

Good Morning Kashmir

16th Year Of Publication

Narendra Modi @narendramodi



It was a delight to meet former UK PM, Mr. Rishi Sunak and his family! We had a wonderful conversation on many subjects. Mr. Sunak is a great friend of India and is passionate about even stronger India-UK ties.

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'Chillai Khurd' Likely To End On Wet Note

10-Day Long Chillai-Bachha To Commence From Today



AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: After Chilla-i-Kalan-- the 40-day harshest winter period-- ended on a dry note in Kashmir, the 20-day small cold known as "Chillai Khurd" too failed to bring any major respite.

However, as the 20-day small cold is all set to culminate on (Wednesday February 19), the weatherman has predicted light to moderate rain and snow at many places on its last day.

The fresh rains and snow in Jammu and Kashmir will likely end the prolonged dry spell tomorrow as a two-day wet spell is expected to bring rains and snow in J&K till Thursday.

Notably, after a 20-day long Chillai-Khurd (small cold) that occurs between January 31 and February 19, a 10-day long Chillai-Bachha (baby cold) will commence

from February 20 to March 2. Director Meteorological (MeT), Dr Mukhtar Ahmad told a local news agency KNO there is a possibility of light to moderate rain and snow at many places during 19th evening to 20th late afternoon. "The fresh Western Disturbance is all set to hit the Union Territory," he added.

Dr Ahmad said that the plains of Kashmir & Jammu may receive light to moderate rain and thunder with gusty winds at few places, adding that the higher reaches of Chenab Valley & South Kashmir may receive moderate snowfall up to around 10 inches while the higher reaches of north & Central Kashmir may receive snowfall up to 8 inches.

Meanwhile, an Independent Weather Forecaster, Faizan Arif Keng said that a fresh Western Disturbance is set to

Shah Asks J&K Govt To Ensure Implementation Of New Laws



GMK NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI: The Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday asked the Jammu and Kashmir administration to ensure full implementation of the three new criminal laws in the Union Territory by April 2025.

Chairing a review meeting on the implementation of three new criminal laws in Jammu and Kashmir in the presence of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah here on Tuesday, the Home Minister also reviewed the implementation and present status of various new provisions related to police, prisons, courts, prosecution, and forensics in Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by the Union Home Secretary, Chief Secretary and Director General of Police of Jammu and Kashmir, the Director General of the Bureau of Police Research

and Development (BPRD), the Director General of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), and other senior officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the UT administration.

During the discussion in the meeting, Shah said that optimum use of technology should be made to ensure speedy justice under the three new criminal laws. He asked the UT administration to ensure full implementation of the three

Will Aware People Of New Criminal Laws: CM Omar

JAMMU: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said on Tuesday that although the implementation of the new criminal laws was not the responsibility of the elected government in the union territory, his government would make people aware of the new laws.

Speaking to reporters after he attended the meeting chaired by the Union Home Minister, CM Omar Abdullah said, "As far as the elected government is concerned, it is not our responsibility to implement these laws. Since these are new laws, people should be aware of them. For this, the elected government needs to do more."

He said that Jammu and Kashmir had done better in the implementation of these new laws, but a few weak areas needed to be addressed.

The Chief Minister said he had discussed the security situation in the UT with the Union Home Minister

HE ALSO STRESSED ON THE NEED TO FIX RESPONSIBILITY OF POLICE OFFICERS to expedite the process of filing chargesheets. He said that every police station in Jammu and Kashmir should put the maximum use of the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS) into practice.

2 Kashmiri Men Held With Rs 2 Cr Cash

AGENCIES

JAMMU: Police on Tuesday arrested two persons along with around two crores of cash on National Highway in Lakhanpur area of Kathua, the state border town between Jammu-Kashmir and Punjab.

A local news agency KNO reported that on a tip off, police laid a surprise check post at Lakhanpur and intercepted a Hyundai Creta bearing registration number HR98J- 9889, heading towards Kashmir.

Police searched the vehicle and found

Suspected IEDs Defused In South Kashmir

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Security forces detected two suspicious objects on Tuesday in Jammu and Kashmir's Shopian and Tral areas, officials said here.

In Shopian the suspicious object was found in Kasha Chitragam village while in Tral the object was found in Pinglish Nagwadi village of Tral area.

Officials said the two areas have been cordoned off and the bomb

IGP Kashmir Discusses Summer Operation Strategy

Lauds Police, CRPF For Maintaining Law & Order



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: The Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir Zone, V.K. Birdi on Tuesday commended the efforts of police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in maintaining law and order in the Valley and stressed the need for continued collaboration to strengthen the region's security framework.

Chairing a high-level joint security review meeting of police and CRPF at DPO Anantnag, the IGP also held discussions with the officers on the summer operation strategy, outlining key security tactics and contin-

gency plans for the upcoming season.

