

Good Morning Kashmir

16th Year Of Publication

Narendra Modi @narendramodi



We strongly condemn the cowardly terrorist attack in New Orleans. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families. May they find strength and solace as they heal from this tragedy.

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J&K Inseparable Part Of India's Soul: Shah

Says PM Modi Not Only Brought Terrorism Under Control But Has Also Completely Dismantled Its Ecosystem In The Valley



GMK NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI: Asserting that Jammu and Kashmir always has been and will continue to remain an inseparable part of India, Union Home Minister, Amit Shah said Thursday that Prime Minister, Narendra Modi led government has not only brought terrorism under control but has also completely dismantled its ecosystem in the Valley.

Shah made these remarks while releasing the book 'Jammu Kashmir & Ladakh Through the Ages: A Visual Narrative of Continuities and Linkages'. Many dignitaries including Union Minister of Education Dharmendra Pradhan and Chair-

man of the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) and Editor of the book Prof. Raghuvendra Tanwar were present on the occasion.

In his address, Shah said that the National Book Trust (NBT), through its latest publication, has effectively dismantled a long-standing myth about India by presenting facts and evidence, thereby establishing historical truths.

He said that there was a myth that India was never united and the idea of independence for this country was meaningless — a misconception that many had come to accept as truth. Shah highlighted that while for most of the

MeT Issues 'Yellow Alert' In J&K For Jan 5, 6

Heavy Snow, Rains Expected From Jan 4 To 6; Cold Wave Conditions Prevail In Kashmir



AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: The local Meteorological department here has issued a 'yellow alert' for January 5 and January 6, saying that heavy rain and snowfall is expected at the isolated places during the period.

The MeT department has issued an alert, stating that there is a possibility of heavy rain and snowfall at the isolated places. "The disruption of traffic on higher reaches

snow avalanches, landslides and shooting stones are expected on January 5 and 6," the MeT has said.

In a detailed forecast, the weatherman has stated that on January 3, the weather is expected to remain generally cloudy with the possibility of light snow at isolated higher reaches.

From January 4-6, Director MeT, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad said that moderate to strong WD is expected and under its influence, there is a possibility of light to moderate

rain in plains of Jammu and snow at most places of J&K with peak activity during 4th (Night) to 5th (late Night) and 6th morning & improvement from the afternoon.

He added that generally cloudy and dry weather is expected on January 7-10, adding that from January 11-12th, generally cloudy weather is expected with possibility of light snow at isolated places.

In its advisory, ●P-06

Kashmir's Upper Reaches Receive More Snow

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Fresh snowfall occurred in the Kashmir Valley on Thursday as the cold wave continued unabated across J&K.

The Meteorological Department has forecast more rain/snow because of two back-to-back Western Disturbances (WDs) passing over J&K.

A MET department statement said in view of fresh snowfall, sub-freezing temperatures and icy conditions over roads (plains/higher reaches), tourists/travelers/transporters are advised to plan accordingly and follow Admin/Traffic advisory.

Meanwhile, Srinagar recorded minus 2.6 degrees Celsius, Gulmarg minus 8.6 degrees Celsius and Pahalgam minus 4 degrees Celsius as the minimum temperatures on Thursday.

Jammu city registered 7.4 degrees Celsius, Katra town 9 degrees Celsius, Batote 4.6 degrees Celsius, Banihal 2.9 degrees Celsius and Bhandarwah 1.6 degrees Celsius as the night's lowest temperature. ●P-06

5 Die Of Asphyxiation, Fire In J&K



AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Two minor siblings lost their lives in a fire incident in Tangmarg area of Baramulla district, while three youth died due to possible asphyxiation in Bhandarwah area of Doda district, officials said on Thursday.

They said that a fire incident occurred at Ferozpora village in Tangmarg on Thursday, engulfing the residential tin shed. Despite rescue efforts from the neighbours and fire and emergency service personnel, the lives of minor siblings could not be saved.

The victims were identified as Mina Ashraf, a 4-year-old girl and a 3-month-old Muntazir Ashraf — the children of Mohammad Ashraf Dar.

As per the locals, the family had been living in the tin shed due to financial constraints and alleged negligence in securing housing ●P-06

Ruhullah Agrees To Rally For Statehood

Says Cannot Sidestep Fight For Restoration Of Special Status

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Just a few hours after Chief Minister and National Conference vice-president Omar Abdullah on Thursday exuded hope that his party Member

getting Article 370 back and not mere restoration of statehood.

Omar while addressing a news conference here referred to a recent protest led by the MP outside his residence over reservation issues. "It is good that MP Aga Ruhullah protested. I now hope he will lead a similar protest outside Parliament for the restoration of J&K's statehood."

Responding to the Chief Minister's assertion, ●P-06



Hopeful Statehood Is Restored Soon: Omar

Says His Government Will Fulfil All Promises Made To The People During The Five-Year Term

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday expressed optimism that Jammu and Kashmir's statehood will be restored soon and said that his government will fulfil all promises made to the people during the five-year term.

Addressing a press conference at the Sher-e-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC) here, CM Omar said he is hopeful that statehood would be restored to J&K soon so that his government can fulfil

promises made to the people.

Before the beginning of the press conference, CM Omar said on social media platform X that he would not make any big statement during the press conference as it is basically an interaction with the media.

National Conference leader Omar said that after taking over as the chief minister, he and his colleagues thought the new government was difficult to run because it was a totally different scenario as compared to 2009-2015 as J&K is a Union Territory now, but things have started to ●P-06



Inaugurates Winter Carnival In Pahalgam

ANANTNAG: In a grand celebration of Jammu and Kashmir's rich cultural heritage, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah inaugurated Winter Carnival at Pahalgam on Thursday.

The event, which draws attention to the picturesque beauty of the region and its vibrant cultural landscape, was held in the presence of several dignitaries, including Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar ●P-06

Sajad Lone Files PIL For Fair Police Verification



AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: J&K Peoples Conference (PC) President and MLA from Handwara, Sajad Lone, has filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) before the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh in Srinagar, challenging the misuse of the police verification process, a statement said here on Thursday.

"The PIL, submitted through Advocate Syed Sajad Geelani, seeks to address the growing misuse of police verifications as a tool of collective punishment, targeting individuals based on the actions or affiliations of their family members," the statement added.

Lone's move comes in response to his earlier commitment to protect the rights of citizens, emphasizing ●P-06

ACB Unearth Major Discrepancies In F&ES Dept

Probe Reveals 109 Candidates Selected Despite Securing Lower Marks Than Cut-Off-Marks

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: In what could spark an outrage over recruitment process in Jammu & Kashmir, an investigation by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has revealed that 109 candidates secured lower marks than the cutoff marks in the job test in the Fire & Emergency Services Department in 2020, but were selected by showing them to have secured higher marks in the final selection list than the marks actually secured by them.

The premier anti-graft body also found that five real brothers from Budgam district, along with relatives of officials from the Fire and Emergency Services (F&ES) Department and candidates from the same localities, figured in the selection list.

In an official handout, the ACB said that a manual review of the OMR sheets vis-a-vis answer keys



revealed discrepancies in the selection process.

"Out of 690 selected candidates, 109 were found to have secured lower marks than the cutoff marks, but were selected by showing them to have secured higher marks in the final selection list than the marks actually secured by them. For instance, candidates actually securing 11, 17, 24 marks were shown to have secured 90 marks each in the final selection list," it said.

The ACB said it found that five real brothers from district Budgam were selected

and multiple such instances, besides, selection of some relatives of officials of Fire & Emergency Services Department, and the instances of the selected candidates belonging to the same localities have surfaced during the course of enquiry.

The probe revealed that the question papers were found beyond the comprehension of candidates who have studied upto 8th standard which is the required minimum qualification.

The probe also revealed favouritism in selection of firm for conducting ●P-06

Free Textbooks To Students By Jan-End: Sakina Itoo



AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Education Minister, Sakina Itoo Thursday said that the students enrolled in government-run schools will receive free textbooks by January-end.

Besides, Itoo further clarified that there will be no syllabi curtailment for the students appearing in upcoming board exams.

The minister during a media interaction said, "All textbooks will be made available by January end. It took some time to make free textbooks available for the students."

On asking about the curtailment of syllabi in upcoming board exams, Itoo said, "There will be no relaxation in syllabi for the board exams because the session has been changed only upto 9th standard."

"The date-sheets have been already issued and we ●P-06

MUFASA: THE LION KING (3D HINDI) (U) 04:10PM

PYAR MEIN QURBAN (HINDI) (U/A 16+) 03:05PM

PUSHPA (THE RULE PART-02) (HINDI) (U/A 16+) 02:15PM, 05:30PM

KRAVEN THE HUNTER (HINDI) (A) 06:40PM

SARDAAR JI (RE-RELEASE) (PUNJABI) (U) 06:05PM

INOX SRINAGAR

Movies Schedule

Friday, 3rd January 2025

TICKETS AT:
www.bookmyshow.com | www.inoxmovies.com
Paytm, Innox App or Directly from the booking counter at the cinema.

Call 95416 13868
For assistance with tickets

Jal Shakti Minister inspects Rangil WTP; reviews functioning



GMK NEWS NETWORK

GANDERBAL: Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmed Rana, today inspected the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) Rangil in Ganderbal to take stock of its functioning. The Minister inspected various units of the plant and enquired about their operational status. He took stock of water supply to households, storage capacity, water reservoirs, pump rooms and water testing laboratories. He was informed that the water treatment plants at Rangil feed portable drinking water to a large population of Srinagar city, Gander-

bal district and few areas of Baramulla district. While inspecting the 20 million gallons per day (MGD) and 10 MGD reservoirs at Rangil, Javed Rana maintained that nature has gifted the valley with abundant water resources and it is our prime duty to protect and keep them pollution free. While sharing suggestions for further improvement, Rana urged upon the officials to carry out regular inspection of water tanks. He asked them to keep the surroundings of Rangil WTP clean from any possible contamination of water. He stressed upon the concerned officials to

ensure that quality water is supplied to the consumers besides regular water tests are done. Javed Rana enjoined upon the officers to expedite the work on 5 MGD filtration plant, while maintaining set quality parameters, which will further boost the carrying capacity of the Rangil plant. Appreciating the work of the officers of Jal Shakti department, the Minister further emphasised on efficient water supply management and clean, safe drinking water supply to every household. He said that the government is committed to provide drinking water tap connections to every

household under the Jal Jeevan Mission. Chief Engineer Jal Shakti Department, Kashmir, Brahm Jyoti Sharma, presented a brief about the functioning of both 20 MGD and 10 MGD WTPs and the future plans. He apprised the Minister that the water treatment plant assumes huge significance as it feeds potable drinking water to various habitations of Srinagar, Ganderbal and Baramulla districts. He also said that work is in progress on the 5 MGD water filtration plant and steps are afoot to complete it within the stipulated time frame.

