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Nepal Floods Expose Hydropower Risks In Warming Himalayas

Victoria Milko/Sibi Arasu

Dhading (Nepal): Workers shovelled thick mud from a flood-ravaged power station in central Nepal, trying to revive a key node that supplies electricity to more than 20,000 people. But as they cleared debris from equipment buried by last week's catastrophic floods, there was hope the plant would not simply be rebuilt in the same place, beside the river that destroyed it.

In Nepal, up to 900 workers are unaccounted for from a dozen hydropower projects,



according to the Independent Power Producers' Association, Nepal, with hundreds believed trapped in tunnels. In Nepal and China combined, over 900 people have died and 4,700 are missing.

The loss of hydropower infrastructure is estimated to have taken 700 megawatts offline

-- about 10 per cent of the country's power capacity. Once the immediate aftermath of the disaster is dealt with, the question of how to restore power, roads, bridges, schools and health facilities quickly without rebuilding the same vulnerabilities should be on top of Nepalese authorities' minds, disaster experts said.

"Authorities have to take a hard look in the mirror now and ask how they will be rebuilding in these places. They will also have to take a close look at other projects in Nepal that have not been built yet, whether they'll be approved after this event," said Jakob Steiner, a geoscientist

at the University of Graz in Austria, who is currently based in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Rebuilding for resilience, not just replacement

Hydropower projects that were operating or under construction were fully or partly destroyed across Rasuwa, Nuwakot and | [More on P6](#)

Srinagar Is Moving Uphill Can Infrastructure Follow?

As homes, hotels and tourist retreats push toward Harwan's highlands, the administration is beginning to confront the civic infrastructure required to support the city's expanding edge.

Syed Sammar Mehdi

Srinagar: The road into Harwan climbs toward the wooded slopes, where Srinagar starts to look less like a valley city and more like a city rising into the hills.

Houses have appeared on land that once marked the outer edge of urban life. Tourist traffic moves toward Dachigam, Dara and Astanmarg, while private construction has followed the view.

The growth has created a common complaint among residents and developers: buildings have reached the hills faster than civic infrastructure has. On Monday, Mohammad Muqsit Wani, the Block Development Officer of Harwan, went into the field to inspect what the administration was doing about that gap.



Acting under the guidance of Akshay Labroo, the District Development Commissioner of Srinagar, Wani examined development works at several sites, including the upgradation of the Health Centre at Syedpora, works at Khimber and improvements to irrigation | [More on P6](#)

'No More Assurances': J&K Medical Interns Begin Strike On Stipend Hike

Demand Rs 30,000 monthly stipend and a formal government order

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: MBBS and BDS interns across Jammu and Kashmir on Monday began an indefinite strike, demanding an increase in their monthly stipend from Rs 12,300 to Rs 30,000 and insisting on a formal government order notifying the revision.

Protests were held at several government medical institutions, including GMC Srinagar, GMC Baramulla, GMC Handwara, GMC Anantnag and SKIMS Bemina in Kashmir, besides GMC Jammu, GMC Udhampur, GMC Rajouri and GMC Doda.

The protesting interns said the stipend had remained unchanged for nearly seven years despite repeated representations to the government and assurances regarding its revision.

"We have been forced to abandon work and take to the streets. All we are demanding is a stipend commensurate



with the number of hours we work," an intern said.

Dr Shah Nawaz, an intern, said MBBS and BDS interns across J&K had joined the strike.

"Our stipend has remained at around Rs 12,300 for seven years. In several other states, interns are getting between Rs 25,000 and Rs 45,000. We are performing the same

duties, including 24-hour and night shifts and rural postings, but are being paid only around Rs 400 a day," he said.

The interns said they work in emergency departments, OPDs, wards, ICUs and operation theatres and assist doctors in procedures and routine patient care.

"Despite performing regular duties | [More on P6](#)

Stipend Hike Proposal Under Process: Itoo

Health and Medical Education Minister Sakina Itoo on Monday said the demand of MBBS interns for an increase in their monthly stipend was genuine and that the government had already initiated the process to consider the hike. Talking to reporters, Itoo said the government had met representatives of the protesting interns and subsequently processed their demand. "We have met them. After meeting them, we have processed their file. The file has been sent to the Finance Department for the financial implications. It is under process," the minister said. Itoo urged | [More on P6](#)

India Records Hottest August Since 1901: IMD

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: India recorded its hottest August since 1901 in 2026, with the country's mean temperature touching 28.01 degrees Celsius, while rainfall during the month was deficient and ranked among the lowest recorded since 2001, the India Meteorological Department said on Monday.

According to the IMD, the normal mean temperature for August is 27.34 degrees Celsius. The average minimum temperature during August 2026 also reached a record high of 24.36 degrees Celsius, against the normal of 23.68 degrees Celsius.

Rainfall during the month stood at 213.3 mm, making it the seventh lowest August rainfall recorded since 2001, the weather department said.

The IMD attributed the deficient rainfall to moderate to strong El Nino conditions prevailing over the equatorial Pacific.

"Currently, strong El Nino conditions are prevailing over the equatorial Pacific Ocean, with sea surface temperature remaining above normal across the central and eastern equatorial Pacific. These conditions are expected to strengthen further | [More on P6](#)

J&K Snow-Bound Areas To Begin Census Today

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The month-long population enumeration in snow-bound areas of Jammu and Kashmir will begin today, with enumerators set to physically visit households across 16 districts of the Union Territory.

The population enumeration exercise in the snow-bound areas will continue from September 1 to September 30, according to officials.

"The population enumeration exercise will begin in snow-bound areas of J&K and the entire Ladakh Union Territory," Amit Sharma, Director Census Operations for Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, said.

Sharma, who is also the Chief Principal Census Officer for J&K and Ladakh, is visiting Dudu and Basantgarh sub-divisions of Udhampur to formally inaugurate the exercise.

According to details, the enumeration will cover 1,115 villages and three municipalities identified as snow-bound non-synchronous areas.

Doda has the highest number of such villages and municipalities at 305, followed by Kishtwar with 158, Baramulla 93, Ramban 88, Udhampur 79, Kulgam 66, Anantnag 55, Kupwara 49, Reasi 49, Kathua 48, Pulwama and Shopian 32 each, Bandipora 28, Poonch 24, Ganderbal 7 and Budgam 5.

The three | [More on P6](#)

Strengthen Red Cross Outreach To Vulnerable Sections: LG Sinha

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday called for greater outreach by the Indian Red Cross Society in far-flung and border areas of Jammu and Kashmir, emphasising the need to take humanitarian services closer to vulnerable and needy sections of society.

Chairing the Annual General Meeting of the Indian Red Cross Society, J&K UT, Sinha said the organisation should further strengthen its humanitarian role and expand its activities across the Union Territory.



"The Red Cross Society must further strengthen its humanitarian role and expand its activities to ensure timely assistance and essential services reach vulnerable and needy sections of society across Jammu Kashmir," he said.

Sinha, who is also President of the Indian Red Cross Society, J&K, directed officials to intensify the organisation's anti-drug campaign and contribute towards building a Nasha Mukta Jammu Kashmir.

He also | [More on P6](#)

RBA Certificate Fraud

HC Upholds EOW Jurisdiction, Refuses To Quash FIR

M Ahmad

Srinagar: Observing that the jurisdiction of an investigating agency is determined by the nature of offences disclosed in an FIR at the time of its registration, and not by the offences that may ultimately be established after completion of the investigation, the High Court of J&K and Ladakh has dismissed a petition seeking quashing of an FIR registered against a woman accused of fraudulently obtaining and using an RBA certificate to secure

appointment as an Assistant Professor in Biochemistry.

A bench of Justice Sanjay Dhar held that the material collected during the investigation prima facie disclosed cognizable offences and that the Court cannot exercise its inherent jurisdiction to quash the FIR, registered by the Economic Offences Wing Srinagar, as regards allegations of cheating, forgery, criminal conspiracy and offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The investigation agency alleged that | [More on P6](#)

HC Rejects Writ In Bar Association Poll Dispute

M Ahmad

Srinagar: The High Court of J&K and Ladakh has held that a Bar Association is a voluntary body and its internal election disputes or amendment of eligibility criteria for office-bearers cannot be challenged through a writ petition under Article 226 of the Constitution of India.

A bench of Justice Wasim Sadiq Nargal dismissed a petition filed by an advocate who had challenged the 2023 amendment enhancing the eligibility criteria for contesting the posts of President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Bar Association Shopian. Under the amended provisions, the required standing at the Bar was increased from 10 to 15 years for President and Vice-President and from seven to 10 years for Secretary.

The petitioner had also challenged the election notification issued on December 11, 2025, contending that the amendment had been introduced without following due procedure.

The petitioner argued that no valid General Body Meeting was held, no proper notice was circulated and no resolution approving the amendment had been passed. The advocate also alleged that the amendment was arbitrary and intended to exclude younger advocates from contesting elections.

The respondents opposed the petition, maintaining that the amendment had | [More on P6](#)

J&K Horticulture Loses ₹3,700 Crore Post-Harvest: NITI Aayog

Fruit output has grown fivefold since 1980, but apple productivity has declined.

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir is losing horticulture produce worth nearly 3,700 crore after harvest, even as the sector has expanded more than fivefold since 1980, with declining apple productivity and shrinking almond cultivation emerging as major concerns, according to a NITI Aayog roadmap.

The findings are part of the recently released "Roadmap for Horticulture Development

in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir @ 2047", which examines the changing structure of the Union Territory's horticulture economy and identifies key constraints affecting its future growth.

