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Education and Healthcare Top Priorities For Govt: CM

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday said strengthening education and healthcare remains a top priority for the Jammu and Kashmir Government, stressing that improvements in both sectors are essential for children to compete at national and international levels.

Addressing the award ceremony of the ALOHA National Level Competition (NLC)-2026 Kashmir at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC) in Srinagar, Omar praised the participating students for their mental arithmetic skills.

"These children were amazing. If you had given me a calculator, I would not have been able to find the answers as quickly as they did," he said.

Recalling his school days, the Chief Minister said mathematics had been a difficult subject for him and that simply passing the subject had been a significant achievement.

Omar said children today face greater competition for their attention because of television, mobile phones and digital platforms, making it increasingly difficult to keep them focused on a particular activity.

He credited parents and teachers for helping the students develop the skills needed



to compete at national-level events.

"The biggest responsibility for the government is to pay attention to these two things and how we improve the education system and how we improve the health system. Only then can our children compete not just at the national level but at the international level," he said.

The Chief Minister also highlighted the need to improve student retention, saying Jammu and Kashmir performs well at the primary and middle-school levels but sees a decline in enrolment as students move into higher classes.

He called for concerted efforts to reduce dropout rates and ensure that students remain in the education system through the higher secondary level.

Omar also called for greater cooperation between government and private schools, saying students should | [More on P6](#)



Farmers harvest paddy on the outskirts of Srinagar as autumn sets in Kashmir. KO Photo By Abid Bhat

Hailstorm, Gusty Winds Hit Kashmir

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: Parts of Kashmir Valley witnessed hailstorms, gusty winds and brief spells of rain on Wednesday as cloud activity intensified across several areas during the afternoon.

Independent weather forecaster Faizan Asif Keng said cloud development was first observed over parts of North Kashmir before intensifying and spreading towards Central and South Kashmir.

Hailstorms were reported from Sopore and some other areas of North Kashmir, while strong winds were recorded across parts of North and Central Kashmir. Several areas also received brief spells of rain.

"Light snowfall was also observed over the extreme higher reaches of Kashmir," Keng said.

He said no major spell of rain or snowfall was expected across Jammu and Kashmir over the next 10 days, though isolated late-afternoon thundershowers or brief spells of rain could occur in some areas.

The India Meteorological Department has not issued any weather warning for Jammu and Kashmir for September 23-27. However, thunderstorm and lightning activity has been forecast for September 28 and 29.

Srinagar recorded a maximum temperature of 30.3 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, 2.9 degrees above normal, | [More on P6](#)

HC Allows Abortion Of Minor Rape Survivor

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh has permitted the medical termination of the pregnancy of an 11-year-old girl who was allegedly sexually assaulted, holding that the statutory 24-week gestational limit could not override constitutional protection in the exceptional circumstances of the case.

Justice Wasim Sadiq Nargal passed the order on a petition filed on behalf of the minor through her father.

The court was informed that the pregnancy was assessed at around 22 weeks and five days when a Medical Board examined the girl on September 11. By the time the court delivered its judgment, the pregnancy had crossed the 24-week statutory limit.

Considering the girl's age, the circumstances in which the pregnancy occurred and the medical opinion placed before it, the court directed the authorities to take immediate consequential steps | [More on P6](#)

SKUAST-K Interns' Protest Enters 17th Day

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: The protest by veterinary interns of Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology-Kashmir (SKUAST-K) over revision

of their monthly internship stipend entered its 17th consecutive day on Wednesday at the Shuhama campus.

Under the banner of the Jammu & Kashmir Veterinary Students Association (JKVSA), | [More on P6](#)

Omar Hits Back at BJP Over Sheikh Abdullah Remarks

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday hit back at the BJP over remarks on National Conference founder Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, saying those who did not participate in the freedom struggle could not teach others about that period of history. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a function at SKICC in Srinagar, CM Omar questioned the historical role of the RSS and the BJP's predecessor organisation, asserting that the contribution and sacrifices of the National Conference in Jammu | [More on P6](#)

Banks To Remain Open Sunday Ahead Of Strike

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: All banks, including Regional Rural Banks, will remain open on Sunday for the convenience of customers in view of a strike called by the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), the finance ministry said in a statement on Wednesday.

The UFBU, which claims to represent 90 per cent of the banking workforce, is set to go on a three-day strike beginning September 28, primarily seeking a 5-day banking week, among other demands.

The strike, | [More on P6](#)

J&K Book Ban Controversy Sparks Political Debate

CS Defends Removal of 4,249 Banned Books; Omar Questions Elected Govt's Role

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The controversy over the withdrawal of books from government educational institutions in Jammu and Kashmir intensified on Wednesday, with Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo defending the removal of banned titles, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah questioning the role of the elected government in such decisions, and Kashmir's chief cleric

Mirwaiz Seeks Transparency, Says Withdrawals Could Affect Academic Freedom

Mirwaiz Umar Farooq seeking greater transparency.

Dulloo said books banned under provisions of law should not be kept in government schools and colleges, describing the examination of books as a regular process.

"Banned books, which the government has banned under provisions of law, should not be in government schools or colleges. The government has taken this | [More on P6](#)

Over 25,000 Students Graduate Yearly, But J&K Has No Employability Data

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir Government does not have consolidated, course-wise data on the employability of graduates from government degree colleges, universities and cluster universities, the Higher Education Department has informed the Legislative Assembly.

In a written reply to



Unstarred D. No. 1/6/76, tabled by MLA Arjun Singh Raju, the department said

Jammu and Kashmir has 145 government degree colleges, which collectively

produce around 25,000 to 30,000 graduates every year.

However, it said standardised employability data was not available for the academic sessions 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26.

The department said graduate employability varies across courses and institutions and is influenced by | [More on P6](#)

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PM2.5 Identified As Leading Air Pollutant Driving Global Cancer Burden: Study

Press Trust Of India

A study that analysed global cancer burden with a long-term exposure to common air pollutants across 952 locations found that PM2.5 is the dominant contributor. Particulate matter sized under 2.5 microns or 0.0025 millimetres (PM2.5) accounted for 8.82 million cases of the total 109 million cases identified between 2000 and 2020, according to findings published in the journal Nature Health. Highest preventable fraction of cancers in the population due to PM2.5 exposure was observed for cancers of the respiratory, reproductive and endocrine systems. Researchers, including those from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, also found that globally, each 10 microgram per cubic metre increase in PM2.5, ozone and nitrous oxide levels was associated with an increased risk of cancer by 16 per cent, 4.23 per cent and 11.7 per cent, respectively. Exposure to nitrous oxide was attributable to 6.67 million incident cases, while exposure to ozone was attributable to about 2.6 million incident cases during the study period. Women were found to be consistently more vulnerable for most malignancies. Almost the entire global population (99 per



cent) breathes air containing pollutant levels exceeding the World Health Organization's air quality guidelines, with the highest exposures seen in low and middle-income countries, the researchers said. Air pollution adversely affects nearly every organ system in the body, they said. "This study evaluated the effects of long-term exposure to PM2.5, O3 (ozone) and NO2 (nitrous oxide) on cancer incidence and quantified their attributable burdens

worldwide, encompassing 109 million cases from 952 locations between 2000 and 2020," the authors wrote. "PM2.5 emerged as the dominant contributor to the global cancer burden, accounting for approximately 8.82 million attributable cases during the study period," they said. About 17.9 per cent of tracheal, bronchial and lung cancer cases could be prevented if exposure to PM2.5 was removed or

addressed, the study found. The results reinforce the International Agency for Research on Cancer's (IARC) -- the United Nations' cancer agency -- group 1 classification of PM2.5 as a carcinogen, particularly for lung cancer, signifying the existence of definitive, sufficient evidence of PM2.5's carcinogenic properties, the researchers said. However, the study also showed that PM2.5's cancer-inducing gene mutations extend beyond the respiratory system, particularly cancers of the thyroid, oesophagus, colon and rectal, and breast. Further, each 10 microgram per cubic metre increase in PM2.5 was found to correspond with a 17.9 per cent higher risk of kidney cancer and a 21.1 per cent higher risk of bladder cancer. Biologically, PM2.5 exerts broad cancer-related impacts, possibly due to its small size and driving multiple processes, including systemic oxidative stress, DNA damage and immune dysregulation, the researchers said. The study uses high-quality, globally representative cancer datasets involving populations from low, middle and high-income countries and therefore, ensures a generalisability of the findings, they said. The findings provide critical evidence to inform air quality policies, the team added.

Brain's Language Network May Be More Resilient To Ageing: Study

Press Trust Of India

Among older adults, activity in the brain region responsible for language may be identical to that seen in brains of younger adults, even as activity in the brain system involved in decision-making might differ between the two age groups, a new study has found. Findings published in the journal Nature Communications suggest that specialised brain regions, including those involved in processing language, might be more resilient to ageing, compared to other brain regions, researchers said. The researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Boston University said that cognitive functions tend to decline with age -- brain scans from previous studies have shown changes in function of a brain network involved in working memory and problem-solving. "It's well known that executive functions, such as attention, working memory, and cognitive control, tend to decline with age. And it's also known that in opposition to that, language skills typically tend to remain quite stable or even improve with age," said lead author Anne Billot, who carried out the work while doing her PhD at Boston University. "These two types of functions really go in opposite directions in healthy ageing. In terms of behaviour, that's quite well-established, and we wanted to see if that was also the case in the brain," she said. The study revealed that in older adults, activity of the language processing network is nearly identical to that seen in the brains of younger adults during language tasks. However, the researchers found that activation patterns in the 'multiple demand network', a brain system involved in executive control tasks such as decision-making, were very different in older and younger adults.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, HAMEEDA BANO, W/O MOHAMMAD SIDIQ MIR, R/O KREMSHORA, KHANSAHIB, BUDGAM, am seeking correction with regard to my name, which has been erroneously written as "HAMIDA" in official records, including bank records, instead of my correct name, i.e. "HAMEEDA BANO." Account No.: 0435040100003453 If anyone has any objection in this regard, he/she may inform the competent authority (J&K Bank Branch Kremshora) within seven days from the date of publication of this notice.

