29th year OF PUBLICATION

KASHMIR OBSERVER®

Wednesday 25 November 2026 | Srinagar | Vol: 29 | Issue: 287 | Pages: 08 | Price: ₹3

www.kashmirobserver.net ● twitter.com / kashmirobserver ● facebook.com/kashmirobserver ● Postal Regn: L/159/KO/SK/2014-2016

KO Classifieds

PLACE YOUR **AD** TODAY!

You can do it all here

• PUBLIC NOTICES • NAME CHANGE • SALE/ PURCHASE • BIRTHDAY WISHES • OBITUARIES

Sub-Zero Temperatures Grip Kashmir

Pahalgam Coldest at Minus 4.6°C

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Sub-zero temperatures gripped large parts of Kashmir as the night cold intensified, with Srinagar and Pahalgam recording their lowest minimum temperatures of the ongoing winter season.

According to the Meteorological Department, Pahalgam in south Kashmir was the coldest place in the Valley at minus 4.6 degrees Celsius, followed by Shopian at minus 4.1 degrees Celsius.

Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 1.6 degrees Celsius, down from minus 0.4 degrees Celsius the previous night and 1.3 degrees below the seasonal average. Pahalgam's temperature was 2.5 degrees below normal, officials said.

Several other parts of the Valley also recorded sub-zero temperatures. Pulwama recorded minus 3.4 degrees Celsius, Anantnag minus 2.6 degrees Celsius, Konibal Pampore minus 2.5 degrees Celsius and Budgam minus 2.3 degrees Celsius.

Srinagar Airport and Awantipora recorded minus 2.2 degrees Celsius each, while Qazigund settled at minus 2.0 degrees Celsius. Kupwara recorded minus 1.0 degrees Celsius, Bandipora minus 1.1 degrees Celsius, | More on P6

Sheshnag Works Draw Mounting Flak, Over 4000 Sign Petition

» Political leaders and religious figures question excavation; seek clarity on project approvals

» Youth-Led Protests Demand Halt to Construction Near Fragile Alpine Lake



Farzana Nisar

Srinagar: From a peaceful protest on Srinagar's Shankaracharya Hill to planned trail runs and an online petition that has garnered over 4,300 signatures, a growing public campaign is gathering momentum in Kashmir to protect its fragile alpine lakes. At the centre of the campaign is Sheshnag Lake, where construction activity has | More on P6

16.2% Of Amarnath Yatra Route Highly Landslide-Prone: Study

Around 16.2 per cent of the Amarnath pilgrimage corridor has been classified as highly susceptible to landslides, while 68.1 per cent falls under the moderately susceptible category, according to a study published in the journal Scientific Reports. The study, titled Geological and climatic controls on landslide susceptibility and hazard along the Amarnath pilgrimage corridor, Kashmir Himalaya, identifies the combined | More on P6

Kashmir Environmental Group Seeks Probe Into Sheshnag Excavation

Ansar Hussain

Srinagar: Heavy earth-moving machinery operating near Sheshnag Lake in south Kashmir has prompted an environmental group to seek an independent investigation, raising concerns about the effects of excavation on one of the region's sensitive alpine ecosystems.

The J&K Climate Action Group (JKCAG) has submitted a representation to the Jammu and Kashmir government, asking it to investigate the reported use of heavy machinery, excavation and other construction activities near the high-altitude glacial lake.

Dr. Raja Muzaffar Bhat, the group's chairman and an environmental activist, said excavation, cutting into mountain slopes and dumping construction debris could alter natural drainage patterns, | More on P6

THE GROUP HAS URGED THE JAMMU AND KASHMIR GOVERNMENT to suspend excavation near the high-altitude glacial lake, warning of possible damage to its fragile ecosystem and threatening to approach the National Green Tribunal.

Resident Doctors' Stir Spreads To District Hospitals

KO Web Desk

Srinagar: The agitation by postgraduate (PG) and Senior Resident doctors demanding enhancement of stipends and pay parity with premier medical institutions intensified across Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday, with resident doctors from several Government Medical Colleges and district hospitals joining the protests.

The agitation entered its fifth consecutive day at Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar and sixth day at GMC Jammu, as doctors continued to demand revision of their existing pay structure, removal of disparities and a uniform policy across medical institutions in the Union Territory.

The Association of Indian Medical Students and Resident Doctors (AIMSA), along with Resident Doctors' Associations (RDAs), said the demands were aimed at securing financial parity for PG and Senior Resident doctors with their counterparts at SKIMS Srinagar, AIIMS Jammu and other premier central medical institutions.

At GMC Jammu, AIMSA Chief Advisors Dr Sanah and Dr Abhishek Mittal said immediate enhancement of stipends remained the central demand. RDA Vice President Dr Abhimanyu Manhas also extended support to the agitation.

As part of the peaceful protest, resident | More on P6

J&K Waqf Board A Benchmark For Country: Rijiju

Says efforts underway to provide Hajj quota opportunities to Waqf employees

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Union Minister for Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju on Tuesday praised the functioning of the Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board, describing its work in religious, educational and social sectors as a benchmark for other Waqf boards across the country.

Speaking after visiting the revered Baba Reshi shrine in the Tangmarg area of north Kashmir, Rijiju said the work undertaken by the J&K Waqf Board had exceeded his expectations and deserved appreciation.

He particularly praised the renovation and development of the Baba Reshi shrine complex, saying the construction and restoration work had been carried out commendably.

"The way this entire complex has been built, including the main place where devotees offer prayers, is commendable. They have done a wonderful job," he told reporters.

The Union Minister said the J&K Waqf Board had also undertaken significant work at the Hazratbal shrine and in the fields of education, healthcare and social welfare.

He said other Waqf boards in the country should draw inspiration from the initiatives undertaken in Jammu and Kashmir.

"I have said before that no other Waqf Board in India has done more splendid work than this. All other Waqf boards in the country need to take inspiration and learn from the good work done by the Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board," Rijiju said.

Congratulating Waqf Board Chairperson Darakhshan Andrabi and | More on P6

Women, Youth Driving Transformation Of J&K's Rural Economy: LG

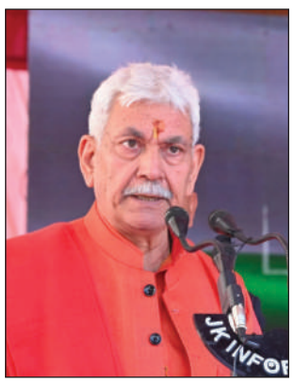
Inaugurates 10-day Jhiri mela, calls for adoption of scientific farming practices

Observer News Service

Srinagar:Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday said women and youth were playing an important role in transforming Jammu and Kashmir's rural economy, with women farmers, self-help groups (SHGs) and rural entrepreneurs contributing to economic self-reliance.

Addressing the annual Jhiri Mela, the Lieutenant Governor highlighted the growing participation of women in agriculture and allied sectors and called for greater opportunities in education, skill development and entrepreneurship for women in rural areas.

He said women-led self-help



groups were working alongside farmers and contributing to the rural economy through local products, handicrafts, food processing and small enterprises.

"In the agriculture and allied sectors, our daughters are setting new benchmarks of innovation and entrepreneurship," Sinha said.

Emphasising the need to modernise agriculture, the Lieutenant Governor said Jammu and Kashmir had immense opportunities for innovation and employment in the sector. He urged young people to take the lead in making farming more productive, profitable and future-ready through technology, entrepreneurship and scientific practices.

He said farming and allied sectors should be viewed as dynamic engines of economic growth and encouraged youth to explore opportunities in agriculture, horticulture and dairy farming.

Highlighting the impact of the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), Sinha said agricultural reforms, modern infrastructure, diversification and market-oriented initiatives were helping improve farm incomes and create new opportunities in the rural economy.

He urged | More on P6

Physics Icon H.C. Verma Headlines Kashmir Science Carnival

Padma Shri award-winning educator's visit brings students, scientists and science communicators together in North Kashmir.

Shahid Mir

Srinagar: A physics textbook can take a student to the edge of the universe, but a meeting with the person behind those lessons can make that universe feel a little closer.

That was the excitement in North Kashmir, where Padma Shri award-winning physicist Professor H.C. Verma became the centre of attention at a two-day science carnival.

Generations of Indian students have grown up reading his name in their physics textbooks.

This time, the man behind those lessons was right in front of them.

At Hill Grange School in Handwara, students from educational institutions across Kupwara district gathered to meet Verma, listen to him and engage with the ideas that have made him one of India's most recognised figures in science education.

There was something special about seeing an iconic name step out of the pages of a book. Science, after all, becomes far more exciting when the people who pursue it come within reach.

The exhibition brought its own world of discovery. Scientific models, experiments, innovative ideas and student projects filled the programme, giving young participants a chance to put their classroom knowledge to work.

The exercise | More on P6

Guru Purab Celebrated Across J&K

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The 557th Parkash Purab of Guru Nanak Dev Ji was celebrated across Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday with religious fervour and enthusiasm, as devotees thronged Gurdwaras to offer prayers and participate in special religious programmes.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and National Conference president Dr Farooq Abdullah extended greetings to the Sikh community on the auspicious occasion.

Celebrations brought together members of the Sikh community and people from different faiths, reflecting Jammu and Kashmir's tradition of | More on P6

Speedy Trial No Bail Shield For Convicted Criminal: SC

Press Trust Of India



New Delhi:The Supreme Court has said that a criminal, having antecedents and a previous conviction, cannot be released on bail merely on the strength of his right to a speedy trial.

A bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and Shree Chandrashekhar made the observation while setting aside an order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court granting bail to an accused in a murder case.

"The right to speedy trial is always considered to be a facet of Article 21 of the Constitution of India but, at the same time, when the accused is involved in committing a heinous offence, the right of the accused and the interest of the society, including the interest of the victim and his family, is also required to be seen," the bench said.

The bench said it appeared that neither the previous conviction of the accused was ever brought to the notice of the high court nor his involvement in other criminal cases was placed before the high court at the time of hearing of the bail petition.

"A criminal, having antecedents and previous conviction, cannot be released on bail merely on the strength of his/her right to speedy trial," the top court said in its November 18 order.

"It is the duty of the court to maintain balance between the two facets, i.e., right to speedy trial and the societal interest, by releasing a person on bail while he is involved in a series of offences and particularly when the bail order has been secured by making an incorrect statement before the high court," it said.

The apex court passed the order while | More on P6

Budgam Meat Seizure Triggers Wider FDA Crackdown Across J&K

Agencies



Srinagar: The seizure of 1,600 kilograms of frozen buffalo meat at Budgam Railway Station has triggered a wider food-safety crackdown across Jammu and Kashmir, with the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) conducting 364 inspections, suspending nine food business licences or registrations and issuing 21 improvement notices.

The department has also recommended 31 cases for adjudication and compounded more than 19 cases under Section 69 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, bringing renewed attention to food-safety violations and the effectiveness of routine inspections across the Union Territory.

The Budgam seizure on November 14 exposed serious lapses in the transportation of perishable food products. The consignment, originating from Delhi and intended for delivery in Srinagar, had allegedly been booked through railway parcel services as general goods without adequate temperature-control arrangements, proper disclosure or | More on P6

CLASSIFIEDS

To place an advertisement
CALL +91-194 2502327
Monday - Saturday (9am - 6pm)
No 5- Dal Lake Boulevard Srinagar, 190001, Kashmir

Good Sleep May Help Counter Effects Of Diabetes, Heart Disease On Brain: Study

Press Trust Of India

Good sleep may help mitigate the adverse effects of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke on the brain, researchers have found.

People with cardiometabolic disorders who sleep well have better cognitive function and a greater brain volume, compared to those having the same conditions but sleep poorly, according to the study by a team including researchers from Sweden's Karolinska Institutet.



Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke — collectively referred to as cardiometabolic diseases — are linked to an increased risk of cognitive decline and dementia. The researchers investigated whether healthy sleep can mitigate these associations.

"Cardiometabolic diseases are very common in older adults, and they are among the most well-established risk factors for declining cognitive and brain health," Abigail Dove, a researcher in the department of neurobiology, care sciences and society at Karolinska Institutet, said.

"Our findings suggest that healthy sleep may help offset some of the adverse consequences of cardiometabolic disease for the brain. This is meaningful because for most people, improving sleep is an accessible and achievable goal," Dove said.

The study, published in the Journal of the American Heart Association, is based on data from more than 4,00,000 middle-aged and older people in the UK Biobank, of whom just over 54,000 had at least one cardiometabolic disease.

MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scans of the brain were also available for nearly 35,000 of the study participants.