According to the report, around 5 lakh tonnes of apples are lost after harvest, translating into an estimated monetary loss of 1,500 crore. Vegetables suffer a similar absolute loss of around 5 lakh tonnes, with the estimated financial loss put at

1,560 crore. Cherries have the highest percentage of post-harvest losses, estimated at between 40 and 49 per cent. Saffron, despite a relatively small quantity loss of 0.48 tonnes, accounts for an estimated monetary loss of 4.8 crore because of its high value.

The report attributes the losses to problems across the supply chain, including improper handling, inadequate storage, transportation

constraints, limited processing capacity and weak marketing systems.

Processing of major fruits in J&K also remains limited. NITI Aayog estimates that only 2-3 per cent of apples, 12-16 per cent of cherries and 30-40 per cent of apricots are processed.

The report identifies poor cold-chain infrastructure and limited Controlled Atmosphere storage as significant constraints and recommends village-level

aggregation hubs, pre-conditioning and packaging facilities, staging cold stores and refrigerated vehicles.

The scale of the losses assumes significance given the importance of horticulture to the region's economy. NITI Aayog estimates that the sector provides livelihoods to approximately 3.5 million people, contributes around 6-7 per cent to the UT's GDP and has an annual turnover of about | [More on P6](#)



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Ruhullah's Road Ahead

Ruhullah's differences with Omar Abdullah should not push him into a political break with the party that remains central to Kashmir's struggle for statehood.



Haider Abbas



despite his role in liaising with the Prime Minister during the farmers' agitation in 2021.

Article 370 was finally abrogated on August 5, 2019.

The BJP's long-standing desire to implement a Uniform Civil Code still hangs over the nation. Its other major dream, to build the Ram Temple at the site of the demolished Babri Masjid, has been achieved.

For the PDP, however, the BJP's role in the demolition of the Babri Masjid appeared to have been of little consequence. In fact, all those accused in the Babri Masjid demolition case, including L.K. Advani, were eventually acquitted of the charges.

Therefore, one could almost say, with bitter irony, that nobody demolished it. Perhaps it was never built. Or maybe, it never existed.

The PDP provided the BJP with the political succour it needed in J&K. A historical comparison may help put this in perspective.

It was somewhat akin to the Bahujan Samaj Party forming a government with the ideologically opposite BJP in Uttar Pradesh in 2002. That arrangement helped the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government survive a no-confidence motion brought by the Congress.

If the BJP is what it is today, one could argue that the BSP's support in 2002 played a part in that journey. The BSP had also formed governments with the BJP twice before 2002.

By the end of 2026, there may not be a single BSP member left in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly, Rajya Sabha or Lok Sabha.

For four years, the PDP remained largely oblivious while the Vivekananda International Foundation briefed Satya Pal Malik, reportedly in a confidential capacity, on security issues. It also played a pivotal role in the initial campaign that led to the banning of Jamaat-e-Islami, which can be viewed as a dress rehearsal for the subsequent abrogation of Article 370.

Later, the PDP and NC challenged the abrogation of Article 370 in the Supreme Court. Why would the PDP do so? After all, it had been allied with the very party that had helped scrap it.

The Supreme Court then dashed their hopes when a five-member bench unanimously upheld the Centre's decision.

Prime Minister Modi has now promised the return of statehood. But will it ever come? Perhaps never.

Against this backdrop, Ruhullah has decided to stand against his own party leadership.

Perhaps a moment from history is worth recalling here.

India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was deeply opposed to his Congress colleague Purshottam Das Tandon on several issues. Tandon represented the right wing of the Congress. On the question of language, he favoured a heavily Sanskritised Hindi, while Nehru preferred a more inclusive approach to language and culture.

The two also differed sharply on relations with minorities. Nehru insisted that constitutional protection for Indian Muslims should remain absolute, regardless of developments in Pakistan. Tandon took a harder line.

A piqued Nehru even resigned from the Congress Working Committee in 1951 after Tandon's open disagreement with him continued.

But Tandon remained a Congress leader, and became a Lok Sabha MP and was later nominated by the Congress to the Rajya Sabha.

In 1961, he was also awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour.

There is little doubt that, by an act of providence, Farooq Abdullah survived an assassination attempt. Kamal Singh Jamwal's bullet missed him by a wafer-thin margin. The assailant reportedly expressed no remorse and had been waiting for years to kill Farooq Abdullah.

Farooq Abdullah remains one of the most prominent Muslim faces in Indian politics. He commands respect across a broad political spectrum.

Ruhullah, therefore, may be spinning the wrong urn.

The National Conference is striving to retrieve statehood for Jammu & Kashmir. That should be the rightful concern of every NC cadre. Ruhullah's attempt to carve out a separate and

peculiar niche within his own party serves little purpose.

Three recent political developments may also offer some lessons for him.

Uttar Pradesh Samajwadi Party leader Shivpal Yadav, uncle of SP president Akhilesh Yadav, formed a new party before the 2017 Assembly elections. He campaigned against the SP, made little electoral impact, and contributed to the party's difficulties. He later returned to the SP fold. His son, Aditya Yadav, became a Lok Sabha MP in the 2024 general elections.

Disciplined party workers generally do not rebel simply because they have been denied a position. Leaders such as Ravi Shankar Prasad and Prakash Javadekar were dropped from the Modi cabinet in 2024. But neither launched a rebellion against the BJP.

The condition of the Janata Dal (United), Shiv Sena, Trinamool Congress and Aam Aadmi Party, among others, also shows how political parties have increasingly become sites of internal disorder. Democratic traditions and norms have suffered badly.

Will Ruhullah also end up in the same disarray?

Saner counsel should prevail.

The recent Special Intensive Revision exercise provides another warning. The exercise has opened a new political front in West Bengal, where the BJP is seeking to consolidate its position.

As many as 38.1 lakh voters were declared invalid and appealed against the decision before tribunals. The tribunals have now adjudicated 83,000 applications, with 75,443 voters being reinstated. That amounts to a success rate of 91 percent.

The Trinamool Congress has brought before the Supreme Court the fact that in as many as 31 constituencies, the victory margin was smaller than the number of deleted voters.

A grave scenario may be waiting.

Against this larger political backdrop, Ruhullah should think carefully before taking a step that could permanently separate him from the National Conference.

Political differences within a party are neither unusual nor fatal. Political history is full of leaders who fought bitter internal battles, remained within their parties and eventually found their place in the larger political story.

Ruhullah should perhaps remember that.

The National Conference is bigger than any single disagreement. It has survived far greater political storms. Its struggle for the restoration of statehood gives its leaders a larger cause to pursue.

Ruhullah should remain within that struggle rather than walk away from it.

— The author is a former UP State Information Commissioner and a political analyst. He can be reached at rizvisha4u@yahoo.com.

KO VIEW

Kashmir Beyond Real Estate

Kashmir's historic buildings belong in the public policy debate as cultural assets, rather than being treated mainly as private property.

Old mosques, shrines, homes, bazaars and streets form the physical record of centuries of social and economic life. Their value extends beyond the land on which they stand, and their loss imposes a cost on the wider city.

Srinagar's historic quarters demonstrate why this issue demands stronger public action. Their buildings and precincts connect religious life, commerce, craftsmanship and community institutions.

The Jammu and Kashmir Heritage Conservation and Preservation Act, 2010 recognises this wider value by covering historic buildings, structures, streets, precincts, artefacts and cultural traditions. The law also provides for conservation plans and controls over development.

The central weakness lies in implementation.

Legal recognition has produced too little protection on the ground. Historic buildings often receive serious attention after demolition, structural damage or public controversy has already begun. Such a system leaves conservation dependent on individual disputes instead of placing it within ordinary urban governance.

Srinagar's planning framework has already identified important heritage areas and recognised conservation as part of the city's development. That policy direction needs stronger institutional backing.

Heritage buildings should have proper inventories, regular condition assessments and clear rules governing repairs, alterations and new construction. Owners also need technical assistance and financial incentives so that conservation becomes a practical option rather than a financial burden.

The argument for preservation is also economic.

Historic bazaars support artisans, shopkeepers and small businesses. Traditional buildings provide the setting for cultural tourism and local enterprise. A restored heritage precinct can generate commercial activity while retaining the architectural character that gives the area its identity.

Destroying that character weakens the very asset that tourism seeks to promote.

Conservation should also accommodate contemporary life. Families need functioning homes, religious institutions require usable buildings and businesses need modern services. Heritage policy can address those needs through careful restoration, improved infrastructure and design standards suited to historic areas.

Preservation works best when old buildings remain part of living neighbourhoods.

Public agencies have a particular responsibility. Government cannot ask private owners to protect heritage while public infrastructure and development decisions disregard historic surroundings. Clear rules, transparent approvals and meaningful penalties can give the law practical force.

Kashmir can build new commercial centres and modern housing without sacrificing its historic inheritance. A demolished building can be replaced with another structure, but the accumulated history embodied in an old neighbourhood cannot be reproduced through new construction. The policy choice should therefore be clear.

Heritage conservation belongs within Kashmir's development strategy, with public funding, professional oversight and enforceable planning rules.

Historic buildings are part of the valley's cultural infrastructure. Treating them as ordinary real estate turns irreversible cultural loss into an avoidable consequence of urban development.

Beyond The Race

The third edition can turn a few hours of running into a lasting economic opportunity for Srinagar, its businesses and the visitors who come for the race.



Deebu Malik

A marathon usually has a simple geography.

There is a starting line, a long road and a finish line. Kashmir adds another destination to that map: the places a runner visits before the race, the hotel room booked for the weekend, the restaurant table occupied after training and the family holiday that grows around a sporting event.

That is where the Kashmir Marathon's real promise lies. Its third edition in 2026 should be judged by what happens beyond the 42.195 kilometres.