HAMEEDA BANO
W/O: MOHAMMAD SIDIQ MIR
R/O: KREMSHORA, KHANSAHIB, BUDGAM

rko

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Ghulam Mohammad Dar S/o Ab Gani Dar, R/o Seriwarpora, Tehsil Pattan, District Baramulla, J&K -- 193121, do hereby inform the general public that my name has inadvertently been recorded as "Gh. Mohd Dar" in my Aadhaar Card bearing No. 6380 8025 1666, which is incorrect. My correct and actual name is "Ghulam Mohammad Dar". I have applied for correction/updates of my name in the Aadhaar records. Any person having any objection in this regard may submit the same to the concerned authority within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. No objection shall be entertained thereafter.

fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Haneefa Begum W/o Gulam Mohamad Dar, R/o Seriwarpora, Tehsil Pattan, District Baramulla, J&K -- 193121, do hereby inform the general public that my name has inadvertently been recorded as "Hanifa Begum" in my Aadhaar Card bearing No. 5712 3539 7012, which is incorrect. My correct and actual name is "Haneefa Begum". I have applied for correction/updates of my name in the Aadhaar records. Any person having any objection in this regard may submit the same to the concerned authority within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. No objection shall be entertained thereafter.

fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

I have applied for the issuance of DOB certificate In favour of my son Tawkeer Ahamd War who was born on 20-07-2015 & Mohammad Hazim War who was born on 22-01-2018.. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in the office of the BDO Tujjer Sharief within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained. Mohammad Arif War F/o Tawkeer Ahamd War & Mohammad Hazim War R/o Zaloora

fko

NOTICE

I, Manzoor Ahmad Mir, father of Mohammad Nawab, who is studying in Class 4th, Section Blue, Roll No. 22 at Green Valley Educational Institute, Ellahi Bagh, Srinagar, hereby give notice that the name of my ward was inadvertently recorded in the school records as "Nawab Manzoor Mir" instead of his correct name, "Mohammad Nawab."

I request the school authorities to correct the name in their records accordingly.

If anyone has any objection to the proposed correction, they may contact the school authorities within seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After the expiry of the said period, no objection shall be entertained.

Manzoor Ahmad Mir
Father of Mohammad Nawab

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Mohd. Yousuf Malla, S/o Gh. Hussain Malla, R/o Magam, hereby inform that my 8th Class Pass Certificate, issued by Government Middle School, Magam, was badly damaged due to the 2014 floods. I am now applying for a duplicate certificate. Any person having any objection to the issuance of the duplicate certificate may submit the same in writing to the Office of the Zonal Education Officer, Magam, within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. Mohd. Yousuf Malla S/o Gh. Hussain Malla R/o Magam

bmg

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Mohammad Latief Tragwal, F/o: Affifa Batool R/o: Alamdar Colony C, Lal Bazar Srinagar, do hereby state that I am applying for correction of the parentage details in the school records of my daughter, Affifa Batool, who is studying at Bilaliya Educational Institute, Lal Bazar, Srinagar.

Incorrect Father's name: Muhammad Latief Tragwal
Correct Father's name: Mohammad Latief Tragwal
Incorrect Mother's name: Nelofer Begum
Correct Mother's name: Nilofar

If anybody having any objection to the said correction, he/she may contact the office of the Principal, Bilaliya Educational Institute, Lal Bazar, Srinagar within 7 days of this notice. After that no objection will be entertained.

Affifa Batool
D/o Mohammad Latief Tragwal
Nilofar

Media line adst

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Irfan Hussain, F/o Arshi Irfan, hereby declare that due to an inadvertent error, the name of my daughter were wrongly recorded in the school records of Iqbal Memorial Institute Bemina

The details are as follows:
Incorrect Name: Arusha Irfan
Correct Name: Arshi Irfan

If any person has any objection to the above-mentioned corrections, they may inform the school authority of Iqbal Memorial Institute Bemina within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. Thereafter, no objection shall be entertained.

Irfan Hussain
F/o Arshi Irfan

Media line adst

PUBLIC NOTICE

My name has been wrongly written as KHALIDA AKHTER S/O AB RASHID YATOO on my Adhaar card bearing Adhaar No ..6495 1205 4437 while my correct name is KHALIDA RASHID D/O ABDUL RASHID YATOO which needs to be corrected if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/ her objection in the office of concerned Adhaar authority of India within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained
Name...KHALIDA RASHID
D/O..ABDUL RASHID YATOO
R/O..DAWLATPORA AUTHOORA

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JKSC Holds UT-Level Football Trials at TRC Turf

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council (JKSC) on Wednesday conducted UT-level trials for Sub-Junior Boys in football at the TRC Synthetic Football Turf in Srinagar to select the J&K team for the National Football Championship 2026.

Young footballers from across Jammu and Kashmir participated in the trials and

evaluation was also supported by the accompanying physiotherapy team.

Secretary, J&K Sports Council, Tazayun Mukhtar Kawos, was present during the proceedings.

The Sports Council said the trials were part of its efforts to identify and nurture grassroots sporting talent across Jammu and Kashmir.

It also reiterated its commitment to maintaining a transparent and merit-based



showcased their skills before the selection panel.

The expert panel assessed the players on technical proficiency, game awareness and overall fitness. The

selection process based on fair competition.

The selected players will represent Jammu and Kashmir at the National Football Championship 2026.

Omar Meets IUST VC, KCCI Delegation At Raabita



Observer News Service

Srinagar: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday held separate meetings with Vice Chancellor of the Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), Prof Shakil Ahmad Romshoo, and a delegation of the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) at Raabita in Srinagar.

During his meeting with Prof Romshoo, the Chief Minister discussed matters related to higher education and academic development in Jammu and Kashmir.

The interaction focused

on strengthening educational initiatives and promoting academic excellence, with the government reiterating its engagement with higher education institutions.

Omar also met a KCCI delegation led by its president Javid Ahmad Tenga and discussed issues concerning trade, business and the economic growth of the region.

The meetings provided an opportunity for discussions on strengthening coordination with academic and business stakeholders and advancing initiatives related to education, commerce and wider economic development.

KU, UGC-DAE CSR Hold Research Facilities Workshop

Observer News Service

Srinagar:The Department of Physics at the University of Kashmir, in collaboration with the UGC-DAE Consortium for Scientific Research (UGC-DAE CSR), Indore Centre, organised a two-day awareness workshop to promote collaborative research and wider access to national scientific facilities.

The workshop familiarised faculty members and researchers with major Department of Atomic Energy facilities, including the Raja Ramanna Centre for Advanced Technology (RRCAT), Dhruva Reactor and Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre (VECC), along with advanced infrastructure available at UGC-DAE CSR centres.

Inaugurating the workshop, University of Kashmir Vice-Chancellor Prof Nilofer Khan stressed the importance of stronger links between universities and national research facilities.

She said access to advanced scientific infrastructure could expand the scope and quality of research and provide researchers opportunities to work with cutting-edge facilities and develop scientific collaborations.

Director, UGC-DAE CSR,

Prof Kaustubh R. S. Priolkar, highlighted the Consortium's efforts to facilitate access to major DAE facilities and encouraged researchers to make greater use of its Collaborative Research Scheme.

Centre directors and senior scientists interacted with participants and explained facility access procedures and opportunities for collaborative research.

Technical sessions covered material synthesis and characterisation, spectroscopy, microscopy and physical-property measurements under low-temperature and high-magnetic-field conditions. Participants were also introduced to access protocols for INDUS Synchrotron beamlines at RRCAT and facilities at the Consortium's centres in Mumbai, Kalpakam and Kolkata, including the Bhubaneswar Node.

Faculty members from physical, chemical, biological and engineering sciences participated in the workshop and explored potential collaborations and research proposals.

The programme is expected to strengthen research links between the University of Kashmir and UGC-DAE CSR and promote wider use of advanced scientific infrastructure among researchers.



KO Photo : Abid Bhat

Dastgeer Sahib Illuminated, Devotees Gather Ahead of Annual Urs

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The historic Dastgeer Sahib shrine in Khanyar witnessed a steady flow of devotees on Wednesday evening as preparations for the annual Urs of Hazrat Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani (RA), popularly known as Ghaus-ul-Azam, entered the final stage.

The shrine was illuminated as devotees began arriving for the night-long Shab Khani on the eve of Thursday's Urs Mubarak.

People from different parts of Srinagar and other areas of Kashmir visited the shrine to offer prayers and participate in religious observances.

Devotees said the Shab Khani holds special spiritual significance and remains deeply rooted in Kashmir's religious traditions.

Numan Ahmed, a devotee from Soura, said families have been visiting Dastgeer Sahib for generations to participate in the night-long prayers and

seek blessings.

Zubair Firdous from Nishat said the gathering reflected Kashmir's long-standing spiritual traditions, with devotees arriving from different areas to participate in the observances.

The Shab-e-Urs was marked by prayers, recitation of the Holy Quran,

The annual Urs of Hazrat Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani (RA) remains an important religious observance in Kashmir, attracting devotees from across the Valley to Dastgeer Sahib every year.

Meanwhile, National Conference president Farooq Abdullah and Chief

“The annual Urs of Hazrat Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani (RA) remains an important religious observance in Kashmir, attracting devotees from across the Valley to Dastgeer Sahib every year.

Zikr and other religious activities, with devotees spending the night in remembrance and devotion.