Sleep was assessed based on five self-reported factors: sleep duration, circadian rhythm, insomnia, snoring and daytime sleepiness.

The researchers found that people with cardiometabolic disease who slept well performed slightly better on tests of general cognition, problem-solving ability and processing speed than those with the same conditions who slept poorly.

They also had significantly larger total brain volume, as well as greater volumes of grey and white matter. The link between sleep and brain structure was more pronounced in people with type 2 diabetes, heart disease or stroke than in those without these conditions.

"Healthy sleep may attenuate the associations of CMDs (cardiometabolic disorders) with poorer cognitive performance and markers of brain atrophy. The findings highlight sleep as a modifiable factor that may support cognitive and brain health in individuals with CMDs," according to the study.



IIT-Kanpur Researchers Identify How Pancreatic Immune Cells Switch Off Insulin Release

Press Trust of India

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur have identified a molecular pathway through which immune cells in the pancreas can rapidly suppress insulin release, opening up a potential new avenue for developing therapies to protect insulin production in people with obesity and Type-2 diabetes.

The findings, published in 'Journal of Clinical Investigation', show that immune cells called macrophages can switch off insulin secretion by neighbouring beta cells within minutes, rather than gradually damaging them through inflammation over months or years, according to a note issued by IIT-Kanpur on Thursday.

Simran Singh and Ashish Kumar led the study as co-first authors under the supervision of Sai Prasad Pydi, assistant professor, department of biological sciences and bioengineering, IIT-Kanpur.

"We discovered that immune cells that are present next to beta cells can switch off insulin release within minutes," Pydi said.

> **Using a precision genetic technique, the researchers found that activating this pathway reduced insulin secretion in mouse models, while switching it off improved insulin release. Blocking GPR18 or other steps in the pathway also restored insulin secretion.**

The researchers found that the process involves sphingolipids, a class of fats released by macrophages, rather than the inflammatory proteins traditionally associated with obesity-related pancreatic damage.

The team traced the trigger to GPR18, a receptor on macrophages. Once activated, it prompts the immune cells to release sphingolipids, which are taken up by neighbouring beta cells through a surface transporter, and interfere with their insulin-producing machinery.

Using a precision genetic technique, the researchers found that activating this pathway reduced insulin secretion in mouse models, while switching it off improved insulin release. Blocking GPR18 or other steps in the pathway also restored insulin secretion.

The team, working with the Indiana Biosciences Research Institute in the US, confirmed that the same pathway was present and active in human pancreatic tissue. Activating it in donated human tissue also suppressed insulin secretion, according to the communique.

While the study does not offer an immediate treatment for diabetes, the findings establish a potential target for developing drugs to preserve insulin production in people with obesity and Type-2 diabetes, it said.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The father's name of my daughter, Amina Ali, has been wrongly written in her school records as Ali Mohammad Mir while his correct father's name is Ali Mohd Mir. Now I have applied for the correction of the same if anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file them in office of the Principal Islamic Model Institute Ratnipora within seven days. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Ali Mohd Mir
F/o Amina Ali
R/o Ratnipora
x

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Rouf Ahmad Rather S/o Gh. Nabi Rather, R/o Turka Batapora, Tehsil Kunzer, District Baramulla, J&K UT, hereby inform the general public that I have misplaced/lost my Passport at my residence. Despite my best efforts, I have been unable to trace the same.

Therefore, anyone who finds the said Passport is requested to kindly hand it over to the undersigned or inform me accordingly. If the Passport is not found within seven (07) days from the date of publication of this notice, I shall proceed with the necessary formalities for obtaining a duplicate/replacement Passport from the Regional Passport Office, Srinagar.

Name: Rouf Ahmad Rather
S/o: Gh. Nabi Rather
R/o: Turka Batapora, Tehsil Kunzer, District Baramulla, J&K UT.
fko

PUBLIC NOTICE

In Aadhaar card of my son bearing No. 5212 2308 5755 his name is recorded as MOHAMMAD ZIYAAN AHANGER while as his actual & correct name is MOHAMMAD DIYAAN AHANGER as per his birth certificate. Now I am applying for its correction. Objections if any, must reach concerned authorities within a week at the most.

ABASS ADVT.

ZAHOOR AHMAD AHANGER F/O MOHAMMAD DIYAAN AHANGER
R/O HABAKADAL, SRINAGAR

PUBLIC NOTICE

In my Aadhaar card bearing No. 2303 5983 9123 my name is recorded as DILSHADA AKHTAR while as my actual & correct name is DILSHADA BANO as per my domicile certificate. Now I am applying for its correction. Objections if any, must reach concerned authorities within a week at the most.

ABASS ADVT.

DILSHADA BANO W/O ABDUL RASHID DOJI
R/O HABAK SHANPORA HAZRATBAL, SRINAGAR

29th year OF PUBLICATION

KO NEWS & UPDATES

YouTube

KASHMIR OBSERVER®

The methods used to consume news have changed over time from newspapers, to television, to the Internet on our computers to carrying the news around with us 24/7 on smartphones in our pockets.

Kashmir Observer, with 29 years of experience in news gathering is now available 24x7 on all digital platforms like laptops, cell phones or via Bluetooth on your smart TV's across the world

Kashmir Observer is a one stop information bank for you. Watch live debates, talk shows and documentaries on critical issues facing Kashmir on KO youtube channel.

VISIT
https://www.youtube.com/c/kobserver

OR SCAN

OUR SPECIAL PROGRAMMES

THE OTHER SIDE | INKISHAF | VOX POP | UNRAVEL KASHMIR

Keeping Kashmir's Communal Harmony Alive Our Collective Responsibility: SSP City

Agencies

Srinagar: Calling Kashmir's tradition of communal harmony a legacy that must be preserved collectively, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Srinagar, Dr G V Sandeep Chakravarthy, on Tuesday urged people to uphold mutual respect and peaceful coexistence, while assuring that police would continue to maintain peace and security across the city.

Speaking to reporters during his visit to Durgeshwari Temple in Srinagar, the SSP Chakravarthy said Kashmir had always stood as an example of communal harmony and that preserving this tradition was a shared responsibility.

"Kashmir has always been an example of communal harmony. It is our responsibility to keep this beautiful tradition alive," he said.

Reiterating the police commitment towards public safety, the SSP said, "Srinagar Police is always there to serve and protect people. It is our responsibility to maintain peace and security in the city."

Extending his message on Gurpurab, Dr Chakravarthy highlighted the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, particularly the principles of truth, selfless service and communal harmony. "Waheguru Ji's message is always about service, selfless service, truth and communal harmony. On this auspicious day, we must carry forward that message," he said.

He stressed that these values must be reflected in everyday life and that preserving Kashmir's tradition of coexistence was a responsibility shared by all.

Meanwhile, responding to a question about the sale and distribution of rotten meat, the SSP assured that a major initiative would be undertaken to address the issue. "I have already said that there will be a major initiative on rotten meat," Dr Chakravarthy said—(KNO)

Hourly Parking Charges In Srinagar Hit Motorists Hard

Agencies

Srinagar: Exorbitant time-based parking charges along major roads in Srinagar are adding to the financial burden on motorists, with people parking their vehicles for several hours in commercial areas such as Lal Chowk, Residency Road, MA Road and Rajbagh facing particularly high costs.

The concern is that even when motorists find a roadside parking space, the hourly tariff can make an ordinary visit to the city expensive. For people attending offices, conducting business, shopping or visiting hospitals and other institutions, parking for few hours can translate into a substantial daily expense.

Public resentment over the charges has been reported earlier, with commuters alleging that roadside parking rates under Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL) reach as high as Rs 70 per hour. A seven-to-eight-hour stay was reported to cost Rs 500 or more, placing a disproportionate burden on people who have no option but to keep their vehicles parked for extended periods.

Traders have also raised concerns that steep parking charges discourage customers from visiting city-centre markets. The issue of promised short-duration free parking and the need for better monitoring of parking operations have also figured in public complaints.

An SSCL official defended the higher roadside rates, stating that such spaces were intended for short-duration parking and were priced differently from designated parking facilities. However, commuters question whether a system designed to discourage prolonged roadside parking should impose such a heavy financial burden on people who depend on the city centre for their daily work.KNT



Srinagar Officials Extend Greetings On Guru Nanak Dev Ji's 557th Prakash Diwas

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Akshay Labroo and Senior Superintendent of Police Dr GV Sandeep Chakraborty visited the historic Gurdwara Chhati Padshahi at Rainawari to extend greetings to the Sikh community on the occasion of the 557th Prakash Diwas (birth anniversary) of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

Accompanied by members of the Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, the officers paid obeisance at the historic shrine and conveyed their warm wishes to the devotees celebrating the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted the universal teachings and contributions of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, emphasising their enduring relevance in promoting equality, brotherhood, compassion and selfless service.

He observed that the Sikh Guru's teachings gave prominence to noble social institutions such as Langar, Sangat and Kirtan, which continue to inspire people towards inclusiveness, collective harmony and service to humanity.

SSP Srinagar also highlighted the significance of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's teachings and extended his greetings to members of the Sikh community on the auspicious occasion.

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the arrangements and facilities put in place for devotees at the Gurdwara.

The District Administration Srinagar had made elaborate arrangements in advance through various line departments to ensure the smooth observance of Prakash Diwas and facilitate devotees visiting Gurdwara Chhati Padshahi.

IAS probationer Aakash Garg, SP North, Tehsildar Khanyar and other officers accompanied the Deputy Commissioner during the visit.

NIT To Compile Alumni Directory Covering Batches Up To 2026

Observer News Service

Srinagar: The National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar has initiated the process of compiling a comprehensive alumni directory covering graduates up to the 2026 batch, with an aim to strengthen its engagement with former students across the country and abroad.

The initiative, being undertaken by the Office of the Dean, Alumni and International Affairs, is aimed at creating an updated database of alumni and providing a platform for sustained interaction between the institute and its former students.

Prof. M. A. Shah, Dean, Alumni and International Affairs, said the initiative would help strengthen the relationship between the institute and its alumni and create new avenues for collaboration.

"An updated and comprehensive alumni directory is an important step towards keeping our alumni connected with their alma mater. Their experience, expertise and suggestions can play a valuable role in strengthening the institute, mentoring students and creating opportunities for academic, research and professional collaboration," Prof. Shah said.

According to the institute, the directory will facilitate professional networking, mentorship, academic and research collaborations, career support and greater alumni participation in institutional development.

The Institute has urged all alumni of NIT Srinagar and erstwhile Regional Engineering College (REC) Srinagar to submit their details through a Google Form being facilitated by the concerned office.



The historic Durgeshwari Pathshala Temple in Fateh Kadal, Srinagar, reopened after remaining closed for 37 years.

KO Photo Abid Bhat

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Arif Ahmad Wani S/O Farooq Ahmad Wani R/O Lalpora, Tehsil Kunzer, District Baramulla, J&K UT, hereby inform the general public that the name of my ward's mother has been wrongly recorded in the school records of Al-Noor Model School, Dhobiwan, Tangmarg, where my ward Aisha Arif is studying in Class 2nd, as Ruksana instead of her correct name Ruksana Bano.
Now, I have applied for correction of the same in all school records as per her Aadhaar Card. Objections, if any, may be submitted to the concerned school authorities within seven days from the date of publication of this notice. No objections shall be entertained thereafter.

fko

OFFICE OF THE RETURNING OFFICER FOR JKFA EXECUTIVE BODY ELECTIONS, 2026

NOTICE

Subject: Deferment/Postponement of JKFA Executive Body Elections, 2026, in compliance with the order dated 23rd November, 2026, passed by the Hon'ble Court of Additional District Judge, Srinagar.

In continuation of the Election Notification dated 4th November, 2026, regarding the conduct of elections to the Executive Body of the Jammu & Kashmir Football Association (JKFA), it is hereby notified for the information of all concerned that the Hon'ble Court of Additional District Judge, Srinagar, vide order dated **23rd November, 2026**, passed in Summary Suit No. 9465/2026 (CNR No. JKSG02-007068-2026), has directed maintenance of status quo with respect to the JKFA elections scheduled to be held on **25th November, 2026**, until the next date of hearing.

Accordingly, in strict compliance with the aforesaid directions of the Hon'ble Court, the polling and related election activities for JKFA Executive Body Elections, 2026, scheduled for 25th November, 2026, stand deferred / postponed until further orders.

The further course of action and revised schedule, if any, shall be notified separately in accordance with further orders/directions of the Hon'ble Court.

All affiliated Football Clubs, contesting candidates, members of the Electoral College and other stakeholders are hereby asked to maintain status quo and refrain from undertaking any polling or election related activity scheduled for 25th November, 2026, until further orders.