The meeting also focused on enhanced coordination, joint resource utilization, and operational efficiency. Senior officers from the Police and CRPF, deliberated on joint deployment strategies, operational preparedness, and emerging security challenges.

The IGP Kashmir commended the efforts of both forces in maintaining law and order and stressed the need for continued collaboration to strengthen the region's security framework.

He also inspected the Special Operations

Jammu & Kashmir Court Sentences Paedophile To 14 Yrs In Jail

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: The Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) in J&K's Sopore town on Tuesday sentenced a notorious paedophile to 14 years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs one lakh.

Mir Wajahat, CJM Sopore passed a conviction order on self-styled spiritual healer, Aijaz Sheikh on Tuesday sentencing him to 14 years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 1 Lakh for repeatedly sexually abusing two victims over a decade.

Advocate Ayshia Zahgeer for the victims told reporters that the accused had been convicted yesterday.

The matter was reserved for arguments today on the quantum of the sentence.

The CJM Sopore sentenced the accused to seven years of rigorous imprisonment each for two



victims in this case. The sentences will run consecutively, he will be in rigorous imprisonment for 14 years and a fine of Rs 50,000 for each of the victims. Rs 45,000 has been directed to be deposited as compensation and the CJM has also said that the victims are at

liberty to approach appropriate forums for their compensation in their capacities.

Aijaz Ahmad Sheikh had been impersonating as a faith healer and victimised minor girls by exploiting the credulous parents. There was

Bank Officer Among 5 Held In Multi-Crore Loan 'Scam'

AGENCIES

JAMMU: The crime branch of the Jammu and Kashmir Police has arrested five accused, including a former manager of the Jammu and Kashmir Bank, in connection with an alleged multi-crore-rupee loan scam here, the agency said on Tuesday.

The case was registered in 2023 on a written complaint from Mohammad Shakeel, the chief manager of the supervision and control division of the bank's Jammu zonal office.

The complainant alleged that Saleem Yousuf Bhatti, a contractual employee of the Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP), Poonch, and others got the inactive accounts of the watershed committee in the bank's Lassana branch in Surankote activated.

The accused allegedly got the nomenclature of the accounts changed, issued fake salary certificates and confirmation letters to different non-existing employees and managed to get personal loans, cash-credit loans and car loans by posing themselves

as government employees, a spokesperson of the crime branch said. He said the accused also managed to open fraudulent government accounts at the bank's branch offices at Mendhar and Mendhar Bus Stand.

They first deposited money through different banks in the accounts of the watershed committee and the fake accounts opened by them, issued fake authority letters instructing the branches to disburse and credit the salary in the individual accounts

• P-06

CPI (M) Resolutions Call For Statehood, KPs Return

AGENCIES

JAMMU: The CPI(M) adopted resolutions on the immediate restoration of the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir and the return and rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits at the two-day state conference of the party, a senior leader said.

The CPI(M)'s 13th state conference ended here on Tuesday, which was attended by coordinator and polit bureau member Prakash Karat, All India Kisan Sabha president Ashok Dhawale and MLA M Y Tarigami.

The conference concluded by electing a state committee of 23 members. "Several resolutions were adopted at the conference, which among other things demanded the immediate restoration of statehood, democratic

and civil liberties, rehabilitation of Kashmiri migrants, land laws, trade union rights and necessary steps for boosting agriculture and horticulture produce," Tarigami



told PTI. The resolution with regard to the restoration of statehood urged all secular parties within and outside J-K to raise their voice for the fulfilment of the

promise Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah made to the people of J&K.

"The dual nature of the governance system is a fraud with the mandate of the people. We want full restoration of the statehood to allow the elected government to run the state in accordance with the aspirations of the people," he said.

Tarigami said opposition parties have a bigger responsibility in the country and they should raise their voice in support of J-K within and outside the parliament.

He also demanded a review of the cases of all those jailed in the aftermath of the 2019 bifurcation of the erstwhile state into two Union territories and revocation of its

Those Playing With Students Career Will Face Action: Itoo

70-80% Textbooks Almost Reached District Levels



AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: Education Minister, Sakina Itoo Tuesday said that the government will take action against schools that are found playing the career of students.

Speaking to the reporters, Itoo said, "It is very unfortunate that some eligible students could not appear in annual regular board exams of 10th standard due to the lackadaisical approach at

some levels."

The education minister said that the government had initiated an inquiry into the matter. "Enquiry committee in this regard has been constituted and whosoever will be found guilty will face action. Playing with the career of students is unacceptable."

"We will try to do whatever is feasible for the eligible students who couldn't appear in Class-10 exams," Itoo said.

Besides, the

MHA Re-Designates LG Advisor's Post

Dr Pawan Kotwal Becomes First Chief Secy Of Ladakh

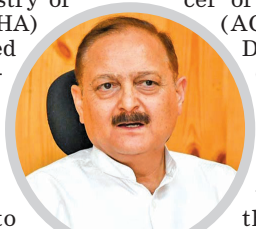
AGENCIES

LEH: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has re-designated the post of Advisor to Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh as Chief Secretary of the Union Territory.