Preparations continued at the shrine and adjoining areas for the main Urs on Thursday, which is expected to draw a large gathering of devotees.

Minister Omar Abdullah extended greetings to Muslims on the occasion, recalling the spiritual teachings and legacy of Hazrat Ghaus-ul-Azam.

Omar Abdullah expressed hope that the occasion would bring peace, harmony and prosperity to Jammu and Kashmir.



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HIGHWAY STATUS

Sgr-Jammu highway - (Open)

Mughal Road - (Open)

Srinagar- Leh- (Open)



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CALENDAR

11 Rabi-ul-Sani

1448

PRAYERS

FAJR

4: 57

ZUHR

12:24

ASR

4: 44

Magrib

6: 31

ISHA

7: 51

This Day In History

- 1493 - Christopher Columbus embarks on his 2nd expedition to the New World, setting sail with a fleet of 17 ships
- 1529 - Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent and his Ottoman troops arrive in Vienna, beginning of the siege
- 1688 - France declares war on Germany
- 1706 - Treaty of Altranstädt: Charles XII of Sweden & August II of Saksen
- 1789 - President George Washington nominates John Jay for 1st Chief Justice
- 1789 - US Attorney General Office is created
- 1829 - Russia & Ottoman Empire sign Peace Treaty of Adrianople
- 1838 - Anti-Corn-Law League forms to repeal English Corn Law
- 1841 - British adventurer James Brooke obtains lands around the Sarawak river from the Sultan of Brunei
- 1850 - Papal Bull issued, establishes Roman Catholic hierarchy in England
- 1853 - France annexes New Caledonia
- 1877 - Battle of Shiroyama, decisive victory of the Imperial Japanese Army over the Satsuma Rebellion
- 1943 - Soviet forces reconquer Smolensk
- 1965 - Saudi Arabian & Egyptian accord over Yemen
- 1970 - Soviet space probe Luna 16 lands on earth after 1st unmanned round trip to moon
- 1971 - 90 Russian diplomats expelled from Britain for spying
- 1975 - OPEC announces a 15% increase in government per barrel revenues
- 1978 - USSR performs underground nuclear test
- 1979 - CompuServe began operation as 1st computer information service
- 1980 - Iraqi troops cross Iran's border, encircling Abadan
- 1981 - US performs nuclear test at Nevada Test Site
- 1982 - US, Italian & French peacekeeping troops begin arriving in Lebanon
- 1990 - Iraq invades the French and Dutch missions in Kuwait; French President Mitterrand called the action a violation of international law; a U.S. warship boards an Iraqi-flagged tanker bound for the port of Basrah
- 1990 - Saddam Hussein states his willingness to strike first and his intention to damage oil fields in the region if Iraq does strike

From KO Archives

Traders Refusing Kashmiri Apple

400 Trucks Lying Unloaded At Azadpur Mandi

Observer News Service

Srinagar-Nearly 400 trucks laden with Kashmiri apple are stranded at the Azadpur mandi in Delhi, as traders refuse to unload them because of their preference for fruit from Himachal Pradesh.

The situation has sent a wave of concern through fruit traders in Kashmir, and the matter has been taken up with the Delhi government.

A delegation of the Fruit Growers Association said that different varieties of apple are being exported in this season and 400 trucks laden with the fruit arrived in the Azadpur mandi in Delhi four days ago.

"Traders in the capital are declining to unload the trucks because preference is being given to fruit from Himachal over that from Kashmir," it said.

The trucks are stranded at the mandi, causing deep concern among the growers community, it said. The stranding of 400 trucks has caused a shortage of vehicles to ferry fruit to outside the state, and as a result freight charges have jumped through the roof, it said.

"Only a few days ago, the freight per carton from Shopyan to Delhi was Rs 40. This had now been hiked to Rs 50," it said. Sources said that the union minister for water resources, Prof Saifuddin Soz, has conveyed his concern by raising the issue with the horticulture department in Delhi after the matter was brought to his notice by fruit traders.

(Kashmir Observer, September 24, 2000)

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KO VIEW

Nature First

Kashmir's celebrated beauty is disappearing fast. Lush meadows, turquoise lakes, and historic landmarks are giving way to haphazard construction and concrete walls. Roads carve through valleys, tourist spots are boxed in by bulky gates, and once-scenic views are lost to unsightly development.

These changes harm ecosystems and affect the well-being of residents and visitors alike. Eco-engineering offers a way to reconcile growth with nature, guiding development that protects the environment while enhancing human experience.

The problem starts in classrooms. Engineering students acquire technical knowledge but rarely absorb the responsibility that should accompany it.

Sustainability is often confined to a single optional semester, covering familiar topics like deforestation, noise pollution, and soil degradation. Such superficial treatment leaves future engineers ill-equipped to weigh environmental consequences in real projects. Sustainability must be integrated across all subjects, teaching students to balance design, function, and ecological impact from the start.

Making environmental code books as central as design manuals would turn theoretical knowledge into everyday practice. Students exposed to these standards early would naturally factor ecological costs into their decisions.

Small changes in perspective can also have real impact. Urban transport, for example, could prioritize panoramic bus windows over Wi-Fi screens, connecting commuters to their surroundings. Rewarding cyclists with data incentives encourages green mobility.

Such interventions show that eco-conscious thinking is practical and achievable.

Design itself shapes human experience. Concrete gates at tourist sites may impress, but they sever the connection with the environment. Tree-canopy entrances or structures that blend with the landscape evoke awe while protecting ecosystems.

Students must learn to integrate architecture, psychology, and engineering, guided by educators who emphasize ethics. Collaboration and conscious design can turn every project into an opportunity to harmonize human life with nature.

Environmental degradation and poorly planned growth reveal the cost of neglecting moral and ecological responsibility in the valley.

By embedding sustainability into engineering education, we can cultivate professionals capable of designing a Kashmir where development enhances rather than erodes natural beauty.

Dr S. Bashir Ahmad Veeri

On September 21, 2026, growers, buyers and other stakeholders from across the Kashmir Valley gathered at a Buyer-Seller Meet held at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Complex in Srinagar. The meet was presided over by Agriculture Minister Javid Ahmad Dar and attended by several legislators representing agrarian constituencies of Jammu and Kashmir. Discussions centred on the persistent bottlenecks affecting the horticulture supply chain, particularly in post-harvest management, logistics, market access and value realisation for growers.

The meet also highlighted a larger shift underway in the sector. Jammu and Kashmir's horticulture economy is moving away from a model built primarily around orchards and seasonal trade towards an integrated value chain in which productivity, quality, storage, processing, branding and market linkages matter as much as the fruit itself. The task now is to ensure that this transition actually improves efficiency and competitiveness while increasing the share of value that reaches the grower.

The sector already carries considerable weight in the regional economy. It generates close to Rs 10,000 crore annually and supports more than 35 lakh people, directly or indirectly, across over seven lakh families. According to the roadmap released by NITI Aayog, horticulture accounts for nearly seven per cent of the Union Territory's Gross State Domestic Product, a share that few other sectors of comparable size can match.

The most visible change is taking place inside the orchard itself. Traditional apple cultivation relied on large trees, wide spacing and a long wait before the first harvest. High-density plantation works differently. It uses dwarfing rootstocks, closer spacing, trellising, canopy management and fertigation, with the aim of improving productivity and fruit quality while making more efficient use of land and water, rather than simply adding more trees.

The scale of this shift can now be measured. The Economic Survey 2025-

Kashmir's Next
Horticulture Shift

The region is moving from traditional orchards towards high-density farming, processing and stronger market links.



26 records that 29.13 lakh high-density plants were distributed during 2024-25, taking the cumulative area under high- and medium-density plantations to 20,034 hectares. The overall area under major horticultural crops stands at 3.47 lakh hectares, with production of 27.35 lakh metric tonnes recorded up to November 2025.

This transition matters particularly in a region where landholdings are small. Raising output from existing land makes greater sense than expanding the area under cultivation. For this reason, high-density plantation cannot remain merely a subsidy-driven programme for new saplings. It needs to function as a complete production system, backed by certified planting material, technical extension, assured irrigation, pest surveillance, crop insurance and reliable access to credit and inputs.

Public policy is beginning to reflect this integrated approach. The Holistic Agriculture Development Programme has allocated Rs 1,028.21 crore for horticulture projects. Alongside it, NITI Aayog's Roadmap for Horticulture Development, released earlier this year, lays out a plan extending up to 2047.

Its centrepiece, Operation Golden Greens, is structured as an umbrella mission with five sub-missions covering dry fruits, fresh fruits, vegetables, floriculture and minor crops. Fresh fruits account for about 73 per cent of the fruit-growing area and remain the focus of efforts to raise productivity through high-density plantation, stronger cold-chain infrastructure and improved export logistics.

Dry fruits cover roughly 27 per cent of the area but command high value. The mission therefore emphasises processing, branding and Geographical Indication tagging to enhance returns. The roadmap sets out three phases—from 2026 to 2030, 2030 to 2035, and 2035 to 2047—progressively moving from foundational infrastructure towards deeper integration with global markets.

Much of the real transformation, however, has to take place after the fruit leaves the tree. A significant share of value is still lost through poor grading, inadequate packaging, costly transportation and insufficient storage. The roadmap estimates post-harvest losses in apples at around 25 per cent.

Controlled Atmosphere storage capacity in Jammu and Kashmir has grown from about 31,000 metric tonnes in 2016-17 to 2.92 lakh metric tonnes today. Yet the estimated requirement is close to six lakh metric tonnes. This gap underscores why storage cannot be treated as a standalone infrastructure intervention. It needs to be integrated with pack houses, grading units, quality-testing laboratories, processing facilities and reliable market information.