The first two editions have already established that Srinagar can host an international mass-participation race. About 2,000 runners from 13 countries took part in the October 2024

edition, including 59 international athletes. The November 2025 edition brought runners from 11 countries, elite African athletes, a 3-crore prize pool, private-sector sponsorship from MEIL and a place on the AIMS calendar.

Those figures give the event credibility, but they also raise a harder question: what does Kashmir gain when the runners go home?

A marathon brings a different kind of visitor. Someone travelling for a race has a clear reason to come, a date to plan around and a chance to experience Kashmir on foot.

A runner travelling to Srinagar may book a hotel, eat at local restaurants, use local transport, visit tourist spots and do some shopping. They may also bring a spouse, child, friend or parent. A race can easily turn into a family holiday.

That possibility changes the economics of the event.

The research behind the third edition proposes 5,000 registered runners, with about 400 international athletes from 25 or more countries. Its projections put event-related revenue at around 12 crore and the wider economic impact at 60 crore to 80 crore.

Those figures depend on participation, visitor spending and the links built between the marathon and the tourism economy. They remain projections rather than promises.

Still, they point toward a useful way of

thinking about the race.

Registration fees and sponsorships capture only the event's direct business. The bigger gains can reach hotels, restaurants, transporters, tourism companies, shops, artisans and local vendors as visitors stay longer.

An extra hotel night, a restaurant meal, a purchase from a local shop or an artisan's new customer can turn the marathon into a wider business opportunity.

The marathon can also change the way Kashmir presents itself.

The course already has what marketers spend enormous sums trying to manufacture: Dal Lake, chinar, gardens, mountains and the cultural landscape of Srinagar. "Run Through Paradise" works because the proposition is already visible on the road.

A participant is buying a race entry, but the experience extends beyond the race itself. The setting becomes part of what the visitor remembers.

That makes the calendar surrounding the marathon almost as important as race day.

A runner preparing for Srinagar months in advance gives the organisers a story to tell. So does an international athlete training for the course, a family planning a trip around race weekend, a local volunteer preparing to participate, a hotel getting ready for visiting runners

or a Kashmiri entrepreneur developing a service for them.

Such stories can keep the event present in people's minds way before the starting gun.

Brands have a similar opportunity. A sponsor can become part of a wellness experience, a technology company can build digital engagement around the race, a hospitality company can develop marathon packages and a financial brand can connect the event with financial wellness and long-term health.

Year-round activation and multi-year partnerships can give sponsorship a life beyond a banner beside the course.

Growth, however, brings a responsibility that is easy to overlook when the focus remains on numbers.

The landscape is part of the attraction. Waste and environmental pressure therefore become part of the event's business question. The research proposes zero-waste feed stations and carbon-offset mechanisms, while also placing volunteer satisfaction and community sentiment among the measures of success.

That wider accounting is important. A marathon that brings thousands of visitors into Kashmir should create value for the place through which those visitors run. Economic impact has to be visible beyond the organisers'

balance sheet.

The best test may come after the medals have been packed away.

Did a runner stay a little longer? Did a family return? Did a restaurant see more customers? Did a hotel gain new business? Did an artisan find new buyers? Did an international participant go home and tell someone else to visit Kashmir?

Those outcomes are harder to count than registrations, prize money, sponsorships and media mentions. They also say more about whether the marathon has become part of Kashmir's tourism economy rather than remaining a sporting event that happens to take place here.

The first two editions proved that Srinagar can host the race. The third can test a larger proposition: whether a race can connect sport with tourism and local enterprise in a way that keeps producing value after the runners have crossed the finish line.

A marathon lasts a few hours, but a visitor's decision to return can last years.

That may be the most interesting business the Kashmir Marathon can generate.

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The Rooster and the River

After a decade-long feud, Amma Shouda swallows his pride for a rooster and stumbles upon the ghosts of a changing Kashmir.



Jamsheed Rasool

It was nearing the end of winter in Kashmir.

A thick, grimy fog, black and white tinged with grey, hung over Srinagar much of the day. Morning visibility was bad, cleared up a bit with a dull sun in the afternoon, before darkness descended again on the city.

Perched on the leafless branches of poplars and sycamore trees, the pigeons, overfed in summers, hopefully waited for the kind-hearted to broadcast grains on the stony parapets of mosques and shrines.

Panting heavily, the most resolute of the faithful populace climbed the steep, frosted stairs of Makhdum Sahab shrine, loudly seeking blessings, cribbing why their toil was left unwaged.

Occasionally, a Casper, with a grimacing mural of a soldier, kneaded up the snow and mud in the street as it headed for the roundabout. A helmeted trooper eternally had his head bobbed out from the turret to keep vigil.

Every now and then, the wailing sirens of ambulances, carrying the injured to the tertiary care hospital, disturbed the calm, thick January air. At nights, one was served better to keep filament lights off. The wax candles along with opaque curtains were high in demand.

Hunched at the window of the third storey of his old home in the city's downtown, the graying, hand-to-mouth-earning Amma Shouda was mouthing at shopkeepers on the street.

The clangor of bicycle bells, the screeching of the wheels of auto-rickshaws against the dirtied snow, and his own sonorous panting made his discourse unintelligible.

He sneezed in between, his hands reaching out for the handkerchief on the jute mat frequently. With his long, bony hands, he, every now and then, applied a great, smothering effect and wiped his aquiline nose's residue.

The hustle in the street was that the highway, which was already closed for a fortnight, might not open anytime soon. Holding radio transistors to their ears, the butchers and chicken sellers, who had hoarded the livestock for the day, kept on exploiting the high-heeled and the gullible of the city, much to the chagrin of the cooped-up, penniless man at the window above.

Amma could not, as it was, endure the stocked-up potatoes and pulses for supper. At the same time, ending the decade-long cold war with his in-laws in the countryside was not all that feasible, given he had to live with the shame of being the initiator of the truce.

"I will not go to those morons," he



Amma rushed to his attic, found his stock of dried vegetables thinned out, gazed across to the attic of his mongoloid-nosed neighbour Gulla Gurkhu, leapfrogged onto it, and squandered away with a bagful of dried bottle gourds and turnips.



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thundered back after his wife suggested him so.

He lit up his filter-less Cavender cigarette, had a few long puffs at it, flicked the ash off with his index finger, and turned on the transistor.

When the newsreader said, 'Highway unlikely to be thrown open for traffic this week,' he said in a humble voice to his wife, "What time would my bicycle be oiled ready? I think those morons may have a visitor today."

"10.30 a.m.," she said with a giggle.

It was after traces of crushed bricks were found in the powdered red pepper his in-laws had sent him one autumn ten years ago in 1985 that he had gotten up to his attic, slammed open one rusted tin sheet of his rooftop, and, summiting the apex point, yelled in his heavy voice like a madman, "From here onwards I consider all my in-laws dead men. I may better visit a bear cave than to visit them."

The common saying was that his yelled oath was heard right up to Koh-e-Maraan, a small hillock about a mile away from whose summit Amma's three-storeyed "skyscraper" in Fateh Kadal would look like a bedecked matchbox.

From that day onwards, all and sundry knew that the sun might rise from the west, but Amma Shouda would never visit his in-laws in the countryside.

Amma, the ace angler that he was, would hardly return empty-handed any day. He called Jhelum river bank his second home: a place he would be stationed eternally like a lifeless mannequin, fixing his gaze at the bobber of his fishing line and would be squatted there till Azaan would ring out in Nazir Bab's sonorous voice from the minaret of a local mosque at twilight.

"The bobber just does not move. There is nothing there. Perhaps, even the fish are scared of soldiers," he said disgustingly to himself.

To the suggestion of his wife that Amma should cull his prodigal pigeons, he almost bayed in retort, "I may better slaughter you than cull my pigeons. A true pigeon fancier never culls his pigeons."

As the pungent smoke of cigarettes kept on billowing out from his wide nostrils, Amma sensed that he had to swallow his ego. There was no other way to

have a rooster at supper.

If it came to a bit of barter with his in-laws, he would barter the rooster with the dried vegetables hanging from the latticed windows of the attic above.

Amma rushed to his attic, found his stock of dried vegetables thinned out, gazed across to the attic of his mongoloid-nosed neighbour Gulla Gurkhu, leapfrogged onto it, and squandered away with a bagful of dried bottle gourds and turnips.

When his bushy grey eyebrows rose up and cheeks puffed with the impact of the first pedal on his bicycle, history was made.

Amma, after a decade of cold war with his in-laws, in the attire that all undisguised commoners of downtown Srinagar could afford in that March of 1996, pedalled on to the place where 30 years ago, in the finest attire he ever wore in his life, he was awaited for as a groom.

That evening, as he relished his favourite baev, 'leg piece', Amma recalled what a historical day it had been: how he bicycled twelve miles, taking the shortest route that slithered through the weeping willow alcove, how he had clowned around the children of his brothers-in-law to gain their favour, how the rowdy cityite like him hobnobbed with the uncouth village headmen, how he himself crawled in the hen-houses to lay his hands on the biggest rooster, fending off other rebellious roosters who were pecking their beaks at his hands and obstinately jabbing their talons at him, how he had gibbeted the skinned rooster upside down through the warrens of his area at twilight, and just now, how he had flung the chicken bones and entrails on the rooftops of his well-to-do neighbours who had flaunted their roosters to him while he lay snuggled up in his room earlier in the day.

The dogs, which had crowded below, had been ragingly barking for more bones.

"May the wolves have your bone marrow. I have none to give. Quieten down," Amma yelled at them.