Div Com, ADGP Jammu review arrangements for celebration of Republic Day-2025



GMK NEWS NETWORK



GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar and Additional Director General of Police Anand Jain today chaired a meeting to review the preparations for UT level celebration of Republic Day-2025. The meeting was attended by IGP Crime, DG Youth Services and Sports, senior officers from Police and HODs of different departments including Culture, Science and Technology, Health, Co-operative, Traffic and Security. The meeting focused on finalizing the Tableaux to be made by different departments. The theme-based Tableaux of each department will promote the welfare of the people. The Divisional Commissioner directed the departments to appoint nodal officers to coordinate the arrangements with different departments. He

stressed seamless execution of the themes and concepts approved for the respective departments. It was informed that the Tableaux of Jammu Kashmir Police will showcase the unrelenting efforts against Drug abuse and Narcotics. The Health department will display its efforts towards implementation of TB Mukht Bharat in Jammu and Kashmir. The Culture department will promote the cultural diversity and folk culture of Jammu Kashmir. The Tableaux based on PM Suryaghar Yojna, Fit India movement, Swachh Bharat Mission, Cooperative Credit Societies shall be other features of the celebration of Republic Day 2025. The Divisional Commissioner directed the departments to complete their respective Tableaux by 20th of January. He further issued necessary directions with regards to preparations and arrangements of the UT level celebration of the National festival.

Kathua Admin launches free Hearse Van service



GMK NEWS NETWORK

KATHUA: The District Administration Kathua has launched a free-of-cost hearse van service provided to administration by Chenab Textile Mills under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative. The noble initiative aims to provide dignified last rites to the deceased by ensuring hassle-free and respectful transportation of the deceased to the cremation ground. The hearse van service was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner, Dr. Rakesh Minhas in the presence of ADC Ranjit Singh besides Executive President of Chenab Textile Mills Umesh Gupta and other district officials. The service will be available through the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC)

during office hours within the Municipal limits of Kathua wherein people can make calls and coordinate the services on a First-Come-First-Served (FCFS) basis. The District Administration Kathua expressed its gratitude to the management Chenab Textile Mills for its generous contribution towards the noble cause. This initiative will provide immense relief to the families of the deceased, ensuring a dignified and respectful last ritual. The public can utilize this free service by contacting the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) at 01922238796 and 7889958093. The District Administration Kathua has appealed to the public to take advantage of this service and support this noble initiative.

OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR, ASHMUJI

Subject: Application of Sameer Manzoor Dar, S/o Manzoor Ahmad Dar, resident of Ashmuji Kulgam, for issuance of dependent certificate Tehsil Kulgam

In reference to the aforementioned subject, a report was requested from the concerned patwari. The report indicates that the applicant, Sameer Manzoor Dar, S/o Manzoor Ahmad Dar, resident of Ashmuji Kulgam, that his father passed away on 03/12/2023, as per the death certificate.

The dependents of the deceased are as follows:
 Dilshada Bano, W/o Late Manzoor Ahmad Dar, aged 55 years, engaged in housework.
 Raja Begum, M/o Late Manzoor Ahmad Dar, aged 74 years. Sameer Manzoor Dar, S/o Late Manzoor Ahmad Dar aged 30 years, a student.
 Toufai Manzoor Dar, s/o Late Manzoor Ahmad Dar, aged 25, a student
 Towseef Ahmad Dar, s/o Late Manzoor Ahmad Dar, aged 18, a student

Besides, there is no other member who was depending upon the deceased. Now the applicant Sameer Manzoor Dar intends to obtain a dependent certificate. If anyone has objections to the issuance of the dependent certificate, they may visit the office of the undersigned within seven days from the date of this notice. After this period, no objections will be accepted.

Sd/-
Naib Tehsildar, Ashmuji

STRATEGY FOR THE YEAR 2025 Jammu & Kashmir Teacher's Association holds meeting at Jammu

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Teachers Association (JKTA) held a meeting in Jammu under the leadership of Bhupinder Singh UT President JKTA to discuss its strategic priorities and outline an agenda for the new year. The meeting, chaired by JKTA President Bhupinder Singh, brought together senior office bearers and district representatives to address long-standing issues faced by teachers and to strategize for meaningful improvements in 2025.



A key focus of the meeting was the implementation of a transparent transfer policy, equitable and fair transfer system for maintaining teacher morale and ensuring the effective distribution of teaching staff, particularly in rural and remote areas. The JKTA focused on early implementation of ATD. The association urged the government to streamline the process to minimize delays and eliminate favoritism, ensuring a merit-based system. The association also stressed the importance of conducting timely DPCs. Delays in holding DPC meetings have hindered the career progression of many teachers, leading to frustration and a lack of motivation. The JKTA reiterated its demand for a time-bound mechanism to ensure regular promotions, which are critical for the professional growth and satisfaction of educators. Clearing pending conversion files was another pressing issue discussed during the meeting. Many Rehbar-e-Taleem (ReT) teachers await conversion to permanent cadres, and

the association called on the government to expedite the processing of these files. This move would provide job security and stability to a large segment of the teaching workforce. The JKTA also proposed measures to improve the working conditions of on-duty teachers traveling by train. The association suggested the allocation of reserved berths or sleeper arrangements to ensure that traveling educators are accommodated comfortably and can focus on their assignments without unnecessary stress. The JKTA expressed serious concern over the delayed payments, which have disrupted the program's smooth functioning and strained the relationship between schools and vendors. The association called on the government to clear these dues promptly to restore confidence in the system. The association also highlighted the issue of pending promotions to the Master Grade. Teachers eligible for these promotions have been awaiting clarity for a long time. The JKTA demanded that the pending lists of eligible candidates be issued without further delay to ensure fairness and transparency in the promotion process. Moreover, the association focused on the

ensuring that the voices of teachers are heard and that tangible improvements are made in education. JKTA also demanded that vacant posts of ZEOs, Principals, ZEPs, Lecturers, Headmasters, Masters which are lying vacant in Jammu and Kashmir for the smooth management and administration. The Incharge of the same be assigned such duties. JKTA concepts are also focussed including character building, environmental awareness, management education, teacher education, and the promotion of indigenous languages. These areas, they stressed, would enrich the learning experience and contribute to the holistic development of students throughout Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting was attended by the District presidents of all the districts of Jammu province besides provincial and executive body. Others who were present included Hemait Wani, Joginder Dingra Vice President UT, Irfan Bijran UT Convener, Hamait Wani Chief Organizer, Ishaq Rasheed UT Secretary, Poonam Thakur Provincial President Women wing, Kuldeep Singh Provincial Gen. secretary, Manmohan Singh Provincial Chief Spokesperson, Provincial Organizer Joginder Singh, District President Udhampur Sudesh Kumar, Druv Singh DP Samba, Sajad Malik DP Reasi, Ishaq Chawal DP Poonch, Madhu Sambyal DP Jammu, Mohammed Maroof DP Rajouri, Mohinder Singh DP Kishtwar, Reyaz Ahmed Chairman Ramban, Ishaq Khayal DP Poonch Shoket Chohan Chairman Poonch, Randeep Singh, Daleep Singh and many others.

Food Safety Department Criticized for Laxity as Substandard Food Floods Anantnag Market

GMK NEWS NETWORK

ANANTNAG: The Food Safety Department has been sharply criticized for its apparent inaction as concerns mount over the quality of food being served in the bustling Anantnag markets. Local residents and visitors alike have raised alarms about the substandard quality of popular items such as ristas and kebabs, which are allegedly being sold by both local and non-local restaurant owners without any regulatory oversight. Locals told the news agency Kashmir News Trust that numerous food establishments in the district have been serving meals that fail to meet basic safety and hygiene standards. "These restaurants are charging exorbitant prices while compromising on quality. The lack of oversight is allowing

them to operate unchecked, and we, the customers, are being looted," a disgruntled local resident said. The issue has sparked widespread frustration, with many questioning the Food Safety Department's role in ensuring public health and consumer protection. Despite the increasing number of complaints, there has been little to no visible action from the authorities to address the problem. Food Inspector Zameer Ahmed, when contacted, acknowledged the concerns and assured the public that corrective measures would be taken promptly. "We have taken note of the grievances, and I assure you that starting tomorrow, a comprehensive drive will be conducted to inspect food establishments in the market. Strict action will be taken against violators," he stated. [KNT]

Awareness program on cleanliness held in Doda town



GMK NEWS NETWORK

DODA: The District Administration and Municipal Council Doda, under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner Harvinder Singh organised an awareness program to educate residents of Sadiqabad Mohalla, Ward No 8 about cleanliness and waste disposal. The program was attended by ACR Sunil Kumar Bhutyal; Tehsildar Dr. Subuh Ahmed Shad; EO MC, Ravi Kumar along with sanitation workers, NGOs, and community

members. The officials and NGOs actively interacted with the public, emphasizing the importance of maintaining cleanliness and proper waste disposal. Sanitation workers carried out cleaning drives, including clearing drains and other areas, setting a practical example for the residents. During the interaction, officers and NGOs urged people not to throw garbage in drains or on roads. Instead, they encouraged residents to use dustbins within their homes and dispose of waste responsibly.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL ANMT SCHOOL KUPWARA

email: govnanmtschoolkupwara@gmail.com

NOTIFICATION

Subject: Admission Notification to Left-Over seats in the various Diploma of Paramedical Courses at ANMT School Kupwara. Reference: SAHC/GEN/79-84 Dated 26-12-2024.

Pursuant to the Notification issued by State Allied Healthcare Council-J&K under reference above, applications are invited from eligible and desirous candidates for admission to Left-Over seats of the following Diploma of Paramedical courses at ANMT School Kupwara.

S.No	Courses	Eligibility	No of Vacant seats	Duration
1	OTT	10+2 with Science	09	24 Months
2	Anesthesia		10	24 Months
3	ECG		14	24 Months
4	Medical Assistant		07	24 Months
5	X-Ray Assistant		25	24 Months
6	Lab. Assistant		09	24 Months
7	Dental Assistant		18	24 Months
8	Ophthalmic Assistant		19	24 Months
9	ISM		06	24 Months

The selection of candidates to such courses shall be in accordance with the rules and regulations issued by the J&K Board of Professional Entrance Examinations (JKBOPEE).
Terms & Conditions;
 Application forms will be available in the office of Establishment Section at ANMT School Kupwara from 02.01.2025 to 07.01.2025 against a demand draft of Rupees Two Hundred only in favour of Principal ANMT School Kupwara. Last date for submission of duly filled application forms is 10.01.2025 up to 04:00 pm. The other terms and conditions shall remain same as notified in the information brochure of Notifications issued by the J&K BOPEE / J&K Nursing and Paramedical Council from time to time which can be downloaded from the official website of J&K BOPEE.
 No.-P/ANMT/Kup/366-71
 Dated:- 31-12-2024
 DIPK-10320-24
 DT: 02/01/2025
 Sd/- Principal ANMT School Kupwara

نام کی درستگی

میں نسیم احمد وار ولد عبدالغنی وار ساکنہ چنگیہ روہ بنیں ہر خاص و عام کو مطلع کرتا ہوں کہ میڈیسنی دفتر بنیں میں اپنے بچے کا نام محمد حمزہ وار سے تبدیل کر کے محمد امان وار کر دانا مطلوب ہے۔ اگر کسی شخص کو کوئی اعتراض ہو تو وہ آٹھ دن کے اندر متعلقہ دفتر سے رابطہ قائم کریں۔ بعد از معیار کوئی عذر قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

از طرف: نسیم احمد وار ولد عبدالغنی وار
 ساکنہ چنگیہ روہ بنیں
 فون: 9797210071

Sakeena Itoo conducts surprise inspection of LD Hospital, assesses healthcare facilities

Interacts with patients, attendants

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, today conducted surprise inspection of LD Hospital to review healthcare facilities being extended to the patients there.

The Minister visited various sections of the hospital including emergency ward, outpatient department (OPD), inpatient wards, operation theatres, NICU and PICU wards and reviewed their functioning.