This notice is issued solely in compliance with the order dated 23rd November 2026 of the Hon'ble Court without prejudice to the rights and contentions of the parties.

Place : Srinagar

Dare : 24.11.2026

Sd/-

(SURINDER SINGH GURM)
SP (Retd.), CBI
RETURNING OFFICER
JKFA Executive Body Elections, 2026

DIPK-NB-2222/26
dated: 24-11-2026

- TRAFFIC POLICE : 9419993745, 01998-266686
- PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883
- PDD: 0194-2450213
- FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES : 2479488,2452222,2452155
- CAPD: 18001807011
- SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081
- Ambulance: Kashmer EMS Service: +91 94841 00200

AIRPORTS

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311

RAILWAYS

- SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259
- ANANTNAG: 01932-228243
- BARAMULLA: 0194-102029
- BIJBHERA: 01932-228243
- PAMPORE: 01933-294132
- PATTAN: 01954-293507
- QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

HIGHWAY STATUS

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

HIJRI CALENDAR

14 Jumada al-Sani
1448

PRAYERS

FAJR	5: 44
ZUHR	12:17
ASR	3: 47
Magrib	5: 27
ISHA	6: 51

This Day In History

- 1667- A deadly earthquake rocks Shemakha, in the Caucasus, killing 80,000 people.
- 1715- First English patent granted to an American, for processing corn
- 1741- Elizabeth of Russia seizes power in a coup with the aid of Imperial Russian guards in Saint Petersburg, Russia
- 1758- Britain captures Fort Duquesne (later Fort Pitt/Pittsburgh) from French
- 1783- Britain evacuates New York city, its last military position in the United States
- 1839- Cyclone slams south eastern India with high winds and a 40 foot storm surge, destroying city of Coringa. Storm waves sweep inland, destroying 20,000 ships and killing an estimated 300,000 people.
- 1863- Battle of Missionary Ridge, Tennessee
- 1876- Indian Wars: In retaliation for the American defeat at the Battle of the Little Bighorn, United States Army troops sack Chief Dull Knife's sleeping Cheyenne village at the headwaters of the Powder River.
- 1897 -Spain grants Puerto Rico autonomy
- 1899- Battle at Graspan, Cape colony: General Methuen beats Farmers
- 1905- Telimco makes the 1st ever advertisement for a radio set, by advertising a $8.50 set in the "Scientific American" which claimed to receive signals for up to one mile
- 1912- Socialist International rejects that world war is coming
- 1930- Ito, Japan records 690 earthquake shocks in 1 day
- 1933- 1st Soviet liquid fuel rocket attains altitude of 261' (80m)
- 1935- International Institute for Social History (IISG) forms in Amsterdam
- 1936- Germany & Japan sign anti-Komintern pact
- 1942 -National Organization for Aid to Underground, LO, forms
- 1944- World War II: A German V-2 rocket hits a Woolworth's store in Deptford, United Kingdom, killing 160 shoppers.
- 1947- New Zealand accedes to Statute of Westminster, becomes a dominion
- 1955- Race segregation forbidden on trains & buses between US states
- 1957- US President Dwight Eisenhower suffers a mild stroke, impairing his speech
- 1958- Senegal becomes an autonomous state in French Community
- 1965- Congo military coup under Gen Mobutu, President Kasavubu overthrown
- 1973 - 3 Palestinians hijack KLM B747 above Iraq, to Dubai.
- 1979 - Israel returns Alma oilfields in Gulf of Suez to Egypt.
- 1983 - Soyuz T-9 returns to Earth, 149 days after take-off.
- 1983 - Syria & Saudi Arabia announce cease-fire in PLO civil war in Tripoli.
- 1983 - World's greatest robbery 26 million pounds worth of gold, diamonds & cash stolen from the Brink's-Mat warehouse at Heathrow Airport, England.
- 1986 - Iran-Contra affair erupts, President Reagan reveals secret arms deal.
- 1987 - Supertyphoon Nina pummels the Philippines with category 5 winds of 165 mph and a surge that swallows entire villages. At least 1,036 deaths attributed to the storm.
- 2005 - Polish Minister of National Defence Radek Sikorski opens Warsaw Pact archives to historians. Maps of possible nuclear strikes against Western Europe, including nuclear annihilation of 43 Polish cities by Soviet-controlled forces revealed.
- 2007 - The first European Parliament election and a referendum on changing the voting system (called by the President and declared invalid because of insufficient turnout) were held in
- Romania.
- 2009 - Flooding in Jeddah, Saudia Arabia; powerful storm brings 3 years' worth of rain in 4 hours, killing over 150 people and sweeping thousands of cars away during Hajj.

KASHMIR OBSERVER®

Printed & Published by Sajjad Haider on behalf of Kashmir Observer LLP
Printed at: K.T Press Pvt. Ltd 120-Electronic Complex, Industrial Estate, Rangreth-Budgam
Published from: 5-Boulevard Srinagar J&K
Editor-in-Chief : Sajjad Haider
Managing Editor: Bilal Handoo
News Editor: Farzana Nisar
Online Editor: Syed Hamid
Head Layout & Design: Muntazir Yaseen,
Digital Media Head: Amir Ali Shah
Distribution & Advertising: Firdous Ahmad
RNI Registration No: 69503/98
Postal Registration No-L/159/KO/SK/2014-16
Legal Counsel: Tasaduq Khwaja
Switchboard: (0194) 2502327 | +91 8899256463
Editorial: (0194) 2502327
Email: editor@kashmirobserver.net

KO VIEW

The Himalayan Cost

Jammu and Kashmir needs a more careful approach to development in its mountains.

Roads, tunnels, hotels and hydropower projects create jobs and support the economy, but construction in the Himalayas comes with risks that cannot be ignored.

The region's development plans must take account of the land, slopes and natural systems on which these projects depend.

A draft Sustainable Mountain Development Policy 2026, submitted to the J&K government, raises serious concerns about the environmental pressure on the mountains. It warns that development without proper safeguards could cause lasting damage within a generation.

The draft also points to a major weakness in current planning: the economic benefits of projects often receive more attention than their environmental costs.

Scientific research shows why this needs to change.

A study published in Scientific Reports on November 10 examined landslide risks along the Baltal-Amarnath-Panjtarni-Poshpathri pilgrimage route. It found that 16 per cent of the surveyed area had high susceptibility to landslides, while another 68.1 per cent fell into the moderate-risk category.

Steep slopes, weak rock formations, road cutting and changes to natural drainage were among the factors behind the risk. The study also recorded a warming trend of nearly 2 degrees Celsius in recent decades. These findings should influence decisions about new infrastructure.

Cutting roads into unstable slopes, blocking natural water channels and dumping excavated material into streams can weaken mountain slopes and increase the risk of landslides. Such damage can threaten settlements, roads and livelihoods. Project approvals should therefore depend on scientific assessments rather than construction costs and economic projections alone.

Tourism also needs better planning. Jammu and Kashmir recorded around 2.36 crore tourist visits in 2024, according to the draft policy. Popular destinations such as Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Sonamarg face growing pressure from construction, traffic, waste and sewage.

Tourism supports local businesses and employment, but uncontrolled expansion can damage the natural surroundings that attract visitors.

The draft proposes dividing mountain areas into four ecological sensitivity zones, setting visitor limits at popular destinations and introducing special standards for roads, tunnels and hydropower projects. It also recommends a Mountain Development Authority with powers to enforce these rules.

The government should turn these proposals into clear and enforceable rules. Geological surveys, slope studies and environmental assessments must guide project approvals. The combined impact of several projects in the same mountain region should also be examined. A proposed Mountain Knowledge Centre could help monitor glaciers, springs, biodiversity and disaster risks.

Jammu and Kashmir needs investment and infrastructure, but development plans must respect the limits of the land. The government should make scientific evidence the basis of its decisions.

The cost of ignoring the Himalayas' natural limits will eventually be paid by the people and the economy that development is meant to serve.

Don't Turn Sheshnag Into Joshimath

Excavators digging into a sacred Kashmir lake raise serious questions about pilgrimage infrastructure, environmental protection and the cost of ignoring scientific evidence.



Dr S. Bashir Ahmad Veeri



Uttarakhand has already shown what can happen when construction and human activity exceed the limits of a mountain environment. The Kedarnath disaster and land subsidence in Joshimath forced authorities to reconsider construction in sensitive areas. Measures have included limits on pilgrim numbers and restrictions on mechanised work near glaciers. Kashmir should learn from these experiences before facing a similar crisis.

At 11,780 feet, where the air is thin and the mountains are covered in snow for much of the year, heavy machines are cutting into the shores of Sheshnag Lake.

Videos of the work have triggered anger in Kashmir, with environmentalists, religious groups and members of civil society questioning why such a sensitive place is being disturbed.

Their concern goes beyond the damage to the lake. They are also worried about people living downstream.

If development at Sheshnag damages the mountain system that feeds their water sources, how will these communities get the water they depend on?

Sheshnag is among the most sensitive parts of the upper Pahalgam region. Located near the Kolahoi glacial system, the lake forms part of a catchment that feeds the Lidder River. The land around it consists of loose glacial deposits, steep slopes and other natural formations that have developed over thousands of years.

Heavy excavators working in such terrain can disturb the ground and increase the risk of damage.

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) says the work is meant to widen and strengthen existing tracks to ease traffic congestion along the Amarnath Yatra route. It has also said that environmental safeguards are being followed.

Better roads may make the pilgrimage easier, but the location calls for greater care.

A road project that disturbs the natural barriers around a high-altitude lake could create risks far greater than the traffic problems it seeks to solve.

Sheshnag is already recognised as one of Jammu and Kashmir's 14 high-risk glacial lakes that could trigger a Glacial Lake Outburst Flood, or GLOF.

Such floods occur when water held behind natural barriers suddenly breaks through, sending huge volumes downstream.

Excavation around the lake's moraine dams and surrounding permafrost could weaken natural formations that help hold back glacial water.

The disasters in Nepal and at South Lhonak Lake in Sikkim show how devastating such floods can be.

The danger does not end at the alpine water body.

The glacier-fed waters of upper Pahalgam and Kolahoi feed the Lidder River, which joins the Jhelum near Gur. Along the way, the river supplies drinking water and irrigation to Pahalgam, Bijbehara, Anantnag East and Anantnag town.

Farmers, fruit growers, traders and tourism businesses depend on this water. Kashmir's multi-billion-rupee horticulture sector also depends on healthy mountain water sources.

Damage to the upper catchment could eventually affect families whose livelihoods have little to do with the Amarnath route.

Scientific research has been pointing to the growing risks for years. Studies led by Prof. Shakil Ahmad Romshoo, an Earth scientist and Vice Chancellor of the Islamic University of Science and Technology in Awantipora, have documented the rapid retreat of the Kolahoi Glacier.

Global warming is driving the loss of ice, while human activity is making the situation worse.

Vehicle emissions and black carbon deposits darken the ice, allowing it to absorb more heat and melt faster.

Research involving the University of Colorado Boulder and other scientific assessments of Himalayan water systems has also raised concerns about unregulated human activity along the Pahalgam-Amarnath corridor.

Large numbers of pilgrims, vehicle emissions, waste and physical disturbance can affect the local environment and surrounding slopes.

These findings have led to repeated recommendations asking the Jammu and Kashmir administration to limit the number of pilgrims visiting the area daily. The concerns also include the premature melting of the sacred ice lingam and the risk of instability on nearby slopes.

The administration has a legal responsibility to take these concerns seriously.

The Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal have relied on the Precautionary Principle to protect environmentally sensitive mountain regions. Their rulings stress the need for proper and transparent environmental impact assessments before any development takes place in high-altitude areas.

India has also made international commitments to protect its mountain water sources.

Uttarakhand has already shown what can happen when construction and human activity exceed the limits of a mountain environment.

The Kedarnath disaster and land subsidence in Joshimath forced authorities to reconsider construction in sensitive areas.

Measures have included limits on pilgrim numbers and restrictions on mechanised work near glaciers.

Kashmir should learn from these experiences before facing a similar crisis.

The administration should immediately stop mechanised excavation in the Sheshnag and Kolahoi catchment areas until independent glaciologists assess the damage and the risks.

Their findings should be made public, followed by clear limits on construction and pilgrim numbers.

People visit Amarnath in search of faith, and protecting the mountains that surround the pilgrimage should be part of that faith.

A road may save pilgrims some time, but the water flowing from these mountains sustains thousands of families throughout the year.

Those families should never have to pay the price for a development decision taken without understanding what lies beneath the ground.