When they did not stop, he chased them right to the Fateh Kadal Bridge. The embers in the firepot, which he had sneaked underneath his coarse-clothed cloak while he set to chase dogs, had

been frittered away by his ambling, and now, from an odd left-out ember at the base, he lit up his cigarette and, gazing at the cold waters of Jhelum, he stood squatted on the cemented, chipped bank lifelessly like he were during his peak angling days.

In the pitch darkness, the narrowed river meandered on. Muffled up and bitten by cold, Amma momentarily wondered how come such a big river as Jhelum had its origin in a small pond in South Kashmir.

As he had long drags at his cigarette, he was reminded of his heyday on its banks and of what had befallen Kashmir: how he had meticulously taught the art of angling to the young men of the area consumed by conflict, how married men of his lane became struggling spouses, and how, in earlier times, the same men would be pompously queued up for tickets at Shiraz Cinema, mimicking dialogues of the last month's Bollywood flicks, how he would set up nets among the thickest brambles on Koh-e-Maran to trap pheasants, how soldiers, as his deceased father had told him, had air-dropped at the airbase in Budgam, how the last ethnic Kashmiri king was tricked by Akbar, how a Pakistani woman, smitten by his kalchi pigeons in the '80s, had cast flirtatious glances towards him, how madly irritated he got when his in-laws sent him adulterated pepper, how his high-heeled neighbours were leaving the downtown to live amongst pacifist lots in the uptown localities of Rajbagh, Jawahar Nagar and Hyderpora, how the grave-diggers of the nearby locality were the nouveau riche of downtown Srinagar, and how his assiduously crafted carpets, earlier exported to elites of France and Germany, now collected cat shit in the attic.

He had stood out too long, even for a jocular old man who could act a madman before soldiers at the drop of a hat, and his stock of cigarettes was also finished.

He searched in the other pocket and found a Nippo flashing search torch. A thing at such a place in that dark of night would have invited a sure-shot trouble.

When a strange, putrefying smell emanating from the waters below reached him, he sensed something ever so slowly was moving in water and was now to be

anchored at the sandy banks below him. He lifted his torch, rotated the disc with his hands and turned it on.

The beams focused on a bloated cumulative mass, stinking, decomposed beyond contemplation and meaning.

He drowned his face in his cupped hands, mumbled a prayer underneath his breath, blinked back the tear which glistened at the corner of his eyes and stood up.

He fleetingly cast a glance towards Fateh Kadal Bridge, thinking how heartlessly the bygone autocrat rulers had gotten the corpses of rebellious youth skinned alive and gibbeted for days on end from the cantilever pillars of the bridge.

As he turned off the torch light, he was reminded how the bony neck of the rooster he held flauntingly high in his hands had been dangling at twilight. He took short, soundless steps, squeezing his muffler in his tooth-gaped mouth to prevent his wheezing from being heard, and, not even letting nostalgia disturb him, set off for home.

When he reached the nook of his lane, he sat on the cobbled shop front of the coppersmith Ali Khara's shop, which doubled up as a secretariat for all never-do-wells of the area.

He pulled out the soggy muffler from his clogged mouth and let out the suppressed panting all at once. His neighbour, Gulla Gorkhu, in a guffaw after hearing something funny on radio, gauged Amma's presence by his panting, and besides, the silhouette as seen from his dimly lit room was either that of a six-feet-something Amma or that of a Yeti. He stationed the radio at the window sill, turned its disc to full volume.

"In a miraculous effort, unheard in history, the road clearing authorities, braving the vagaries of weather and acute shortage of gadgets and vehicles, today cleared the Srinagar-Jammu highway, the only connection of Kashmir with the rest of the world," the radio blared.

"You begged to your in-laws, fell at their feet. All for nothing! The roosters would be available at cheap prices tomorrow," Gulla Gorkhu blurted.

Amma, as if possessed by a ghost, lifted pebbles from the ground and began slinging them at Gulla Gorkhu's window panes.

"Only a fool like you can trust radio news in Kashmir, only a fool like you can trust radio news in Kashmir, the eternal fool like you, my dear Gulla Gorku," Amma let his baritone ring out in the lanes of his locality. His cloak still reeking of chicken droppings he had had smeared his cloak with as he had lain crawling in that hen house of his in-laws.

— The author is a senior scribe and short story writer from Srinagar with more than 15 years of experience in media, education, and corporate sectors. His work, published in various outlets, focuses on the human stories and changing dynamics of his homeland. He can be reached at jamsheeddar85@gmail.com.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Nepal Floods Expose

Dhading, among the worst-hit districts. Many of the workers had taken shelter in the tunnels but are stuck, waiting to be rescued, according to officials.

"The tunnels are built to access hydropower infrastructure and to divert water," Steiner said, describing the tunnels as big enough to drive trucks through.

Apart from the hydropower projects, tens of kilometres of roads, multiple bridges and essential buildings like schools and hospitals have been destroyed.

Ramraj Narasimhan, a senior director with the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, said rebuilding should focus on continuity of services rather than trying to make every structure indestructible.

"If it gets damaged, let it get damaged, but can we build in redundancy in the system?" he said.

That can mean choosing a better location for construction, alternate routes, backup power, improved early warning and financial tools such as insurance to speed recovery, Narasimhan said. Risk assessments should examine where a river bends, where slopes are unstable and where a single failure could cut off several communities.

Narasimhan's organisation estimates that USD 124 billion worth of Nepal's infrastructure is exposed to climate-driven disasters, creating the potential for hundreds of millions of dollars in losses each year. A report by the coalition earlier this year found that Nepal's average annual losses are nearly USD 760 million from various disasters, while the country's national disaster fund is only a fraction of this amount.

Climate risks grow for Himalayan hydropower Climate scientists said the Himalayan region -- which is warming faster than many other parts of the world -- is particularly at risk from increasing global warming as a result of human-caused climate change.

Climate experts said the flooding adds to evidence that infrastructure planning in the Himalayas is being forced to account for disasters that are increasing as the climate warms. Glaciers across the Hindu Kush Himalaya are losing ice at an accelerating rate, while permafrost degradation, unstable slopes, glacial lakes and increasingly erratic rainfall are raising the risks of floods, landslides and debris flows, according to reports by Kathmandu-based climate research group International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development.

The stakes are particularly high for Nepal because hydropower is both a foundation of its electricity grid and an important source of economic growth and export revenue. Much of the country's potential is run-of-river hydropower, Narasimhan said, meaning facilities are closely tied to steep river corridors where land is limited and hazards can cascade quickly.

Steiner said smaller floods can sometimes be managed with diversions that keep debris and high flows away from expensive infrastructure and tunnels. But for events as large as the latest flood, he said, physical defences may be overwhelmed. In those cases, early warning becomes the critical protection for people.

He said the flood was detected at the China-Nepal border after moving rapidly from its source, leaving little warning time upstream. But there was still time as the flood travelled downstream toward hydropower sites, raising questions about whether warnings could have reached workers sooner.

The disaster is also likely to intensify scrutiny of where future projects are approved. Himanshu Thakkar, coordinator of the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People, said environmental, social and disaster-risk assessments need to reflect the specific landscape and past hazards of each valley, backed by land-use rules and stronger accountability.

Hydropower projects can themselves become "force multipliers" when large structures, debris and altered river channels add to downstream damage, Thakkar said. He argued that Nepal should also consider more decentralised solar power as part of a broader energy mix.

Thakkar said the question now is not only how fast Nepal can rebuild but also what it chooses to put back in the path of the next flood. (AP)

J&K Highly Vulnerable

disaster risks. The Kashmir Valley is particularly prone to floods, the Chenab Valley remains vulnerable to landslides, while the Jammu region falls under high seismic risk zones.

The Committee observed that J&K has developed a structured disaster management framework. The Disaster Management Plan, initially notified in 2017, was revised in 2023 to align with the UT's administrative structure and the National Disaster Management Plan. District Disaster Management Plans have been prepared for all 20 districts.

Institutional arrangements have been strengthened following the reorganisation, including restructuring of the Disaster Management Authority. However, the transition period witnessed challenges related to clarity of responsibilities and coordination between departments.

Disaster risk reduction is being incorporated into infrastructure development, with measures such as slope stabilisation and improved drainage being undertaken in road, tourism and hydropower projects. However, such measures are still project-specific and have yet to become part of a uniform system.

The Committee appreciated steps taken to strengthen early warning mechanisms, including adoption of the Common Alerting Protocol and integration of alerts from IMD, CWC and DGRE. However, last-mile connectivity continues to pose a challenge in remote districts like Kishtwar, Kupwara and Bandipora.

The disaster response capacity is supported by SDRF battalions, NDRF deployment, and coordination with the Army. Resources are being pre-positioned and seasonal preparedness measures are being undertaken.

Community-level preparedness has been strengthened through Aapda Mitra and Aapda Sakhi initiatives, along with Disaster

Management Committees at Panchayat and Block levels.

Various mitigation measures, including slope stabilisation, flood protection works and embankment construction, have been undertaken in vulnerable areas like Ramban, Baramulla and Uri. Monitoring of glacial lakes to address GLOF risks is also being carried out.

Measures to tackle urban flooding are being carried out in Srinagar and Jammu. However, encroachment along floodplains, insufficient drainage networks and gaps in enforcement continue to pose challenges.

Provisions relating to earthquake-resilient construction and floodplain zoning have been established, but implementation remains uneven, particularly in peri-urban and rural areas.

The Committee observed that J&K has made considerable progress in strengthening its disaster management framework. However, it emphasised the need to improve last-mile connectivity, ensure strict implementation of land-use regulations, mainstream disaster risk reduction across development activities, and enhance technological and institutional capabilities. (KNO)

India Records

in the coming months," IMD Director General of Meteorology Mritunjay Mohapatra said.

