered particularly vulnerable.

Wildlife researcher and conservationist Kashif Farooq Bhat said the rise in human-bear encounters should be viewed in the context of habitat disturbance and seasonal food availability.

"This is the apple harvesting season, and apples could be a prime attraction for bears. Maize is also available during the same period, making increased human-bear interactions more likely," he said.

Bhat said the conversion of traditional grazing land around protected areas into agricultural fields, orchards and settlements has also brought people and wildlife into closer contact. Improper disposal of household and horticultural waste may further attract bears to villages and urban areas, he added.

He cautioned against linking the number of attacks directly to an increase in the bear population, saying scientific population studies were needed to establish the actual status of Asiatic black bears.

Bhat urged communities living near forests to avoid disturbing wildlife habitats, dispose of waste properly and follow advisories issued by the Wildlife Protection Department.

"If a bear is sighted, people should remain calm, avoid moving alone, inform the department and not take the matter into their own hands," he said.

Youth Turns Govt Assistance into Polyhouse Farming Venture

Agencies

PULWAMA: In a promising example of agriculture-driven entrepreneurship, a young farmer from Meej in Pampore has transformed government assistance into a commercial farming venture, demonstrating the growing potential of protected cultivation as a source of income and employment in Kashmir.

Rafiq Rasool has established two polyhouses with an overall project cost of nearly Rs 41 lakh under the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP). The project received 95 per cent subsidy assistance, helping him set up a modern farming unit designed to facilitate vegetable production throughout the year.

Unlike conventional cultivation, where farmers remain largely dependent on weather and seasonal cycles, the polyhouses allow Rasool to maintain vegetable production under controlled conditions. The initiative has enabled him to diversify his crop



portfolio and experiment with several hybrid and exotic varieties.

At present, the farmer is cultivating around eight varieties of pumpkin, besides cucumber and other vegetables.

Speaking to KNO, Rafiq said the produce has found a good market and has provided him with a steady source of income.

Beyond generating income for himself, the enterprise has also opened employment opportunities for nearly 10 people. The project has thus emerged as an example of how assistance extended under

government agricultural programmes can create not only self-employment but also jobs for others.

Rasool said young people should look beyond conventional employment avenues and make use of the opportunities available through government-sponsored schemes.

He encouraged unemployed youth to consider agriculture as a business opportunity, saying that modern farming techniques can make the sector financially rewarding when combined with proper planning, technology and institutional support.

'J&K Moving from Bulk to Controlled Fruit Production'

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Director Horticulture Marketing J&K Ghulam Jeelani Zargar on Wednesday said that Jammu and Kashmir is gradually moving from bulk fruit production towards controlled production as the government is expanding mandi and storage infrastructure across the Union Territory.

Zargar said the expansion of the mandi network has significantly changed the way horticulture produce is marketed in J&K, with 37 mandis now facilitating trading activities across different regions.

He said around 99% of J&K's horticulture produce was earlier sent to Azadpur Mandi in Delhi. The establishment of mandis within J&K has since created more avenues for growers to market their produce.

"Sopore Mandi, Asia's second-largest fruit mandi, is sending produce to at least 200 destinations across the country," Zargar said.

He said Sopore Mandi alone handles fruit trade



worth around Rs 1,500 crore, with nearly 14 lakh metric tonnes of produce being dispatched to other states.

J&K's horticulture produce is also being exported to countries including Bangladesh and Nepal, he added.

Zargar said the department faces a major challenge in marketing the region's large production, with around 3.7 lakh hectares under horticulture and annual fruit production estimated at around 37 lakh tonnes.

"It is not easy to market such bulk production, but we assure that the department will leave no stone unturned to make way forward," he said.

He said the sector was now moving towards controlled production, supported by the expansion of controlled-atmosphere storage facilities.

"CA stores have crossed 3.5 lakh tonnes, which is revolutionising the market," Zargar said.

He said the expansion of storage capacity, coupled with the growing mandi network, would help regulate market arrivals and provide growers with greater flexibility in marketing their produce.