Interacting with the doctors and paramedics on the occasion, Sakeena Itoo impressed upon them for timely medical intervention of referral patients owing to criticality of expecting mothers. She also stressed for optimal utilisation of available resources at this premiere maternity health facility to ensure that patients receive best possible care.

"It is crucial for health-



care facilities to operate with highest standards of medical care and hygiene, especially in government hospitals that serve the majority of population", Sakeena maintained. She added "our government is committed to ensure that medical services are efficient, well-managed and patient-centric across all

peripheral and tertiary care hospitals as well as other institutions.

During the inspection, the Minister also took note of several critical areas where improvements are needed. She assured the hospital administration that immediate corrective measures would be taken up to address these issues.

Sakeena Itoo also interacted with the patients and their attendants to seek feedback on the condition of facilities and medical care being provided at the facility. She assured them the present government led by Omar Abdullah is determined to strengthen the healthcare system in the region.

CS reviews progress on construction of highways across J&K

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today convened a meeting with NHAI, NHIDCL, Beacon and Project SAMPARK to review progress on construction of different highways across all districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, APD, Commissioner Secretary, Forest Department, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu/Kashmir, Secretary, R&B, Deputy Commissioners, Chief Engineers of PWD besides other concerned officers.

The Chief Secretary impressed upon the project implementing agencies to expedite progress on the ongoing works so that the fixed deadlines are met without any fail. He observed that the repeated slippage in timelines for completion of these projects should be avoided as it questions the professional standards of the organisation.

The Chief Secretary directed the Secretary PWD and concerned divisional administrations to take monthly assessment of these projects besides visiting the sites to remove any bottlenecks hampering their progress. He also



urged them to extend full cooperation to the concerned executing agencies for speedy completion of these projects.

Dulloo also had a project wise appraisal of progress achieved, so far, in each of the work. He enquired about the expected date of completion of work on each phase of these projects along with the current status of physical progress registered in each of them.

Some of the significant projects of NHAI reviewed during the meeting included projects of Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway, remaining work on the tunnel on Ring Road Jammu, tunnels and viaducts on Udhampur-Ramban section including Dalwas and Cafeteria Morh.

The Chief Secretary also assessed progress on Marog to Digdol tunnel and Digdol to Khuni-Nallah tunnels

under the Ramban-Banihal section of NH-44. In addition, opening of Banihal Bypass besides ongoing work on different phases of Ring Road Srinagar were discussed in detail. The concerned divisional and district administrations were asked to assist the construction company in extending the working hours so that the work on this prestigious projects progresses on expected lines.

The road projects of NHIDCL, reviewed during the meeting, included progress on completion of Zojila Tunnel, Z-Morh Tunnel, Jammu-Akhnoor Road, Chenani-Sudhmahadev Road, Gohakhellani, Khellani-Khanabal Highways and Singhpora-Vailoo tunnel which is part of this project.

The projects being executed by BRO under project

Beacon and Sampark which came up for discussion included Akhnor-Poonch Highway, Srinagar-Baramulla-Uri Highway, Sangrama flyover, Pattanand Baramulla Bypass, Rafiabadd-Kupwara-Trehgam Highway, Khanabal-Pahalgam Road, Rajouri-Thanamandi-Surankot Roads besides others. Various projects of R&B including construction of Flyovers at Bemina and Sanat Nagar, Rehabilitation of Chanapora and Tengpora bridges Srinagar-Budgam-Pulwama-Shopian-Kulgam-Qazigund Highway (NH-44), construction of by-passes for three main towns of Pulwama, Kulgam and Shopian besides other road safety and strengthening works currently going on in different parts of the UT were also reviewed in the meeting.

DLSA Srinagar & Budgam organize training prog for Legal Service Unit for Children (LSUC)



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Srinagar, in collaboration with DLSA Budgam, organized a two-day orientation training programme for the members of the Legal Service Unit for Children (LSUC) for the implementation of the NALSA Child-Friendly Legal Services for Children Scheme 2024.

The event, held under the chairmanship of Jaffer Hussain Beg, Chairman DLSA Srinagar/Principal District & Sessions Judge, Srinagar, and Om Prakash Baghat, Chairman DLSA Budgam/Principal District & Sessions Judge, Budgam, aimed to enhance the understanding and execution of the NALSA Scheme 2024.

The training programme was inaugurated at the ADR Centre, District Court Complex, Budgam, by Om Prakash Baghat in the presence of officials and mem-

bers of the Legal Services Unit of DLSA Budgam.

The inaugural session underscored the scheme's significance in ensuring access to justice for children.

Masarat Shaheen, a retired judicial officer and mentor of the committee, addressed the participants virtually, emphasizing the pivotal role of the scheme in creating child-friendly legal services.

She highlighted the need for a compassionate approach in addressing the legal needs of children.

Nusrat Ali Hakak, Civil Judge (Sr. Division) and Secretary DLSA Srinagar/DLSA Budgam, elaborated on the objectives of the orientation programme.

She stressed the importance of equipping participants with the knowledge and tools required for effective implementation of the scheme, ensuring justice reaches the most vulnerable sections of society.

Advocate Gazala

Mumtaz and Mr. Sharooq Ahmad Bhat, members of the LSUC for the implementation of the NALSA Scheme 2024, shared their practical experiences in the field. They discussed real-world challenges and best practices to address the legal needs of children effectively.

Members of the Legal Services Unit for Children from both DLSA Srinagar and Budgam actively participated in the discussions, sharing insights and experiences. The virtual participation of Budgam LSUC members enriched the discourse, contributing to a broader understanding of the scheme's objectives and strategies for its successful implementation.

This collaborative initiative reflects the commitment of DLSA Srinagar and Budgam to building a robust legal framework for the protection of children's rights, in alignment with the NALSA Scheme 2024.

DC Kupwara takes detailed tour of Lolab subdivision

Inspects arrangements for Lolab Snow Festival, pays surprise visit to SDH Sogam



GMK NEWS NETWORK

KUPWARA: Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan today held a detailed tour of Lolab subdivision and took stock of the arrangements for conduct of the Lolab Snow Festival and other functioning of essential services after recent snowfall.

SDM Lolab, Javaid Masoodi and Tehsildar Sogam accompanied the Deputy Commissioner. During the tour, the Deputy Commissioner visited Kariwan Dever where Snow Festival by District Administration is scheduled to be held.

She inspected the facilities to be provided to the people who will visit the place during the snow festival and directed the concerned officers to ensure fool proof arrangements in place so that the visitors will enjoy the different activities during the festival.

Talking to media persons, the Deputy Commissioner appealed the people to come in large number to enjoy the scenic beauty of Lolab during the Snow Festival adding that the District Administration Kupwara has made adequate arrangements to make the

festival more vibrant and successful.

She also inspected the snow clearance operation going on major roads of Lolab subdivision.

The Deputy Commissioner also paid a surprise visit to Sub District Hospital Sogam during which she inspected the functioning of all sections of the hospital which include OPD, IPD, Dialysis Unit, Labour Room, USG, X-Ray, Jan Aushadi Store, Pharmacy, Ophthalmology and Dental Section.

She interacted with the patients and attendants and enquired about the services provided by the Hospital.

The DC also interacted with the Doctors and Para medical staff and enjoined upon them to ensure seamless functioning of the hospital so that the people living in far flung areas of Lolab subdivision do not face any inconvenience in getting proper healthcare services.

She also enquired from the BMO regarding the availability of essential drugs and was informed that sufficient stock of drugs is available in the hospital to cater the needs of the patients.

DC Shopian; Director Archives, Archaeology & Museums visit heritage sites of district

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar and Director, Archives, Archaeology and Museums, J&K, Kuldeep Krishan Sidha and other officers today visited various cultural and heritage sites of the district in order to assess their needs for their upkeep and rejuvenation.

During the visit, the officers made an inspection of Kapal Mochan Temple at Nagbal and Jamia Masjid at Shopian.

Comprehensive review of development/ rejuvenation plans of these cultural sites was done for preservation of their historical and cultural importance.

During the visit, members of the management committee of Kapal Mochan and Jamia Masjid interacted with the officers and put forth their suggestions for the infrastructural interventions to be made at these sites.

ADDC, Dr. Nasir Ahmad Lone, ACR, Shakoor Ahmed Dar, Exen R&B, and other concerned officers were present.

All arrangements put in place to face winter vagaries in Srinagar

DC Srinagar directs departments to ensure prompt response to tackle winter exigencies

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Amidst inclement weather forecast, all arrangements have been put in place in Srinagar District to face winter vagaries and ensure routine essential services and supplies.

In this regard, a meeting was chaired by Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Dr Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat here at Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex.

At the outset, the Deputy Commissioner directed the officers to plan proactively and enhance preparedness in light of the snowfall forecast for the following week. He instructed officials to improve action plans so that people do not suffer during snowfall.

The DC stressed the need to prioritize snow clearance on major roads, link roads, inner lanes, and bylanes to ensure accessibility to public. Similarly, he timely measures to address water logging in low lying areas.

He emphasized on full utilization of machinery



and available resources to ensure prompt road clearance and restoration of connectivity.

In addition, the DC stressed the Officers of Health Department to maintain details of all pregnant ladies in the District particularly in far flung areas so that they do not face any difficulty during inclement weather.

Likewise, PDD and PHE authorities were asked to take all required measures to ensure uninterrupted supplies of water and power in the District.

The Mechanical Engineering Department was also given directions for prompt and swift measures

for snow clearance. The DC also stressed the Officers to ensure utmost coordination and proper liaisoning with District Emergency Operation Centre/Winter Control Room.

He emphasized on round the clock operationalisation of the Control Room to address the winter related complaints of the public on fast track basis.

The meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Dr Khalid Hussain Malik, Officers of R&B, SMC, PHE, PDD, Health, District Disaster Management Authority and other Departments.

DDC launches Baseline Survey under Mission Yuva in Baramulla

GMK NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA: District Development Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa today launched the baseline survey under Mission Yuva at Dakbanglow Baramulla, a key initiative aimed at empowering youth and fostering entrepreneurship across the district.

The survey will identify unemployed, under-employed, and aspiring entrepreneurs, providing valuable data to frame interventions such as loans, skill development programs, and other support mechanisms.

The survey to be conducted through a door-to-door approach, will cover all Panchayats, Blocks, and Villages in Baramulla.

A team of 75 supervisors and 1,500 investigators will

be working to gather real-time data on the needs, aspirations, and challenges faced by the youth.

Speaking at the launch, the DDC emphasized the importance of the baseline survey in shaping the future of youth empowerment in the district. "This survey will help us understand the specific needs and potential of our youth. Based on the data collected, we will provide them with tailored support through Mission Yuva, ensuring that every aspiring individual has the opportunity to succeed," the DC stated.

Mission Yuva is structured around four strategic pillars Culture, Capital, Capacity, and Connectivity to provide a holistic framework for youth empowerment and entrepreneurship. These pillars are designed to

create an ecosystem where youth can access financial resources, enhance their skills, preserve their cultural identity, and connect with relevant networks to fuel their success.

In addition, the District Development Commissioner directed all officers to gear up for an extensive IEC (Information, Education, and Communication) campaign, ensuring that the public is well-informed and engaged in the mission.

This campaign will play a key role in raising awareness about the opportunities available under Mission Yuva and encouraging active participation from the community.