The weather department said four low-pressure systems formed during August and collectively persisted for 26 days. However, their rainfall activity remained largely confined to the Indo-Gangetic plains, leaving several other parts of the country with deficient rainfall.

Looking ahead, the IMD forecast below-normal rainfall over India as a whole during September. Rainfall is expected to be below 91 per cent of the long-period average, with September's long-period average standing at about 167.9 mm based on data from 1971 to 2020.

The department also forecast above-normal monthly average maximum temperatures during September.

The IMD said the prevailing El Nino conditions over the equatorial Pacific are expected to strengthen further in the coming months, with implications for India's rainfall and temperature patterns.

The latest forecast comes after a notably warm and relatively dry August, with the record-high mean and minimum temperatures highlighting the continuing influence of large-scale climate conditions on India's weather. India recorded its hottest August since 1901 in 2026, with the country's mean temperature touching 28.01 degrees Celsius, while rainfall during the month was deficient and ranked among the lowest recorded since 2001, the India Meteorological Department said on Monday.

According to the IMD, the normal mean temperature for August is 27.34 degrees Celsius. The average minimum temperature during August 2026 also reached a record high of 24.36 degrees Celsius, against the normal of 23.68 degrees Celsius.

Rainfall during the month stood at 213.3 mm, making it the seventh lowest August rainfall recorded since 2001, the weather department said.

The IMD attributed the deficient rainfall to moderate to strong El Nino conditions prevailing over the equatorial Pacific.

"Currently, strong El Nino conditions are prevailing over the equatorial Pacific Ocean, with sea surface temperature remaining above normal across the central and eastern equatorial Pacific. These conditions are expected to strengthen further in the coming months," IMD Director General of Meteorology Mritunjay Mohapatra said.

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HC Rejects Writ

been approved by the General Body after due notice and majority vote. They also argued that the Association was a voluntary body governed by its own Constitution and bye-laws and was neither "State" under Article 12 nor a body performing a public function under Article 226.

The Court agreed with the respondents' preliminary objection. It held that the District Bar Association Shopian neither derives its existence from any statute nor exercises statutory powers or governmental functions. The Court observed that merely because its members are advocates and the legal profession has an important role in the administration of justice, every activity of the Association cannot be treated as a public function.

The Court held that the dispute over eligibility for holding office in the Association concerned "internal governance" and the electoral rights of its members, without any public-law element. It therefore could not be examined through writ jurisdiction.

The Court also noted that the case involved disputed questions of fact, including whether notice for the General Body Meeting was issued, whether the meeting was held and whether the amendment was validly approved. Such issues, it said, require examination of evidence and are

more appropriately adjudicated by a competent civil court.

It further took note of the delay in challenging the 2023 amendment, observing that the amended Constitution had remained operative for a considerable period and subsequent elections had allegedly been conducted under it. The Court held that the petitioner's conduct raised issues of acquiescence and approbate-and-reprobate, particularly as the challenge was made after the issuance of the election notification when the amended eligibility criteria affected his candidature.

Referring to judgments of the Supreme Court and various High Courts, including the recent decision concerning the New Delhi Bar Association, the Court reiterated that a Bar Association does not become amenable to writ jurisdiction merely because it consists of advocates. Accordingly, the Court dismissed the writ petition as not maintainable.

'No More Assurances'

and handling a substantial workload, we continue to receive only Rs 12,300 a month. This is unjust," another intern said.

Dr Abhinav Bhat, another protesting intern, said a committee constituted by the Health and Medical Education Department in 2023 had recommended an increase in the stipend to around Rs 25,000 for 2025-26.

He said the issue was subsequently raised during the 2026 Assembly session, where a proposed stipend of around Rs 26,300 was mentioned, but the revision had not yet been implemented.

"Sometimes we are told the file has been forwarded to the chief minister, while at other times we are told it is with the Finance Department. We are being made to run from one office to another," he said.

Bhat said the interns wanted a formal order rather than further assurances.

"We are on an indefinite strike and will continue until our demand is fulfilled. We want a written order, not merely an assurance," he said.

Meanwhile, Health and Medical Education Minister Sakina Itoo said the government had taken cognisance of the demand and that the proposal to increase the monthly stipend to Rs 30,000 was under process with the Finance Department.

"Their demand is genuine. We are not saying that it is wrong because there is a lot of inflation these days. There is a need to increase the stipend, and we also acknowledge it. The Hon'ble Chief Minister has also said so," she said.

Itoo, however, urged the interns not to resort to a strike while the proposal was under consideration, saying the agitation could affect patient care.

The interns said they appreciated the minister's acknowledgement of their demand but wanted a time-bound and formal resolution.

"We respect the minister and appreciate that she has acknowledged our demand, but we have heard such statements before. What we need now is a government order. Once the order is issued, there will be no reason for us to continue the protest," an intern said.

According to comparative figures displayed by the protesters, Odisha has the highest monthly stipend among the states listed at Rs 44,319, followed by West Bengal at Rs 43,099 and Assam at Rs 35,000.

Karnataka pays Rs 30,000, while Kerala offers Rs 27,300 and Delhi and Meghalaya Rs 26,300 each. Telangana is listed at Rs 25,900, while Arunachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh offer Rs 25,000 each.

Tamil Nadu's stipend is shown at around Rs 25,000, followed by Haryana at Rs 24,310 and Andhra Pradesh at around Rs 21,840. Gujarat, Bihar, Goa and Himachal Pradesh are listed at around Rs 20,000, while Puducherry offers Rs 18,000.

Against these figures, J&K interns receive Rs 12,300 a month, placing the Union Territory at the bottom of the comparison presented by the protesters.

Amid the protest, Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee president Tariq Hameed Karra urged Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to intervene and ensure an early resolution of the interns' demand.

In a letter to the Chief Minister, Karra described the demand for enhancement of the stipend as genuine and deserving of immediate consideration. He said interns routinely work long and demanding hours while attending to patients and assisting in hospital services.

The J&K Congress chief also pointed out that the stipend paid to medical interns in J&K is considerably lower than that offered in several other parts of the country.

"I would therefore urge your good self to kindly direct the concerned authorities to engage with the protesting interns, listen to their grievances and work towards an early and satisfactory resolution of the issue," Karra said.

PDP MLA from Pulwama Waheed Para also backed the protesting interns and urged the government to address their demand.

"Pushing the most educated youth onto the streets by refusing to listen is an unfortunate precedent to set," Para posted on X.

He said interns carry significant responsibilities during emergency and night duties despite being paid Rs 12,300 a month.

The interns said they would continue their agitation until the government formally notifies the revised stipend.

"We have performed our duties throughout the internship despite long hours and heavy workload. We only want a fair and dignified stipend. Until there is a written order, the protest will continue," an intern said.

Stipend Hike

the interns not to resort to a strike while the proposal was being examined by the government.

"There is no need for them to go on strike," she said, maintaining that the government was considering their demand.

The minister described the demand for an increase in the stipend as genuine, while indicating that the proposal required examination by

the Finance Department as it would have financial implications for the government.

Her remarks came as MBBS and BDS interns across Jammu and Kashmir began an indefinite strike on Monday over the long-pending demand for revision of their internship stipend.

The interns are demanding that their monthly stipend be increased to Rs 30,000 from the existing Rs 12,300.

The protesting interns have said the stipend has remained unchanged for nearly seven years despite repeated representations and protests. They have also highlighted the disparity between the stipend paid to interns in J&K and those in several other states.

The interns have maintained that they perform duties in emergency departments, OPDs, wards and other clinical areas, including night shifts and rural postings, and have demanded that the government formally notify a revised stipend.

The minister's statement that the proposal is under process comes amid the interns' demand for a written order on the stipend revision.

The interns have said they will continue their strike until their demand is accepted and a revised stipend is formally notified.

Srinagar Is Moving

channels at different locations. "The inspection had a larger significance in a city whose physical footprint has expanded sharply," Wani said.

Srinagar's urban population stood at 1.22 million in the 2011 Census, accounting for almost the entire district population. Research published this year found that the city's built-up area increased from 24.2 square kilometres in 1992 to about 108 square kilometres in 2024, a more than fourfold expansion.

"Much of that growth has followed roads, peripheral land and new residential demand," says Saqib Bhat, a Srinagar-based real estate agent. "Rising land values have pushed construction toward the edges, while tourism has added another source of pressure."

A recent report put residential land in some Srinagar neighbourhoods at Rs 3 crore to Rs 4 crore a kanal, with brokers describing strong demand on the city's outskirts.

Harwan has gained a particular pull because geography and tourism meet there.

Dara has developed as an adventure-tourism destination, with paragliding flights beginning around Astanmarg and landing in Harwan.

Srinagar itself draws roughly 1 million to 1.5 million domestic tourists a year, according to the city's climate-resilience plan.

"Tourism has brought hotels, restaurants and other visitor infrastructure closer to the hills," says Farooq Ahmad, a resort owner in Harwan. "Private investment has also followed the search for views, open land and an escape from the density of the city below."

The same forces that make Harwan attractive have increased the public cost of extending health services, irrigation, roads and other infrastructure into terrain once considered peripheral.

At the workshops, Wani reviewed physical progress and spoke with officials and field functionaries. He directed them to follow approved specifications, maintain quality, complete projects within stipulated timelines and use public funds effectively.

The Harwan administration said regular field inspections would continue so that government projects reach residents at the grassroots.

Its stated goal, Wani concluded, is to strengthen public infrastructure and improve service delivery through the block's Panchayats.

Srinagar's expansion has already moved beyond the old boundaries of the city. Harwan shows what comes next.

As people and investment move into the hills, the question is shifting from where Srinagar can grow to whether its public infrastructure can keep pace.