According to reports, the General Administration Department of Ladakh issued an "Office Memorandum" announcing the re-designation of the post of Advisor to the Lieutenant Governor as Chief Secretary, UT of Ladakh.

This decision, according to the officials, follows the notification dated January 3, 2025, issued by the Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT), Government of India and has been approved by the Competent Authority in the Ministry of Home

Affairs. Pertinently, an IAS officer of the 1994 batch (AGMUT cadre), Dr. Pawan Kotwal



currently serves as the Advisor to the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh and will now assume the designation of Chief Secretary, UT of Ladakh, with no change in his duties and responsibilities.

"All official communications previously addressed to the Advisor to Lieutenant Governor shall now be directed to the Chief Secretary of Ladakh."

This decision marks a significant milestone in Ladakh's administrative evolution, making Dr. Pawan Kotwal the first Chief Secretary of the Union Territory.

A highly respected civil servant, Dr. Kotwal

NAKSHA76 Pilot Programme Launched for Urban Habitations in Pattan

GMK NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA: The National Geospatial Knowledge-Based Land Survey of Urban Habitations (NAKSHA) was launched Tuesday at Government Degree College Pattan as part of a nationwide pilot initiative under the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme

(DILRMP). Member Legislative Assembly (MLA) Pattan, Javed Reyaz Bedar, and Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, launched the event at Degree College Pattan. Jammu and Kashmir is among the regions selected for this initiative, with four Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) identified for the pilot project, including Pattan.

The programme aims to modernize land records using advanced geospatial technology, ensuring accuracy, transparency, and efficiency in urban land management. Speaking on the occasion, MLA Javed Reyaz Bedar highlighted the significance of accurate land records in streamlining urban planning and ensuring transparency in governance.

DC Minga Sherpa, emphasized the administration's commitment to leveraging technology for efficient land management, reducing disputes, and enhancing urban development through reliable geospatial data. The event was attended by Sub-Divisional Magistrate Pattan, Gulzar Ahmad, Tehsildar Pattan, Executive Officer Municipal Committee Pattan and other Officers and officials from concerned departments besides local residents.

An Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaign was also conducted to create awareness regarding the benefits of programme.

LDBC Commission assesses implications of backwardness among OBC's

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: The Jammu & Kashmir Local Bodies Dedicated Backward Classes Commission chaired by Justice (Retd.) Janak Raj Kotwal, and its Members; R.K. Bhagat IAS (Retd.) and Professor M. S. Bhadwal visited District Headquarter Baramulla as a part of their outreach and met the stakeholders from different panchayats and Urban Local Bodies of Districts Baramulla, Kupwara and Bandipora to assess the implications of backwardness among OBC's in direct elections to the local bodies.

The Commission was apprised by the delegations about the problems faced by the OBC community in getting representation in the local bodies and the circumstances that prevent them in getting elected to the rural local bodies.

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Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT REGIONAL TRANSPORT OFFICER, BUDGAM

E-Mail: artobudgam1@gmail.com; Pin Code: 191111, Ph. No. 01951315001

PUBLIC NOTICE

Through the medium of this Public Notice, all the vehicle owners who have not obtained the route permits of their vehicles till date (as per the enclosed list), are hereby informed to obtain route permits of their vehicles within a period of 15 days from the date of issuance of this Public Notice, failing which all such vehicles shall be seized and action as warranted under the Motor Vehicles Act and Rules framed thereunder, shall be initiated against them.

NO.-ARTO/BUD/2024-25/3449-54

Dated:- 15 /02/2025

Sd/- Assistant Regional Transport Officer Budgam

Table with 5 columns: S.No, Vehicle No, Owner Name, Father Name, Owner Address. Contains a long list of vehicle registration details for Budgam.

Table with 4 columns: Vehicle No, Owner Name, Father Name, Owner Address. Contains a long list of vehicle registration details for Budgam.

DIPK-12115-24 DT: 18/02/2025

Sd/ ARTO-BUDGAM



National Lok Adalat in Budgam scheduled on March 08

GMK NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM: District Legal Services Authority Budgam has scheduled 1st National Lok Adalat on March 08, 2025 for pending/pre-litigation at District Court complex Budgam and all Tehsil courts of district Budgam for expected amicable settlement.

Accordingly, all concerned Ld. Advocates as well as Persons/parties who desire to get their cases settled through the Lok-Adalat have been informed to approach concerned courts for their amicable settlement by or before March 01, 2025.

The Pre-Litigation cases including Commercial/Money Recovery cases, Labour and Employment disputes cases, Electricity and water bills and other bill payment cases (excluding non-compoundable) and Maintenance Cases will be taken up in Lok Adalat.