The DDC also directed all officers to ensure close monitoring of the survey's progress and to guarantee its successful implementation.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir
OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL GOVT. ANMT SCHOOL BANDIPORA
 Email: anmsbandipora@gmail.com

Sub-: Admission to left over seats in various Courses at Gov., ANMT School Bandipora
 Ref - S.O 333 of 2024, dated 13/06/2024. No- SAHC/GEN/79-84 Dated:- 26/12/2024

NOTIFICATION

Pursuant to the notification issued by J&K State Paramedical and Nursing Council vide referred above, applications are hereby invited from eligible/desired candidates for admission to left over seats in the following Courses at Govt. ANMT School Bandipora.

S. No	Name of the Course	Vacant
01	Laboratory Assistant	07
02	Medical Assistant	07
03	ISM Name of the Course (Unani)	10

Admission /selection to the above mentioned courses are strictly as per the eligibility criteria laid down by the Health and Medical Education Department. J&K State Paramedical and Nursing Council and as notified by the J&K Board Of Professional Entrance Examination (JKBOPEE) on its website for session 2024-25 through notification for admission to the aforementioned courses.

Important Information

- Application forms will be available at Govt ANJMT School Bandipora from 31/12/2024 to 05/01/2025 till 2.00 PM against cash payment of Rs.100/- through proper receipt.
- Last date for submission of duly filled application forms shall be 15/01/2025 till 4.00 PM.
- The application forms completed in all respects along with requisite documents are to be submitted in the office of Principal Govt ANMT School Bandipora.

Documents required

Self attested copies of the following certificates are required to be enclosed to the application form.

- Date of Birth (Matriculation Certificate)
- 12th Marks Sheet
- Domicile Certificate
- Valid Category Certificate issued by the competent authority.
- One passport size photograph affixed on the application.

Note:- Incomplete forms shall be rejected.

No:-ANMT/Bpr/Estt/2024/418-25
 Dated:- 31/12/2024

Sd/-
Principal
Govt. ANMT School Bandipora

DIPK-10348-24
DT. 02/01/2025

Good Morning **Kashmir**

EDITORIAL

Harmony In Unity

In the heat of violence during the partition riots Kashmir was the only place where Mahatma Gandhi saw a ray of light. Irrespective of what was happening in Ambala, Ludhiana, Kapurthala and Jammu Kashmir always remained peaceful and protected its minorities. Even during the Afghan, Sikh and before Mughal rule the minorities relished important posts in the administration. Even during Muslim rule in Kashmir it was the Kashmiri Pandits who enjoyed prime designations in the bureaucracy. The scholarly class from the minority religion were more fluent in Persian, Sanskrit and in a lot of cases Arabic as well when compared to their Muslim brethren. The term 'Kashmiriyat' is actually an invented term which is emblematic of the humanism exhibited by Kashmiris from the last so many centuries. Irrespective of the fall out of the socio-political happenings in the capital city the Kashmiri society remained secular with strong ethical values. The properties of neighbours were protected like it were one's own properties. Most of the people in the 60s, 70s and 80s were taught by Kashmiri Pandit teachers. The Kashmiri Pandits were hugely respected for their scholarly instincts and strongly disciplined life. The recent incident when a group of stranded tourists were provided accommodation in a mosque is nothing new. This is among one of the core values of the strongly-knit Kashmiri society. To provide shelter and food to waylaid travellers has been an age-old trait of Kashmiri character. Working neck to neck with people from all walks of life produced some of the greatest talents in the field of painting, writing, broadcasting and journalism. Kashmiri doctors from all communities have made a name for themselves all across the world with some heading key departments in first world countries while others working as personal physicians to kings and princess worldwide. Kashmir is perhaps the only place in south Asia now where strangers pick up accident-affected people, take them to nearby hospitals and bear all expenses for total strangers. The humanism that Kashmiris exhibit for total strangers has no parallels anywhere in Asia right now. There is a great harmony in unity and Kashmir is a picture perfect example of the same.

Vande Bharat: The Affordable Revolution In Kashmir's Travel Economy, Set To End Skyrocketing Air Ticket Prices

IRFAN ATTARI KASHMIRI

A historic moment for Kashmir's transportation network, the much-anticipated Vande Bharat train will be introduced in January 2025. Able to negotiate the twists and turns of the Himalayan track at a speed of up to 90Kmph, this ultra-modern train is set to further cut travel time between Srinagar and New Delhi to just 13 hours and could well change the way travelers come in and out of the Valley. But it is also seen to tether an economic sort of deliverance, as it is being understood to lower the horrendous air fares that have.

In fact, for decades now, the primary mode with which one has sought to negotiate these geo equational constraints of geography between Kashmir, and points Indian has been over air. And today what once seemed a siren song of savings has delivered a steady trickle of passengers to airlines, albeit all too often at steep and forbidding cost. The same ticket on the New Delhi-Srinagar route costs 3,000- 8,000 (one way) most of the time, and much more during peak tourism seasons and festivals. This has been a huge financial strain for many locals, students and workers.



Vande Bharat Express is a flagship semi-high-speed rail project and it should offer the world class experience to its travelers in India. Stages: Every night the train leaves New Delhi in the evening and arrives Srinagar in the next morning. It's twice as long as any flight, 13 hours, but no comparison to the comfort and convenience. The train is furnished with heating systems that should help it withstand the freezing winter temperatures of Kashmir. It includes significant stops such as Ambala Cantt, Ludhiana, and Jammu Tawi.

The introduction of Vande Bharat train can certainly shake the New Delhi-Srinagar travel space: The premium airlines that have dominated the travel route from New Delhi to Srinagar for the longest time might face competition for the first time as the price of these tickets could range between 2,000-3,000. With these reliability plus comfort quotient trains at affordability, it is set to generate huge passenger traffic among those who earlier had no option.

On the route, analysts said, airfare would fall in the short term by 10 percent to 30 percent as airlines adapt to the new competition. Whether you break up the journey into segments where the train would take a night longer than the flights for that segment of time as on a continual journey, flights do not offer a halfway price for budget travelers and those traveling with family or for a group, like trains do. "The train will bring a rethought policy to airlines," said Rajeev Sharma, a transport analyst. "We will see increased offer, discounting and dynamic pricing to win back lost market share."

This would be felt mostly when winters are foggy or snowing, disrupting air transport most of the time. That's when Vande Bharat might score on all-weather reliability. Now travelers, long inured to the terror of delays and cancellations, can choose who to trust. You are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. The introduction of Vande Bharat will do great favor to the economy of Kashmir, which greatly relies on tourism. The upgradation of the train is going to make travel really easier and cheaper and will result in greater influx of domestic tourists into the Valley. Kashmir is always highly sought after in terms of its natural beauty (landscapes), historical monuments and cultural wealth, but it has often kept budget tourists at bay due to a higher cost of travel. Train fares would be so affordable, and that it would aid in more off-season tourist arrivals, especially from the air sector, wherein airfares for travel during such seasons could be prohibitively expensive and has prioritized to cancellations in inbound tourists, asserted tourism experts. Expect much more; thus, local residents may always depend on a so-frequent inflow for lodgings, hospitality industries, cafes, and also handicraft buy look as well. "Low-cost travel simply means additional tourists visiting the state. A lot, in fact, translates directly to better business," said Bashir Ahmed, who owns a store at Srinagar Lal Chowk.

Wefor this train Vande Bharat will unite, so it cannot be any affair of tourists in that family which is today divided by miles and costly traveling prices, this will be the most affordable medium through which they can again come together while carrying other educations from elsewhere in this country.

Ending Anti-competitive Practices There has been widespread criticism that routes such as New Delhi-Srinagar routes already have followed monetarist price practices in the name of fare. Such is the seasonality here. Peak times, it gets into ridiculous figures. On that, passengers barely have a choice. But the Vande Bharat Express will be an aberration and would skew this monopoly. For the longest time air fare charged by carriers the quote has drummed into a Srinagar-based businessman, Aijaz Ahmad. This is not working as a train that used to save money, this will give one option too because with that competition is the advantage.

Although airlines will never completely lose their customer base — after all, they do cater to the fast — the train's existence introduces a much-needed price control over travel to the market. This shall in the long term, of course, call for equalized pricing and service amongst the passengers. Someday, Vande Bharat train in Kashmir is not just an upgrade in travels, but the progress comes with it, a bridge of affordability and access with travel-

ing is no more a luxury to be only for a selected few; but still for the country, we must progress to be the part of rest countries geographically, commercially, and socially. In fact, this will allow the government to take advantage of their vision of a sustainable development with the modern features of the train. Actually, this makes it a very energy-efficient and environment-friendly, and thus a great model in the field of carrying the future.

Though the countdown towards the inauguration of the Vande Bharat marches ahead across the Valley. For locals, it is long overdue as a way to solve high travel costs and limited options, a way to see Kashmir without breaking the bank for tourists, and for the region as a whole, it offers the promise of greater connectivity and economic growth. It will definitely be a new story for Kashmir in 2025. At its every whistling in the mountains on either side, it decade in and out will be not a whit more than a train arrival; it would usher dawn of the day with the Kashmir Valley connected, just, and all the surplus. Waiting patiently to imbibe the spirit of the new Vande Bharat Express trains, this one being No:20606, is Vande Bharat Express itself which is a hope, opportunity and progressive vehicle for Kashmir and its people.

(The Author is a Renowned Social Activist/ Writer, President of Foundation For Youth Web and a student Of Cybersecurity)

Five Consumer Myths To Ditch In 2025

OLAYA MOLDES ANDRÉS

Over the past year, books like *Less* by Patrick Grant and documentaries like *Buy Now: The Shopping Conspiracy* have encouraged consumers to rethink their internalised beliefs that more consumption equals better living.

As we enter a new year, it's the perfect time to reflect on and leave behind some consumer myths that are detrimental to ourselves and to the planet.

Myth 1: Buying more is better for consumers and society

Retail therapy is a common practice to cope with negative emotions and might seem easier than actual therapy. However, research has consistently shown that materialistic consumption leads to lower individual and societal well-being. In fact, emerging studies are pointing out that low consumption lifestyles might bring greater personal satisfaction and higher environmental benefits.

Some might argue that buying more stimulates the economy, creates jobs and supports public services through taxes. However, the positive impact on local communities is often overstated due to globalised supply chains and corporate tax avoidance.

To ensure that you're spending really does support your community and does not contribute to economic inequalities, it is helpful to learn more about the story behind the labels and the businesses you support with your money.

Myth 2: New is always better



While certain cutting-edge tech may indeed offer improvements over older versions, for most items new might not always be better. As Grant argues in his book *Less*, product quality has declined over the past few decades as manufacturers prioritise affordability and engage in planned obsolescence practices. That is, they purposely design products that will break after a certain number of uses to keep the cycle of consumption going and hit their sales targets.

But older products were often built to last, so choosing second-hand or repairing older items can save you money and actually secure you better-quality products.

Myth 3: Being sustainable is expensive

It's true that some brands have used the term "sustainable" to justify premium prices. However, adopting sustainable consumer practices can often be free or even bring in some extra cash if you sell or donate

the things you no longer need. Instead of "buying new", consider swapping unused items with others by hosting a "swapping party" for things like toys or clothes with your friends, family, or neighbours. Decluttering your home could free up space, bring you some joy, and could also help you to connect with others by exchanging items.

Myth 4: Buying experiences are better than buying material things

Previous research has found that spending money on experiences brings more happiness primarily because these purchases are better at bringing people together. But material purchases that help you to connect with others, such as a board game, could bring as much joy as an experience.