Digital markets add another layer to this emerging value chain. The electronic National Agriculture Market, or eNAM, connects mandis through online trading, transparent bidding and digital payments. In Jammu and Kashmir, trade through eNAM touched Rs 634.09 crore, covering 28.26 lakh quintals, up to November 2025. Its real contribution lies not merely in digitising mandi transactions but in providing growers with better price discovery and access to a wider pool of buyers.

Crop diversification will determine how resilient the sector remains in the years ahead. Apple will continue to occupy a central place in Kashmir's orchards, but future growth cannot depend on a single crop. Walnut, almond, saffron, pear, cherry and apricot already offer proven returns, while berries, kiwi,

selected nuts, vegetables and medicinal and aromatic plants can create new production clusters.

The NITI Aayog roadmap goes further by mapping suitable varieties for different agro-climatic zones—from temperate belts suited to cherry and walnut to intermediate zones better suited to peach and plum—giving districts a clearer basis for deciding what to plant and where.

Floriculture offers a quieter but potentially valuable link between agriculture and tourism. Government gardens, commercial flower cultivation and the Bagh-e-Gul-e-Dawood project demonstrate how flowers can generate income well beyond the farm gate, supporting tourism and small local enterprises. The Economic Survey records 278 parks and gardens and 356.41 hectares under commercial floriculture across the Union Territory.

None of this can succeed through technology alone. Climate variability, pest and disease pressures, pesticide residues, continued reliance on imported planting material, high transportation costs and limited processing capacity remain significant constraints.

Addressing these challenges will require climate-resilient varieties, precision irrigation, integrated pest management, stronger testing infrastructure, export-certification support and farmer producer organisations capable of bargaining and marketing collectively rather than leaving growers to negotiate individually.

Taken together, these developments point to a single conclusion: the horticulture economy of Jammu and Kashmir needs to be understood as a value chain, not simply as an orchard.

The required shift is from production to productivity; from raw fruit to processed products; from distress sales at harvest time to planned and staggered marketing; and from scattered individual growers to organised producer networks.

If infrastructure, research, technology and market access advance together, horticulture can emerge as an even stronger source of rural income, employment and export earnings—while retaining its central place in the economy of Jammu and Kashmir.

The author is a serving legislator from South Kashmir's Bijbehara constituency and contributes occasionally to public policy discourse and the discussion of contemporary political challenges. He can be reached at drveeri2@gmail.com.

The Battle for Kashmir's Walnut

Walnut carving once connected masters, families and homes. Today, its makers are growing older while buyers turn to cheaper copies.



Irshad Mushtaq

In the old lanes of Srinagar, the sound finds you. Steel taps walnut with an artistry that has filled these streets for centuries.

Masters turned this wood into beds that survived marriages. They built cabinets that moved through ages, and carved panels so deep you could run your finger through the grooves and feel the valley's history.

The walnut trees grow slow and dense across Kashmir. Their timber packs tight with grain that holds detail like memory holds songs. Artisans learned to read that grain like a map.

They knew exactly where to cut, understood how hard to push, and recognized when to pull back before the wood split.

Fathers taught sons in workshops that had no formal walls. Masters took apprentices and showed them the chinar leaf. They demonstrated the lotus, and traced vines that seemed to crawl across the surface rather than sit on top.

No two tables ever matched completely. That was the entire point.

A single cabinet could eat up months of labour. Families paid accordingly because

they understood the math: buy once and keep forever.

The wood fought off pests naturally, and the colour grew richer with each passing year. A bed bought for a wedding might eventually hold the grandchildren. Beyond decoration, it was about staying power in a place where nothing else stayed put.

The craft worked because everyone understood the bargain. Artisans earned enough to stick around, and customers saved enough to buy quality. The furniture meant something beyond money. It rooted families to something solid. When Kashmir shook, the walnut bed held steady.

That world is cracking open now.

Machines arrived first on the scene. Computer cutters now reproduce the chinar leaf in minutes. What took a master several weeks now takes an operator one afternoon. The patterns look fine from across the room, but step closer and the depth disappears completely.

Machines cut even and flat, but human hands know to change pressure. They let the wood speak, and ease up when the grain shifts direction.

Customers rarely step closer. They see the shape, notice the dark stain, check the price tag that reads half the workshop rate, and buy the copy and call it good enough.

Then came the substitutes.

Kail wood appeared on the market, deodar followed close behind, and rubber wood shipped in from places with zero connection to this valley.

These timbers drink stain like water. A few coats of chemical polish let them wear walnut's

colour like a costume. The real grain hides underneath.

The weight feels wrong. It is too light, and feels almost hollow. In any showroom, you will see them sitting side by side. The authentic piece and the imitation remain separated by thousands of rupees and centuries of knowledge. Most buyers grab the cheaper one.

Money is tight everywhere. The differences feel fussy, almost like collector's details, and it all seems far removed from real life.

Here is the trap that catches everyone: fake walnut sales pull support from real workshops, and kids who grow up around machine-carved junk lose the eye for handmade work.

Young Kashmiris scroll past their own heritage online. Foreign buyers fly in to grab authentic pieces for Dubai apartments and London flats. The craft survives for export markets while dying at home.

The money turned brutal over time. Raw walnut costs more every single season. Middlemen insert themselves between tree and table. They take cuts that leave artisans with scraps.

A master carver with twenty years of experience earns less than a construction labourer. His kids watch him bend over the wood until evening. They see his hands cramping, notice his eyes burning, make their own choices, study computers, apply for government posts, and leave the valley entirely.

The workshops grow emptier each year, the masters grow older, and the chain edges closer to breaking.

Some workshops tried to adapt to new times. They built lighter pieces for modern flats,

wired carved panels for electricity, filmed their process and posted it online, and hoped the story would sell what the product alone could not.

These moves help some workshops survive, but cannot save the whole system and rescue the thick web of suppliers, carvers, polishers, and sellers that made the craft work at scale.

The threat runs deeper than simple technology. Kashmir is forgetting how to recognize its own treasures. Kids who have never watched a master work cannot value what the hands produce. They see the glossy finish on machine-made kail wood, accept it as sufficient, inherit carved panels from grandparents, sell them to antique dealers for quick cash, and buy replacements that will crumble before their own children grow up.

Outside manufacturers grasp the value better than locals do. Factories in Punjab and Gujarat now churn out "Kashmiri style" furniture. They hire cheap hands, apply fake aging techniques, ship products back into the valley at prices no Srinagar workshop can touch, and steal the look and dump the meaning.

Each piece sold this way writes Kashmir out of its own story.

The valley faces a test that is really a question about identity. Can a society under pressure hold onto something that demands time, money, and faith? Can young Kashmiris learn to spot stained rubber wood against real walnut? Can they recognize embossed patterns against hand-cut depth? Can they build businesses that connect remaining masters to buyers who still care about the difference?

Some signs point toward yes. Small groups

document the craft. They film artisans at work, archive patterns, and create records that might outlast the workshops themselves. Designers mix traditional carving with modern function. They build lamps and modular units that fit current life without ditching old methods. Online platforms allow direct sales. They cut out middlemen, and let carvers keep more of their own value.

These efforts remain scattered across the landscape. They need coordination, money, and above all local pride.

The world already knows Kashmiri walnut work matters. International collectors pay top rates, while museums mount shows regularly. The recognition is already there, but what is missing is the internal belief that this heritage belongs to living Kashmiris. It is not meant for archives and foreign buyers alone.

The craft will survive in some form, but the question is what survival looks like in practice.

Walnut carving could shrink into a boutique craft, with a few masters serving global elites while machine copies flood the local market. It might survive only as a museum piece, explained in captions rather than practiced in homes.

Or it could find new life, sustained by Kashmiris who decide their own hands and history matter more than cheap convenience.

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Kashmir Measures a Child's Love in Kilometres

The scolding directed at young Kashmiris who leave overlooks the money the diaspora sends home and the scarcity of work that pushes them out.



Mohammad Ilyas Bhat

Surinder Sharma, the Indian satirist, once told a story that scolded parents for sending their children abroad.

Better, it argued, to share a simple meal with a son at home than to live in comfort while the family sits in different countries.

Kashmir has voices that say the same, and some of them go further, treating the young Kashmiri who takes a degree or a job abroad as someone who has committed a social offence.

The worry underneath is real. Elderly parents need company and attention, and children owe them both. The argument weakens at the point where it asks a son or daughter to surrender a future so that a body can remain in the next room, and it weakens further when it hints at selfishness in young people who leave for education, employment and a better life.

Consider what a brilliant young person should do when the work of their choice does not exist at home.

Where jobs are few and openings narrow, capable people look beyond the village, the district and the country, and some of that movement is talent finding the ground

where it can grow, whatever the label "brain drain" suggests.

I know one such case. A friend of mine, a brilliant scientist, wanted to go abroad several years ago, and his mother persuaded him to stay. Out of respect for her wishes he remained in India, and he is recognised today as one of the finest scientists the country has.

He also once topped a selection list and was dropped from the final selection, while comparatively ordinary candidates went through.

One can only imagine what that does to a person of real ability.

When merit goes unrewarded, which has become routine, blaming a talented person for looking elsewhere is hard to defend, and his early wish to go abroad looks perfectly understandable in retrospect. None of this promises that all who leave will find a better life, but it does say that talent needs a place where its abilities are fairly recognised and properly used.

Kashmiri society already knows that a son's address and his loyalty can differ.

In families where a married man lives with his wife's family, an arrangement called Ghar Pethor or Ghar Jamai, he lives apart from his own parents. Few would measure his affection for them in kilometres.

Marriage, work, money and circumstance have always decided where people live, and geography has never governed the bond alone. If society understands such arrangements at home, it can understand a child living abroad for study or a salary.