The Post-litigation cases including Criminal Compoundable Offences, NI Act cases, under section

138, Commercial/Money Recovery cases, Motor Accident Claim cases (MACT), Labor dispute cases, Disputes related to Public Utility services such as Electricity & Water Bills cases etc. (excluding non-compoundable), Matrimonial disputes (except divorce), Land Acquisition cases, Services matters relating to pay and allowance and retrial benefits, Revenue cases, Other civil cases (rent, easementary rights, injunction suits, specific performance suits etc.) will be also taken up in the Lok Adalat.

Besides Parties/Persons, whose cases/matters are not pending in any court but desirous to settle their disputes at Pre-litigation stage can also approach office of the Secretary, District Legal Services Authority Budgam personally or through email id. dlsabudgam2020@gmail.com by or before March 01, 2025, so that their cases, claims/matters can be taken up in this Lok Adalat for their amicable settlement.

Jal Jeevan Mission achieving steady progress in J&K

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir has made significant strides in improving access to clean water in the rural households through "Jal Jeevan Mission" with many far-flung and hilly areas getting tap water supply for the first time in history.

The latest example of this achievement under the mission is Lanker Pombay village of Panchayat Khallora in Kulgam district, comprising about 80 households. This habitation was not having any sustainable water supply scheme and inhabitants were finding it very hard to meet their water needs. The locals would mainly depend on hand pumps and water tankers supplied by the department, for meeting their daily domestic water needs on bare minimum basis.

With the launch of Jal Jeevan Mission, a water supply scheme with dug-well as source worth

Rs. 187.68 lakh, was conceived for this habitation for providing potable water supplies as per prescribed standards. The land for construction of 0.60 Lakh Gallons RCC SR was provided by the villagers unhindered. The people centric and inclusive approach adopted in conceiving this water supply scheme rekindled their hope and the public reposed faith in the department for having a sustainable water supply system.

Now, this scheme with a rising main length of 2000 m, distribution pipe network of about 6000 m and Reinforced Cement Concrete Service Reservoir, stands completed and the water supply through household level tap connections is being provided to this habitation.

Jal Jeevan Mission aims to provide every rural household with a Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) within their premises, capable of

delivering a minimum of 55 liters of water per capita per day while adhering to set quality standards. More than 3200 water supply schemes have been taken up across the UT at an estimated cost of about Rs. 13000 crore, against which Rs. 7000 crore (approx.) have been expended, so far, with completion of about 1400 schemes and the remaining schemes being at advanced stages of completion.

To ensure transparency and accountability in implementation of the Mission, a robust monitoring mechanism under the overall supervision of Mission Director, Jal Jeevan Mission with various units like UT level experts/consultants, District Project Management Units (DPMUs), Third Party Monitoring Inspection Agencies (TPIAs) and Pani Samiti's besides District Jal Jeevan Mission (DJJM) headed by respective District Development Commissioners (DDCs)

have been established in addition to regular monitoring by the field engineers and technicians. The local communities have also actively participated in planning, implementation and monitoring of the mission activities at the village level.

To ensure cost-effectiveness and efficiency in project completion within established timelines, proven and successful solutions from regions like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Ladakh are being replicated in the region. These solutions included utilization of HDPE pipe distribution systems in specific locations and incorporation of GRP water storage tanks.

With the accelerated pace of implementation over the past years, J&K remains steadfast in its commitment towards ensuring drinking water security for all its rural residents for the next three decades.

IICT holds Draw of Lots, selects 100 weavers for free modern carpet looms



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR- The Indian Institute of Carpet Technology (IICT), Srinagar, Tuesday organised 'Draw of Lots' for selection of 100 active registered carpet weavers for distribution of free Modified Modern Steel Carpet Looms.

A large number of applicant weavers from various districts assembled in IICT premises at Bagh-e-Ali Mardan Khan, here, for participation in the Draw of Lots, after which 100 beneficiaries were selected by the Designated Committee in a fair and transparent manner.

Sharing details, Director IICT Zubair Ahmad, stated that these looms, which have been sanctioned by the Ministry of Textiles, GoI, at a cost of ₹43.70 lakh under its 'Wool Processing Scheme'

for the current financial year, shall be distributed amongst the selected beneficiaries at a function to be notified separately.

Highlighting the salient features, Director IICT stated that the prototype of the modern carpet looms was developed after intense research of 02 years, followed by mandatory testing. "The new loom has inbuilt detachable seating arrangement with back support, with working width of 6 ft. suitable for carpet weavers, who generally have small workplaces," he explained.

He further stated that the new loom can be shifted and installed at any other place, unlike the traditional wooden looms which were largely immovable. "These looms can stand their own weight and carry a better aesthetic appeal," he concluded.