The Director said the department would continue to strengthen marketing infrastructure and explore new avenues to ensure better market access for J&K's horticulture sector—(KNO)

Bandipora's Springs Succumb to Garbage, Encroachment



Agencies

SRINAGAR: Once famous for springs, streams and freshwater resources, North Kashmir's Bandipora district is now witnessing a steady decline in its traditional water sources, with several springs and channels either drying up or being reduced to garbage dumping sites.

Locals told KNO that Bandipora, traditionally associated with Alim (knowledge), Adab (literature) and Aab (water), is facing growing concerns over the deterioration of its natural water resources.

They said that water channels and springs in areas including Gundpora, Ajas, Kehnusa, Arin, Kuloosa, Gamroou, Nadihal and Guroora have been severely affected by indiscriminate dumping of household waste.

The situation has also put a question mark over the quality of water flowing into downstream water bodies, including Wular Lake, one of Asia's largest freshwater lakes.

In Gundpora, a centuries-old stream that was once used by residents for domestic purposes is now littered with plastic bot-

tles, rotten food, discarded household items and other waste.

"People used to depend on this stream for water. Today, garbage is dumped into it and the flow has been blocked at several places," said 60-year-old resident Abdul Gani.

Residents said the problem is not limited to solid waste. Sewage discharge and other forms of contamination have further affected several traditional water channels.

"The water bodies that once added to the beauty of Bandipora are disappearing. Many of them are no longer fit even to look at," said Abdul Razak Bhat, an elderly resident of Bandipora town.

Several springs, some of which residents claim are more than a century old, have also either dried up or witnessed a sharp decline in their water discharge.

A spring in Gamroou, once used by villagers for domestic needs, has reportedly turned into a dumping spot, while residents of Gundpora and Dardpora said old springs in their areas have dried up.

"An old spring in Gundpora has completely dried up, forcing people to travel

considerable distances to fetch drinking water. A similar situation has emerged in Dardpora," said Abdul Khaliq, a resident.

Residents alleged that repeated assurances about cleaning and protecting the water sources have not translated into visible action on the ground.

"The authorities have been making claims about preserving these water bodies, but the situation continues to deteriorate," said Saqib Ahmad, a resident of Rampora.

He said there was an urgent need to prevent garbage dumping, control sewage discharge and undertake restoration of traditional water channels before more sources are lost.

The deterioration of water sources has also been reported from other parts of the district, including Hajin, Sumbal, Shahgund, Gundejahangir and Madwan, where residents said several springs and channels have been affected by pollution, encroachment and neglect.

Locals said restoring the district's traditional water sources would not only help protect its environment but could also reduce pressure on existing drinking-water infrastructure.

They urged the administration and concerned departments to identify vulnerable springs and water channels, remove accumulated waste and establish mechanisms to prevent further dumping and encroachment.

For residents, the decline of these traditional sources is more than an environmental issue, it marks the gradual disappearance of a part of Bandipora's identity—(KNO)

Sindh Nallah Water Quality Deteriorates at 3 Locations Due to Untreated Sewage: CPCB

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Water quality in the Sindh Nallah has deteriorated at three locations in Kangan and Sonamarg due to the discharge of untreated sewage through drains, according to a recent report submitted by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) before the National Green Tribunal (NGT).

The report was prepared in compliance with directions issued by the NGT in a case concerning pollution of the Sindh Nallah and its impact on trout habitat. The CPCB collected 11 water samples on May 4, 2026, including seven from different points along the nallah and four from drains discharging into it.

According to the findings, water quality at all seven river sampling points met the designated Class D standards for the propagation of wildlife and fisheries. However, three sites—Kangan Akhal Bridge, downstream of Shuktadi Bridge in Sonamarg and Sindh Nallah at Sonamarg—did not meet Class B and Class C standards due to high levels of total coliform.

Other key parameters, including pH, dissolved oxygen and biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), remained within the prescribed limits at these river locations.

The CPCB analysis found significantly higher levels of contamination in the drains entering the Sindh Nallah. Faecal coliform levels in the four drains ranged from 2×10⁴ to 29×10⁷ MPN/100 ml, while BOD values ranged between 6 mg/l and 118 mg/l, indicating the presence of untreated sewage.