The author is a serving legislator from South Kashmir and contributes occasionally on public policy and governance in Jammu and Kashmir. He can be reached at drveeri2@gmail.com.

The Rumour Business

The controversy over unsafe meat shows why clear official information and responsible reporting are essential.



Farooq Ahmad Khan

News travels fast in Kashmir.

A story can spread from one end of the valley to the other before anyone checks if it is true. By the time the truth comes out, many people may have already believed it.

There is an old Kashmiri saying that explains this habit: "Gai haa, gai haa, Zainakadle thouk."

The story goes that two men standing on Zaina Kadal bridge spat into the Jhelum and watched it float away. They began shouting, "Gai haa, gai haa." People passing by looked towards the river and joined them.

Soon, a crowd was repeating the same words without knowing what had gone into the water.

Today, we would probably call it going viral.

The saying has survived because people still behave in much the same way. Someone hears something, passes it on and soon others repeat it as fact.

Food-related rumours are particularly damaging because food has a special place in Kashmiri homes.

A good Kashmiri meal takes time and care. People often visit several butcher shops before buying meat. At home, the cook decides which pieces will go into rogan josh, which are meant for tabak maaz and which will be used for yakhni. Rice is cleaned, vegetables are checked and cooking can take hours.

Much of this work has traditionally been done by women, whose efforts often go unnoticed.

Life has changed, though. Many couples now work, and finding time to prepare an elaborate meal every day is difficult. Restaurants and cafés have become a part of family life. They allow people to enjoy good dishes without spending hours in the kitchen.

Many of these eateries are run by young, educated Kashmiris who have invested their savings and created jobs for others. They also introduce visitors to Kashmiri food.

This makes recent reports about unsafe meat worrying.

Last year's seizures had already made customers and restaurant owners anxious. This month, Railway Police seized a consignment at Budgam railway station after officials found it unfit for consumption. Reports said the meat had not been kept properly refrigerated during transport. The Food and Drugs Administration says it has destroyed the consignment and started legal proceedings.

A consignment seized at a railway station does not mean that all restaurants bought meat from it. Similarly, a problem with storage conditions does not prove that rotten meat was found in a restaurant kitchen.

The authorities must take such cases seriously. People have a right to know what reaches their kitchens and whether the food they eat is safe. Those responsible for bringing unsafe meat into the market must face action.

But there is another side to this issue.

A consignment seized at a railway station does not mean that all restaurants bought meat from it. Similarly, a problem with storage conditions does not prove that rotten meat was found in a restaurant kitchen.

In a recent case, the Food Safety Department had to correct reports claiming that rotten meat was seized from an establishment.

The department clarified that the action was related to problems in a dry storage area. The difference is important.

A report about rotten meat can quickly turn customers away, while a finding about storage conditions tells a different story.

A restaurant's reputation takes years to build and can be damaged by a single allegation.

Behind the name on the signboard are owners who have invested their savings, workers who depend on monthly wages and families whose income comes from the business.

When an unverified claim spreads, all of them can suffer.

The best way to prevent this is to make the facts public. People should know who sent the seized meat, where it came from, how it was transported and who was supposed to receive it.

The findings of inspections and laboratory tests should also be shared.

If someone has broken the law, the public should know what action has been taken. The authorities should keep people updated as the investigation moves ahead.

Restaurant owners also have a duty to protect their customers. They should buy meat from known suppliers, keep purchase records, store food properly and report anything suspicious.

These simple steps can help prevent unsafe food from reaching the table. They can also help honest businesses prove that they are following the rules.

The principle is simple: unsafe food must be dealt with firmly, and anyone found responsible must face the law.

At the same time, false or exaggerated claims must be corrected just as widely as the original reports.

An official clarification that reaches only a handful of people does little good when an allegation has already reached thousands.

The story of Zaina Kadal is still worth remembering.

Those two men started shouting without knowing what had gone into the river, and others followed without asking questions.

Today, a similar rumour can travel through hundreds of phones in a few minutes. By the time the truth catches up, a restaurant may have lost customers and workers may be worried about their jobs.

Perhaps the simplest lesson from that old saying is also the one we need most today: before passing a story on, find out what actually happened.

The author is an advocate practising before the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. He writes on law, politics and public issues. He can be reached at advofarooqahmadkhan@gmail.com.

Garbage in the Garden of Gold

A tribunal has ordered an inspection of the Pampore dump. The growers who brought the case want to know why the offices near their fields never did it.



Dr. Raja Muzaffar Bhat



I have watched garbage trucks pass through the saffron fields of Patalbagh and Galandar, near National Highway 44, for almost three years.

October and November are the worst months.

This is when the saffron flowers bloom, but the garbage trucks keep coming. I have written about it, filmed it and shared videos online. Still, nothing has changed.

The dump sits in a small valley between two raised saffron fields. It is Kahcharai land, which means village grazing ground for sheep and cattle.

About five years ago, the Pulwama district administration gave around 67 kanals, or 8.3 acres, to Municipal Committee Pampore to build a waste management plant. That plant was supposed to sort and treat the waste.

What the land got instead was four years of untreated, mixed garbage, tipped straight onto the ground.

Nobody asked the village.

The deputy commissioner made the allotment without speaking to the Halqa Majlis or the Ward Committee, and state land belongs to those bodies, not to the Revenue Department.

Neither body has worked for three years, and the elected government doesn't seem keen on holding panchayat and urban local body elections.

So the people with the best claim to that grazing ground weren't there when it was handed away.

Officials like to tell commoners that ignorance of the law is no excuse. Fine, then the same goes for the municipality and the deputy commissioner.

Dumping mixed waste breaks the Solid Waste Management Rules of 2016 and their 2026 update. It breaks the Saffron Act of 2007 too, and this land was never meant for a dump at all.

Who should have caught it?

The Agriculture Department calls itself the guardian of saffron farming in Kashmir. On July 10, 2026, its extension officer in Pampore wrote to the Sub Divisional Agriculture Officer in Tral, asking him to take it up. He could have acted himself.

Meanwhile, rats and rodents have eaten saffron corms on about 2,000 kanals. Growers watched their crop go while a letter moved one desk higher.

> **OFFICIALS LIKE TO TELL COMMONERS THAT IGNORANCE OF THE LAW IS NO EXCUSE.** Fine, then the same goes for the municipality and the deputy commissioner. Dumping mixed waste breaks the Solid Waste Management Rules of 2016 and their 2026 update. It breaks the Saffron Act of 2007 too, and this land was never meant for a dump at all.

The Pollution Control Committee was no faster. Its divisional officer in Pulwama did nothing for four years. I told the Regional Director at least a dozen times. A notice went to the municipality only after I complained to the chairman, Vasu Yadav, and the site stayed open even then.

The Supreme Court has given these committees the power to impose environmental compensation on their own. Four years have gone by and they haven't charged Pampore's municipality a single rupee.

I ended up doing a job that officials are paid for.

So I went to the National Green Tribunal, with around 40 saffron growers as co-petitioners. Our case was listed first on 17 November 2026. My lawyer, Saurabh Sharma, showed the bench geotagged photographs and the pollution committee's own report. He had a three-minute video ready, but the judges had seen enough. Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava and Expert Member Dr Afroz Alam set up a Joint Committee at that first hearing.

The committee has people from SKUAST-K, the Regional Director of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and a nominee of the pollution committee.

Within eight weeks they must visit Patalbagh, assess the damage to the 2,000 kanals and the land around them, and check whether the dump has the clearances the law demands.

The Deputy Commissioner of Pulwama, the officer who allotted the land, will coordinate the visit.

I am glad the tribunal moved quickly, but the speed bothers me.

Photographs, one report and two judges were enough for a single hearing. Comparatively, four years of local offices gave us a letter passed between desks.

If the evidence was always this clear, the failure sat in the offices closest to the fields.

I could reach a tribunal. Most people who farm that soil can't, and nobody has told me where they are supposed to go.

SKUAST-K now has a seat on the committee, and it can use that seat well. Its draft Mountain Development Policy says little about protecting saffron land or the karewas where much of the saffron grows.

Illegal digging of soil and sand has stripped those karewas for years, and now garbage stations are going up on them too.

I took a similar case to the tribunal over a dump Municipal Committee Pulwama set up on karewa land in Newa. I have written about a Karewa Protection Authority, and Bijbehera MLA Dr Bashir Veeri has tabled a private member's bill on the same idea.

The university could suggest how to restore and landscape these fields. I plan to put that to its Vice Chancellor soon.

At the end of the day, a tribunal can order an inspection, but it can't make a municipality ask a village before it fills the village's grazing ground with garbage.

Only an elected body can do that, and the grazing ground is still waiting for one.

— The author is an environmental activist and policy analyst based in Kashmir. He chairs the J&K Climate Action Group and founded the Jammu & Kashmir RTI Movement. He can be reached at bhatrajamuzaffar@gmail.com.

Kashmir's Love of Gold

Falling prices expose the risks of treating family jewellery as a dependable investment rather than one part of a wider financial plan.



Irshad Mushtaq



Just look at the gold necklace in your house. It probably didn't begin as an "investment." Maybe your mother saved for years to buy it. Maybe it was put away for a daughter's wedding. Maybe it came down through a family that trusts what it can see and touch.

So when prices drop, the worry isn't just about the market. It's personal. Should we buy more? Hold on to what we have? Wait and see?

I get the attachment. But decisions made on feeling alone can get expensive. Gold deserves a place in your savings, but its price can fall, its returns aren't guaranteed, and a full locker doesn't mean you are secure. Give gold the same care you would give any other investment.

So why is it falling?

Market reports through November 20, 2026, point to a stronger US dollar, higher US Treasury yields and expectations of tighter American monetary policy. Some investors have also cashed in profits or sold to raise money. These are market explanations, rather than government-certified findings.

The logic is simple. Gold pays no interest. When bonds and cash start paying more, they look better. And since gold is priced in dollars, a strong dollar makes it costlier for buyers in other currencies.

Here's the part that surprises people. Gold has a reputation as a safe haven, but in tough times investors sometimes sell even "safe" assets just to raise cash. So gold can fall while fear rises. Safe haven never meant immune to the market.

Your necklace's price story begins far from Srinagar's jewellery shops. London is a major wholesale bullion centre. New York's COMEX leads in futures and options. Shanghai has big physical and derivatives markets. India's bullion trade and the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) tie local prices to the world. Dubai, Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan serve their own regions.

These markets affect one another, but they don't sell the same thing at the same price.

Bullion, futures and finished jewellery all cost different amounts and serve different purposes. And nobody, whether government, exchange or jeweller, announces one worldwide price.

Now walk into a jewellery shop in Srinagar. The price you are quoted starts with international rates and the dollar-rupee exchange rate. Then come supplier costs, premiums or discounts, and import costs.

The India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA) publishes domestic price references, and MCX futures give another benchmark. But IBJA is an industry body, rather than a government department, and a futures price isn't the price of your necklace.

The rupee matters too.

When it weakens, a global fall in gold may show up as only a small dip here. When it strengthens, the effect flips.

So ask for quotes on the same purity and weight at the same time, and check making charges, taxes and buyback terms before you pay.

Government policy shapes your bill as well.

On July 23, 2024, the Union Budget cut customs duty on gold and silver from 15 percent to 6 percent. That was a one-time policy change, instead of a promise about what you will pay later. There's also a special 3 percent GST rate for gold and certain precious-metal categories.

Checking purity is easier than it used to be. The six-digit Hallmark Unique Identification (HUID) system began on July 1, 2021. Since April 1, 2023, old-style hallmarked jewellery without a six-digit HUID can't be sold.

What you bought earlier stays valid, and you can check HUID details on the BIS Care app.

Just remember that a hallmark proves purity and traceability. It doesn't promise a profitable resale or stop deductions when you sell.

Gold has mattered to India in bigger ways than most lockers show.

In the 1991 crisis, the Reserve Bank of India pledged 46.91 tonnes of gold with the Bank of Japan and the Bank of England to raise $405 million. The money was repaid between September and November that year.

At the end of March 2025, the RBI held 879.59 tonnes, 511.99 of them in India. Those are official figures for that date, rather than current holdings.

It's a great example of gold as a reserve and a source of quick cash. But a central bank has very different duties and resources than a family does. If you are saving for your child's education, you can't just copy what the RBI does.

You may have seen the "₹10,000 became crores" headline too. Here's the math behind it.

A Government of India publication lists gold at ₹88.62 per 10 grams in 1947. Assume an ending price of ₹1,25,590 per 10 grams.

On paper, ₹10,000 back then would have bought about 1.128 kg, worth roughly ₹1.42 crore.