KPDCL Announces Power Shutdown In Key Srinagar Areas

AGENCIES

SRINAGAR: According to CE KPDCL that in order to facilitate PHE Department to carry out works at Dalband Nishat and the replacement of 33kV CTs along with other related works at Brein Nishat, the power supply to receiving stations including Brein and Nisha besides feeding areas Brein, Tulip Garden, Pahloo, Taj- Vivanta, handampora, Ishbar, Nishat Pathan Bagh shall remain affected on February 22 from 11:00AM to 3:00PM.

In view of re-conductoring of 33kV Khanyar-Rainawari line from 0.15 ACSR to 0.2 ACSR, the power supply to receiving stations including Khanyar, Kathidarwaza, Rainawari and feeding areas including Miskeen Bagh, Rozabal, Maqdoom Sb, Hazaribagh, Jogilankar, JLNH Hospital, Kondabal, Hassanabad, Saida Kadal, Dal Kawpora Naidyar, Mental Hospital, Central Jail, Kathidarwaza, Local, Dal areas shall remain affected on February 22 & 25 from 10:00AM to 5:00PM.

In view of emergency stabilization work by STD Sopore, the power supply to receiving stations including Watlab, Tujjar, Dooru and respective feeding areas shall remain affected on February 22 from 10:00AM to 4:00PM.

Also, in view of shifting of utilities by BEACON-NH, the power supply to receiving stations including Palhalan, Hamray and feeding areas including Hanjiwera, Pattan, Palhalan, Hamray & adjoining

areas shall remain affected on February 20 from 10:00AM to 4:00PM.

In view of emergency stabilization work, the power supply to receiving stations including Baramull-I, Kanlibagh and feeding areas including Baramulla main town, DC office, Kanlibagh, Sangri & adjoining areas



shall remain affected on February 23 from 10:00AM to 4:00PM.

In order to carry out stabilization/improvement works, the power supply to receiving stations including Panzigam, Ajar and feeding areas including District Police Line, Town, Arin, Panzigam, Ajar and adjoining areas shall remain affected on February 20 & 25 from 10:00AM to 4:00PM.

The power supply to receiving stations including Nursoo, Naidhal, Ajas and feeding areas including Nursoo, Naidhal, Ajas, Garoora, Papchan, Nishat, Argam and adjoining areas shall remain affected on February 20 & 25 from 10:00AM to 4:00PM.

To carry out jumpering of 33 KV Kаланtra tap work by STD Sopore, the power

supply to receiving stations including Sangrama, Wagoor, Kreeeri, Ichloo and respective feeding areas shall remain affected on February 19 from 10:00AM to 4:00PM.

To carry out erection of ST Pole and shifting of 33 KV Budgam Kremshore Line permanently through underground cable at Raz-

in view of upgradation of 33 KV Wanpoh SICOP line from 0.1 ACSR to 0.2 ACSR, the power supply to receiving stations including Shamsipora, SICOP, Zirpara, Veeri, Cheniwader, Shuhul Flour Mill and feeding areas including Veer, Srigufwara, Zirpara, Shamsipora, Bijbehara-SICOP and adjoining areas shall remain affected on February 25 & 27 from 10AM to 5:00PM.

In order to carry augmentation/stabilization of 33 KV Awantipora Line, the power supply to receiving stations including Awantipora-I, Awantipora-II, IUST, AIIMS, Rice Mills, LIS and feeding areas including Malangpora, Padgampora, Beighpora, Barsoo and Awantipora shall remain affected on February 22 from 10:00AM to 4:00PM.

The power supply to receiving stations including Noorpora, Dadsara, Tral-1st, Tral-2nd and Chewa and feeding areas including Tral Town, Dadsara, Chewa, Noorpora, Mandoor, Bathnoor, Diver and adjoining areas shall remain affected on February 22 from 10:00AM to 4:00PM.

In view of extension of existing 33 KV feeder from Burzhama to Batpora Receiving Station, the power supply to receiving stations including Burzhama and feeding areas including Danihama, Khimber, Chaterhama, Teilbal, Burzhama, Gassu, Shoperbagh, Rahbagh and adjoining areas shall remain affected on February 22, 24 & 26 from 10:00AM to 5:00PM. (ANB)

CEO, SSCL Conducts On-Ground Review of Major Projects



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL), Dr. Owais Ahmed, undertook a comprehensive site visit today to assess the progress of various ongoing projects under the Smart City Mission.

The inspection covered critical locations, including the Amira Kadal pedestrian bridge, Goni Khan Market/Plaza, and the Jehangir Chowk Junction improvement project, highlighting the administration's commitment to timely and efficient execution of these initiatives.

Dr. Owais was accompanied by senior officials, including the Chief Engineer, Executive Engineers, and other key personnel from SSCL.

During the visit, he stressed on the importance of adhering to project timelines while maintaining the highest standards of quality and sustainability.