The most severe contamination was detected in the drain near Hotel Glacier/Tajwas in Sonamarg, where faecal coliform was recorded at 29×10⁷ MPN/100 ml and total coliform at 35×10⁸ MPN/100 ml.

The drain in Kangan recorded faecal coliform levels of 61×10⁴ MPN/100 ml, while the drain near the Army Transit Camp in Sonamarg showed 13×10⁵ MPN/100 ml.

The CPCB noted that total coliform levels at three river locations exceeded the prescribed limits of 500 MPN/100 ml for Class B and 5,000 MPN/100 ml for Class C. It linked the deterioration primarily to the high faecal coliform concentrations detected in the drains discharging into the water body.

The report also examined the status of the 1.2 MLD Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) at Sonamarg and found that installation work was still underway. Officials of the Sonamarg Development Authority told the CPCB team that around two more months would be needed to complete the installation. The authority had also not obtained the mandatory Consent to Establish (CTE) from the J&K Pollution Control Committee.

In its assessment, the CPCB concluded that untreated sewage entering the Sindh Nallah through drains was responsible for increased total coliform

levels at the three affected locations in Kangan and Sonamarg.

The pollution control body recommended that the J&K Pollution Control Committee direct the concerned agencies to ensure that sewage is properly treated before being discharged into the water body. It also called for regular monitoring of the nallah to prevent any further deterioration in water quality.

The findings are part of ongoing proceedings before the NGT following a news report titled "Sindh Nallah Polluted Trout Habitat Threatened in Ganderbal", published by Greater Kashmir on August 19, 2024.

The Tribunal is examining pollution in the Sindh Nallah and its possible impact on trout farming, with the water body serving as an important source of freshwater for trout-related activities in the region.

The NGT had earlier asked the CPCB to conduct fresh sampling in April, observing that the earlier assessment was based on samples collected in December 2025, when tourist activity in the area was relatively low.

The CPCB later carried out the sampling on May 4 after its proposed April exercise was disrupted by extensive landslides in Jammu and Kashmir.

The matter was listed before the NGT on August 24, 2026—(KNO)

Woman Dies After Falling from Hillside in Reasi

REASI: A 29-year-old woman died after slipping and falling from a hillside while cutting grass in the Chassana area of Reasi district on Wednesday, officials said.

The woman was cutting grass on a steep hillside when she lost her footing and fell nearly 200–300 metres, officials said, adding that she died on the spot.

The deceased was identified as Sajo Begum, a resident of Manjikote Morha Balsaran in Mahore tehsil.

Police have taken cognisance of the incident and initiated an investigation. (Observer News Service)

Two-Storey House Attached under NDPS Act: Police

SRINAGAR: Police on Wednesday attached a two-storey residential house in Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

The action was taken against Noor Mohd Dar, son of Mohammad Ismail Dar and a resident of Hapatnar in Charar-i-Shareif, under Section 68-F(1) of the NDPS Act, a police spokesperson said in a statement issued to Kashmir Observer.

The attachment is linked to a case registered under Section 8/15 of the NDPS Act at Charar-i-Shareif Police Station.

The case pertains to offences relating to the illegal possession, transportation and trafficking of narcotic substances, he said.

"Continuing its sustained campaign against the menace of drugs and the financial networks supporting narcotics-related activities, Police in Budgam have attached a two-storey residential house," the spokesperson said.

"As per the provisions of law, the owner of the attached property is prohibited from selling, transferring, leasing, mortgaging or otherwise creating any third-party interest in the attached property without the permission of the competent authority," he added. (Observer News Service)

Two Arrested as Police Crack Multiple Gold Theft Cases

SRINAGAR: Police have achieved a major breakthrough in a series of gold ornament theft and snatching cases reported in and around Sopore town, arresting two persons, including an alleged receiver of stolen property, and recovering seven pairs of gold earrings, officials said on Wednesday.

In a statement issued to Kashmir Observer, an official spokesperson said that during investigation of case FIR No. 192/2026 under Section 309(4) BNS, registered at Police Station Sopore after a woman from Seelo reported that an unknown person had taken her towards Amargah, threatened her with a knife and forcibly taken away her gold earrings.