That works out to about 9.62 percent growth a year over roughly 79 years.

Fun sum, but it hides a lot.

The starting price has no exact date. The math ignores premiums, making charges, storage, taxes and inflation. And annual averages, daily peaks and retail quotes shouldn't be tossed together.

If you want a fairer comparison, the RBI publishes historical average-price tables.

So what should you actually do when prices fall? Start with your financial plan, rather than the price chart.

Say your portfolio is worth ₹10 lakh and you want 10 percent in gold. That's ₹1 lakh. If you already hold ₹60,000 in gold, you need ₹40,000 more. Buy it in four instalments of ₹10,000. That way you spread your risk and don't have to guess the bottom.

Once you reach your target, stop. Another price drop isn't a reason to buy again. Gold can help diversify a portfolio because it often moves differently from equities and bonds. But it can also stay weak for a long time, and it pays no interest or dividends.

World Gold Council research from March 2026 found that holding 7.5 to 15 percent in gold improved historical risk-adjusted performance in a hypothetical Indian portfolio from December 2006 to December 2025.

Remember, that's industry research built on historical assumptions, rather than a government recommendation or a promise about the future.

A 20 percent cap can work as your own limit against putting too much in one place, but it isn't a government rule or a target.

And please count the jewellery you already own. That wedding necklace or inherited set may be worth a lot, even if you would never dream of selling it.

Most of all, don't let fear spend your money. Nobody should borrow, dip into emergency savings or rush a purchase because they are afraid of missing a bargain.

Jewellery, emergency funds and investments each do a different job. Blur the lines, and you could be caught short when education, healthcare or retirement bills show up.

A well-filled locker is a real comfort, especially after years of saving. But security also means having cash when life surprises you.

Gold can be part of that, as long as you know what you own, what it cost and how much of your savings you have tied up in it.

— The author is the founder of M I Securities, Srinagar, and writes on finance and Kashmir economy.

> **A well-filled locker is a real comfort, especially after years of saving.** But security also means having cash when life surprises you. Gold can be part of that, as long as you know what you own, what it cost and how much of your savings you've tied up in it.

KASHMIR OBSERVER®
SRINAGAR | WEDNESDAY | 25.11.2026

Sub-Zero Temperatures

Ganderbal minus 0.3 degrees Celsius and Kokernag minus 0.1 degrees Celsius.

Gulmarg recorded a minimum temperature of 0.2 degrees Celsius, improving from minus 2 degrees Celsius the previous night. Kulgam also registered 0.2 degrees Celsius, while Baramulla recorded 0.1 degrees Celsius. Sonamarg recorded 3.2 degrees Celsius.

Cold conditions were more severe in Ladakh, where Leh recorded minus 7.8 degrees Celsius, followed by Kargil at minus 6.5 degrees Celsius and Nubra Valley at minus 5.9 degrees Celsius.

In the Jammu division, Jammu city recorded a minimum temperature of 9.6 degrees Celsius, while Jammu Airport registered 7 degrees Celsius. Udhampur recorded 6.5 degrees Celsius, Poonch 6.2 degrees Celsius and Rajouri 3 degrees Celsius.

Bhadarwah recorded 2.8 degrees Celsius, while Katra and Batote registered 10.5 degrees Celsius each.

The Meteorological Department has forecast largely dry weather across Jammu and Kashmir from November 25 to November 30, with sunny to partly cloudy conditions expected.

Higher reaches and tourist destinations, including Gulmarg and Pahalgam, are likely to continue experiencing colder nights, the department said.

Sheshnag Works

triggered mounting opposition and calls for an immediate halt to excavation.

Local trekkers held a peaceful protest on Shankaracharya Hill, while local adventure clubs are organising trail runs to mobilise public support for the protection of Kashmir's fragile alpine ecology.

Meanwhile, an online petition titled "Stop construction around Kashmir's alpine lakes", hosted on Change.org, has crossed 4,300 signatures. Started by Zarqua Banday, the petition urges authorities to stop construction around ecologically sensitive alpine lakes and engage with local environmental and community groups to develop a sustainable way forward.

The petition argues that road construction in the name of development and improved connectivity could damage untouched natural habitats, increase pollution and disturb the ecological balance of the region's high-altitude lakes.

"This isn't progress; it's a threat to our environment," it says, warning that the consequences of such interventions could be irreversible.

It calls on the government to explore alternatives such as guided trekking, limited-access permits and eco-friendly accommodation to promote tourism without compromising the natural environment. Citing the Swiss Alps as an example, it urges authorities to prioritise long-term ecological preservation over short-term gains.

The campaign has also drawn support from political leaders and religious figures, with concerns mounting over the deployment of heavy machinery near the high-altitude Sheshnag Lake along the Amarnath Yatra route in south Kashmir's Anantnag district.

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Tuesday attempted to visit the site to assess the situation but was stopped by police along with party MLAs Waheed Para and Syed Muntazir Mehndi. The leaders had set out from Chandanwari and tried to trek towards Sheshnag.

Speaking to reporters, Mehbooba expressed alarm over reports of large-scale excavation near the lake, questioning the deployment of heavy machinery in the ecologically fragile area.

"The information we are receiving about what is happening there in Sheshnag is very terrifying that they have taken huge machines and huge bulldozers to Sheshnag, which is a few kilometres away from the Amarnath Ji cave, and excavation is taking place there," she said.

She said the region's forests, mountains and glaciers played an important role in the formation of the naturally occurring ice lingam at the Amarnath cave, warning that damage to the Himalayan environment could have wider consequences.

"If you destroy Jammu and Kashmir's environment, its glaciers, its mountains, and its forests like this, and take such huge machines up there, then how will this Shivling manifest? Then what will you come here for?" she asked.

Mehbooba also appealed to Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari to intervene and review the project plans, alleging that the pilgrimage route was being used as a pretext to alter the landscape.

She drew parallels with Uttarakhand, cautioning against turning pilgrimage sites into conventional tourist destinations and urging the authorities to protect Kashmir's fragile Himalayan ecology.

Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee president Tariq Hameed Karra also questioned the deployment of a JCB excavator near the lake and sought details about the purpose of the work and the permissions obtained from various departments.

Karra said he was surprised by the presence of heavy machinery at such a high-altitude location and questioned which department had undertaken the work and which authorities had granted the necessary no-objection certificates.

"I was surprised to see how the JCB reached Sheshnag. From what we could make out in the video, it appeared to be digging soil and dumping it on the left-hand side, towards the lake," he told PTI.

He said reports that the agency concerned had obtained clearances from various departments made it necessary for the government to disclose the details of the project and the approvals granted.

Kashmir's chief cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who has also signed the online petition, urged people to collectively raise their voice against what he described as the destruction of fragile ecological zones.

He questioned the silence of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and called on him to intervene in his capacity as an elected representative to ensure that the activity was stopped.

The BJP, meanwhile, accused critics of practising selective environmental activism and attempting to politicise the issue. Party spokesperson and former MLC Girdhari Lal Raina alleged that some political leaders were trying to communalise the development issue and revive the Amarnath land controversy.

The controversy erupted after a video showing an excavator operating near Sheshnag Lake, described as a high-risk glacial lake, circulated widely on social media, prompting objections from political parties, religious leaders and environmentalists.

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO), however, said on Monday that post-Amarnath Yatra works were being carried out in compliance with all applicable safety norms and environmental safeguards.

16.2% Of Amarnath Yatra

influence of geological weaknesses, steep terrain, climatic variability and human intervention as key factors contributing to slope instability along the Baltal-Amarnath-Panjtarni-Poshpathri route.

The remaining 15.7 per cent of the study area has been classified as having low landslide susceptibility.

The study documented 49 landslide events along the corridor, including 28 debris flows, 15 rockfalls, two debris slides, two rockslides, one creep event and one rock topple.

An analysis of these events showed that 35, or 71.4 per cent, occurred in areas classified as having high landslide susceptibility. Ten events were recorded in moderately susceptible areas, while four occurred in zones with low susceptibility.

The researchers found that landslides were concentrated on steep slopes, structurally deformed rock formations, debris-covered terrain and active drainage channels. Geological weaknesses and discontinuities associated with the Main Central Thrust zone were also identified as important controls on slope instability.

The study noted that nearly 90 per cent of mapped slope failures were associated with slopes steeper than 25 degrees. It also highlighted the influence of road and track construction, with 60 to 70 per cent of recorded landslides occurring within 50 metres of roads or other disturbances.

Geotechnical assessments showed variations in rock quality across the corridor, with conditions ranging from poor to moderate in the southern sector and moderate to good in the northern sector.

The researchers also examined climatic trends and found a warming pattern of nearly 2 degrees Celsius in recent decades, alongside substantial year-to-year variations in snow cover.

The analysis of temperature records showed an increase in mean temperature of around 0.05 degrees Celsius annually. Maximum and minimum temperatures also recorded increasing trends. However, the study found no statistically significant trend in overall annual precipitation.

The researchers identified 54 extreme rainfall events, each exceeding 45 millimetres in a day, in the Baltal Valley between 1994 and 2024. Of these, 15 occurred during the monsoon season, when intense rainfall can increase the likelihood of flash floods, debris flows and landslides.

The study observed that snow cover is minimal during the peak pilgrimage months of July and August, making rainfall-driven soil saturation a more significant factor in slope instability during this period. It also highlighted the role of rain-on-snow events during spring and early summer in generating rapid runoff and triggering slope failures.

Referring to past extreme weather events along the corridor, the researchers cited the July 8, 2022, Baltal cloudburst as an example of the area's vulnerability to intense rainfall and debris-laden floods.

The study said the interaction of rugged terrain, fragile geological formations, steep slopes, narrow valleys and intense precipitation increases the vulnerability of the Baltal-Amarnath sector. The concentration of pilgrims and temporary infrastructure during the annual pilgrimage further increases exposure to such hazards.

For reducing landslide risks, the researchers recommended improving surface and subsurface drainage, stabilising vulnerable slopes through engineering measures such as retaining and gabion walls, and ensuring that road construction and widening are guided by detailed geotechnical assessments.

They also called for relocating temporary accommodation and tents to relatively stable terrain, updating landslide susceptibility maps at decadal intervals and considering safer route alignments, including the strategic use of ropeways in highly landslide-prone areas.

The researchers said susceptibility maps could support land-use planning, slope stabilisation, route management and targeted monitoring. They stressed the need to integrate geological assessments, satellite observations and real-time weather monitoring to strengthen early-warning systems and disaster preparedness along the pilgrimage corridor. (ONS

Kashmir Environmental

increase sediment entering the lake and cause lasting damage to its catchment.

The group described the reported activities as potential violations of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, and noise pollution regulations. It has called for an immediate scientific assessment of the work and its possible ecological and hydrological consequences.

The representation also asks the government to temporarily suspend activities that could harm the lake until independent experts complete their assessment.

The group wants authorities to disclose the permissions granted for the work, along with technical documents and details of how construction debris is being disposed of.

The dispute comes as authorities undertake infrastructure and facility development to support pilgrims visiting the Shri Amarnath shrine. The group acknowledged the importance of providing facilities for pilgrims, while insisting that construction in the high mountains must follow environmental safeguards and scientific assessments.

Sheshnag's location within a sensitive mountain landscape makes the concerns particularly significant. Changes to slopes and drainage around an alpine lake can affect how water and sediment move through its catchment, potentially altering the ecosystem over time.

JKCAG said it would approach the National Green Tribunal if the government failed to take timely action.

"We are seeking appropriate legal intervention to ensure the protection of Sheeshnag Lake and its surrounding fragile ecosystem if the authorities fail to take timely and effective action," the organisation said in its statement.

The group argued that pilgrimage and environmental protection could proceed together, provided development followed scientific principles.

The immediate question now is whether the government will investigate the excavation before construction activities leave lasting consequences for the lake and the mountain landscape surrounding it.

Resident Doctors'

doctors in Jammu held a silent demonstration on Tuesday, wearing white aprons, black bands and face masks to express solidarity and highlight their grievances.

Resident doctors at Sub-District Hospital Sopore also staged a protest, demanding equal pay and recognition.

AIMSA has placed several demands before the government, including replacement of the existing 6th Pay Commission-based structure with 7th Central Pay Commission Level 10 for PG residents, along with Dearness Allowance (DA) and House Rent Allowance (HRA).

The association has also sought an enhancement of the basic pay of Senior Residents to Rs 67,700, at par with their counterparts at SKIMS Srinagar and other central medical institutions, besides 20 per cent Non-Practising Allowance (NPA) for PG and Senior Resident doctors.