J&K Snow-Bound

municipalities falling under the snow-bound non-synchronous areas are Uri, Gulmarg and Kishtwar.

The self-enumeration exercise for the second phase was conducted in these areas from August 17 to August 31.

The first phase of the Census in the entire Union Territory was carried out in June by officials.

The door-to-door enumeration in the snow-bound areas is being conducted separately to account for the difficult accessibility of these regions during the winter months and ensure that the population count covers all designated areas.

Strengthen Red Cross

directed Deputy Commissioners to intensify resource mobilisation and explore innovative avenues for fund generation to strengthen the humanitarian and welfare activities of the Red Cross Society.

The Lieutenant Governor asked Deputy Commissioners to prepare comprehensive district-wise annual activity plans identifying priority areas and interventions and submit them for effective implementation.

Sinha also advised Deputy Commissioners to explore opening diagnostic centres in remote areas, particularly in locations where people have to travel long distances to access hospitals and essential healthcare services.

Calling for coordinated efforts against tuberculosis, he stressed the need for effective identification, diagnosis, treatment and follow-up of TB patients at the grassroots level.

The meeting reviewed and deliberated on various agenda items presented by Shubhankar Pratyush Pathak, General Secretary, Indian Red Cross Society, J&K.

The discussions included budget estimates, audit, appointment of medical officers at blood banks and diagnostic centres, and activities undertaken by the Red Cross Society and its district-level units.

The Deputy Commissioners, who are presidents of the respective District Red Cross Units, apprised the Lieutenant Governor of activities being undertaken in their districts and shared

suggestions for further strengthening the functioning and outreach of the organisation.

The meeting was attended by Dr Mandeep K Bhandari, Principal Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor; Shubhankar Pratyush Pathak, General Secretary, Indian Red Cross Society, J&K; Deputy Commissioners and officials of IRCS, J&K.

HC Upholds EOW

the petitioner obtained the RBA certificate in 2013, within two years of her marriage to a resident of Handwara, despite the applicable rules requiring a claimant to have resided in the backward area for at least 15 years before applying.

According to the investigation, the certificate was allegedly issued on the basis of false information and incorrect reports by revenue officials and was subsequently used before the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission to secure public employment. The probe also found alleged irregularities concerning the renewal of the certificate and tampering with official records.

The Court, after hearing counsel parties including Sr. Advocate P Kohli for petitioner and advocate F A Bhat along with Ms. Sara for one of the respondents, rejected the contention that the Economic Offences Wing lacked jurisdiction, observing that offences relating to documents fall within its jurisdiction under SO 232 of 2022.

Holding that the case was not merely one involving violation of rules, the Court said the material prima facie indicated that the RBA certificate and its renewal had allegedly been obtained through fraudulent means. Consequently, the petition challenging FIR No. 9/2025 was dismissed.

The investigating agency alleged that the certificate had been issued illegally and through abuse and misuse of official position by the concerned revenue authorities, leading to the registration of the FIR.

The petitioner, however, challenged the FIR on several grounds. It was contended that the case had been registered after a delay of about 12 years from the issuance of the certificate and that the contents of the FIR did not disclose the commission of offences relating to cheating, forgery or misrepresentation.

It was further argued that the petitioner had bona fide applied for the certificate and that the competent authority had issued it after following the required process. The petitioner had also questioned the jurisdiction of the Economic Offences Wing to register and investigate the case.

Addressing the jurisdictional objection, the High Court examined Notification SO 232 dated May 9, 2022, under which the offices of the Crime Branch, including the Economic Offences Wings at Jammu and Srinagar, were declared police stations with jurisdiction over specified categories of offences.

The Court further held that the jurisdiction of an investigating agency is determined by the nature of offences disclosed in the FIR at the time of its registration and not by the offences that may ultimately be established after completion of the investigation.

On the merits of the case, the Court took note of the material collected during the investigation, which indicated that the petitioner had secured appointment under the RBA category on the basis of a certificate issued by the Tehsildar, Handwara, in June 2013.

"Thus, it cannot be stated that it is only a case of violation of rules but it appears to be a case of obtainment of the RBA certificate in a fraudulent manner," the Court said and dismissed the plea.

J&K Horticulture Loses

10,000 crore.

At the same time, the report points to a broader productivity challenge.

The area under fruit cultivation increased from 1.31 lakh hectares in 1980 to 3.44 lakh hectares in 2022, while fruit production rose from 5.6 lakh tonnes to 27.22 lakh tonnes.

Productivity, however, increased from 4.3 tonnes per hectare to 7.91 tonnes per hectare, indicating that a substantial share of production growth has come through expansion of cultivated area rather than comparable gains in yield.

NITI Aayog notes that the scope for further expansion of cultivated land is now limited, making productivity improvement increasingly important for the future of the sector.

Apple, which accounts for around half of J&K's total fruit cultivation area and more than three-fourths of its fruit production, has shown signs of declining productivity. The report records a negative compound annual growth rate of 0.37 per cent in apple productivity between 2020-22 and 2022-23.

Almond cultivation has also witnessed a significant contraction, with the area under the crop declining by around 10,000 hectares. The decline has become particularly pronounced in recent years.

The report links the challenges facing horticulture to changing climatic conditions, evolving market requirements and rising production costs, while stressing the need to improve the productivity and resilience of existing orchards.

NITI Aayog has recommended high-density plantations, improved planting material, better varieties and modern orchard-management practices to raise productivity.

It has also called for greater value addition, stronger market linkages and investment in storage, processing and transportation infrastructure so that increased production translates into higher returns for growers.

The roadmap proposes an integrated mission framework titled "Operation Golden Greens" for transforming Jammu and Kashmir's horticulture sector through phased interventions up to 2047.

The report underscores that with limited scope for expanding cultivated land, the future growth of J&K's horticulture sector will depend increasingly on improving productivity, reducing post-harvest losses and strengthening storage, processing, transportation and marketing systems. (inputs from KNT)

Kashmir Fruit Growers Urged to Use Rail Freight for Produce Transport

Press Trust of India

SRINAGAR: Divisional Commissioner of Kashmir Anshul Garg on Monday asked fruit growers and traders to make greater use of Railways' goods and freight services to ensure economical and hassle-free transportation of horticulture produce, particularly apples, to various domestic mandis and international destinations.

Garg held a meeting to review the utilisation of railway freight services for transportation of horticulture produce from Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by IGP Traffic (Kashmir) M Soleman Choudhary, Director Horticulture Planning & Marketing Ghulam



Jeeleeni Zargar, officers from the Northern Railway, industries & commerce and information departments, and representatives of various fruit associations.

The divisional commissioner stressed that railway transportation should be increasingly utilised for long-distance destinations, as it offers a cost-effective

and efficient alternative for transporting large quantities of horticulture produce. He also directed the Director Horticulture Planning & Marketing to ensure effective coordination among fruit growers, traders, associations and railway authorities for smooth movement of the produce.

Garg asked the Deputy Commissioners to explore the possibility of and to facilitate the transportation of a certain percentage of fruit consignments through railway services from their respective districts.

Discussing the Roll-on/Roll-off (Ro-Ro) service, the Divisional Commissioner asked Northern Railway officials to share infor-

mational video with fruit associations highlighting the prescribed technical parameters for trucks, including permissible load height and other requirements.

Both the Divisional Commissioner and IGP Traffic also directed fruit associations to undertake extensive sensitisation of truck drivers for adherence to the permissible load limits on the National Highway.

Representatives of various fruit associations put forth their suggestions and sought long-term solutions to strengthen the transportation infrastructure for the horticulture sector, including improved connectivity of fruit mandis with the railway network.

Altaf Bukhari Questions Reported J&K Bank HQ Shift

Raises concerns over lending pattern, recruitment policy and Board representation

KO Web Desk

SRINAGAR: Apni Party president and former Finance Minister Syed Muhammad Altaf Bukhari on Monday questioned the functioning of Jammu and Kashmir Bank, raising concerns over its lending pattern, recruitment policy, Board composition and reports of a possible relocation of its headquarters from Srinagar.

Addressing a press conference in Srinagar, Bukhari said any move to shift the bank's headquarters from Srinagar would have implications beyond its administrative functioning and could affect its institutional connection with Jammu and Kashmir.

He sought clarity from the Jammu and Kashmir Government over the reported proposal, pointing out that the government remains the bank's largest shareholder with around 52 per cent stake.

Bukhari also questioned the bank's lending pattern, claiming that credit growth in Kashmir was around nine per cent compared with nearly 20 per cent outside Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the figures raised questions over whether the bank was in-



creasingly directing its lending activity away from its traditional market in the Union Territory.

Drawing on his experience as Finance Minister, Bukhari questioned the rationale for lower lending in Jammu and Kashmir when, according to him, non-performing assets were higher outside the region.

He said the government should examine the bank's lending pattern and ensure that it continues to play a meaningful role in supporting businesses and economic activity within Jammu and Kashmir.

The Apni Party chief also raised concerns over an alleged proposal to change the recruitment pattern for positions outside Jammu and Kashmir.

He said recruitment to branches

operating outside the region had traditionally provided employment opportunities to candidates from Jammu and Kashmir, except where local recruitment was required because of language considerations.

Bukhari warned that any significant change in the practice could reduce employment opportunities for young people from Jammu and Kashmir.

He also questioned the present composition of the J&K Bank Board, alleging that representation from Jammu and Kashmir had become inadequate compared with the number of directors from outside the region.

Seeking an explanation from the government, Bukhari said the issue was particularly important given its substantial ownership in the bank.

He held the Jammu and Kashmir Government responsible for what he described as the situation surrounding the bank and called for immediate clarification on the issues.