When spending money, my research has shown that the key is to understand whether the purchase will help you to connect with others, learn new things or help your communi-



ty. It's not about whether we spend our money on material items or experiences. It is also worth remembering that there are plenty of activities that can help you to achieve those goals with no spending required. So, instead of instinctively reaching to our wallets, perhaps in the new year we could think about whether a non-consumer activity like a winter hike or doing some volunteering could bring us closer to those intrinsic goals like personal growth or developing relationships. These goals have been consistently linked to better wellbeing.

Myth 5: Buying a gift is the best way to express love

Marketers often promote the message that expensive financial gestures are the best way of expressing love and appreciation for others. Spreading this idea will help them to sell more products. However, my research suggests that embracing consumerist ideals might in fact distance us from others. Research has shown that

investing in things that can buy us more time as well as spending money on others can lead to higher levels of wellbeing. Combining these insights suggests that gifting our time to others might be a great way to show affection and could have a positive ripple effect.

For instance, offering to babysit for a busy friend or a family member, helping a relative with a home project or offering your skills to advise or teach someone something new or useful can be incredibly valuable to others.

For 2025, consider a new year's resolution that is gentle on the wallet and kinder to the planet: it's possible to resist the commercial pressures to over-consume and find ways to enjoy the simpler pleasures of life, many of which are free anyway.

(The author is a senior Lecturer in Marketing, Cardiff University. The article was first published in The-conversation.com)

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Conversations With A New Wave Of Muslim Leaders

BY RAHMA DUTTON

What do sighting the moon, purifying your wealth and the postpartum rest period have in common? A strange question, I know, but they are each practical, lived elements within the deen of Islam. The practices of moon-sighting, zakat and forty days at home after birth held great importance for Muslims in the past but, in many cases, have had their status relegated to that of old-fashioned traditions. Knowledge that would simply have been common sense to our ancestors has been all but lost to us, whether derided through colonial history, or viewed, out of context, through our modern lens.

I spoke to visionary Muslim leaders in these three areas of life to understand how reintroducing the traditional wisdom of our ancestors can enliven us and connect us as individuals, while also empowering us as communities. Their imaginative visions paint a picture of how our future as Muslims in Britain could be; how our relationships could be stronger, how our experiences could be richer and how our lives could be more joyful.

New Crescent Society

What if all Muslims in the UK did Eid on the same day? What if sighting the moon together was a joyful community experience that united us with the environment, and the people, around us? This is the vision of Imad Ahmed, founder of the New Crescent Society. He's attempting something that's never been done before – an independent UK lunar calendar based on local moon-sightings.

The New Crescent Society currently has fifteen moon-sighting locations across the UK and has successfully sighted the moon for eleven of the last twelve months. The missing month was December, when there was too much cloud cover at all their locations. The moon would have been visible in Scotland – they just don't have a location there yet.

"There's a myth that the moon is not visible in the UK, or it's not visible in the winter months. Over the last few years we've demonstrated that you can see the new crescent in the UK, all year round – you just need to work together."

Imad's inspiration for New Crescent Society came after a visit to South Africa in 2015. He experienced the moon-sighting tradition of the Muslims in Cape Town. They go down to the beach together, they sight the moon together and then they all celebrate Eid together.

"I was just blown away. There were people doing iftar, kids playing, they looked so happy. Local politicians attended the moonsighting, and then the community announced Eid on TV and on the radio. I thought, 'this is amazing, why can't we do this in the UK?'"

Motivated to share the experience he'd had in Cape Town with Muslims back in the UK, Imad began to search for locations to congregate and view the moon. He settled on Greenwich, where he's been working with the Royal Observatory since 2017 to share his love for the stars and educate Muslims and non-Muslims alike on the history of astronomy and Islam. It's clear though, as I speak to him, that his real passion lies in looking up at the sky; connecting to the environment and bringing other people together to do the same.

"Our mission is to connect the community to the cosmos: to bring people together, share food with one another, and marvel at the skies together."

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CATZvgigbC6/>

He describes the excitement and joy that comes from being out there looking towards the heavens and the understanding that can only be gained from experience.

"Unfortunately, many legal scholars have read about moonsighting, but they've never actually done it themselves. I've found they often don't know how to sight the moon, yet overcomplicate things with theories and legal injunctions that they've read somewhere. Yet it really is quite straightforward. Sighting the moon is like learning to swim – you can't learn how to do it from a book."

He's certain that anyone who comes out to sight the moon for three months has more knowledge on the subject than most imams in the country.

"There's a sighting location that is mainly attended by families, mothers and their children. On one occasion, some imams attended, and we all expected the imams to lead – but the imams didn't know how to sight the moon! It was the mums and kids who taught the imams – and it really is quite easy to do."

It's this direct connection, open to anybody, that is so inspiring. It's a powerful reminder that Islam is not just for scholars. We need teachers, yes, but not



intermediaries.

"What is so exciting to me about this project," Imad continues, "is that it's about connecting people to the source. Just look at the moon. For me, the moon is a metaphor. Just like the moon is for everybody, Allah is for everybody; and when you sight the moon for Eid, Eid day is for everybody too – whether you're a mother or a mullah."

His comment is profound and empowering. The moon is something we all have access to and there's a joy that comes with that. In fact, joy is reflected in the very language we use to describe the new moon in Arabic – hilal.

"Hilal comes from the Arabic root related to shouting out in joy," Imad mentions as an aside, "the tenth form from the same root, istihlaal, means the first cry when a baby is born. The trilateral root has a similar meaning in Hebrew: to shout, or to praise – and also, a flash of light. Hallelujah is from the same root, meaning 'Raise your voice to praise God.'"

The vision he describes for the future of moon-sighting in the UK is certainly a joyful one:

"In a hundred years' time? I hope that this is an established tradition, and Muslims in every location can go out to look for the moon, especially for Ramadan and Eid, sharing food and joy. Maybe there will be a live stream from all the locations across the UK, so people can feel the fun and anticipation, waiting for news across the country, and enjoy that sense of calendrical communion with everyone across the isles."

Looking at what has been achieved in less than five years, it's a vision that doesn't seem that far off.

Local Zakat Initiative

What if UK zakat could really serve to empower UK Muslims in great need? What if the potential for zakat to heal hearts and strengthen communities was realised? That's the future the Local Zakat Initiative hopes to see.

Zakat, a pillar of Islam, is an obligatory tax. Zakat must be taken from all Muslims whose wealth is above the threshold, but can only be distributed to specific eligible recipients. This separates it from sadaqaah – charity which is given freely, to whoever you want.

Local Zakat Initiative are passionate about localising and re-humanising zakat, a responsibility which has largely been handed over to charities. Their aim is to connect with and support communities in establishing local systems of zakat collection and distribution.

"I want local zakat collectors to become familiar fixtures in towns and cities across the country" states Ahmed Peerbux, co-founder of Local Zakat Initiative. "Familiar faces – not distant charities – who are from communities. Who are known and appointed by those communities. Who takes zakat from the wealthy in those communities and then distributes it among the poor in those communities."

He speaks of two things that inspired him to take on this task; the prophetic sunnah itself and the contemporary crisis we are in.

"During the time of the Prophet , what was collected in an area was also distributed in that same area," he explains, recounting a hadith of

the Prophet sending his companion Mu'adh to Yemen with the instruction to collect from their wealthy and distribute to their needy. "Such was the impact of this instruction, that after only a few years Mu'adh could no longer find enough people in need around him locally. Only then did he send a portion of the zakat away from Yemen to Medina."

The second motivation he refers to, the contemporary crisis, is the fact that 50% of UK Muslim households are in poverty, while 98% of Muslim giving in the UK is spent overseas.

"There are Muslims in Britain – praying at the mosque with us, living next door to us – who should be receiving zakat. A few people have said to me 'there isn't real poverty in this country compared with abroad,' but that really belittles the hardship a lot of Muslims face here. It almost denies their struggles. And when they say 'besides, the state helps here,' it denies us our responsibility as Muslims."

The confusion between zakat and sadaqaah, and the reliance on charity organisations, is one of the biggest initial barriers Local Zakat Initiative have faced.

"If you google 'Zakat' now, all you'll get are charity ads. Even though we know that zakat isn't charity, I think we have conceptually coupled its implementation with charities. There's this idea that it's the only way to "do" zakat, that there's no other way. One person said to me, 'I love what you're doing, but there are no zakat collectors in my area so I just gave it to a charity in the end.'"

It's this kind of response that the initiative particularly hopes to address. As I speak to Peerbux it's clear that he himself has moved from an attitude of "we don't really have a choice" to a strong conviction that we do.

"The Muslims in Britain already have amazing community infrastructure in place. You can come together with others in your community, be it centred around a masjid, a community hub, a sufi tariqa, a study circle, a suburb or whatever, and appoint a collector who will take and distribute zakat locally. Someone who is recognisable and reachable, someone who is trusted; someone who will take on the responsibility of ensuring that the needy in their community don't go unnoticed."

He's given zakat a lot of thought in the context of the other four pillars of Islam. "All the pillars of the deen are things Muslims do together; acts of worship which nurture a sense of community. Prayer in congregation is twenty-seven times better than praying alone and when there's a shahada, everyone wants to gather round and watch. The pillars literally bring us closer together, whether we're standing shoulder to shoulder in the mosque or pushed up against each other on the hajj. It reminds me of that verse in the Qur'an, to be 'in ranks like well-built walls.' That's when we're strongest as a community. But when you pay your zakat to a charity online with a few clicks, you miss out on all of that."

There are a handful of communities in the UK who have already established zakat collection and distribution locally; in Luton, Liverpool, Bradford,

Nottingham and Norwich. Ahmed himself collects and distributes in London, albeit on a small scale.

"Recently, we were able to help a Syrian refugee and widow with two teenage children here in London. They have only been in the country for eleven months, don't speak any English, and have been under lockdown in an unfamiliar place with no family, friends, or funds. They can't even afford the internet; they are invisible, and cut off."

"There was another Syrian refugee family we gave zakat to last week, just down the road from me. They were newlyweds when the civil war began in 2011. A missile destroyed their home and left the man unable to walk. When we gave them the money, they insisted we came in and then invited us back for another visit. It was clear to me that it wasn't just the financial help they appreciated; it was the human transaction, the greeting, the dua, the conversation, the connection. I think it was also the thought that people who know them had told me as the collector that they were in need. It was the thought that people cared for them. And that is Islam: 'harisun 'alaikum'. 'He is deeply concerned for you; he is gentle and merciful to the believers.'"

Nicola Mahdiyyah Goodall
 What if women observed the tradition of staying at home for forty days and were fully supported to heal physically, and transition spiritually, after giving birth? What if we all had knowledge of the simple practices and remedies that can dramatically improve a woman's postpartum health outcomes? These are the questions that Nicola Mahdiyyah Goodall is addressing in her work as a doula and educator.

"I am that person that does say 'I'm not doing it, deal with it' but a lot of women can't do that. And then, who's taking the children to school? How is food getting into the house? Who's clearing up the mess?"

Interestingly, Mahdiyyah has both postpartum experiences. As a 25-year-old, when she had her first daughter, she dismissed any sort of postpartum rest as "for grannies." She was up and about the day after giving birth. "I thought I knew better, like we all do when we're young. I don't know what I was thinking. I was just exhausted. I was exhausted for two years after her birth. Tired and achey and miserable."

She finally healed in full after destiny led her to an incredible GP with knowledge of home remedies. When she had her second child eight years later her opinion on postpartum recovery had turned 180 degrees.