He urged the team to accelerate efforts to ensure the timely completion of these projects, which are pivotal to transforming Srinagar into a modern, citizen-friendly urban hub.

"Our mission is to create a sustainable and inclusive urban environment that addresses the needs of all residents. These projects are not just about infrastructure development but

also about improving the quality of life for the people of Srinagar," Dr. Owais said. He further stressed the need for meticulous planning and execution to ensure that the projects deliver long-term benefits to the city.

The projects under review are part of a broader initiative to upgrade Srinagar's urban infrastructure, enhance public amenities, and improve overall living conditions. The Jehangir Chowk Junction improvement project, in particular, aims to alleviate traffic congestion and enhance pedestrian safety, addressing key challenges faced by the city's residents.

CEO also motivated the SSCL team to remain focused and collaborative, emphasizing that their efforts will play a crucial role in shaping Srinagar's future as a vibrant and resilient urban center. "Every step we take today will have a lasting impact on the city's development. Let us work together to ensure that Srinagar becomes a model smart city," he added.

The visit concluded with a review meeting where officials discussed strategies to address challenges and expedite project completion. SSCL remains committed to delivering transformative projects that align with the aspirations of Srinagar's residents and contribute to the city's sustainable growth.

People concerned as begging menace expected to increase in Ramadhan

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

SRINAGAR: With the holy month of Ramadhan approaching, the prevalence of begging is expected to increase across Kashmir Valley, particularly in shrines, markets and other public spaces. Residents have expressed concerns over the growing number of beggars, including children, non-locals and organised groups, who flood the streets seeking charity.

While some are genuinely in need, others have reportedly turned begging into a professional and organised trade.

A recent study conducted by Rutba Gulzar, a student of Economics at the Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), highlights the organised nature of begging in Kashmir.

According to the research study, begging in Kashmir, which was traditionally a means of survival, has evolved into a profitable business controlled by organised cartels. The study also reveals that the influx of non-local beggars has altered the landscape, often pushing local beggars into obscurity.

A senior official from the Labour Department said there is no official data on the number of beggars in the region. "Begging is not a registered activity, and beggars are not required to

enroll anywhere," the official said.

He said non-locals entering Kashmir, including those turning to begging, are not documented. "Unlike labourers hired by contractors, beggars—whether local or non-local—remain undocumented," he added.

Many residents have urged authorities to take action, particularly in hotspots areas like shrines, where beggars tend to congregate in large numbers.

Fazil, a resident of Srinagar, said the same faces appear every year. "Many of them come to Kashmir only during Ramadhan because people are more generous during this time," he said.

Suhaib, another local, said, "Every year, as Ramadhan nears, the number of beggars on the streets increases. Many are outsiders who come here just for charity." He urged authorities to address the issue before it turns into a larger racket.

The study also highlights that some beggars have been in the trade for over two decades, with many migrating to Kashmir during peak tourist seasons to capitalise on the influx of visitors.

Researchers say that begging is no longer just a social issue but has transformed into a full-fledged industry with public health and economic implications—(KNO)

No plans for water meters in Kashmir: Jal Shakti official

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

SRINAGAR: Amid growing speculation about the installation of water meters in Kashmir, the Jal Shakti Department on Tuesday clarified that no such proposal has been received for the region as of now.

A senior official from the department said that while the government holds the authority to decide on the matter, there is no official directive or plan currently under consideration.

"As of now, the Jal Shakti Department has not received any proposal or order from the government regarding the installation of water meters in Kashmir," the official confirmed.

The official also spoke about the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), a centrally-sponsored initiative aimed at providing safe drinking water to all households. He said that over 85% of households in Kashmir now have access to drinking water, with expectations of achieving 100% coverage by March 31, 2025.—(KNO)

SAD DEMISE

Haleema Mir, wife of former JKAS officer Ghulam Nabi Mir, passed away after a brief illness in Srinagar. She was a retired government school teacher and was widely respected for her dedication to education and community service.



Her funeral was held in her native village, Khelan in Pulwama, where thousands of mourners gathered to pay their last respects. No Rasm-e-Chahrum will be observed.

Grief Stricken

Ghulam Nabi Mir (JKAS), Dr Mir Samiullah
Dr Aabida, Dr Rafia, Zahida (JKAS)
Abdul Rashid Elahi, Muzaffar Elahi
Neyaz Elahi, Cell: 7780864410, 9906255154

DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONER (HANDICRAFTS)
Ministry of Textiles, Government of India

Vocifer For Local
My Handicraft My Pride

EXHIBITION CUM SALE OF HANDICRAFTS ITEMS

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OFFICE OF THE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONER (HANDICRAFTS), MINISTRY OF TEXTILES, GOVT. OF INDIA, WEST BLOCK NO.7, R.K PURAM, NEW DELHI.

DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONER (HANDICRAFTS)
Ministry of Textiles, Government of India

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD (R&B) DIVISION TANGMARG

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Name: Waza Construction
Prop: Javed Ahmad Waza
S/O: Ghulam Nabi Waza
R/O: Narbal (Budgam)
Registration No. SE(R&B)SB/2752/BEE of 20218-19
Subject: Construction of link road from Bunshoora at Kashi Mohalla Kunzer

No./R&B/Div/T:-6986-88
Dated: 18/02/2025
PH No. 9906423199

Reference: -
1. This Office letter No.R&B/D/T/6578-79 dt: 27-01-2025.
2. This Office letter No.R&B/D/T/6724-25 dt: 05-02-2025.
3. This Office letter No.R&B/D/T/6874-75 dt: 12-02-2025.

The above cited subject work was tendered vide this office NIT No. 83/Rnb/Tangmarg of 2024-25 dated: 16-01-2025 in which you are participant among others. As per the e-comparative statement you were found to be first lowest tenderer for the said work and you were supposed to submit the performance security deposit @5% and Additional performance security @20% of the contract value as per the NIT Clause 5 & 9IX respectively which you failed to submit in due course of time.

Where as you were directed vide above referred notice to submit the performance security and additional performance to this office, so that the formal allotment may be issued in your favour. Whereas despite serving above mentioned notices you were given ample time to deposit performance security and additional performance security which you failed to deposit. Your non-seriousness has delayed in issuing the formal allotment and thereby delaying the execution of this prestigious work.

As such you are hereby given last and final opportunity to deposit performance and additional performance security as per NIT conditions within 15 days from issuance of this notice to you through print media. After that bid security will be forfeited and you shall be debarred for participation in tendering process in accordance with the general condition of contract.

DIPK-12157-24
DT: 18/02/2025

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
(R&B) Division Tangmarg

Good Morning **Kashmir**

EDITORIAL

**BOPEE's Matriculation error
A Disservice to Students**

The ongoing matriculation examination, administered by the Board of Professional Entrance Examinations (BOPEE), has come under heavy scrutiny due to multiple discrepancies in the formulation of question papers. The difficulty level of certain exams has left students scrambling, with many struggling to make sense of the complex and poorly structured questions.

Students, who have spent years preparing for this crucial examination, now face an uphill battle, not only against the clock but against questions that appear to have been designed without their academic journey in mind. The inconsistency in the questions' difficulty, coupled with an apparent lack of clarity, has created an environment where many students feel ill-prepared and unjustly tested.

It is essential that BOPEE takes immediate accountability for these errors. A transparent review and a commitment to fairer, more accessible exam papers are urgently needed. Such discrepancies in an examination of this magnitude undermine both the credibility of the board and the future of the students who are its responsibility. Education should empower, not create obstacles — it is time for BOPEE to rectify this situation and restore faith in the examination system.

The Great Indian Student Exodus

DR. SATYAWAN SAURABH

There has been a rise in the number of medical students leaving India to study abroad, with over 30,000 students going abroad every year. According to data from the National Medical Commission, only 16 percent of foreign medical graduates pass the Foreign Medical Graduate Examination screening test. Due to NEET competition, high tuition, and a lack of domestic seats, India's healthcare system is plagued, leading to an increasing reliance on foreign education. With low tuition costs, streamlined admission processes, and recognized degrees, many countries are preferred destinations for travel. Due to these factors, an increasing number of students are bridging the gap by pursuing medical education outside India, guaranteeing that they can still fulfill their aspirations of becoming a doctor.

Indian students prefer international medical courses due to the easy application and admission process. Students can study English or a foreign language. Tuition costs around Rs 200,000 to Rs 300,000 every year. No capitation fee is required. Many international universities have received recognition from the World Health Organization and the Medical Council of India. Students are exposed to a multicultural setting that broadens their life experiences and knowledge. With good educational quality, their degrees are recognized across international borders. Indian medical students are increasingly leaving the country due to intense competition for domestic seats. Students in India seek options abroad due to fierce competition, often in countries where medical regulations are lax.

Since India has only one medical seat for every 22 applicants, more than 20,000 students are forced to study abroad each year in countries such as China, Russia, and Ukraine. But the uneven quality of curriculum at many international medical schools affects students' employability and agility. Foreign graduates' access to India's healthcare system is delayed because they must pass the Foreign Medical Graduate Examination and complete an internship. Of the 32,000 Indian students who took the Foreign Medical Graduate Examination last year, only 4,000 qualified. For these students and families, high tuition costs, unstable economies, and security threats in some countries are burdensome.

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine led to the displacement of more than 24,000 Indian medical students, resulting in financial losses and an uncertain academic future. India's shortage of doctors is getting worse as more foreign-trained medical professionals choose to practice



abroad because of better opportunities there. The first change is to expand the number of medical seats to meet the domestic demand for medical education. 10,000 more medical seats will be added in 2025; India has a five-year target of 75,000 additional seats. Affordable medical colleges must be established to increase access to education in underprivileged areas. Access to medical education has increased by opening new government medical colleges and expanding AIIMS in tier-2 and tier-3 cities.