Bukhari said the government should make its position clear on the bank's lending strategy, recruitment practices, Board representation and the reported headquarters proposal rather than allowing uncertainty to persist.

LG Manoj Sinha felicitates J&K Bank for support to Amarnath Yatra 2026



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha felicitated J&K Bank, represented by MD & CEO Amitava Chatterjee, in recognition of the Bank's significant support towards the successful conduct of Shri Amarnathji Yatra 2026.

The felicitation took place during the Post-Yatra Felicitation Event chaired by the Lieutenant Governor at Lok Bhawan Auditorium, Srinagar.

Expressing gratitude, MD & CEO Amitava Chat-

terjee thanked the Lieutenant Governor and Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board, dedicating the recognition to the Bank's staff for their commitment and efforts.

"As the premier financial institution of Jammu and Kashmir, the Bank remains committed to facilitating pilgrim registration through its designated branches across the country, besides providing convenient and uninterrupted banking services during the pilgrimage period," he added.

Woman Killed in Bear Attack While Working in Kulgam Orchard

Kulgam: A woman working in an orchard was killed after she was reportedly attacked by a wild bear in the Tarigam area of south Kashmir's Kulgam district on Monday.

The deceased was identified as Lateefa Banu, wife of Farooq Ahmad, a resident of Tarigam, Kulgam.

According to the available information, the woman came under attack while working in an orchard and reportedly died on the spot.

The incident has caused concern among residents, particularly people working in orchards, amid reports of increased movement of wild bears in the area.[KNT]

Jammu Couple Chargesheeted in Job Fraud Case

JAMMU: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Crime Branch, Jammu, filed a chargesheet on Monday against a couple for allegedly duping some people on the pretext of arranging government jobs for their children here, an official said.

The Jammu Crime Branch spokesperson said the chargesheet was filed before the court of the Railway Magistrate, Jammu, against Jameel Anjum and his wife, Sana Mir, residents of the Kacchi Chawni area of Jammu, in a case registered in 2023.

He said the case was registered based on a joint complaint by Naresh Kumar and Rajesh Kumar, who claimed the accused persons obtained a total of Rs 19 lakh from them after promising government jobs for their children and providing fake appointment orders.

During the investigation, the spokesperson said the seized documents were sent to the Jammu and Kashmir Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) for examination. He said the FSL opinion supported the allegation that Anjum had forged the appointment documents and used them as genuine to dishonestly induce the complainants with the false promise of a government job.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Crime Branch EOW Jammu, Faisal Qureshi, advised people to remain vigilant against such economic frauds and report any such incident to the agency. Victims of economic frauds may also submit their complaints via email or telephone. (PTI)

Cow Protection More Important Than Women's Safety in BJP's India: Mehbooba

Srinagar: PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Monday expressed concern over the rising cases of sexual violence against females in the country, saying cow protection seems to be a higher priority than women's safety.

"In BJP's India, cow protection has become a higher priority than women's safety. On mere suspicion of cow slaughter, people have been lynched to death by mobs. Yet, when it comes to protecting women from rape, sexual violence and brutality, the convicted rapists not only enjoy parole after parole but also full patronage," Mehbooba said in a post on X.

The former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister said India can be a safer place for women even if only half the energy used for cow vigilantism is devoted to women's safety.

"If even half the energy devoted to vigilantism in the name of cows were invested in safeguarding women, India would be a far safer place for every daughter, sister and mother," she said.

Shopian Bars Disclosure of Child Identities in Suicide Cases

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The District Child Protection Officer (DCPO), Shopian, has directed officials, institutions, media organisations and members of the public to refrain from circulating, uploading, publishing or disclosing photographs, CCTV footage or identifying information concerning children involved in suicide or attempted-suicide cases.

The order, issued under Mission Vatsalya, follows a case involving an attempted suicide by a child that came to the notice of the District Child Protection Unit, Shopian.

The DCPO has prohibited the circulation or publication of photographs, CCTV footage, videos, screen-shots or any other material that could individually or collectively reveal the identity of the child.

The order specifically bars disclosure of the child's name, address, school, parents' identifying information, contact details, location and other particulars that could lead

to identification, except where permitted by law or authorised by the competent authority.

It also prohibits the sharing of case records, inquiry documents, medical information, statements and other confidential material on social media platforms or public communication channels, including WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

The DCPO has directed that CCTV footage relating to such incidents be treated as confidential. Where such footage is required for investigation or judicial proceedings, it is to be preserved and supplied only to the competent investigating authority, court or other legally authorised authority.

The order cites Section 74 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, which protects the identity and identifying particulars of children involved in conflict with law, children in need of care and protection, and child victims or witnesses in inquiries, investigations or judicial proceedings.

SC Collegium Recommends Justice Bhati As Chief Justice of J&K, Ladakh

Correspondent

SRINAGAR: The Supreme Court Collegium on Monday recommended the elevation of Justice Dr. Pushpendra Singh Bhati of the Rajasthan High Court as Chief Justice of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh.

The Collegium, headed by the Chief Justice of India, also recommended Justice Sanjay K. Agrawal of the Chhattisgarh High Court for appointment as Chief Justice of the Rajasthan High Court and Justice Alpesh Yeshvant Kogile of the Gujarat High Court as Chief Justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court.

Justice Bhati was born on September 21, 1970. He holds a BA, LL.B., LL.M. in Mercantile Law and a Ph.D. on "Promotion & Seniority in Public Employment, its Changing Dimensions and Role of Supreme Court". He enrolled as an advocate in 1992 and was elevated as a Judge of the Rajasthan High Court on November 16, 2016.

He has primarily practised in the Rajasthan High Court at Jodhpur, with his areas of specialisation including writ jurisdiction, service matters, public interest litigation, election, rev-

enue, mining, education, Panchayati Raj, family, criminal and other miscellaneous matters.

Justice Bhati served as Additional Advocate General of Rajasthan at the Rajasthan High Court, Jodhpur, and has represented several government departments and public institutions. He was also a panel lawyer for the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, Labour Department and Ayurved Department of the Rajasthan Government. He served as Standing Counsel for the Indian Railways for 16 years and represented bodies including the Reserve Bank of India and Jai Narain Vyas University.

Before his elevation to the Bench, Justice Bhati was elected a member of the Bar Council of Rajasthan from 2009 to 2015. He served as President of the Rajasthan High Court Lawyers Association from 2011 to 2013 and as General Secretary of the Rajasthan High Court Advocates Association in 2001. He is also a trained mediator of the Rajasthan High Court and has been a member of the Supreme Court Bar Association since 1992.

www.apd.jk.gov.in		Ph. 0191-2564189 (J) 0194-2506251 (S)	
GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR			
AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT			
CIVIL SECRETARIAT, JAMMU/SRINAGAR			
Subject: Verification of Character & Antecedents of the applicants who have applied for compassionate appointment, under Jammu and Kashmir Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme-2022-reg.			
NOTICE			
The applicants whose names figure in "Annexure-A" to this Notice are hereby informed to submit their credentials in the following format in terms of clause 12 (vii) of J&K Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme, 2022 to Mr. Sahil Jandyal, JKAS, Additional Secretary to the Government, Nodal Officer in respect of the Animal/Sheep Husbandry & Fisheries Department for the purpose of verification of character & antecedents of the applicants.			
The requisite information shall be submitted either in person in Room No. G-32-G, Civil Secretariat, Srinagar, or on Mobile No. 9419234144, or by e-mail at sahiljandyal.kas@jk.gov.in, within twenty one (21) days from the date of issuance of this Notice.			
Name of the candidate		Details	
Parentage			
Permanent Address as per domicile certificate			
Mobile Number			
E-mail Address			
ANNEXURE A			
S. No	Name of the applicant with parentage and address		
1.	Mr. Suhaib Tanveer Sfo Tanveer Ahmad Khan Rio Kulangam Bagh Handwara District Kupwara-		
2.	Smt. Ranjana Devi W/o Late Babu Ram Rio Village Hottar Tehsil Billawar District Kathua.		
Dated: 31-08-2026		(Nusrat Shah)	
No. ASHF-SHONGAZ/2/2026 (7716563)		Under Secretary to the Government Agriculture Production Department	
DIPK-5164-26 DT: 31/08/2026			

Email: ceomc-bla@jk.gov.in		Tel. & Fax : 01952-455776	
GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR			
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER			
MUNICIPAL COUNCIL BARAMULLA			
Subject: Rescheduling of Sortition (Draw of Lots) for allotment of shops to dislocated shopkeepers in Shopping Complex, General Bus Stand, Baramulla.			
NOTICE			
All concerned dislocated shopkeepers are hereby informed that the Sortition (Draw of Lots) for allotment of shops in the Double Storey Shopping Complex at General Bus Stand, Baramulla, earlier scheduled to be held on 31-08-2026 at 2:00 PM, has been now rescheduled on 16-09-2026 at 2:00 PM in the office of Municipal Council Baramulla.			
Therefore, the concerned dislocated shopkeepers are hereby informed through the medium of this notice to take note of the revised date and time and remain present at the venue accordingly. The other terms and conditions of the original Sortition Notice issued vide No. MC/Bla/2026/2261-68 dated 07-08-2026 shall remain unchanged.			
No: MC/Bla/2026/ 3113-15		Chief Executive Officer	
Dated: 29/08/2026		Municipal Council Baramulla	
DIPK-NB-1523-26 DT: 31/08/2026			