"During investigation, a detailed investigation involving CCTV analysis, technical inputs, field verification and examination of suspects led to the identification and arrest of Ishfaq Ahmad Bhat son of Abdul Majeed Bhat resident of Haripora, Langate, Handwara. The stolen earrings in the case were subsequently recovered at his instance," the spokesperson said.

Further investigation and detailed examination of the accused generated leads regarding his alleged involvement in similar incidents, including FIR No. 207/2025 under Section 304(2) BNS and FIR No. 55/2026 under Sections 304(2)/351(2) BNS of Police Station Sopore, the statement said.

Some have been linked to the registered cases, while the remaining ornaments have been seized under relevant legal provisions for identification and verification.

The investigation also led to the arrest of Sayed Ahmed Khan son of Munna Khan A/P Sangrama, a goldsmith, for his alleged role as a receiver of stolen property. His role and possible linkages with other similar incidents are being investigated. Further investigation is underway to ascertain the involvement of the accused in other cases and to identify the rightful owners of the remaining recovered property, he said. (Observer News Service)

Chari Mubarak Marks Culmination of Budha Amarnath Yatra 2026

POONCH: Amid religious and spiritual fervour, the Chari Mubarak Yatra was conducted in Poonch, marking the formal culmination of the revered Shri Budha Amarnath Ji Yatra 2026.

Led by Shri Shri 1008 Mahamandleshwar Swami Vishavratmanand Saraswati Ji Maharaj, the procession commenced from the Dashnam Akhara Mandir in Poonch, making its way to the sacred Shri Budha Amarnath Ji Shrine at Rajpura, Mandi.

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, MLA Kalakote Thakur Randhir Singh, former MLC Vibodh Gupta, Deputy Commissioner Poonch Ashok Kumar Sharma, DIG Rajouri-Poonch Sandeep Wazir besides other officers of the civil administration and police were present.

The Chari Mubarak Yatra was preceded by a special Puja and Havan, amid the resounding chants of Vedic Mantras, at the Akhara Mandir Poonch. Swami Vishavratmanand and Saraswati Ji Maharaj, along with numerous religious dignitaries, Yatris and locals congregated for this auspicious occasion.

Following the puja, a guard of honour was accorded to the holy mace and the Yatra to Shri Baba Budha Amarnath Ji temple was started amidst the participation of hundreds of devotees from across the nation, who offered prayers and chanted slogans in reverence to Lord Shiva.

Subsequently, a grand religious gathering was held at a nearby hall, where Swami Ji and other dignitaries delivered enlightening speeches on communal harmony, brotherhood and peace in the region.

The Chari Mubarak Yatra spanned a distance of 25 kilometers, with pilgrims making halts at various stalls arranged by the locals, providing food and refreshments.

The ancient Shrine of Lord Shiva, situated in the mountains of pir panjal, holds great significance as it is believed to be the place where Rishi Pulatsya, the grandfather of King Ravana of Lanka, engaged in worship for several decades. The Pulast River, flowing from the Loran-Mandi mountains of Pir Panjal to Poonch, derives its name from this revered saint.

The Chari Mubarak was welcomed at Mandi with immense enthusiasm and spiritual zeal, as people from all faiths joined together in celebrating the procession. With resounding chants of Lord Shiva's name, the sacred Chari Mubarak was carried to the Baba Budha Amarnath Ji Temple, where special prayers were conducted, encompassing the entire place in divine spirituality.

The Chari Mubarak will remain in the temple for two days and will be brought back on the auspicious occasion of Raksha Bandhan. With this, the ten-day-long Budha Amarnath Ji Yatra reached a formal conclusion, leaving behind a trail of devotion and blessings. The locals would continue to visit the temple to pay obeisance and receive blessings of the Lord Shiva. (Observer News Service)

Flood Fury Sweeps Nepal, 100 Dead, 500 Missing

Press Trust of India

KATHMANDU: Over a hundred people died, and nearly 500, including 133 Indians, are missing after a torrential flash flood originating in Tibet swept through central Nepal districts, causing devastation in towns and villages, washing away bridges and damaging at least a dozen hydropower projects on Wednesday.

The flood surged through the Bhote Koshi River at around 9 am (local time), affecting the Rasuwa and Dhading districts bordering Tibet, officials said. Situated near the Tibet border, Rasuwa is about 125 km northeast of Kathmandu.