Other demands include regular revision of DA and implementation of a uniform pay structure across all Government Medical Colleges and SKIMS in Jammu and Kashmir.

AIMSA President J&K Dr Mohammad Momin Khan said the association was hopeful of a positive response from the government and urged the authorities to resolve the issue without further delay.

He welcomed Health Minister Sakina Itoo's interaction with the protesting doctors and expressed hope that the government would take concrete steps, as it had previously done in the case of MBBS and BDS interns.

The agitation has also received support from several district-level healthcare institutions. Dr Yaser Fayaz from District Hospital Kulgam said resident doctors there had joined the indefinite strike from November 23 over disparities in stipends.

He said elective services would remain suspended, while emergency services would continue as usual.

At JLNM Hospital, Dr Ravi and Dr Zoha Suzain highlighted the disparity faced by DNB residents, saying they were currently receiving a stipend of only Rs 48,000.

Dr Yamin from District Hospital Pulwama also joined the agitation, while PG residents from GMC Anantnag, GMC Baramulla and GMC Doda extended their participation.

The protesting doctors maintained that their movement was peaceful and aimed at securing fair remuneration, financial parity and a uniform policy across medical institutions in J&K.

They urged the government to initiate meaningful dialogue and take a time-bound decision, warning that continued delays could deepen resentment among resident doctors.

Physics Icon H.C

went beyond displaying carefully prepared models and encouraged students to observe, question, experiment and find explanations for the things they see around them. A good question, as the saying goes, can be worth more than a thousand ready-made answers.

Technical sessions and direct interactions with visiting experts added another dimension to the two-day gathering. Teachers joined students in discussions with academics and science communicators, making the carnival a meeting ground for different generations of learners.

Among those gathered was Dr. Baba Nazrul Islam, president of the Private Schools Association Jammu and Kashmir, who joined Verma as chief guest. The gathering also brought together Dr. Khurshid Ahmed, secretary of the Science Communicators Association, Jammu and Kashmir, and Dr. Ranjeet Kumar, a science communicator from Kanpur. Zahoor Ahmad, chairman of Monarch School, Handwara, and executive members of PSAJK Kupwara were also present.

Speaking to students and parents, Dr. Islam praised Hill Grange School chairman Javed Ahmad Mir for opening the institution's doors to students from other schools and creating an opportunity to meet distinguished academics. He stressed that scientific thinking grows when children learn to question, reason and look beyond the answers printed in their books.

Mathematics, he said, needed special attention. "A strong command of numbers and analytical thinking gives children the foundation to understand scientific principles, develop technology and solve practical problems," he said.

His message to students was clear: the road to scientific discovery often begins with the simplest mathematical idea.

He also turned to a concern playing out in homes and classrooms.

Children are spending increasing amounts of time in front of screens, he said, and parents need to strike a balance by encouraging reading, outdoor activities and meaningful academic engagement. "Curiosity needs nourishment, and a screen cannot replace the experience of exploring the world with one's own eyes."

Dr. Islam also spoke about the people who stand behind the classroom: teachers.

PSAJK, he said, remained committed to their professional development and the capacity-building of school staff through regular training, academic interactions and exposure to emerging developments in science, education and technology.

"Schools," he said, "must keep learning if they hope to prepare children for a world that keeps changing."

Women, Youth Driving

farmers, particularly small and marginal cultivators, to adopt modern technologies and align their production with emerging market demands.

The Lieutenant Governor also encouraged greater cultivation of millets, describing them as climate-resilient crops that could help farmers enhance their incomes amid irregular rainfall, rising temperatures and declining groundwater levels.

Paying homage to Baba Jitto and Bua Kaudi at the annual fair, Sinha said the legacy of Baba Jitto represented truth, courage and justice, and underscored the dignity, rights and self-respect of farmers.

He said Baba Jitto's struggle was not merely about a crop but about protecting the rights of hardworking farmers.

"His sacrifice continues to inspire society to stand against injustice and uphold respect for labour. Baba Jitto's message also transcends caste, class and community, and represents a shared national heritage," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor said the true tribute to Baba Jitto and Bua Kaudi would be to build a society where no farmer was left alone in the struggle for rights and dignity.

Calling for a whole-of-society approach to inclusive development, he said truth, hard work and mutual respect must remain the foundation of a developed Jammu and Kashmir.

Sinha also urged young people to take pride in Dogra language, folk traditions and regional history, stressing the need to preserve cultural heritage through digital technology.

He encouraged youth to learn traditional songs, folk tales and regional history from elders and use digital platforms to introduce Dogra culture to wider audiences.

The Lieutenant Governor said the administration was making continuous efforts to ensure the smooth organisation of the Jhiri Mela and that infrastructure at the venue had witnessed significant improvement.

On the occasion, he visited exhibition stalls set up by government departments, agricultural entrepreneurs, self-help groups and farmers. The event also featured a play depicting the lives of Baba Jitto and Bua Kaudi, besides cultural performances showcasing the region's heritage.

Member of Parliament Jugal Kishore Sharma, MLAs Surinder Kumar and Gharu Ram Bhagat, Additional Chief Secretary Chandraker Bharti, Divisional Commissioner Jammu Vikas Kundal, IGP Jammu Tejinder Singh, DIG JSK Range Shridhar Patil, Deputy Commissioner Jammu Minga Sherpa, SSP Jammu Joginder Singh and Municipal Commissioner Jammu Aayushi Sudan were among those present.

J&K Waqf Board

her team, he assured that he would continue to extend support and encouragement to their initiatives.

The minister also appreciated the Board's efforts to generate revenue from Waqf properties and assets through proper planning and utilise the resources for public welfare.

Rijiju, who is also the Chairman of the Central Waqf Council, said he would convene a meeting to discuss ways to improve the functioning of Waqf boards across the country.

"We want all state Waqf boards to function well. The Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board has worked beyond my imagination and expectations," he said.

Responding to a question about providing Hajj pilgrimage opportunities to employees of Waqf institutions, Rijiju said the government was keen to extend such opportunities to them in the future.

He said he had recently discussed the issue of increasing India's Hajj quota with Saudi Arabia's Minister of Hajj and Umrah during his visit to the country.

Rijiju said that once the quota was enhanced, efforts would be made to accommodate Waqf employees along with other categories of applicants.

"We want them to get a chance too. Within that quota, we send some employees, and we would like to give Waqf personnel an opportunity in the future as well," he said.

Budgam Meat Seizure

mandatory labelling.

The FDA subsequently confirmed that the entire 1,600-kg consignment had been destroyed and legal proceedings initiated against the persons and entities concerned.

The department's response gathered pace immediately after the incident. On November 15, it conducted 85 inspections of meat storage and processing units, issued 16 improvement notices, recommended 11 cases for proceedings under Section 56 of the Act and compounded four cases with a total fine of Rs 4,000.

A subsequent enforcement drive covered 108 establishments, during which three FSSAI licences were suspended, five samples were lifted and five cases were recommended under Section 56. One case was also initiated under Section 58 over expired food articles, while expired products worth approximately Rs 77,500 were destroyed.

The FDA later disclosed cumulative post-Budgam figures of 364 inspections, nine licence or registration suspensions, 21 improvement notices, 31 recommendations for adjudication and more than 19 cases compounded under Section 69.

However, the department has not provided a consolidated quantity of additional rotten meat or adulterated food seized during these inspections, even as the enforcement drive has expanded across the Union Territory.

The latest action comes against the backdrop of the major rotten-meat controversy that rocked Kashmir in August 2025, when authorities uncovered large quantities of decomposed, unlabelled and unsafe meat during raids across the Valley.

More than 12,000 kilograms of such meat was reported seized during the crackdown, while the FDA separately disclosed that over 3,500 kilograms had been seized and destroyed during an intensified enforcement operation in the initial days of the controversy.

One of the major recoveries was made on July 31, 2025, when 1,200 kilograms of foul-smelling meat were seized and destroyed at a facility in Zakura. Police registered FIR No. 48/2025 at Police Station Zakoora, while subsequent raids and investigations brought several meat storage and supply points under scrutiny.

The controversy also severely affected the restaurant and hospitality sector, with businesses reporting a sharp decline in customer confidence.

The FDA subsequently disclosed that during 2025 it had seized another 4,040 kilograms of frozen meat and meat products from five establishments in Srinagar for violations of prescribed requirements.

These included 1,200 kilograms from Sunshine Industries, Zakura; 500 kilograms from Al-Taqwa, Lasjan; 1,400 kilograms from M.M. Foods, HMT; 420 kilograms from Niyaz Ahmad Kawa, Aali Kadal; and 520 kilograms from Al-Azeem Enterprises, Manderbagh.

Following adjudication, penalties ranging from Rs 17,500 to Rs 5 lakh were imposed on the respective operators. The department also said two samples were examined by the ICAR-National Meat Research Institute, Hyderabad, and identified as buffalo meat.

The enforcement record from 2025 also included suspension of FSSAI licences of several food establishments in Kashmir, including Al-Taqwa Foods, Sunshine Foods, Aarif Enterprises, Anmol Foods, Jubilant Food Works (Domino's Pizza) in Anantnag, Shanu Shahi Biryani, Shan Fish Fry, Bismillah Sweets and Khanday Poultry.

The latest round of licence suspensions has extended the crackdown to establishments in both Kashmir and Jammu.

Among those named in the November 21 suspension action were Jan Sweets, Hazoori Bagh, Srinagar; the bakery manufacturing unit of Mughal Darbar, Residency Road; Cottage Inn Restaurant, Baghat; Madina Sunrise Poultry, Baghat; Madina Zaika Biryani, Baghat; Orbit Restaurant, New Pulwama; and NFS Poultry, Mandli, Billawar.

Reports also named Delhi Ki Mashoor Biryani and Restaurant NAZ at Vijaypur, Samba, although published accounts differed over the total number of establishments covered.

In a separate enforcement action, the FDA recommended suspension of licences of Delhi Chicken Point, Boulevard Road, Srinagar; Royal Punjabi Restaurant, Boulevard Road; Sun-N-Shade, Boulevard Road; and Copenhagen Hospitality Private Limited, Bahu Plaza, Jammu, over hygiene and sanitation deficiencies.

At Copenhagen Hospitality, 45 kilograms of frozen chicken were seized and destroyed for failure to maintain prescribed temperature conditions. The department did not describe the seized chicken as rotten.

On November 23, following inspections of 281 food establishments across Jammu and Kashmir, the FDA suspended the registrations of Zaika Chicken Biryani, Khayam, Srinagar, and Royal 99 Café, Shalimar, Srinagar, over food-safety, sanitation and hygiene violations.

The department also lifted 51 samples of meat, meat products and other food commodities and initiated nine cases, including six concerning insanitary and unhygienic conditions.

Despite the 2025 controversy and the prohibitory order issued in October that year restricting the transportation, storage and sale of frozen food products without prescribed temperature-control arrangements and mandatory labelling, the Budgam incident has again exposed vulnerabilities in the supply and transportation chain.

The FDA's own figures show that during the financial year 2026-27, it had conducted 12,778 inspections, collected 7,266 enforcement samples and 2,857 surveillance samples, instituted 533 cases and secured adjudication in 619 cases, with penalties totalling approximately Rs 1.004 crore.

The department has also announced plans to expand the NABL-accredited testing capacity of government food laboratories to 2,500 parameters by January 2027 and 3,500 by March 2027.

However, the recurrence of major food-safety controversies despite extensive inspection figures has brought the effectiveness of routine surveillance into focus.

People have demanded that the FDA publish establishment-wise details of seized rotten meat, laboratory findings, inspection reports and final orders, including whether suspended licences have subsequently been restored or permanently cancelled. (KNT)

Speedy Trial No

hearing an appeal filed by the complainant, who is the father of the deceased, challenging a January 2026 order of the high court granting bail to the accused.

The bench noted that the high court had granted bail on the grounds that the accused was in jail for over five years.

The complainant had argued that the high court ought to have considered all relevant aspects of the matter, including the criminal antecedents of the accused and particularly the fact that he was earlier convicted in an attempt to murder case.

The counsel appearing for the accused said he had mentioned his criminal antecedents in his bail application filed before the high court.

The top court noted that while preferring the bail petition before the high court, the accused made a statement at two places that he was not involved in any other case except the present one.

It said he had concealed his conviction in the previous case in which he was convicted and sentenced for attempting to take the life of the same person, who is the deceased in this case.

The bench said the present crime was committed while the accused was on bail in the case where he stood convicted for committing the offence of attempt to murder.

It said the high court ought not have released the accused on bail pending trial.

While allowing the appeal, the bench set aside the high court order and directed the accused to surrender before the court concerned within a week.