People have moved in search of knowledge and a better life throughout history. The internet and globalisation did not invent

migration, they simply changed how easily migrants stay in touch.

A son in London can speak to his mother in Srinagar in the evenings, a daughter in Toronto can watch her father's face on a video call, and a trip that once took weeks now takes a day or two.

Technology cannot lie beside an elderly parent who is seriously ill, and no honest account should pretend otherwise. Proximity guarantees nothing either.

Most of us have seen families who share a house or an apartment building where the children barely speak to their parents, pass them in corridors, eat at their own tables and stay absorbed in their own lives.

Closeness without attachment can be a lonelier condition than

distance.

Elsewhere, children thousands of miles away phone their parents, pay their medical expenses, arrange domestic help, visit whenever possible and stay deeply involved in their lives.

The useful question about a child concerns how responsibly he or she lives, and the kilometres tell very little.

Ask a loving parent what they want for a son or daughter. A grown child sitting idle at home because the family house is close, or a child who gains knowledge, builds a career, earns an independent living and lives with self-respect?

Most parents choose the second. The sharper contradiction lies elsewhere. Kashmir has thousands

of charitable initiatives, educational institutions, religious organisations and welfare projects, along with individual beneficiaries, that receive money from Kashmiris abroad. NRIs sponsor scholarships, contribute to mosques and schools, support orphanages and trusts, help families through medical emergencies and finance community projects, besides sending money to their own parents and relatives.

Many of those who lecture them about leaving have drawn on that generosity.

A person good enough to fund an NGO, pay for a poor student's education or cover a stranger's treatment becomes less responsible only in the telling, and only because of the distance on a map.

Living away from parents and abandoning them are different acts.

A daughter abroad may be devoted while a son two streets away is indifferent, and care, responsibility and affection measure a child better than any map.

The romance of staying has its own cost, because it punishes ambition.

A talented doctor with a place in a world-class hospital abroad, an engineer working on cutting-edge technology and a scientist who gains laboratories and equipment unavailable at home would all be asked to decline. A young person who can earn several times more overseas and secure the future of parents, siblings and children is judged selfish for it.

Condemning departures skips the question of why they happen.

Young Kashmiris are leaving amid insufficient jobs, inadequate research opportunities, limited industrial development, weak

private-sector employment and few avenues for entrepreneurship, and blaming them is the easiest response and the most intellectually lazy one.

The task is to build a Kashmir that young people choose to stay in, and shaming them has no part in that.

Those who go also send money home. It pays for parents' health-care, improves housing, finances siblings' education and supports relatives in hard times, and in many Kashmiri families one member's earnings abroad sustain several people at home.

The diaspora adds exposure to other systems, technologies, professional cultures and ways of thinking, which a Kashmiri living abroad can pass back as knowledge, expertise and resources.

The advice to the young should therefore be to go wherever talent takes them, for education, employment, research and opportunity, and to stay connected to their parents, family and community.

Those who remain behind can practise equal wisdom by declining to measure a child's love in the kilometres between home and Kashmir.

Parents need care, and care does not depend on sharing a roof. Children need opportunities, and guilt supplies none.

A society that keeps scolding its departing young is describing a place that has given them little reason to stay, and the scolding spares that place the harder question of what it has to give.

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Young Kashmiris are leaving amid insufficient jobs, inadequate research opportunities, limited industrial development, weak private-sector employment and few avenues for entrepreneurship, and blaming them is the easiest response and the most intellectually lazy one. The task is to build a Kashmir that young people choose to stay in, and shaming them has no part in that.

The Mystery of Kashmir's First Humans

Palaeolithic discoveries connect Kashmir to humanity's deep past, but the archaeological record offers no simple line from ancient toolmakers to people living today.



Muskan Shafi Malik

Picture someone standing beside an ancient river, holding a chipped piece of quartzite. There are trees, open land and the river around them. Cities, roads, farms and temples are far away. The land has no name.

The person watches the trees for animals and looks for a safe place to stay. We know little about who they were. The stone they left behind tells us they were here.

This person wrote nothing, and the silence sets a trap for anyone who wants to call them the first Indian.

Across South Asia, archaeology has recovered stone tools, animal remains and other traces of early human activity, although the evidence varies sharply from site to site.

Those same materials say nothing about a name, a dialect, a god or an ethnicity, which are exactly what a claim of ancestry needs.

The word itself is a geographical convention.

The borders dividing India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka did not exist, and the prehistoric land formed a single ecological zone, which is why archaeologists speak of South Asia or the subcontinent.

Those early foragers held no modern allegiance and no shared identity in the modern sense. Anyone who wants to know their world must set aside retrofitted political stories and read the region through its geology, ecology and stone.

Kashmir belongs in that reading more than its reputation suggests.

Reported Palaeolithic finds from Kashmir, particularly around Pahalgam, suggest that early humans reached the valley and its surrounding landscapes, although the evidence is sparse compared with the better-documented Palaeolithic record of peninsular India.

At Isampur in Karnataka, a quarry preserves extensive evidence of Acheulean tool manufacture, including cores, flakes, hammerstones and bifaces. At Attirampakkam in Tamil Nadu, luminescence and palaeomagnetic dating placed Acheulean assemblages at roughly 1.5 million years, far earlier than anyone had assumed.

The Acheulean is a tradition of systematically flaked, symmetrical bifaces, and its makers struck river cobbles into flakes and cores, then worked quartzite into handaxes, cleavers and chopping tools.

Such work shows raw material chosen with care, forward planning and adaptation to changing terrain. Stone also draws a hard line, because it records mechanics and movement while the maker's mind stays out of reach.

Bone was supposed to settle what stone could not.

On 5 December 1982, at Hathnora on the Narmada, the geologist Arun Sonakia uncovered a partial fossilised skullcap, the first direct biological evidence of an early hominin in South Asia. It sharpened the dispute instead.

Scholars first called the fossil an advanced Homo erectus, and later morphometric analyses led researchers to argue for an archaic Homo sapiens, or for an unclassified Middle Pleistocene lineage such as a Denisovan relative.

The skullcap keeps its value because it resists a tidy label, and it shows knowledge as an ongoing investigation, which a fixed verdict would end.

Suppose the label were settled. A population living here hundreds of thousands of years ago still could not be mapped onto any present-day community. Deep prehistory ran through successive migrations, long isolations, episodic admixture



Long before the Nile, Mesopotamia or the Aegean rose, the subcontinent sat at a crossroads.

Populations moved out of Africa, through West Asia, into Europe and East Asia, and South Asia worked as corridor and crucible. Its river systems and varied microclimates supplied habitats through Pleistocene climatic swings, and people adapted, survived and dispersed from here over Eurasia.

and local extinctions, with lineages vanishing or giving way to incoming groups.

Treating ancient presence as modern descent is a category error that flattens a volatile mosaic into ethnic myth, and the valley's stones, like the Narmada's bone, have no heirs to name.

Anatomically, modern humans evolved in Africa before dispersing over the globe, and the question for South Asia becomes timing and route.

Some scholars favour a rapid coastal movement along the Indian

Ocean littoral, others an inland push through the Levant, Arabia and the Iranian plateau.

Sudden shifts in microlithic technology give material clues, while genetics keeps an independent clock.

Working with autosomal DNA, mitochondrial lineages and ancient admixture, David Reich, Mait Metspalu and Priya Moorjani have reconstructed how founder lineages entered the subcontinent, and their findings place modern humans here between 60,000 and 70,000 years ago.

About 74,000 years ago, the Youngest Toba super-eruption blanketed large parts of South Asia in ash, an event long cited as a volcanic winter that nearly extinguished human populations.

At Dhaba in the Middle Son Valley, Chris Clarkson and colleagues found continuous stone-tool assemblages directly beneath and above the ash layer, with technological traditions running unbroken through the horizon.

The theory of catastrophe met the

layered ground, and the ground favoured survival.

Long before the Nile, Mesopotamia or the Aegean rose, the subcontinent sat at a crossroads. Populations moved out of Africa, through West Asia, into Europe and East Asia, and South Asia worked as corridor and crucible. Its river systems and varied microclimates supplied habitats through Pleistocene climatic swings, and people adapted, survived and dispersed from here over Eurasia.

Their days revolved around flowing rivers, savannas, monsoons that came and failed, migrating megafauna, outcrops of good stone, seasonal plants, the hunt and the protection of fire.

Names, griefs and languages are gone for good, but archaeology recovers the technology, the raw-material economies and the subsistence strategies, which anchors deep prehistory in a human life instead of speculation.

The phrase "first Indian" breaks into several questions with several answers: the earliest hominin toolmaker, the first anatomically modern human, the initial permanent settler, the first biological ancestor of living groups.

Those questions point to different realities, and the record answers with successive populations that colonised, vanished, intermingled and adapted over vast epochs.

E. H. Carr observed that facts become history through the questions historians put to surviving fragments, and this question says more about the asker than about the stone.

Back on the river terrace, the quartzite tool lies uninscribed, with no maker's name, and still proves that someone judged the grain of the rock and struck it with force to survive.

For hundreds of thousands of years, people like that learned to live from the landscape. What followed when they began asking the landscape to feed them belongs to another layer of ground.

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CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Education and

not be treated differently based on the type of institution they attend.

"This is not a competition between a private school and a government school. The children are ours, whether they study in a government school or a private school, and they are the future of Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

He said the government was working to simplify procedures for private schools by reducing delays and hurdles related to permissions and approvals.

The Chief Minister also referred to legislation for private universities, saying it would create greater opportunities for students to pursue quality higher education within Jammu and Kashmir.

He stressed the need to prepare students for emerging fields such as Artificial Intelligence by incorporating new developments into school curricula and syllabi.

Referring to the ALOHA competition, Omar said participation by children from remote areas of Jammu and Kashmir, other states and abroad was encouraging.