The flood waters then spread to Nuwakot and Chitawan districts, damaging at least four permanent bridges and few temporary ones.

According to preliminary study reports on the basis of analysis of satellite pictures, the flash flood occurred due to an ice avalanche caused by an unstable

mountain rock mass lying near the Nepal-Tibet border, 20 kms northeast from Tibet-Rasuwadhi border area.

The massive flood entered into Trishuli river through Bhotekoshi in Timure due to the rock slide and swelling Lhende river situated in Nepal-Tibet border, said the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA), Nepal.

The Kathmandu Post quoted Rijan Bhakta Kayastha, a professor at Kathmandu University and a climate researcher, as saying that an earthquake also occurred on the Tibetan side around the same time.

According to the US Geological Survey, a magnitude 4.4 earthquake struck Tibetan territory at 8:37 am, about 47 kilometres north of Gosainkunda, the newspaper said.

In a separate report, the Kathmandu Post quoted the NDRRMA to report that 72 bodies were recovered across seven districts by Wednesday evening. One body was recovered in Rasuwa, 11 in



Nuwakot, 18 in Dhading, 28 in Chitwan, nine in Gorkha, four in Tanahu and one in Nawalparasi East, it said. A total of 93 people have been rescued from different parts of the affected areas, according to Rajendra Prasad Dhamala, spokesperson at Bagmati Province Police Office.

Among them, 30 people are undergoing treatment at the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu.

At least 133 Indians and 37 NRIs are among the nearly 400 persons missing.

Over and above that, 80 securitymen, including 44 Nepal Army personnel, have gone missing across various locations, Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal informed the House of Representatives.

Nepal's Flood Forecasting Division said in a post on X in the afternoon, "According to

information received from the Chinese side, since the lake at the river blockage site has not yet been fully drained, the risk remains in the Bhote Koshi and Trishuli areas" and asked people to stay away from the rivers and remain in a safe places.

"Even though the lake has not been fully drained at the site where the river is blocked, the risk persists in the Bhote Koshi and Trishuli areas, and people are urged to stay away from the river and remain in safe locations until the next update is issued," the NDRRMA said in a post on X later in the day.

The most affected was Rasuwa with videos going viral on social media highlighting the scale of the devastation, purportedly at Rasuwagadhi checkpoint in Nepal-China Border where a massive wall of gushing water could be seen overriding a two-storey building and washing away everything it covered.

Scores of people could be seen running away first, apparently at the sound of approaching water,

but within seconds are covered by mud and debris left behind by the flash flood.

Social media was full of photos and videos that showed the devastation in the habitations along the Bhote Koshi and Trishuli rivers.

Apart from the 133 Indians, there were 37 NRIs among the 341 foreign tourists/pilgrims missing after the devastating flash floods in Rasuwa district with most of the Indians headed for the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra in Tibet.

According to Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), of the total of 341 travellers, there were 62 Nepalese nationals, who are missing there.

Remaining tourists were from the US, Malaysia, the UK, South Africa, Australia and Netherlands, NTB said in a statement.

At least 59 of the Indians were pilgrims for the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra, Samrat Tours and Travel agency said.

The Indian Embassy in Kathmandu issued emergency num-

bers for assistance and information related to Indian nationals that have been affected by the flash floods.

In a post on X, it said people can contact +977 985 131 6807 or +977 970 910 7500.

The Embassy of India has remained engaged with the relevant authorities of Government of Nepal for early rescue and relief for Indian nationals affected by the flash floods that took place in Nepal, it said in another post on X.

Rescue and relief efforts continue to be strengthened in coordination with the Government of Nepal, it added.

The Nepal Tourism Board also issued similar numbers, including a toll free emergency number 1234 or hotline 1144 or tourist police 9851289445 for help.

The Kathmandu Post said flooding in the Bhote Koshi River washed away the 42-kilometre road linking Betrawati in Nuwakot with the Rasuwagadhi border crossing in Rasuwa.