Guru Purab Celebrated

communal harmony and peaceful coexistence.

The occasion was marked by special prayers, Gurbani Kirtan, religious discourses and community langars at Gurdwaras across the Union Territory.

Devotees visited Gurdwaras, including Chhati Padshahi in Srinagar and religious shrines in Jammu, Poonch, Karnah and other areas, to pay obeisance and seek blessings.

The celebrations highlighted Guru Nanak Dev Ji's universal message of equality, compassion, truth, brotherhood and selfless service.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha paid obeisance at Gurdwara Sahib in Chand Nagar, Jammu, on the occasion. He offered prayers for peace, prosperity, happiness and the well-being of all, interacted with devotees and extended greetings to the Sikh community.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also greeted the Sikh community, saying Guru Nanak Dev Ji's timeless teachings of compassion, equality, unity and selfless service continued to inspire humanity and promote harmony among communities.

National Conference president Dr Farooq Abdullah recalled the Guru's message of humanity, non-violence, brotherhood and communal harmony.

Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg also extended greetings to the Sikh community, highlighting the teachings of truth, equality, compassion, humility and service to humanity.

In Srinagar, the main religious observances were held at the historic Gurdwara Chhati Padshahi in Rainawari, where devotees gathered in large numbers to offer prayers and participate in Gurbani Kirtan.

Celebrations were also held at Gurdwaras in Jawahar Nagar, Allochi Bagh, Barzulla and other parts of the Valley. Community langars and religious gatherings formed an important part of the celebrations.

Deputy Commissioner Srinagar Akshay Labroo, DIG Central Kashmir Rajiv Omprakash Pandey and SSP Srinagar Dr G V Sandeep Chakravarthy also visited Gurdwara Chhati Padshahi, paid obeisance and extended greetings to the Sikh community.

POONCH, KARNAH

In Poonch, the 557th Parkash Purab was celebrated with devotion at Gurdwara Singh Sabha, with Sikh devotees, officials and members of other communities participating in the religious programmes.

Children Leaving Private Institutions, Joining Govt Schools: Education Minister

Says infrastructure upgrade priority; kids facing problems due to cold weather

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Stating that many children have left private schools and joined government schools, Education Minister Shamima Firdous on Tuesday said the government is committed to strengthen educational infrastructure across Jammu and Kashmir.

Talking to media persons on the sidelines of an event at Narbal here in Central Kashmir, the Minister said "We have many children here who have left private schools and joined government schools. We should all work towards realising the dream of a prosperous Jammu and Kashmir."

Emphasising the need to improve basic facilities in government schools, the Minister said her focus would be on providing better infrastructure, including proper classrooms and washrooms, particularly in underdeveloped schools.

"Unless we pay attention to infrastructure and provide children with a good environment, good classrooms and washrooms, shortcomings in the education system will continue," she said.

She also indicated that efforts were underway to establish



higher secondary schools, adding that certain hurdles had delayed the process but expressed hope that the proposal would move forward.

Asked about coaching centres and other educational institutions allegedly using children in promotional advertisements, the Minister said parents should think about allowing their children to be used for such purposes, adding that the government could not be held responsible.

YOUNG CHILDREN FACING DIFFICULTIES

On the upcoming winter vacations, the Minister said there were two different opinions regarding when the vacation should be announced, with some favouring continuation of classes for a little longer while others seeking an earlier start to winter vacations.

Acknowledging the difficulties faced by younger children, particularly those studying in Nursery, Lower KG and Upper KG, due to weather conditions, she assured that their concerns would be taken into consideration.

"I am aware of this concern. There are two opinions on the matter. Some say that classes should continue for a little longer, while others feel that vacations should be announced. Kids, particularly those in Nursery, Lower KG and Upper KG, are facing difficulties due to the weather. We will do justice to their concerns, InshaAllah," she said—(KNO)



Icicles blanket tree branches amid freezing temperatures in Tangmarg on a cold winter morning. KO PHOTO/ABID BHAT

CS Reviews Key Development Projects In Rajouri, Calls For Faster Execution

Observer News Service



RAJOURI: Chief Secretary Dr Sajjan Singh Yadav on Tuesday undertook an extensive tour of Rajouri district to review the progress of major developmental projects, inspect sports, healthcare and educational infrastructure, assess flood-related restoration works and take stock of heritage conservation initiatives.

During his visit to the Sports Stadium, Rajouri, the Chief Secretary interacted with young sportspersons participating in volleyball and badminton and sought their feedback on available facilities and coaching arrangements. Appreciating the sporting potential of the district, he stressed the need for improved infrastructure, professional coaching and greater opportunities for local talent.

He called for engaging more coaches under the Khelo India initiative to help promising players compete at national and international levels. He also inspected ongoing construction at Sports Stadium Kheora and directed the executing agencies to accelerate the work without compromising quality.

At Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University (BGSBU), he inspected the ongoing construction of the university auditorium, girls' hostel for nursing students and the new main gate. The girls' hostel, being constructed at a cost of Rs 354.23 lakh, has completed masonry work on its ground and first floors, while plastering is underway. The main gate project, costing Rs 59.11 lakh, has also achieved completion of its superstructure.

The Chief Secretary directed the authorities to expedite the remaining works and stressed the installation of rooftop solar power plants in new university buildings to promote renewable energy.

Interacting with students and faculty members, he called for preparing a comprehensive ten-year vision for the university, with measurable goals and a clear action plan. He emphasised aligning academic programmes with employability, skill development and emerging job-market requirements, while encouraging students to pursue learning beyond the prescribed curriculum.

Reviewing healthcare infrastructure, Dr Yadav inspected the 180-bedded Teaching District Hospital building and took stock of additional works being executed at an approved cost of Rs 5 crore. While civil works have been completed and lifts installed, electrical works are nearing completion and firefighting arrangements are underway. He directed the authorities to expedite the remaining work to ensure early operational readiness.

He also inspected the 6.3 MVA dedicated receiving station at Government Medical College (GMC), Rajouri, being constructed at a cost of Rs 2.89 crore. The project is targeted for completion by March 2027. He said the facility would strengthen power reliability at the medical college and ensure uninterrupted electricity supply for healthcare services.

Taking stock of flood-related damage, the Chief Secretary visited Bella Bus Stand, which was washed away during recent flash floods, and reviewed restoration requirements. At Androlla Bridge, he directed the executing agency to complete pending works at the earliest to restore connectivity.

JKSSB Rules Out FAA Paper Leak

Agencies

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) has ruled out a question paper leak in the Finance Accounts Assistant (FAA) examination, saying police foiled a high-tech cheating attempt and no evidence of mass malpractice has emerged so far.

Around 1.62 lakh candidates appeared for the November 15 examination for nearly 600 posts at 493 centres across Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking to KNS, JKSSB Chairman Shrikant Balasaheb Suse (IAS) said the alleged cheating attempt involved modified wireless devices and miniature magnetic earpieces, adding that the incident is being examined and examination security protocols are being reviewed.

He said a re-examination could be considered in cases of mass malpractice, but no such evidence had emerged so far. Any decision on cancellation would depend on the findings of the investigation and applicable legal principles, he added.

The chairman said the Board has initiated a review of examination standard operating procedures (SOPs), while candidates found guilty of malpractice could face cancellation of candidature and debarment.

Dismissing rumours of postponement, Suse said the Police Sub-Inspector (PSI) examination would be held as scheduled, with additional security coordination planned with police and district administrations. (KNS)

Govt Approves Transfer Of 320 Kanals Of Land For Modern Fruit & Vegetable Markets

Observer News Service

JAMMU: In a major step towards strengthening Jammu and Kashmir's horticulture and agriculture sectors, the Government led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has approved the transfer of 320 kanals and 4 marlas of land to the Agriculture Production Department for establishing modern Fruit and Vegetable Markets in three districts of the Kashmir Valley.

Approved by the Council of Ministers in the public interest, the land will be transferred free of cost at identified locations in Baramulla, Pulwama and Kulgam districts. The proposed sites include 50 kanals at village Palhallan in Tehsil Pattan of Baramulla district, 20 kanals and 4 marlas at village Nowdal in Tehsil Tral of Pulwama district, and 250 kanals at village Kulgam in Tehsil and district Kulgam.

The proposed markets will provide farmers, including small and marginal growers and women farmers, improved access to organised marketing facilities and better opportunities to secure remunerative prices for their produce. Equipped with modern infrastructure and facilities, these markets will promote transparent price discovery, standardised electronic weighing, digital payments and efficient handling of agricultural produce.

The facilities will also incorporate improved arrangements for grading, sorting, storage and transportation, helping reduce post-harvest losses, minimise marketing costs and ensure the availability of fresh produce to consumers.

The initiative is aimed at strengthening agricultural supply chains, improving market linkages and promoting value addition within the region. It is also expected to generate employment opportunities in trading, transportation, logistics and other allied activities, while contributing to higher farm incomes and sustainable rural development.

The initiative underscores the Government's focus under Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on strengthening the agricultural and horticultural economy, improving market infrastructure and ensuring that farmers receive better returns for their hard work.

J&K Police Sanctions Rs 5.5 Lakh Special Relief For Families Of SPOs Killed In Kishtwar

Observer News Service

KISHTWAR: Jammu and Kashmir Police have sanctioned special relief for the families of two Special Police Officers (SPOs) who were killed in Kishtwar district on November 11.

The order no. 3190 of 26 which is in possession of Kashmir Observer reads: "Sanction is accorded for the grant of Special Relief of Rs 5,50,000 each out of the Contributory Welfare Fund of SPOs to the dependents / legal heirs of SPO Rachpal Kumar (Belt No. 65 SPO) and SPO Bhabi Chand (Belt No. 920 SPO) of District Police Kishtwar.

Both were residents of Kiyar, Tehsil Dachhan. They were martyred by unknown terrorists on November 11, 2026 at Lahan Nar, Dehrna Top, Panzal Waji near Water Point of District Kishtwar during the course of their engagement."

The order further reads: "Sanction is also accorded for the reimbursement of Rs 1,00000 (Rs One lakh only) out of the contributory Welfare fund of SPOs to SSP Kishtwar on account of immediate relief which ahs already been paid to NoK of aforesaid Martyr SPOs@ Rs 50,000 (Rs fifty thousand only) each for performing last rites."

The SSP Kishtwar has been directed to submit the complete proforma with attested documents for further relief as per rules, i.e. ex-gratia relief of Rs 17,50,000 each, Group Personal Accidental Insurance of Rs 35,00,000 each through J&K Bank, and ex-gratia (additional death cover) of Rs 15,00,000 each.

Pertinently, earlier this month two Special Police Officers went missing in Kishtwar District and their bullet-riddled bodies were found near a Nand nullah area between Dachhan and Marwah.

The SPOs, Rashpal Kumar (45) and Bobby Chand (57), were posted at Kiyar village in the higher reaches of the Dachhan area. Killings of the two SPOs was the first such incident in the area in 26 years.

According to a senior police officer, Kumar and Chand were on their way from the village to a Temporary Operation Base (TOB) of the Rashtriya Rifles at Dharna in Marwah to accompany troops for area dominance and search operations.

Sources said that while passing through the Kiyar forests, which is known as a "shadow zone" for its lack of mobile phone connectivity, contact with the SPOs was lost.

After the SPOs did not reach the operational base by afternoon, an alert was sounded, prompting police and the troops to launch joint searches in the area following which their bodies were recovered.

GTA VI Fever Grips Srinagar

Agencies

SRINAGAR: GTA fever has gripped Srinagar city, with gaming enthusiasts making a beeline for gaming cafes to experience Grand Theft Auto VI (GTA VI), the blockbuster release that has ended a wait of more than 13 years since its predecessor hit the screens in 2013.

At Velocity, a gaming hub in Sonwar, the excitement is translating into a steady rush of players, with enthusiasts turning up throughout the day to explore the latest instalment of Rockstar Games' globally popular franchise.

Dayan Manzoor, owner of Velocity, said that the response has been overwhelming, with people from different age groups visiting the centre.

"The rush has been amazing. We remain open from 11 am until around 10 to 10:30 pm and people keep coming to play the game," he said, adding that the centre has maintained an 18-plus entry restriction for GTA VI.

For Fayiq Ahmad, a resident of Lal Bazar and an esports gamer and developer, the excitement carries a special significance after more than a decade of waiting.

"Many of us grew up playing GTA V. After 13 years, getting a new instalment feels special. There is curiosity about everything, from the graphics and gameplay to how much the virtual world has changed," he said.

Sufaim Mushtaq, another gaming enthusiast from Khanyar, said the release has generated considerable excitement among local players, many of whom are eager to experience the new features and expansive virtual world.