He said the achievements of the young participants reflected the efforts of their parents, teachers and ALOHA International, adding that participation itself was an achievement.

The Chief Minister also said the government would explore introducing the ALOHA mental arithmetic programme in government schools to provide students across the education system with a level playing field.

He congratulated the participating students, parents, teachers and organisers and expressed hope that the ALOHA programme would expand further in Jammu and Kashmir.

Omar Hits Back

and Kashmir could not be erased.

"The people who did not take part in the fight for freedom, what lesson will they teach us? RSS and the ancestral party of BJP, everyone knows their role in the fight for freedom. Everyone knows who apologised and what they did," he said.

Omar said Sheikh Abdullah's role in Jammu and Kashmir's history was well known and that the sacrifices associated with the National Conference could not be forgotten.

"No one can forget the role of Sher-e-Kashmir here. The sacrifices that were made in the National Conference. The sacrifice started from the National Conference," he said.

Referring to the slogan associated with the party's political history, Omar said: "Hamlaavar khabardar, hum Kashmiri hain khabardar. Where did this slogan come from?"

He accused the BJP of attempting to reinterpret history when it disagreed with a particular narrative.

"Now BJP has made it a habit. When they don't like anything, they try to present history in a new way. They have tried in this too," he said.

The Chief Minister also raised concerns about the functioning of the Election Commission, saying public

trust in elections was fundamental to democracy.

Referring to delimitation in Jammu and Kashmir, Omar reiterated concerns earlier expressed by his party. "We believe that the process was opaque, the process was flawed and the entire process was designed to benefit one political party and its friends," he said.

He also referred to reported differences within the Election Commission, saying such developments raised questions about the electoral process.

"The foundation of democracy is the elections. And if people's trust in the elections is lost, then why do people participate in the elections?" he asked.

Rejecting suggestions that little work had been done during the ongoing Assembly session, Omar said questions, bills and resolutions had been taken up in the House.

He said BJP members had also participated in discussions and noted that deliberations on a resolution concerning teacher training and the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET), moved by School Education Minister Sakeena Itoo, would continue.

"Some more resolutions will come before the House," he said.

On being asked about the issue of banning books, Omar said the elected government did not currently have the authority to decide such matters. "We just have to wait for that situation to change. And then we will take a fresh look at what's happening," he said. (KNO)

HC Allows

for termination, subject to medical assessment and safeguards recommended by the Medical Board.

The judgement noted that the person allegedly responsible for the sexual assault had not been identified or arrested at the time of the decision.

The court also directed authorities to protect the minor's identity and medical particulars and ensure that she receives necessary medical and psychological support.

The case highlights the court's exercise of constitutional jurisdiction in exceptional circumstances, balancing the statutory gestational limit with the minor's fundamental rights and medical circumstances.

SKUAST-K Interns'

the interns are demanding an increase in their monthly stipend from Rs 6,000 to Rs 23,000. They said the stipend has remained unchanged since 2011 and is inadequate in view of their clinical duties, training requirements and expenses.

The protesting interns have also met Agriculture Minister Javid Ahmad Dar over the issue. However, they said the matter remains unresolved as the government has not issued any written assurance on revising the stipend.

The interns said verbal assurances were insufficient and maintained that they would continue their protest until a written commitment was provided.

JKVSA president Saqlain Rashid said the government was ignoring the

demands of veterinary interns despite the responsibilities involved in their training.

"If MBBS and other health sector interns can be given a written assurance on their stipend demands, we too deserve the same. Our work is no less important, yet we are being ignored," he said.

Another intern, Toyiba Bashir, said the demand was simply for a revision of the stipend, which has remained unchanged for 15 years.

She said interns are required to travel within the university, to other districts and states, and to remote areas as part of their training, while receiving only Rs 6,000 per month.

The interns also sought parity with veterinary interns in other parts of the country, claiming that stipends at several institutions are above Rs 20,000.

The JKVSA said the protest would continue until the government provides a written assurance on revision of the stipend. (KNO)

Hailstorm, Gusty

while Jammu recorded 33.9 degrees Celsius.

Gulmarg recorded a maximum temperature of 21.2 degrees Celsius and received 3.4 mm of rainfall during the 24-hour period ending Wednesday morning.

Banks To Remain

if it materialises, would coincide with the half-yearly closing of the banking sector.

In view of the proposed three-day nationwide bank strike called by the UFBU from September 28 to 30, 2026, following the weekend holidays on September 26 and 27, the government has taken proactive steps to ensure the banking services needs of citizens, the statement said.

"In order to ensure that the genuine banking needs of the public are not adversely affected for an extended period, all Public Sector Banks and Regional Rural Banks will function normally on Sunday, the 27th of September, 2026," it said.

The Reserve Bank of India has granted approval for all bank branches, offices, ATM-link branches and currency chests to remain fully operational on September 27, it said.

The Department of Financial Services under the ministry of finance reiterated that the welfare and convenience of bank customers remains the government's foremost priority.

The government and bank managements have appealed to unions to defer the proposed strike, and have also taken measures to ensure that essential banking services continue uninterrupted, it said.

UFBU's other demands include an update and improvement of pension, a uniform dearness allowance formula for all pensioners and an option for employees covered under the National Pension System (NPS) to switch to the old pension scheme (OPS).

Many public sector banks have started issuing advisories to their customers

to use digital channels such as Mobile Banking, ATM, Internet Banking, BC Point and UPI for banking needs if the strike materialises.

Banks have also advised their customers to complete essential banking transactions well in advance of the proposed strike dates to avoid any inconvenience.

The proposed 3-day strike period also coincides with the half-yearly closing of banks on September 30, a date of particular significance for reconciliation, provisioning and treasury and market operations.

J&K Book Ban

decision," he said while speaking to reporters during his visit to Sheetal Nath Temple near Kral Khud in Srinagar.

His remarks came a day after the Jammu and Kashmir government informed the Legislative Assembly that 4,249 books had been withdrawn from circulation in government degree college libraries, while 518 copies of 19 banned titles had been removed.

The government said 21,81,582 books and publications had been examined so far, with another 1,752 books referred for expert examination.

The issue has triggered questions over the criteria used to classify books as objectionable or banned and the authority under which the withdrawals were carried out.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said the elected government currently has no role in decisions concerning book bans under the prevailing administrative arrangement.

"I have my own views on whether books should be banned or not. But unfortunately, in the current system, the elected government doesn't get to decide these things," Omar told reporters on Wednesday.

He said the issue raised a wider question about whether banning books was the way forward in a democracy and indicated that the elected government would review the matter if the administrative arrangement changed.

Kashmir's chief cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq also criticised the withdrawal of the books, describing it as "disturbing and unfortunate".

He questioned what made the books objectionable and called for the titles and reasons for their removal to be made public.

Mirwaiz said academic freedom and access to diverse perspectives were fundamental to education and argued that restricting what students could read could affect learning and critical thought.

The controversy has also drawn attention in the Legislative Assembly, where members have sought details about the books withdrawn, the criteria applied during the review and the legal basis for their removal.

Meanwhile, Dulloo, during his visit to Sheetal Nath Temple, described the shrine as an important part of Srinagar's shared heritage and called for collective efforts to preserve such sites.

He said the temple is believed to be one of the eight Bhairavas associated

with the protection of Srinagar and had historically served not only as a place of worship but also as a venue for community gatherings and religious programmes.

Dulloo said the temple was burnt in 1991 and later repaired by the Sanatan Dharma Sabha. It was reopened for devotees in 2021 after remaining closed for several decades.

He said preserving such heritage sites and passing their legacy to future generations was a collective responsibility.

Over 25,000 Students

factors such as higher education, competitive examinations, skill acquisition and availability of employment opportunities in relevant sectors.

It also acknowledged that there is currently no formal comprehensive assessment or survey mechanism to systematically measure employment outcomes, placement rates, average salary packages and sector-wise absorption of graduates from these institutions.

The department said efforts were being made to assess employment outcomes through placement drives, career counselling and institutional-level tracking. It added that steps were also being taken to strengthen alumni and employment-outcome tracking in line with the National Education Policy (NEP)-2020.

On declining enrolment, the department said district-wise, college-wise and course-wise details of programmes witnessing a decline of more than 25 per cent over the past three academic sessions, including vacant and leftover seats, had been provided in Annexure-A.

The department said a committee had been constituted to rationalise subjects and introduce new programmes in government degree colleges, with a focus on industry-aligned, skill-based and future-ready courses under the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUGP).

The committee identified declining admissions in several government degree colleges, particularly those located in rural and remote areas, as an issue requiring attention. It recommended a comprehensive programme-wise review of enrolment across government degree colleges.

The committee also recommended adopting a cluster-based academic model and introducing one-year post-graduate programmes for eligible FYUGP graduates in colleges with the required academic and infrastructure facilities.

Among the proposed new programmes are courses in Artificial Intelligence, data science, cyber security and remote sensing. These have been proposed for selected government degree colleges, particularly around Jammu and Srinagar, where the required infrastructure and faculty can be developed.

The department said the measures were aimed at aligning higher education with emerging employment opportunities and future workforce requirements.

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Kashmir Apple Growers Find Relief as Markets, Storage Demand Improve

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Apple growers in Kashmir are seeing some relief this season, with prematurely fallen "Giran" apples fetching better returns than last year while demand for cold storage has risen sharply amid efforts to avoid distress sales during the peak harvest period.

Growers said a crate of Giran apples is currently fetching between Rs 100 and Rs 250, depending on quality and demand. Though the rates remain well below those of marketable apples, growers said the returns are helping them recover part of the costs incurred on labour, pesticides and orchard maintenance.