"I said, 'I'm doing forty days. I don't care about school, washing, nothing. I'm staying home. And everyone can starve.' At the end of six weeks, I was ready to go: healthy, fit and bright."

Her personal experience, and the desire to share this knowledge, has been a huge motivation for the work she does. With the realisation that two years of healing could have been completed in six weeks, the issue of postpartum care shifted in her mind. It became a matter of justice for women. As she puts it "you don't have to be exhausted, with bleeding nipples, crying your eyes out."

Mahdiyyah has four children. The

last three were each born eighteen months apart and when her youngest was three months old she found herself at a trampoline park; a birthday party that one of her older children was attending. Unable to resist the opportunity to bounce, she jumped onto a trampoline with her baby and began calling the other mums to join in. They all got on and then ran off to the toilet. It was another huge turning point for her. She'd just had three babies, one after the other, and was the only mother who wasn't wetting herself on the trampoline. The only mother who could jump for joy.

She puts it down to allowing the body to heal and allowing the muscles to contract by observing a potentially challenging, but relatively short, period of rest. Something that was common practice in all Muslim societies until recently.

"I really want to spend a year," says Mahdiyyah, "travelling around the UK, going to all the masjids and cultural centres and helping to train the women there to set up a rota system. So that when you have your baby you know that every day you get a visit from a member of your community and they bring you some food and put the washing on or help with taking the kids back and forth to school or whatever needs to happen in your family. All you need is forty women who are prepared to help for one day. Or eight women who would come once a week. It's really achievable."

It's an extraordinary moment, if we stop to reflect on it, to have a human transition, through your body, from the unseen to this life. It's an irreversible process and a lot for a woman to integrate, both physically and spiritually. Given that context, is forty days without cooking dinner, running to the shops or driving the kids to school too much to ask for? Consider, the possible results include feeling energised, avoiding a prolapse, actually enjoying sex again and even being able to jump joyfully on a trampoline. What if we could facilitate that for each other? How might that change lives, relationships and families? How might that strengthen communities?

What if...?
 Each of the leaders I spoke to had a realisation that they couldn't keep to themselves, an experience they wanted to generously share with others, and these three initiatives grew as a result. They're not waiting for somebody else to solve the problem, they're using what they have available to bring communities together and address a need. Each of these initiatives looks at a situation with curiosity and possibility and asks "What if there's a different way? What if it's simpler than we previously thought? What if the answer lies in our tradition, in the way our great grandparents did things?" and I'm left wondering: what if we could do the same?

(Rahma Dutton is a writer and storyteller. She loves the smell of coffee and alone-time with a book. She tells stories to remind herself and others that we're never alone, even if it sometimes feels like that. You can read more of her work at rahmadutton.com. IG & Twitter: @rahmadutton. The Article was first published in Amaliah.com)

J&K Inseparable Part

countries geo-politics have defined their boundaries, India's case is unique where this nation has been defined by its geo-cultural expanse, and whose borders are made up of from cultural unity.

He elaborated that India's essence lies in its geo-cultural identity, with its cultural fabric binding the nation from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Bengal to Gujarat. He argued that interpreting India solely as a geo-political entity overlooks its true nature. Instead, a deep understanding of India requires viewing it through the lens of its geo-cultural identity. He stressed the importance of historical research and academic institutions in promoting this perspective to the world, as it is crucial to understanding the elements that culturally unify the country.

Highlighting the similar distortions that have affected the history of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, Shah asserted that interpreting the history of these regions by manipulating facts is both futile and misleading.

"Such distortions could only stem from the works of historians with a myopic vision. Those who know about India's illustrious past will never commit such mistakes," he said.

He pointed out that the book demonstrates, with evidence, that the culture, languages, scripts, spiritual philosophies, art forms, pilgrimage traditions, and trade practices found throughout India have been present in Kashmir for at least thousand years.

He emphasized that once this historical truth is established, questioning Kashmir's union with India becomes irrelevant. Shri Shah added that this book proves that our rich heritage, scattered across every corner of the country, has been present in Kashmir for thousands of years. The book draws upon references to Kashmir from texts as old as 8,000 years, reaffirming its integral role in the nation's history.

Asserting that Kashmir always has been and will continue to remain an inseparable part of India, Shah stressed that no legal provision could ever sever this bond, and while there were attempts to separate Kashmir from India in the past, time itself has nullified those efforts.

"Modi government is committed to revive the historic and cultural heritage of Kashmir, and we will soon reclaim what has been lost," Shah said.

Shah emphasized that the time has come to move beyond history written to appease past rulers. He urged historians to confidently document India's history using evidence, facts, and the perspective of its rich, millennia-old culture, and to present it to the world with pride.

Noting that Kashmir has always been a land of inclusivity, embracing and nurturing diverse faiths, the Home Minister said that whether it is Buddhism, Sufism, or Shaivism, each tradition has found the freedom to thrive on Kashmiri soil. He also pointed out that Kashmir is often referred to as the land of Kashyap, underscoring its historical and spiritual significance.

The Home Minister remarked that Kashmir has long suffered under the onslaught of fundamentalists, invaders, and plunderers with expansionist ambitions.

"Articles 370 and 35A were obstacles, preventing Kashmir from being fully integrated with our country. Prime Minister Modi's resolute determination led to the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019,"

"By abolishing Article 370, Modi ji ended a tainted chapter of post-independence history and initiated a new chapter of Kashmir's development in tandem with the rest of India," he added.

Stating that Article 370 had sowed the seeds of separatism in the minds of the youth of the Kashmir Valley, the Home Minister questioned why terrorism has not arisen in many parts of the country that have significant Muslim populations.

He pointed out that states like Gujarat and Rajasthan also share borders with Pakistan, yet terrorism did not emerge there. He said that Article 370 created the misconception that the connection between India and Kashmir was temporary, which sowed the seeds of separatism that eventually turned into terrorism.

He also expressed regret over the unfortunate fact that more than 40,000 people fell victim to terrorism and that Kashmir's development was set back by decades. He further remarked that for years, terrorism wreaked havoc in the region, while the nation stood by as a silent spectator.

Highlighting that after the abrogation of Article 370, there has been a reduction of over 70 per cent in terrorist incidents in Kashmir, Shah said it proves that Article 370 was a facilitator of terrorism.

He mentioned that in 2018, there were 2,100 incidents of stone-pelting in Kashmir, whereas in 2023, not a single such incident occurred. He highlighted that over 25,000 panchayat members, including sarpanches, block panchayat members, and district panchayat members, were elected and are actively working for the development of their areas, thereby strengthening the roots of democracy in Kashmir.

He also pointed out that there was a record turnout in the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in 33 years.

"Today, Kashmir is home to the world's largest railway arch bridge, Asia's largest tunnel, and a cable-stayed rail bridge. Kashmir now has an IIT, an IIM, two AIIMS, nine government medical colleges, two nursing institutes, two state cancer institutes, eight colleges that are already operational, while 24 more are under construction," he said.

Taking pot-shots at his political opponents, Shah questioned previous governments and asked why even 10 per cent of these developments did not occur during their 70 years of governance, and said they owe an explanation to both the nation and the people of Kashmir.

Modi government has not only brought terrorism under control but has also completely dismantled its ecosystem in the Kashmir Valley. The government has done everything for this land, which has made a significant contribution to the civilizations of the country and the world," he said.

"Due to the efforts of the Modi government, Kashmir has once again become an integral part of India's geo-cultural nation and is moving forward on the path of development along with the rest of the country, with democracy firmly established there," he added.

He expressed confidence that whatever has been lost will soon be regained, including not only development but also the cultural heights and ancient glory. He remarked that the people of Kashmir will create and realize those immortal chapters of history on the ground. Home Minister further quoted Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, who had said that Jammu and Kashmir is not just a part of India but an inseparable part of India's soul.

"This has now been firmly established, and no

one can deny it anymore," he added.

MeT Issues 'Yellow'

the MeT has said that in view of fresh snowfall, sub-freezing temperature & icy conditions over roads in plains and higher reaches, the tourists, travelers and transporters are advised to plan accordingly & follow administration and traffic advisory.

"There is a possibility of heavy snow at isolated higher reaches during 4th night to 5th late night," it reads.

Kashmir's Upper

The 40-day-long period of intense winter cold called the 'Chillai Kalan' started on December 21 and will end on January 30.

Most lakes and other water bodies are presently frozen partially in the Valley.

Doctors have advised people not to expose themselves to long periods of cold. Children and elderly people have been especially warned to guard themselves against cold which constricts blood vessels resulting in myocardial infarction.

"This is responsible for heart attacks and heart failures globally in countries with cold weather. The risk becomes very high if a patient has respiratory ailments," they said.

5 Die Of

assistance under the government's Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY), a scheme for underprivileged families.

Meanwhile, Tehsildar Tangmarg, Eyaad Qadri expressed grief over the loss of lives in the incident. He termed the incident as "heartwrenching and unfortunate". "We are investigating the incident and the cause of the fire is being ascertained," he said.

Tehsildar assured that the family will be provided the necessary assistance. "They will be rehabilitated in a nearby building," he said, extending sympathies and condolences to the bereaved family.

Meanwhile, three youths were found dead inside a room at a hotel in Bhadarwah area of Doda district, officials said.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Doda, Sandeep Mehta said that the preliminary inquiry suggested it as a case of "asphyxiation".

Giving details, the SSP said that police received a call from the brother of one of the deceased persons, stating that there was no response to the repeated phone calls.

Subsequently, he said, the location of the phone was traced. In the meantime, he said, one of the several teams constituted for the purpose, traced the vehicle in which the brother of the caller traveled to Bhaderwah from Jammu.

Upon further investigation, he said, it came to the fore that three persons had booked a room at Royal Inn Guest House.

"There was no response after the room was knocked repeatedly and subsequently the door was broken and police found three persons in unconscious state with two of them lying on bed and another inside washroom," he said, adding, "Teams of doctors and forensics were called in and doctors declared them as dead."

He said that while investigations are underway, preliminary inquiry suggests it to be a case of asphyxiation. "A charcoal heater was found inside the room and it appears to be a case of asphyxiation but reports from forensic authorities are awaited and further investigations are underway."

The deceased were identified as Mukesh Singh son of Kuldeep Singh, resident of Domana in Jammu; Ashutosh Singh Rana son of Daleep Singh Rana, resident of Bhela, Doda, at present Purkhoo in Jammu and Sunny Choudhary—(KNO)

Ruhullah Agrees

MP Ruhullah wrote on X (formerly twitter): "After 2019, my political stance has been crystal clear. At one of my earliest public gatherings in Budgam and then at other gatherings throughout Kashmir and also in my interviews post-abrogation, I told my people that our fight must be for the restoration of 370 and the dignity it embodies for the people of Jammu & Kashmir."

Referring to Omar Abdullah's suggestion, Ruhullah further wrote: "I've been informed about an urge and desire to protest for statehood in Delhi. I AM READY to participate in such a protest, and invite those prioritizing statehood to organize it. I will also try to organise support from at least more than 100 Hon'ble MPs. I believe for them there is no better time than January to organize it, when India's Constitution—the very document that enshrined our special status—was adopted."

Termining abrogation of Article 370 as a calculated act of humiliation, Ruhullah wrote: "At the same time I ought to remind that the abrogation of Article 370 was a calculated act of humiliation, and a deep wound deliberately inflicted upon us. The subsequent demotion to a Union Territory was a further attempt to impress upon us the indignity of the abrogation."