The GTA VI buzz has also reached the country's political conversation, with earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi joining the excitement through a post on X.

"India is playing a whole new game!" Modi wrote, sharing GTA-inspired graphics comparing India's transformation between 2013, when GTA V was released, and 2026.

Released on November 19, GTA VI marks the latest chapter in Rockstar Games' hugely popular franchise, bringing an end to one of gaming's longest-awaited sequels—(KNO)

Jhelum Left Deeply Scarred By Sand Extraction At Sempora



SRINAGAR: Large portions of the River Jhelum bank behind the Entrepreneurship Development Institute (EDI) at Sempora, Pampore, have been left deeply gouged and scarred by sand extraction, with excavation visibly eating into the riverbank and damaging land claimed by locals as their ancestral property.

The activity has allegedly continued despite objections from the landowners, who say they have already approached the authorities and a police case has also been registered in connection with the matter.

The continued extraction has raised serious concerns among the affected landowners, who allege that their property is being systematically damaged while those involved continue their operations despite the reported police action.

They have sought immediate intervention by the administration and police to stop the extraction, prevent further damage to the Jhelum riverbank and protect their ancestral land. [KNT][

225 Students Enrolled In Govt Schools During Mega Drive

BUDGAM: Around 225 students were enrolled in government schools during a mega enrolment drive organised by the Zonal Education Office Narbal at Government Middle School (GMS), Kawoosa Khalisa, in Budgam district on Tuesday.

Minister for Education Shameema Firdous and Beerwah MLA Dr Shafi Ahmad Wani attended the programme, organised to encourage parents to enrol their children in government schools for the 2026–27 academic session.

Director School Education Kashmir Naseer Ahmad Wani, Chief Education Officer Budgam Bashir Ahmad and Zonal Education Officer Narbal were also present, along with education officials, teachers, local representatives and members of the public.

The dignitaries stressed the need to strengthen government educational institutions, improve public confidence in the government school system and ensure access to quality education for every child. They also called for greater parental awareness and community participation to improve enrolment.

The campaign highlighted the academic opportunities and facilities available in government schools, urging parents to actively participate in efforts to strengthen the public education system. [KNT]

Over 9 Kg Of Suspected Narcotics Recovered During CASO In Arigam

BUDGAM: A joint operation by personnel of D/181 and A/181 CRPF companies led to the recovery of over nine kilograms of suspected narcotic substances from a residential house at Arigam in Khansahib area of Budgam district on Tuesday.

According to officials, CRPF personnel were initially deployed for checkpoint duty at Arigam when, acting on specific intelligence, the naka was converted into a Cordon and Search Operation (CASO).

During the operation, security personnel searched the residential premises of Abdul Majid Ganie, son of Mohammad Ismail Ganie, a resident of Arigam, and recovered a consignment of suspected narcotic drugs weighing approximately over nine kilograms.

Police have registered FIR No. 228/2026 under Section 8/20 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act at Police Station Khansahib. Further investigation into the recovery is underway. [KNT]

Registration Made Mandatory For All Tourism Operators In Restricted Areas Of NK

SRINAGAR: The Tourism Department has directed all tourism service providers, tour operators and other stakeholders operating in restricted areas of Baramulla, Bandipora and Kupwara districts to obtain valid registration under the Jammu and Kashmir Tourist Trade Act, 1978, before undertaking any tourism-related activity.

In a circular, the Assistant Director Tourism, Gulmarg, acting as the prescribed authority, made registration with the Tourism Department and requisite permission from the competent authority mandatory wherever applicable.

The directive covers tourism-related services and business operations, including activities undertaken by individuals and other stakeholders within the restricted areas of the three districts.

The circular warns that anyone found conducting tourism-related activities without valid registration or in violation of the Tourist Trade Act and applicable regulations will face strict legal action under the relevant provisions of the law.

All concerned stakeholders have been directed to ensure compliance with the instructions in letter and spirit before commencing or continuing their operations.

The department said the measure was aimed at regulating tourism activities, ensuring public safety and accountability, and bringing orderly management to tourism operations in the three districts. [KNT]

DC Anantnag Visits Guru Nanak Dev Ji Gurdwara at Mattan

ANANTNAG: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anantnag, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat visited the historic Guru Nanak Dev Ji Gurdwara at Mattan to extend warm greetings to the Sikh community on the auspicious occasion of Gurpurab, commemorating the birth anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

Addressing on the occasion, the DC said that the teachings of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, based on the principles of equality, compassion, selfless service and brotherhood, continue to inspire generations and provide a strong foundation for a peaceful and harmonious society.

He also took stock of arrangements made for smooth celebrations of the Guru Purab.

During the visit, members of the Sikh community apprised the Deputy Commissioner of various community-related demands and sought his intervention for their early redressal.

The Deputy Commissioner also took stock of the arrangements put in place for the smooth and peaceful celebration of Gurpurab at the Gurdwara. He directed the concerned officers to remain available at the venue throughout the celebrations and ensure that all necessary arrangements are maintained for the convenience of devotees and participants. The Deputy Commissioner was accompanied by Additional District Development Commissioner, Tehsildar Mattan, Block Medical Officer (BMO) Mattan and other concerned officers. (Observer News Service)

Iran Warns to Widen Battlefield, Says No US Base Beyond Reach

Agencies

TEHRAN- Iran has issued a fresh warning to the United States, declaring that any future confrontation could spill far beyond the Middle East, with American military bases targeted wherever they are relocated.

Iran's top military commanders have warned that Tehran is prepared to expand the battlefield and strike US installations even in distant locations, including bases previously considered beyond the reach of Iranian missiles.

Chief Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Major General Ahmad Vahidi, said the Iranian Armed Forces were more prepared than ever to defend the country and would not confine any future response to the region.

Speaking on Tuesday at a ceremony, Vahidi warned that any new aggression could have consequences well beyond the immediate battlefield.

"Our brave fighters are firmly holding their positions. Our forces are stronger than ever and remain on the battlefield to defend Iran, Islam and our nation," he said.

Vahidi also accused Washington of seeking to dominate the region and control its resources, arguing that the American military presence was driven by strategic and economic interests rather than regional security.

In a separate warning, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, Major General Ali Abdollahi, said relocating US military bases would not shield them from Iranian retaliation.

He claimed that American installations had suffered severe damage during the recent war, with several bases still unable to return to their previous operational capacity.



According to Abdollahi, Washington is now considering shifting its military deployments to more distant locations, but such moves would not change Iran's ability or resolve to strike them.

"The Americans are seeking to change their deployment locations and transfer them to more distant areas," he said, adding that no relocation would alter Tehran's response to future threats.

The Iranian commander also asserted that the country's missile capabilities had demonstrated their effectiveness against two powerful adversaries, including what he described as a global superpower and the world's fifth most powerful military.

The warnings follow an earlier statement by Major General Mohsen Rezaee, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, who told Lebanon's Al-Mayadeen network that any fresh US attack would invite strikes on American bases far beyond the Middle East, potentially including installations in Europe and islands previously considered outside Iran's missile reach.

"If American aircraft take off from a distant military base and come to bomb Iran, we will target that base as well," Rezaee warned.

The escalating rhetoric comes against the backdrop of two major rounds of US-Israeli military aggression against Iran. The first, in June 2025, lasted 12 days, while the second began on February 28, 2026, and ended in early April after 40 days.

During both confrontations, Iranian forces launched ballistic missiles and drones against US and Israeli assets across the region.

Tehran has also kept the Strait of Hormuz shut since early March in response to the aggression, disrupting a vital global energy corridor and sending energy prices soaring.

Disgusted At How My Mother Was Brutalised, Humiliated, Abused In Politics: Rahul Gandhi

Press Trust of India

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has said he felt disgusted with the way his mother Sonia Gandhi was "brutalised, humiliated and abused" in politics, and that he may talk about it one day.



He made the remarks during a conversation with his mother and his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, a video of which was shared by them on social media platforms on Tuesday.

In the video, Rahul Gandhi says he told his mother that there were many things that she should have written in her memoir "Belonging: A Journey Of Love" such as how she was attacked and about the true nature of a lot of those people.

Rahul Gandhi says his mother has been kind to many people in the book as that's her way.

"I saw my mother being brutalised, humiliated and abused in a way that you know it's crazy. The type of absolute filth that you know even the most so-called honourable people which has not been said and she will not say, maybe I will say one day but the pettiness, the nastiness, the abuse of a woman, as a son, I found that to be completely disgusting," he says.

Sonia Gandhi says she let it go as in old age one tends to put the past behind.

Praising her mother, Priyanka Gandhi says that she was actually making a supreme effort to assimilate into our culture.

"I have never seen mama behaving badly and doing anything that even is sort of would not be expected in that norm, doing everything possible, at the same time just being attacked basically because you're born somewhere else," she says.

In the video shared days after the launch of "Belonging", the three are seen reminiscing about moments of joy, laughter and pain they felt at various points of their lives.

From dominating headlines since its announcement in August to flying off bookstore shelves, the memoir has had a blockbuster run, with HarperCollins India CEO Ananth Padmanabhan saying last week that it has sold "over two lakh copies" in less than a week, broken multiple publishing records and emerged as one of the "biggest memoirs" in independent India's history.

2 Indians Among 11 Injured in Attack on Saudi Capital

Press Trust of India

DUBAI: Two Indians and three Nepalese nationals were among 11 people injured on Tuesday when Yemen's Houthi militia targeted a tower in the financial district of Saudi Arabia's capital, authorities said.

Saudi Arabia's Civil Defence said 11 people were injured after the tower in Riyadh's King Abdullah Financial District came under what it described as a "terrorist attack" by Houthi militia.

Those injured included two Saudi citizens, two Indian nationals, three Nepalese and four Egyptians, it said.

It said that competent authorities immediately responded to the incident, implemented all approved procedures and measures for handling such situations, and took the necessary measures to protect lives and property.

Earlier, Saudi-led Coalition Spokesperson Maj Gen Turki Al Malki said a tower had been targeted in the financial district and that competent authorities were responding at the site.

Meanwhile, the Indian Embassy in Saudi Arabia has asked the Indian nationals residing in the Gulf country to abide by local rules and regulations.

The Houthis have in the past claimed responsibility for attacks on Riyadh.

Brothers Use AI-Edited IDs to Bag 70 Loans Worth Rs 1 Cr

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI: A simple online search to source identity documents of unsuspecting people and AI editing tools to digitally alter them -- this was the alleged modus operandi of two brothers from Gurugram to secure more than 70 loans worth over Rs 1 crore, an officer said on Tuesday.

The accused, identified as Gaurav Chhabra (35) and his younger brother Shubham alias Divyang Chhabra (24), were arrested on September 29, the officer said.

Both brothers are class 10 dropouts, unemployed and live in Gurugram with their family, which includes Gaurav's wife and their mother, according to the officer.

The brothers were allegedly engaged in this fraud since 2022, searching for identity documents of people with names similar to theirs and digitally tampering with them using artificial intelligence (AI) editing applications, police said. The duo then allegedly used the altered documents to secure loans from online lending companies that did not require physical verification.

Careful not to draw large amounts at once and rouse suspicion, they allegedly sought loans of Rs 1 lakh each and generated a monthly income of Rs 3-4 lakh through the fraud.

The accused allegedly altered names, photographs and other personal details from genuine identity documents to create fake KYC records and obtain loans from multiple banks and financial institutions online, they said.

"The case came to light after a resident of east Delhi's Patparganj approached the Cyber Police Station in East District, after discovering that multiple loans had been reflected against his PAN number despite him never having applied for or availed of them," Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) Rajeev Kumar told PTI.

The complainant also found that his CIBIL score and creditworthiness had been adversely affected because of the loan accounts, he said.

Investigation revealed that more than 30 loans amounting to around Rs 7 lakh had allegedly been obtained using the complainant's PAN details. He had also been shown as a guarantor in multiple loan accounts involving around Rs 47 lakh, despite having no knowledge of or having consented to the transactions.

Police said the accused allegedly retained the complainant's original PAN number but digitally altered his name, father's name and photograph to make the document appear to belong to another person.

His Voter ID card was also allegedly tampered with by retaining his identity particulars but replacing his photograph with that of the alleged beneficiary. The altered documents were subsequently used to obtain mobile connections and other services, they said.

The investigation further revealed that around 14 SIM cards had allegedly been procured using such identity particulars between December 2022 and July 2023.

Police said the accused allegedly searched for identity particulars and documents of people through online searches and used digital tools, including AI-based technology, to manipulate photographs and other details before preparing altered KYC documents.