"Last year, we had difficulty even finding buyers for Giran apples. A lot of the fruit was left to rot because traders were reluctant to purchase it amid transportation problems," said Nazir Ahmad, an apple grower from Pulwama.

"This year, the situation is comparatively better. We are getting around Rs 100 to Rs 250 per crate, depending on the quality. Though it is not comparable with the price of marketable apples, it still helps us recover some of our costs," he said.

Giran apples are fruits that fall from trees before the normal harvesting period. While



they generally fetch lower prices, they are used for juice production and other processing purposes.

Growers said timely procurement by traders and comparatively smoother movement of fruit this season had helped prevent the kind of wastage witnessed last year.

Abdul Hameed, an apple grower from Shopian, said the difference was particularly visible this season.

"Last year was extremely difficult. The fruit was falling in large quantities, but there were hardly any buyers. Whatever was col-

lected often remained for days and eventually spoiled," he said.

"This year, traders are lifting the fruit and we are getting some return from it. Rs 100 to Rs 250 a crate may appear small, but when a grower has a large quantity of fallen apples, it provides some financial support," he added.

Meanwhile, cold storage facilities across Kashmir have started receiving consignments for the new season, with many units already fully booked as growers seek to hold back a portion of their crop and wait for better market conditions.

tion of the stock had to be discarded," said a cold storage operator.

Growers said storage provides them with an option to avoid selling large quantities during periods of weak prices when arrivals peak.

"When arrivals are high, growers often have little bargaining power and are compelled to sell at whatever rates are available. Storage gives them an option to hold back a portion of the crop and wait for better market conditions," a grower said.

However, growers and storage operators stressed that cold storage cannot substitute for proper post-harvest management. They called for better grading, packing, transportation and market infrastructure.

The early booking of storage capacity has also highlighted the growing demand for controlled-atmosphere and cold storage facilities in Kashmir, as growers increasingly seek ways to manage price fluctuations and reduce post-harvest losses.

Growers, meanwhile, called for stronger processing and marketing networks for low-grade and prematurely fallen apples, saying improved linkages with juice and processing units could help reduce wastage and improve returns. (inputs from KNO)

J&K Govt Expands Scientific Measures to Control Stray Dog Population



Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir Government is implementing a multi-pronged strategy to address the growing stray dog population across the Union Territory, with a focus on sterilisation, anti-rabies vaccination, improved waste management and regulated feeding points.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, responding to a question in the Legislative

Assembly, said the government was strengthening Animal Birth Control (ABC) and Anti-Rabies Vaccination (ARV) programmes to systematically sterilise and vaccinate stray dogs.

He said existing ABC facilities were being expanded, while new centres and dedicated veterinary staff were being deployed across Urban Local Bodies.

"Under the National Rabies Control Programme, anti-rabies treatment is also being made available

at health facilities," the Chief Minister said.

Omar said solid waste management systems and regulated feeding points were also being strengthened to reduce the availability of open food sources for stray animals.

As part of the initiative, the government has approved the creation of dedicated Expert Animal Birth Control verticals under Jammu Smart City Limited and Srinagar Smart City Limited.

The initiative will involve hiring specialised personnel trained in modern ABC protocols for deployment across Urban Local Bodies.

The government said the measures were aimed at addressing the stray dog population through scientific and systematic interventions while also strengthening rabies control and public safety across Jammu and Kashmir.

Remain Vigilant, Ensure Prompt Response to Emerging Challenges: IGP

Observer News Service

BANDIPORA: Inspector General of Police, Kashmir Zone, Sujit Kumar on Wednesday visited Bandipora and reviewed the security situation, counter-terrorism measures, law and order preparedness, crime



scenario and operational readiness of the district.

The IGP was accompanied by DIG North Kashmir Range, Dr Vinod Kumar.

A review meeting was held at the District Police Lines, Bandipora, where SSP Bandipora Ajaz Ahmed Zargar briefed the officers on the overall

security situation, counter-terrorism measures, intelligence inputs, area domination, security of vulnerable locations, law and order preparedness and the crime situation.

The meeting was attended by the Additional SP and all Deputy Superintendents

and effective response to emerging security and law and order challenges.

The IGP also reviewed the district's counter-terrorism preparedness and security arrangements for vulnerable locations.

Kumar appreciated the dedication and profes-

sionalism of the police personnel and urged them to continue discharging their duties with commitment to ensure the safety and security of the public.

The visit was part of the police leadership's review of security and operational preparedness across districts of the Kashmir Valley.

He directed police personnel to remain vigilant and ensure a prompt

Agriculture Graduates' Protest Enters 3rd Day at SKUAST-K

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Unemployed agriculture graduates from Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology-Kashmir (SKUAST-K), Wadura, continued their protest for the third consecutive day on Wednesday, demanding a clear employment roadmap and reforms in the recruitment framework in Jammu and Kashmir.

The protesters raised slogans and sought a review of SRO-442 of 2017, which changed the recruitment structure for Junior Agriculture Extension Officer (JAEEO) posts.

They demanded restoration of direct recruitment opportunities, identification and filling of vacant posts, timely recruitment notifi-



cations and a predictable recruitment calendar for agriculture professionals.

"We have spent years pursuing professional degrees, but after completing our education, there are limited opportunities in our own field. We want the government to review the recruitment framework," said Aadil Wani, one of the protesters.

Another protester, Zobia Khannum, said agriculture graduates were facing uncertainty because of the absence of regular recruitment.

"We want a clear recruitment calendar and a mechanism to identify and fill vacant posts. It has been 20 years since any recruitment advertisement was issued," she said.

The protesters urged Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and the Jammu and Kashmir Government to intervene and initiate dialogue with their representatives.

They said they would continue their peaceful protest until their demands were addressed. (KNO)

Absconding Jammu Gangster Held in Delhi

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: A Jammu-based gangster, who had allegedly escaped from an observation home in R S Pura, before reporters here, Senior Superintendent of Police, Jammu Joginder Singh said his arrest by the special operations group of police followed sustained efforts to trace him across several states over the past seven months.

He said the gangster had been a juvenile when he was arrested in connection with a murder of another gang-

ster Sumit and subsequently lodged in the observation home. He had attained the age of majority by the time of the February 16 incident when he along with two Pakistani inmates escaped.

Singh and Pakistani nationals Mohammad Sunallah, 20, and Ahsan Anwar, 21, allegedly attacked police personnel with a pistol and escaped from the observation home. Two police personnel were injured in the incident.

During the visit, he was briefed by Northern Command chief Lieutenant General Pratik Sharma at the command headquarters in Udhampur on key

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Bank Limited has appointed Chartered Accountant Rajeev Gupta as an Additional Director in the category of Rotational Directors on its Board, with effect from September 23, 2026.

The appointment was approved by the bank's Board of Directors at its meeting held on September 22 and is subject to approval by the shareholders.

Gupta, who holds Director Identification Number (DIN) 08316212, has more than 33 years of



professional experience in accounting and auditing, financial reporting, taxation, regulatory compliance, budgeting and cash-flow analysis.

He qualified as a Chartered Accountant from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India in May 1993 and holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree.

Gupta is associated with Rajeev Kuldip & Co., Chartered Accountants, Jammu, and has also served as an Executive Director in other companies.

The appointment adds a professional with extensive experience in finance, accounting and regulatory matters to the bank's Board.

Air Chief Reviews Northern Command Preparedness

Observer News Service

UDHAMPUR: Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal AP Singh on Wednesday visited the strategically important Northern Command theatre and reviewed the prevailing operational environment and preparedness of the forces.

During the visit, he was briefed by Northern Command chief Lieutenant General Pratik Sharma at the command headquarters in Udhampur on key



operational dynamics and ongoing inter-services coordination initiatives.

The briefing also covered jointness and synergy between the services for effective execution of multi-domain operations.

The Air Chief Marshal expressed confidence in the operational capabilities

of the forces and highlighted the coordination between the Western Air Command and Northern Command at strategic and tactical levels.

He said the jointness displayed by the two commands could serve as a model for future operations.

Two Cops Found Dead Inside Car in Ramban

JAMMU: Two police personnel were found dead inside a car in Ramban district, official sources said.

Head Constable Farid Ahmed and Selection Grade Constable Muhammad Yaqoob, both posted at District Police Lines, Ramban, were found unconscious under suspicious circumstances inside a car parked at Ziarat Morh in the Sana area of Batote late Tuesday evening, the sources said.

Residents transported the duo to District Hospital Ramban, where the doctors declared them brought dead.

Sources said the exact circumstances and cause of their death were not immediately known.

Police have initiated further proceedings to ascertain the circumstances leading to the incident. (PTI)

Property Attached Under UAPA in Baramulla

SRINAGAR: Police on Wednesday attached a residential property in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district under UAPA in a terror-related case.

The residential property was attached under Section 25 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, in connection with an FIR registered in the north Kashmir district, a police spokesman said.

The attached property comprises a double-storeyed residential house at Nambian village in Sheeri belonging to accused Aijaz Ahmad Ganie, he said.

During the course of the investigation, the property was found, prima facie, to have been used for providing shelter and logistical support to terrorists and facilitating terrorist activities, thereby attracting the relevant provisions of the UAPA concerning proceeds of terrorism, the spokesman said.

The attachment was carried out after obtaining requisite approval from the Director General of Police, he said.

A public notice was also displayed at the property, prohibiting its sale, transfer, lease, mortgage or creation of any third-party interest, the spokesman added.

He said the action forms part of Baramulla Police's sustained efforts to disrupt and dismantle the logistical and support infrastructure of terror networks and to proceed, in accordance with law, against persons and properties found involved in facilitating terrorist activities. (PTI)

3 Mines Defused Near LoC in Poonch

MENDHAR: Three landmines were detected and subsequently defused at two forward villages near the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, officials said.