OFFICE OF THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROJECT OFFICER POSHAN QAZIGUND.													
TENTATIVE SELECTION LIST OF SANGINIS (AWW'S) ISSUED IN RESPONSE TO OFFICE ADVERTISEMENT NOTICE NO:- 13 of 2026 Dated:- 30.06.2026													
S.No	Application S.No	Name of the Candidate	Parentage/W/O	Residence	Qualification	Board	Panchayat /MC Ward No	DOB	Married/ Un-Married	12th Marks			Tentative Selection made at AWC
										Max Marks	Marks obtained	% of Marks	
1	9	Salfia Jan	D/O Khurshed Ahamd Shan	Lassipora	10+2	JKBOSE	No	06.09.2005	Un-Married	500	443	88.6	Lassipora-A
2	6	Nahida Gull	D/O Gull Mohammad Bhat	Sransoo	10+2	JKBOSE	No	11.01.2006	Un-Married	500	434	87	Sransoo-A
3	4	Josy Akhter	W/O Waheed Abdul Qayoom	Manzmoh	10+2	JKBOSE	BA	17.01.1994	Married	500	444	88.8	Manzmoh-B
4	15	Zahida Mahmood	W/O Arif Mohamad Khanday	Sangran	10+2	JKBOSE	B,SC	20.02.1996	Married	500	384	77	Sangran-A
5	16	Sabreena Jan	D/O Abdul Rehman Kumar	Bumthan	10+2	JKBOSE	B,SC	14.10.2003	Un-Married	500	410	82	Bumthan-A
6	10	Sahreen Iqbal	W/O Ovais Hussain Mir	Furrah	10+2	JKBOSE	B.Com	12.10.1990	Married	750	440	59	Furrah-E
The tentative List of Sahikyas is hereby published in local dailies for objections if any within 10 days from the date of Publication after that no objection will be considered. The complete details of the merit position of all applicants can be had from the Child Development Project Office Qazigund during working hours													
NO:- CDPO/Poshan/Qzd/2026/945-46						DIPK-5145-26				Child Development Project Officer			
Dated:- 31.08.2026						DT: 31/08/2026				Poshan Qazigund.			

11 Dead as Firecracker
Factory Explodes in UP



Press Trust of India

KAUSHAMBI (UP): Eleven people, including eight children, were killed and five injured after a massive explosion at a firecracker factory, whose licence had been cancelled in 2024, destroyed its building and six other houses in Uttar Pradesh's Kaushambi district on Monday afternoon, officials said.

Several people were feared trapped under the debris, and a large-scale rescue operation was underway. Teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), police, fire brigade and Air Force personnel were at the site, they said.

All the deceased persons resided in the vicinity of the factory, the officials said.

Superintendent of Police Satnarayan Prajapat said a case was registered at the Pipri police station under relevant sections of the BNS and

the Explosives Act against six individuals, including the factory operator Adil.

Charges will also be filed under the Gangsters Act, and proceedings to seize the assets of the accused will be initiated. Four police teams have been constituted to arrest the accused, he said.

District Magistrate (DM) of Kaushambi, Amit Pal, said the blast occurred at the firecracker factory in Manori village and five to six houses located adjacent to the factory also collapsed due to the impact.

"The factory was granted an explosives licence in 2019, which was originally valid till 2026. However, the licence was cancelled in 2024. A detailed inquiry is underway to ascertain how the factory continued to operate after cancellation of its licence and to fix responsibility at every level. Strict action will be taken against all persons found guilty," the DM told PTL.

Bank Manager Held in
₹20.7L Share Scam

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: Three people, including a deputy manager of a private bank, have been arrested for allegedly cheating a man in Delhi of Rs 20.72 lakh through a fake share market investment scheme, officials said on Monday.

The accused allegedly lured the victim with promises of lucrative returns on stock market investments and routed the cheated money through multiple bank accounts, police said.

The bank official is accused of facilitating the use of a bank account for the fraudsters in exchange for a two

per cent commission.

The arrested accused have been identified as Kanhya Das (36), Rahul Tailor (28) and Arif Hussain Mansuri (35), who was working as a deputy manager at a private bank in Rajasthan. Four mobile phones allegedly used in the commission of the crime were recovered from them, they said.

According to the police, a case was registered following a complaint by Nitin Arora, who alleged that he was duped of Rs 20.72 lakh after cyber criminals induced him to invest in the share market by promising high returns.

PM Modi Meets Pezeshkian,
Backs West Asia Peace

Press Trust of India

BISHKEK: Prime Minister Narendra Modi conveyed to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Monday that India supports all efforts toward ending the conflict in West Asia and emphasised the importance of freedom of navigation and the protection of civilians and civil infrastructure in the region.

Modi met Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in the Kyrgyz capital for their first bilateral talks since the outbreak of the Iran-US conflict in February.

In the meeting, Modi also told the Iranian leader that New Delhi wants to "expand and diversify" the trade basket with Tehran in the "times to come".

"Met President Masoud Pezeshkian in Bishkek. Reiterated our commitment to strengthening India's long standing friendship with Iran across diverse sectors," the prime minister said on social media.

"We want to expand and diversify our trade basket in the times to come. We had a discussion on the prevailing situation in the region. India will continue to support all efforts aimed at ensuring lasting peace," he said.

Pezeshkian urged Modi to use India's extensive contacts with various parties to help them move away from the path of war and



bloodshed and return to the path of dialogue and agreement, according to an Iranian readout.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the two leaders discussed the West Asia conflict and shared perspectives on the evolving situation.

"The prime minister expressed concern at the escalation of tensions in the region and reiterated India's consistent position that all issues must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy," it said.

Modi also reiterated the need for continued efforts to ensure lasting peace and stability in the region.

"Calling for safeguarding the freedom of navigation and commerce, he emphasised that civilians and civilian infrastructure, including commercial shipping and seafarers must not be harmed under any circumstances," the MEA said.

The prime minister also reiterated India's readiness to closely cooperate with Iran in multilateral organisations, including BRICS and SCO.

The prime minister conveyed that he looked forward to welcoming President Pezeshkian to India for the BRICS Summit, it said in a statement.

The Iranian readout said President Pezeshkian expressed "appreciation" for New Delhi's support and cooperation with Iran during the recent war and emphasised the need to intensify diplomatic efforts to establish peace and security in the region.

"From the very beginning of our administration, our efforts have been focused on ensuring peace and security and resolving issues through dialogue and negotiations," Pezeshkian said.

‘Bomb’ Note on Tissue Diverts
Delhi-Bound Air India Flight

Press Trust of India

AHMEDABAD: An Air India Express flight from Dammam in Saudi Arabia to New Delhi with 32 passengers made an emergency landing at the Ahmedabad airport on Monday after a crew member found a tissue paper bearing a message that there was a "bomb" on board the aircraft, police said.

The pilots decided to divert the Delhi-bound aircraft to Ahmedabad after discovering the threat message, said Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), 'G' Division, VN Yadav said.

"The aircraft made an emergency landing at the Ahmedabad Inter-



national Airport at around 4:30pm after a crew member found a tissue paper in the washroom having text "bomb" written on it," said the ACP.

Security agencies thoroughly checked the aircraft and found

nothing suspicious, he informed.

The flight was carrying 32 passengers, all of whom are safe and have been accommodated at Terminal 2 of the Ahmedabad airport, stated the police officer, adding an investigation has been launched into the incident.

In a statement, an Air India Express spokesperson said, "One of our flights from Dammam to Delhi was diverted to Ahmedabad as a precaution and in keeping with security protocols after being notified of a specific bomb threat. The government-appointed Bomb Threat Assessment Committee (BTAC) was alerted immediately, and all security procedures promptly initiated."

Messi Retiring from
Playing for Argentina

AP

BUENOS AIRES: Lionel Messi has ended his career as a player for the Argentine national team at 39 years old, after nearly two decades representing the national side.

Messi, who played in six World Cups, won the tournament in Qatar in 2022 and led Argentina to the final in 2026, losing to Spain.

"It was a decision that hurt — and still hurts deeply — but I understand that the time has come," Messi said on his official Instagram account.

"I swear to you that I always gave it my all—not just in these last few years when we won everything, but before that too; I always fought and left everything on the field for this jersey, to bring you joy and make you feel proud to be Argentine through football."

Messi explained that he wrote his retirement letter on June 21 — two days after losing the World Cup final — but waited to publish it be-



cause his father was facing health issues that eventually claimed his life. Jorge Messi died on Aug. 8 in his native Rosario, Argentina. Messi made his debut for the senior national team in 2006, but his journey was fraught with frustration until he finally lifted the World Cup in 2022.

"Thank you for all the love these past 20 years, I'm going to miss hearing you all from the inside so much. Now I'm going to be one of you, cheering and supporting you from the outside (through thick and thin, even more so)," said Messi. In the letter, the current Inter Miami captain did not reveal how long he intends to continue playing professional football.

Rizwan, Imam Axed
From England Tour

Press Trust of India

KARACHI: Pakistan are likely to send wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan and opening batter Imam Ul Haq back home from their tour of England where the team has endured heavy defeats in the first two Tests so far.

Placed at the bottom of the points table in the World Test Championship, Pakistan lost the opening Test to England by an innings and 103 runs at Leeds and the second Test at Lord's by 194 runs. "It has been decided to send back Rizwan and Imam," Geo News reported.

The touring Pakistan media in England has also reported of a high-level meeting of the officials from the Pakistan Cricket Board following their defeat in the second Test.

PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi, COO Sumair Ahmed, PSL CEO Salman Naseer, former player and senior selector



Aaqib Javed and head coach for limited-overs cricket Mike Hesson attended the meeting.

A reliable source within the PCB said Naqvi, who is also a minister in the government of Pakistan, has been conveyed of their disappointment by those above him over how the Pakistan team has fared in England.

"The incident of Imran Khan's sons' interview being aired during the second Test on Sky Sports has also upset the powers that be, but more than anything, it is the portrayal of the Pakistan team in the media and their performance that has caused concern," the source said.

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