Hormuz Won't Reopen Unless US Accepts All Conditions: Iran

Agencies

TEHRAN: Iran on Wednesday warned that the Strait of Hormuz would remain closed unless the United States accepts Tehran's conditions and returns to the terms of a June memorandum of understanding, as separate talks with Oman seek to establish a new framework for commercial shipping through the strategic waterway.

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps spokesman Brigadier General Hossein Mohebbi said Iran was prepared to reopen the strait within the framework of the agreement if Washington stopped what Tehran described as interference and fulfilled its commitments.

"If the United States stops obstructing and returns to the agreement, we can open the Strait of Hormuz within the framework of the agreement reached," Mohebbi said, according to Iranian state media.

"If the United States does not accept our conditions, the Strait of Hormuz will not be opened under any circumstances."

The warning came a day after Iran-

nian and Omani officials announced an understanding on a temporary shipping route through the strait but stressed that the arrangement did not amount to a reopening of the waterway.

The Strait of Hormuz, which separates Iran and Oman and connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman, is one of the world's most important energy chokepoints. Before the war, more than one-fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments passed through it. Most commercial traffic has been disrupted since the conflict began in February.

Iran sets conditions

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said Tehran's conditions went beyond the lifting of the US naval blockade.

He said Washington must fulfil its commitments under the Islamabad MoU, including ending the economic blockade, bringing a lasting halt to military operations and refraining from further threats or attacks against Iran.

Tehran also wants the United States to address the status of the

blockade affecting Yemen and provide assurances against further military action, Gharibabadi said in a televised interview.

Iran has repeatedly accused Washington of violating the June understanding and says the US failure to implement its commitments was responsible for the subsequent collapse of the agreement.

The MoU, signed in Islamabad in June with mediation by Pakistan and support from regional partners, was intended to halt hostilities and establish a framework for broader US-Iran negotiations. It included provisions concerning the Strait of Hormuz, sanctions and the lifting of wartime restrictions.

Washington and Tehran have since disagreed over the implementation of the accord, with Iran insisting that the United States must first fulfil its obligations before the strait can fully reopen.

New route, but no reopening

Iran and Oman have meanwhile been negotiating for weeks over how shipping should be managed through the strait.

Gharibabadi said the two sides

had agreed in principle on a temporary route about seven nautical miles wide. Commercial vessels entering the Persian Gulf from the Gulf of Oman would travel through Iranian territorial waters, while part of the outbound route would pass through Omani waters.

He stressed, however, that the arrangement was temporary and did not mean the Strait of Hormuz had been reopened.

Iran and Oman are expected to hold further negotiations over a permanent maritime traffic system within 30 to 60 days.

The proposed framework would also exclude military vessels from the route.

"No military vessel will be permitted to transit the Strait of Hormuz," Gharibabadi said, adding that the arrangement applied to commercial shipping.

Omani Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi said Tuesday that he was hopeful the two countries would soon announce a temporary corridor and practical arrangements to restore safe navigation, with longer-term management of the waterway to be addressed later.

14 Infants Killed in Fire at Pakistan Hospital

Press Trust Of India

ISLAMABAD- At least 14 infants were killed on Wednesday after a massive fire broke out in a gynaecology ward of a major hospital in Pakistan's capital Islamabad, authorities said.

The fire occurred around 7 am at the state-run Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), the largest public hospital in the capital.

In a statement, the Islamabad administration said 14 newborns were killed when the fire broke out on the third floor of the hospital's mother and child ward.

PIMS Spokesperson Dr Aneezah Jalil told the Dawn newspaper that 15 babies were in the ward. "At least one baby was saved by a doctor," she said.

The administration statement said rescue teams were rushed to the scene, with six fire brigade vehicles and four ambulances taking part in the rescue operation.

"The fire was immediately brought under control," it said, adding that an inquiry committee headed by the additional deputy commissioner general had been formed to investigate the incident.

PIMS spokesperson Jalil said the fire appeared to have been caused by a short circuit



and added that the flames had been extinguished, but the cooling process would take some time.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Tariq Fazal Chaudhry told the media that the fire spread rapidly due to the presence of oxygen lines in the ward.

He said a probe was ongoing and those responsible for negligence would not be spared, adding the incident's preliminary report would be presented to the prime minister within 14 hours.

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