"The abrogation was a political statement, a declaration that our sacrifices mean nothing, and that our future is theirs to dictate. Given this betrayal, this calculated attempt to break our spirit and subjugate our will, I cannot, in good conscience, sidestep from the fight for our special status and settle for the hollow promise of mere statehood. Shouldn't our voices first rise for our honor, our identity, and the autonomy we have long been denied? I think they should, and I will keep raising mine, louder each time. The Tree Remembers," he wrote on X.

Pertinently, NC Parliamentarian, Aga Ruhullah had stirred a "Hornet's Nest" last month when he sat on a protest against the reservation policy outside Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's residence in Srinagar. Ruhullah was joined by the PDP leaders, Waheed Para, Iltija Mufti and leaders of a few other opposition parties.

National Conference MLA, Salman Sagar had reacted sharply to Ruhullah's protest and had accused him of "sitting with the enemies" of the NC.

Soon after Ruhullah's protest, most of the NC MLAs from Srinagar had skipped the DISHA meeting chaired by the Member Parliament to express their "dismay" over his protest.

However, Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah on Thursday acknowledged that the MP's protest was

conducted under the democratic framework upheld by his government.

"Earlier, protests were considered illegal. We respect democratic rights," Omar told reporters—(KNO)

Hopeful Statehood

fall in place. "It took some time to understand the new rules of UT, however, not many difficulties are faced now," he said.

Speaking about the promises made to people, he said, "We will implement those promises step by step during our five-year term of office."

On the reservation issue, he said that a panel of ministers has been formed and expressed optimism that some solution will definitely come out within six months.

Regarding the electricity situation in J&K, he said that it has improved a lot and expressed hope that it will improve more with the completion of ongoing power projects.

About his promise to provide 200 units of free electric power to consumers, he said, "We will be able to provide 200 units of electricity for free only if meters are installed. When we roll out this scheme in March/April, only those will benefit who have meters installed."

When asked about the alleged recruitment scam in appointments in fire and emergency services, he said, "We also want justice, but let the investigation process be completed. We can't cut short the investigation process. Deserving candidates shall get justice."

"If Pulwama does not want NIT, we will relocate it," the chief minister said in reply to a question about protests in Pulwama over the location of the proposed NIT.

He defended the right of NC MP Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi to protest outside the chief minister's residence.

"Protests are now allowed at my gate. These were not allowed before," he said.

He reaffirmed the administration's flexibility in the face of public opinion.

The Chief Minister dismissed rumours that the Central government or the BJP was putting pressure on him or his ministers.

"These rumours are false," he said replying to a question.

Inaugurates

Chowdhary, former J&K Chief Minister Dr. Farooq Abdullah, Advisor to CM Nasir Aslam Wani and Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Pahalgam Altaf Ahmad Wani. The evening's proceedings began with an electrifying musical performance by the renowned artist Abha Hanjura, whose mesmerizing tunes and captivating stage presence brought the crowd to life.

The musical acts, combined with traditional cultural performances, set the tone for an unforgettable carnival experience.

The vibrant atmosphere of the event, coupled with the awe-inspiring surroundings of Pahalgam, created a magical experience for both the large gathering of tourists and locals who had gathered to witness the festivities.

The Winter Carnival is not only a celebration of the region's natural beauty but also a vital platform for showcasing the talent of local artists and performers.

This year's edition promises to highlight the region's unique cultural heritage, including traditional music, dance, handicrafts, and culinary delights.

By offering a stage for local talent, the carnival aims to promote Jammu and Kashmir's rich cultural fabric to a wider audience, while also giving local artisans the chance to showcase their work and foster economic growth in the region.

Speaking at the inauguration, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah emphasized the importance of such events in bolstering the tourism industry in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Pahalgam is a treasure trove of natural beauty, and through events like the Winter Carnival, we aim to position it as a key tourist destination that not only attracts visitors for its scenic landscapes but also provides them with an authentic cultural experience," he said.

The Winter Carnival's timing is perfect for the ongoing winter season, which attracts tourists from across the country and abroad. The event has been designed to enhance the appeal of Pahalgam, showcasing its capabilities as a year-round tourist hub.

As more visitors flock to the region, local businesses, including hotels, restaurants, and souvenir shops, are likely to experience a boost, contributing to the local economy.

"We are committed to ensuring that Pahalgam and other tourist spots in the region continue to grow as world-class destinations. The Winter Carnival not only provides entertainment and cultural enrichment but also plays an important role in positioning our region as a major player on the global tourism map," added Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Chowdhary.

With its successful inauguration, the Winter Carnival is expected to attract an even larger turnout in the coming days.

The carnival promises to be a key event on the calendar for both local residents and tourists alike, creating a festive environment in Pahalgam that will run through the winter season.

The anticipated influx of visitors will contribute significantly to the region's tourism potential, especially as the festival provides a unique opportunity to experience Jammu and Kashmir's winter charm in full display.

In addition to the ongoing musical performances, the event will feature a variety of other attractions, including winter sports activities, food stalls offering traditional Kashmiri cuisine, and craft exhibitions that highlight the region's artisanal excellence.

The carnival is set to continue over the next several days, and visitors from all over the world are encouraged to experience the festivities and explore the beauty of Pahalgam and its surroundings.

Sajad Lone Files

that the police verification process should not penalize individuals for factors outside their control, particularly the conduct of their relatives.

"The current system has been used to deny citizens their basic rights, such as employment, access to passports and other essential opportunities. The

verification process must remain transparent, fair and aligned with legal standards," he said.

PC President added that the petition calls for the strict enforcement of the Jammu & Kashmir Civil Services (Validation of Character and Antecedents) Instructions, 1997, along with amendments introduced that mandate clear timelines for police verifications.

"These guidelines, which focus solely on an individual's criminal record, are often overlooked, causing unnecessary difficulties. We are committed to ensuring their proper enforcement so no citizen is unfairly punished for the actions of others," Lone asserted.

He said the PIL also highlights violations of Articles 14, 19(1)(g), and 21 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantee equality, the freedom to pursue any profession, and the right to live with dignity.

"When police verifications are based on irrelevant factors, such as the actions of a person's relatives, it not only violates their rights but subjects them to undue hardships which remain ethically and constitutionally unjustified," Lone stated.

Citing the Supreme Court's "Bulldozer Judgment," which strongly opposed collective punishment, PC President said the petition stresses that police verifications should focus solely on the individual in question.

"The Supreme Court's ruling reinforces the principle that no individual should suffer because of others' actions," Lone noted. "We seek to ensure that every citizen is treated fairly and in accordance with the law."

He further clarified that this PIL is not driven by politics but by a commitment to justice, equality, and the protection of constitutional rights. "The petition includes real-life cases that illustrate the severe economic, social, and emotional hardships caused by arbitrary police verification practices. This is about safeguarding the dignity and rights of the people. We will continue to fight for justice for the citizens of Jammu & Kashmir," he affirmed. "The PIL has been submitted to the court registry and is under procedural review. It will be listed for hearing once cleared by the registry," the statement added.

Free Textbooks To

have taken students on board also, they have informed us that they are already preparing for the exams," she said.

About the selling of textbooks by private schools within the institute, the education minister said that the government has constituted a district and zonal level committee. "They have been asked to monitor the violation so that appropriate action is taken against those private schools."

On the occasion she further said that the School Education Department will allow or disallow private coaching during the winter vacations in accordance with the norms set by the government.

On the occasion Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary said, "The government will look into the issue of dysfunctional technical colleges of Jammu and Kashmir. We will streamline the issue soon."

Pertinently, a local news agency KNO had earlier this week reported that even after two weeks of winter vacation, the students enrolled in government-run schools were yet to receive free textbooks from the authorities—thus raising a question on the functioning of JKBOSE.

The delay in delivering the textbooks has left thousands of students at the receiving end as the School Education Department has failed to distribute the course books on time.

In the last week of December-2024, the CEOs of Kashmir region in a meeting with DSEK informed that they have submitted actual requirements of books as per the enrollment for the session 2024-25 to JKBOSE. "However, the receipt of such books is awaited."

Following the culmination of the previous academic session, the minister had assured that the students would receive free textbooks immediately after the culmination of annual exams.

The minister had ordered and instructed the JKBOSE to ensure that the board will deliver free textbooks on time.

ACB Unearth Major

job tests.

"It surfaced that favoritism was shown in awarding contract to L-2 Firm, M/s LMES IT LLP, which had no proven experience of conducting similar exercise as mandated in the e-NIT by sidelining L-1 bidder. Further, the bid of L-2 was accepted by the Departmental Recruitment Board knowing that L-2 was a newly formed Firm in November, 2017 and Maharaj Krishan Wali (main partner with 99% share) was the same person who had earlier remained as resource person with M/s Timing Technology (P) Ltd. As per CVC guidelines /circular/order, the negotiation shall be held with L-1 only and there should be re-tendering in case L-1 bidder backs out, but the guideline /order was not complied with in this case," the probe found.

In 2019, Hyderabad-based M/s Timing Technologies India Pvt. Ltd was selected to conduct the physical test/written examination for Fire & Emergency Service. The resource person of M/s Timing Technologies India Pvt. Ltd was Sh. Maharaj Krishan Wali.

Following allegations of mass copying etc. in the written test, the Government then cancelled the written examination and ordered to conduct written examination afresh.

The ACB found the then members of Departmental Recruitment Board, members of Technical Committee, Officers/Officials of F&ES Department, who remained associated with the recruitment process, being in league with each other as well as with M/S LMES IT LLP through its main partner Maharaj Krishan Wali (L-2 bidder), abused their official positions for extraneous considerations whereby they awarded work of TRP in favor of L-2 bidder by ignoring L-1 bidder in an illegal and unjustified manner, besides manipulated the selection list by preparing fake / fabricated record in order to confer undue benefits upon themselves and the beneficiaries.

"The aforementioned facts constitute commission of offences punishable under sections 7, 13(1) (a) & 13 (2) of PC Act 1988 (as Amended in 2018) and 120-B, 420, 467, 468 & 471 IPC, against the members of Departmental Recruitment Board, including the Chairmen, Members of the Technical Committee, officers/officials of F&ES department, who remained associated with the recruitment process, M/S LMES IT LLP through its main partner Maharaj Krishan Wali, beneficiaries & others. Consequently, a case FIR No 01/2025 was registered in Police Station ACB Central," reads the ACB statement.

Deflated Pakistan look to set record straight in South Africa and level series

AGENCIES

The attempt to give this Test series context may ironically have stripped some from this Test match, especially as far as South Africa are concerned. The hosts have already qualified for the World Test Championship final after beating Pakistan by two wickets in Centurion, and as such, don't necessarily have a bigger picture to play for. However, they have won eight consecutive Test matches at home against Pakistan, and never not won a home series against these opponents, and in that bilateral context, there remains plenty to play for.

In the days since South Africa qualified, there has been some attention towards the perceived softer nature of their draw en route to the World Test Championship, one that their coach Shukri Conrad made "no apologies" for. But with no Test cricket between this Test and the WTC final, South Africa will want to storm into the final in

style, and extend a winning run that already stretches to six games.

Pakistan's WTC hopes had long ago gone up in smoke, but they need to break out of a habit of letting slip winning positions, a habit in this particular cycle. As a result, they have now lost seven of the last nine Tests, and all of the last eight in South Africa. Centurion was the closest they came to breaking that hoodoo, at one stage two wickets away from a stunning win with South Africa still 49 runs away from victory. But, as has been the case with Pakistan too often, they struggled to finish off the tail with the ball, and watched another one slide through their fingers.