An army patrolling party observed two rusted mines at Phagwara Gali in Mendhar sector and immediately summoned the bomb disposal squad. The team safely neutralised the landmines without causing any damage, they said. An anti-personnel mine was also noticed by an army patrolling party at Qasba village in Haveli tehsil. It was safely defused, they said.

On Tuesday, the Army's Bomb Disposal Squad safely destroyed three landmines which were noticed in the forward village of Dhara Basoni in Mendhar border town. (PTI)

J&K BJP Leader's Missing Son Traced to Delhi

JAMMU: The 17-year-old son of BJP Hiranagar MLA Vijay Kumar was traced to Delhi early Wednesday, a day after he was reported missing from his hometown in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said.

Aditya Kumar, a Class II student, left for Delhi on Tuesday evening to meet his sister without informing his family, prompting them to file a missing person report at the local police station, the officials said.

After hectic efforts, police teams traced Kumar while he was travelling on a Delhi-bound bus.

Acting on leads gathered during the night-long search, the police located the bus and established contact with the teenager, who is now being brought back to Jammu, the officials said.

His father had also left for Delhi on getting information about his son's whereabouts. (PTI)

Prevention, Awareness Key to a Healthy Society: Itoo

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Health and Medical Education Minister Sakeena Itoo on Wednesday stressed the importance of awareness, preventive healthcare and healthy lifestyles in building a healthy society, while highlighting the role of Ayurveda and traditional systems of medicine.

Addressing the 11th Ayurveda Day 2026 event, Itoo said Ayurveda represents a valuable traditional knowledge system and can contribute to an integrated approach to healthcare when supported by modern infrastructure, research and evidence-based practices.

She said the government was working to strengthen AYUSH services and integrate them with the broader healthcare system through the co-location of AYUSH facilities.

Itoo highlighted the development of a 50-bed Integrated AYUSH Hospital at Kulgam, along with AYUSH hospitals in Kathua and Samba, and the Government Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital at Amargarh, Sopore.

She said District AYUSH Officers and initiatives promoting medicinal plants



were also being supported to expand access to traditional healthcare and encourage awareness about their responsible use.

Referring to public participation in wellness initiatives, Itoo said 87,110 people participated in Yoga Day activities this year. During the 2026 Amarnath Yatra, 39,609 Yoga sessions were conducted, benefiting 1,56,672 participants.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Ashutosh Gupta discussed the potential role of Ayurveda in cancer care, while Dr Ajay Kumar Tikoo emphasised the need for evidence, research and innovation to strengthen traditional systems of medicine.

Itoo also stressed the importance of responsible use of natural resources and promoting healthier lifestyles as part of a broader preventive healthcare approach.

‘We Will Not Bow’: Pezeshkian Delivers Fiery UN Rebuke

‘Nuclear bomb in Israel, inspectors in Iran’: UN Slammed for glaring double standards

Agencies

UNITED NATIONS: Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian walked into the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday carrying the weight of a nation at war and delivered a defiant message from the heart of the country which has waged a brutal war on his country.

A day after US President Donald Trump used the same global stage to warn that Iran could face devastating consequences if it failed to reach a deal, Pezeshkian struck back with a speech built around one central message: Iran had been attacked, but it had not surrendered.

"We have only defended ourselves. We are not terrorists," Pezeshkian told world leaders.

Then came the line that defined the address: "They did hit us, but we did not bend the knee."

Pezeshkian, regarded within Iran's political establishment as a relatively moderate figure, arrived in New York under intense security and international scrutiny as the war between Iran and the US-Israel alliance entered its seventh month.

But rather than soften Tehran's position, he used the UN podium to mount a sweeping indictment of what he described as a deeply unequal international order—one in which, he argued, powerful states enjoy impunity while weaker countries are subjected to sanctions, inspections and military pressure.

'We are victims of terrorism'

Pezeshkian repeatedly turned the language of terrorism back on those accusing Iran of destabilising the region.

Holding up photographs of Iran's late Supreme Leader Sayyed Ali Khamenei and children killed in the conflict, he said the Iranian people had been the victims of attacks rather than their perpetrators.

"We are not terrorists; we are the victims of terrorism," he declared.

Pezeshkian said Iran had suffered attacks on schools, hospitals, universities, bridges and other civilian infrastructure.

He displayed photographs of children killed in a bombing of a school in Minab and spoke of the destruction in Lamerd, where the US forces used cluster munitions against a sports facility.

"These children had committed no sin. They had committed no crime," he said.

The Iranian president also invoked the killing of 86-year-old Khamenei and the assassination of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, presenting both as examples of what he described as Israel's willingness to strike inside other countries with little fear of international consequences.

'They struck, but we did not bow'

The president portrayed Iran's military response as an act of national survival rather than regional aggression. "They struck, but we did not bow our heads before them," he said.

"We struck back, but we did not strike civilians."

He argued that Iran had demonstrated its ability to withstand a technologically superior adversary and warned that further attacks would not go unanswered.

"Our defense systems are built so that no one imagines that bombing Iranian cities will go unanswered," Pezeshkian said.

Then he issued an unmistakable declaration of sovereignty: "We do not ask permission from anyone to defend our country."

Pezeshkian insisted that Iran's military strength was intended for deterrence and defence, not conquest.

He said Tehran wanted to be strong enough to guarantee its survival without becoming a threat to its neighbours.

"Iran must be powerful enough that its survival and progress are not threatened," he said, while also arguing that Iran should be responsible enough not to use that power for domination.

A direct challenge to Trump

Pezeshkian did not confine his message to general criticism of Washington.

Near the end of his address, he addressed Trump directly. "It must be understood by Mr Trump and those who seek to bully us that we are ready for dialogue and diplomacy and negotiations without accepting the language of force," he said.

The message was deliberately dual-edged: Tehran, he said, remained willing to negotiate—but not under military coercion.

"War was imposed on us," Pezeshkian declared. "But we proved that we do not fear war to defend ourselves; we do not flee from negotiation for peace."

For Iran, he suggested, negotiation and resistance were not contradictory.

'The nuclear bomb is in Israel—but the inspectors are in Iran'

Pezeshkian devoted some of his sharpest words to the nuclear dispute.

He accused Western powers of applying fundamentally different standards to Iran and Israel.

"The atomic bomb and other weapons of mass destruction in this region are in the hands of the Israeli regime; yet inspections are demanded of Iran!" he said.

His central argument was blunt: "The nuclear bomb is in Israel, but the inspectors are in Iran. Israel kills, but Iran is sanctioned."

Hormuz: 'We will not allow it'

The Strait of Hormuz—one of the world's most strategically important waterways—also featured prominently in Pezeshkian's warning.

He rejected the idea that Iran should be expected to safeguard freedom of navigation while simultaneously being denied what he described as security and freedom within its own waters.

"They close the road to us, and then they transport weapons, explosives, missiles, and energy for the destruction of countries through the same waterway," he said.

"This is not possible. They cannot do this, and we will not allow such a thing to happen in our country."

Pezeshkian argued that foreign naval deployments and an expanding military confrontation could not produce lasting maritime security.

"The security of shipping cannot be ensured by undermining the security of coastal states," he said.

Gaza at the centre of his attack on the West

The war in Gaza became another pillar of Pezeshkian's case against what he called Western double standards.

He accused Western governments of condemning violence selectively while failing to hold Israel accountable for the devastation in Gaza.

He said that Iran had not initiated a war in two centuries and insisted that Tehran sought military strength only to ensure its own security. "We want power to defend ourselves, not to aggress," he said.

He described Iranian strategic independence as the ability to maintain relationships without allowing foreign powers to turn those relationships into platforms for attacking neighbouring states.

"The issues of our region ... can be solved in the region and by the region," he said.

Sanctions, he argues, punish ordinary people

The Iranian president broadened his criticism beyond warfare and nuclear policy to economic sanctions.

He described sanctions as instruments that disproportionately hurt ordinary citizens while being justified as tools of international pressure.

"If we seek justice, friend and rival must be measured by the same standard," Pezeshkian said.

He called for human rights to be applied consistently rather than becoming, in his words, an instrument of geopolitical competition.

Iran, he insisted, was not asking for special treatment.

"It demands equal rights and is prepared to accept its responsibilities."

'A more dangerous world'

Pezeshkian warned that the consequences of selective enforcement of international law would extend far beyond Iran.

If countries concluded that international rules applied only when convenient for powerful states, he argued, more nations would seek security through their own military capabilities.

"If trust among nations is destroyed, even the most powerful armies will be unable to create sustainable security," he said.

And if international law were enforced selectively, he warned, countries would increasingly conclude that they had no option but to rely on themselves.

That, he said, would create an even more dangerous world.

His warning was ultimately about the international system itself: military power replacing diplomacy, sanctions replacing dialogue, assassination replacing politics and coercion replacing legitimacy.

"Either we build security together—or endure insecurity together"

Despite the fiery tone of his address, Pezeshkian ended with a call for peace.

Iran, he said, would preserve its military capabilities while remaining willing to negotiate.

"We call the world not to another war, but to peace and justice—not out of weakness, but out of confidence in our own strength," he said.

Then came his final appeal: "Either we will build security together, or we will endure insecurity together."

Pezeshkian's closing vision was of an international system in which powerful and weaker states were subject to the same principles.

"An order worthy of being called 'international' must be based on the equality of nations, justice, fairness, and the shared will of humanity," he said.

And then, in a sentence that encapsulated the message he had carried into the UN hall: "Peace that is not for everyone is not peace, and justice that excludes everyone is not justice."

For a president speaking from New York while his country remains locked in war with the United States and Israel, it was less a conventional diplomatic address than a declaration of defiance—an argument that Iran could be battered, sanctioned and attacked, but could not be compelled to surrender on terms dictated by force.

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