Newlands arguably plays slightly more to their strengths, lacking the express pace South Africa possess. It is a surface that both captains expect to take a bit more spin than Centurion, and should revert back to its natural characteristics after a freak Test last year against



India that ended in a day and a half. Both sides are expected to field a spinner, while Pakistan's seam and swing bowlers may find more joy, especially in the early stages of the Test before the surface flattens out. With just two Test wins in South

Africa across three decades of playing here, a victory here - and a drawn series - will go down as their most impressive away Test series result in years.

With spin likely to play a more significant role at Newlands than it did in Centurion,

Keshav Maharaj returns to the side. But for all of Newlands supposed accommodation for slower bowling, the left-arm orthodox spinner has a surprisingly indifferent record in Cape Town, managing just 9 wickets in 6 matches at an average in

excess of 52. That's almost double his average of 30.44 in South Africa in general, and Maharaj is returning from an adductor strain that ruled him out of the ODI series. Whether he can begin to turn his Newlands record around may be an intriguing plot point as the Test develops.

It's not a vintage age for openers in Test cricket, and particularly not Pakistani openers. Until the final Test, they hadn't produced a partnership over 15 all year, but offered faint glimpses of turning that around with the new pairing of Saim Ayub and Shan Masood, putting up 36 and 49. But neither opener managed to kick on in either innings, something Masood brought up as a point of frustration in Centurion. Against the kind of world-class new ball bowling attack South Africa possess at home, runs for the first wicket are not exactly easy, but Pakistan desperately need them all the same.

Team news

South Africa have rung the changes after the first Test, with Maharaj, Wiaan Mulder and debutant fast bowler Kwena Maphaka coming into the side. Opener Tony de Zorzi has a thigh strain, while fast bowling allrounder Corbin Bosch and Dane Paterson also drop to the bench.

South Africa: Ryan Rickleton 2 Aiden Markram, 3 Wiaan Mulder (capt), 4 Tristan Stubbs 5 Temba Bavuma (capt) 6 David Bedingham, 7 Kyle Verreyne (wk), 8 Marco Jansen, 9 Keshav Maharaj 10 Kagiso Rabada 11 Kwena Maphaka

Pakistan have not yet named an eleven, unsure about playing Noman Ali or simply making do with Salman Ali Agha as lead spinner.

Pakistan: 1 Shan Masood (capt) 2 Saim Ayub 3 Babar Azam 4 Kamran Ghulam 5 Saud Shakeel 6 Mohammad Rizwan (wk) 7 Salman Ali Agha 8 Aamer Jamal/Noman Ali 9 Naseem Shah 10 Mohammad Abbas 11 Khuram Shahzad

Under PM Modi's guidance, para-sports is getting much-needed recognition: Para-athlete Praveen Kumar

IAN S

NEW DELHI : Para-athlete Praveen Kumar, who won the gold medal in the men's high jump T64 at the Paris 2024 Paralympics, expressed his delight on being honoured with the prestigious Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award and said under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance, para-sports is getting much-needed recognition.

The 21-year-old Indian para-athlete cleared 2.08m, an Asian record, in the final for his second Paralympic medal. He won the silver medal at Tokyo 2020 with a clearance of 2.07m, which was also an Asian record three years ago.

"Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance, para-sports is getting much-needed recognition. I am feeling honoured to be named Khel Ratna. I will continue to give my best in the major tournaments so that I can bring more laurels to the nation", Praveen told IANS.

Besides Praveen, World Chess champion Gukesh Dommaraju and Paris Olympics medallists - Manu Bhaker (shooting), and Harmanpreet Singh



(hockey) -- are to be conferred with Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award 2024 by President of India Droupadi Murmu at a specially organised function at Rashtrapati Bhavan on January 17.

Born in Govindgarh (Noida), Uttar Pradesh, Praveen achieved remarkable success on the international stage, notably becoming the youngest para-athlete to win a medal at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics. His journey to become a para-athlete was fraught

with challenges. Born with a short leg, he initially struggled with feelings of inferiority compared to his peers. To combat his insecurity, he engaged in sports with friends and discovered a passion for volleyball.

However, his life took a pivotal turn when he participated in a high jump event at an able-bodied athletics competition, which exposed him to the possibilities available for athletes with disabilities.

Under the guidance of Satyapal Singh, a para-athletics coach who recognised Praveen's potential, he shifted his focus to the high jump. This decision proved fruitful, as he went on to win a gold medal at the Asian Para Games 2022, breaking the Asian record with a jump of 2.05 metres. In 2023, he won a bronze at the World Para Athletics Championship.

Praveen's previous accolades include a silver medal from the World Para Athletics Junior Championship in 2019 held in Nottwil, Switzerland, and a gold medal with an Asian Record at the World Para Athletics FAZZA Grand Prix 2021 in Dubai.

Rohit has to decide whether to play or not: Madan Lal

IAN S

NEW DELHI : Amid a lot of chatter over Indian skipper Rohit Sharma's place in the team following his poor run of form, former India cricketer Madan Lal said that team management and coach can sit down and sort such things out and asserted that it's the skipper's call to decide whether he wants to play or not.

Rohit, who was not a member of the side to win the first Test match of the series in Perth, has been struggling for form. Since returning to the team from the second Test onwards, he has made 31 runs at an average of just 6.20. The skipper is averaging 10.93 in his last nine Tests, which intensifies the speculations over his future with the team.

"Rohit is the captain. As team management, as a coach, they can sit down and sort things out. What's the problem when you're playing for the country? The coach doesn't have that much power to just drop someone. They'll have to consult, right? The team isn't formed by the captain alone, is it? The coach and captain together form the team, right?" Madan Lal told IANS.

Ahead of the Sydney Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, India coach Gautam Gambhir also did not confirm Rohit's selection for the final Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test match at the SCG press conference. He said the under-fire skipper's place in the playing XI will be decided after having a look at the pitch on match day.



"Rohit has to make a decision—whether to play or not to play. If he believes he can do the job and regain his form, that's good. It's about how you feel, your confidence. If he feels that he's not pulling his weight, he can always step aside and give a chance to others. The only thing is that the shuffling of the batting order is a bit of an issue. First, he went to number 5, then he came back to the top of the order," Madan Lal added.

Further speaking about Rohit's leadership and teams' shortcomings, the veteran said, "As a team, you have to perform. You're playing against Australia, not Sri Lanka. You have to seize the moment. Jasprit Bumrah is the only bowler taking wickets. The rest of them, they're taking wickets too, but not breaking through at the right moments. "Like, if you see... Mohammed Siraj took wickets. But the thing is, when did he take those wickets? When 400 runs had already been scored, or 300 runs, or 250, or 400 runs." In the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia, Bumrah is leading the wicket-takers chart with 30 wickets at an average of 12.83. He also completed 200 Test wickets in Australia, becoming the fastest Indian pacer to achieve this feat. His 71 scalps in 2024 is

also the fifth most wickets taken by an Indian bowler in a Test calendar year, a list led by Kapil Dev, who picked 75 wickets in 18 matches in 1983. Be it in South Africa and Australia, or conditions back home, Bumrah was ever impressive.

"When Bumrah is getting wickets, the bowler at the other end also needs to strike. Akash Deep took 1 or 2 wickets, but someone needs to bowl consistently. The only one consistently getting wickets is Jasprit. You need support from the other end too, and at the right time," he added.

India must win the Sydney Test, starting on Friday, to keep their slim World Test Championship Final hopes alive, and would also need Australia to not win either of their two Test matches in Sri Lanka to lock in their spot at Lord's in June.

Sharing advice for the Indian team ahead of the crucial Sydney Test against Australia, the 73-year-old said that the visitors should not panic. He encouraged them to give their 200 percent, understanding that they are playing in Australia's home conditions. The focus should be on staying calm and putting in their best effort despite the challenges.

Mentor Watson on 'showman' Konstas: 'He's built for this stage'

AGENCIES

Sam Konstas' mentor Shane Watson has admitted the 19-year-old's audacious start to Test cricket took even him by surprise, both in terms of the strokeplay and the way he carried himself in the field and with the crowd.

Konstas scored 60 off 65 balls on the opening morning at the MCG, regularly scooping Jasprit Bumrah, and had a run-in with Virat Kohli who was fined for a shoulder barge. Later in the game he embraced the crowd when fielding on the boundary and was a vocal presence under the helmet, clearly getting under the skin of Yashasvi Jaiswal during the second innings.

"I understood what his game plan was, what plan A was anyway," Watson said as part of the ICC Champions Trophy tour at the SCG. "So when plan B sort of kicked in quite quickly, within a couple of overs, that was a little surprising. But the one thing that we've always talked about is trusting his gut."

While Watson was aware of the range of strokes Konstas had in his locker, even if showing them so early in Test was unexpected, he admitted the character shown in the

field was not something he had seen before.

"My experience of dealing and working with Sam has been a very quiet, reserved personality," he said. "[He's] a very deep thinker and certainly not an extrovert. But obviously what we saw in the Test match is that he absolutely is a showman. And he certainly rose to the occasion, as in he wasn't overawed.

"I know through my experience of debuting... you just put a lot of pressure on yourself because it's your dream to be able to represent your country, wear the baggy green. But for Sam, it's superhuman in a way that he sort of just didn't have any of that at all. You can see it wasn't put on. That's just obviously who he is. And again, I hadn't seen that side of him. It just shows that he's built for this stage where most people it takes a bit of time to warm up to sort of get into that. Whereas Sam, he obviously just thrives on that."

Konstas has continued to enjoy the trappings of being a Test cricketer since arriving with the squad in Sydney, having photographs with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his fiancée Jodie Haydon during the annual New Year's Day gathering at Kirribilli House. He also spent time



chatting with Kohli, who his brothers took the opportunity to get a photograph with.

Albanese joked about his role in Konstas' rapid rise to the Test side after the century he scored against the Indians in Canberra. "Of course, he got his break in the Prime Minister's XI [game]," Albanese said. "I'm claiming some of the credit, which is about my only contribution to national cricket."

On Friday, Konstas will become the youngest Australian men's player to feature in a Test at his home ground of the SCG followed by the prospect of two Tests in vastly different

conditions in Sri Lanka. India had already adjusted their tactics by the second innings in Melbourne where Konstas was kept quiet before being bowled by an inductor from Bumrah.

"Look it's going to be a different challenge for him now," Watson said. "Because he's

shown what his plan B is. And we already saw in that second innings the field positions certainly changed. It's going to be a good test of his evolution. To be able to continue to work through how he can take the game on against the best bowlers in the world. But he's certainly got all the gears and

all the skills to be able to make those adjustments quickly.

"He is technically very correct and waits for loose balls. But he's also got the other gears to be able to hit the ball down the ground. But when they do have third man fine and fine leg fine, the ramp shot is probably out. But you know what? I thought the ramp shot wasn't going to come out in the first couple of overs, and it did. Sam will just trust what he feels and go with it. And that's something very special that he taps into."

Australia captain Pat Cummins said there had been no instructions given to Konstas about how to go about his innings and believed he would be able to adjust to different scenarios.

"Think he showed how adaptable he can be," Cummins said. "That takes a lot of skill first of all, but we always encourage our players just to read the moment, play it how they see fit. For Sam he sensed the moment was to attack and put pressure back on the bowlers and he did that, it might be different this week; it might be 'I'm going to play a slow game and kind of score runs that way'. Our message is always just to back yourself, have really clear plans and back your decision making."