Private investment must be encouraged while maintaining high-quality instruction and reasonable costs. Institutions such as the Caribbean and Manipal College of Medical Sciences (Nepal) demonstrate that Indian institutions can grow domestically under a public-private partnership model. Reducing reliance on NEET is important by implementing more open admission processes and multiple entry routes. Bridge courses and alternative admission systems have been suggested by the National Medical Commission in an attempt to broaden selection criteria. International campuses must be promoted by Indian universities to serve Indian students. The international expansion of the IITs and the Manipal Group suggests a model in which Indian medical schools operate internationally under Indian regulations.

To strengthen medical education and internships, we must implement reforms that guarantee the provision of high-quality healthcare. Bringing Indian medical education at par with international standards and man-

datory internships in rural areas is needed. To emphasize patient care and practical skills, the Competency-Based Medical Education (CBME) curriculum was implemented in 2019. Investing in state-of-the-art laboratories, clinical experience, and medical faculty training is a must. Modern simulation labs and e-learning platforms for medical colleges are needed through AIIMS and NMC reforms. Regular assessment of government and private medical schools is necessary to guarantee uniformity.

The National Exit Test (NEXT), administered by the NMC, seeks to standardize licensing exams for medical graduates from both India and abroad. Providing better working conditions, incentives, and higher salaries in both urban and rural areas is essential. The Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) seeks to establish AIIMS-like institutions in underprivileged areas. Using technology to increase access to training and healthcare is imperative. Healthcare delivery in remote areas has improved thanks to the e-Sanjeevani telemedicine initiative, which has enabled over 14 crore consultations. A three-pronged strategy to increase medical seats, regulate private college tuition, and strengthen FMG integration is essential. The NMC's 2023 reforms regarding faculty standards and medical seat distribution are positive steps.

Also, encouraging rural service and creating public-private partnerships can improve quality and access while guaranteeing India's independence. I have nothing bad to say about this migration to get medical education

from India. In India, medical education is extremely expensive. The barriers to entry are irrational. I feel that many more students are capable of becoming doctors. India desperately needs more doctors, especially those willing to work in the rural areas of the country. Medical education in Central Asia is not bad, given the achievements of these countries in healthcare.

Colleges there will function more effectively and sustainably if they use Indian student enrollment to increase capacity utilization and generate additional income. If this helps a group of Indian students become doctors, it is a win-win situation for both parties. There is also the possibility of failure. Some people may not be able to meet the requirements to work in India. Some sub-agents or private contractors may withhold some relevant information in an attempt to attract more students.

Then there may be emergency situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic in China or the war in Ukraine. These may result in a group of students suffering significant losses. The Indian government's policy is not very good at helping students even in emergency situations. The only action the Indian government has taken with regard to medical education abroad is to make the qualifying examination for practicing in India more stringent. The question of how tough such an examination should be is controversial. The main issue is whether there are enough qualified medical professionals in India or whether it is aimed at preventing people from pursuing medical education abroad.

Author is a TV panelist.

Acoustic Neuromas And Advanced Radiosurgery



DR. ADITYA GUPTA

When Mr. Ravi Kumar, a 45-year-old IT professional, started experiencing a persistent ringing sound in his right ear, he initially dismissed it as stress-related. However, over time, the ringing grew louder, and he began to notice a gradual loss of hearing in that ear. Concerned, he sought medical advice and was diagnosed with acoustic neuroma—a benign tumor on the hearing nerve. Given the size and location of the tumor, his doctors recommended CyberKnife radiosurgery. The treatment was swift and non-invasive, requiring just a few sessions, and within months, his symptoms began to improve. Today, Mr. Kumar's hearing has stabilized, and the tumor has stopped growing, allowing him to return to his daily life without the fear of invasive surgery or long-term complications.

Acoustic Neuroma which is also known as vestibular schwannoma, is a benign tumour which is non-cancerous and usually grows slow. It develops on the hearing nerve that leads from inner ear to brain. The branches of this nerve influence the balance, hearing and the pressure from an acoustic neuroma that can cause hearing loss, ringing in your ear and unsteadiness. **Identify the early symptoms!**

The symptom starts with the gradual loss of hearing in one ear and the problem is accompanied by the ringing in the ear also with the feeling of fullness in the ear. The acoustic neuromas can cause the sudden hearing loss. The symptoms that occur over time includes:

- Vertigo
- Facial numbness and tingling
- Problem with balance
- Facial weakness
- Change in taste
- Difficulty in swallowing
- Headaches
- Clumsiness
- Mental confusion

Cyberknife radiosurgery has revolutionized the treatment of acoustic neuroma. What Causes Acoustic Neuroma?

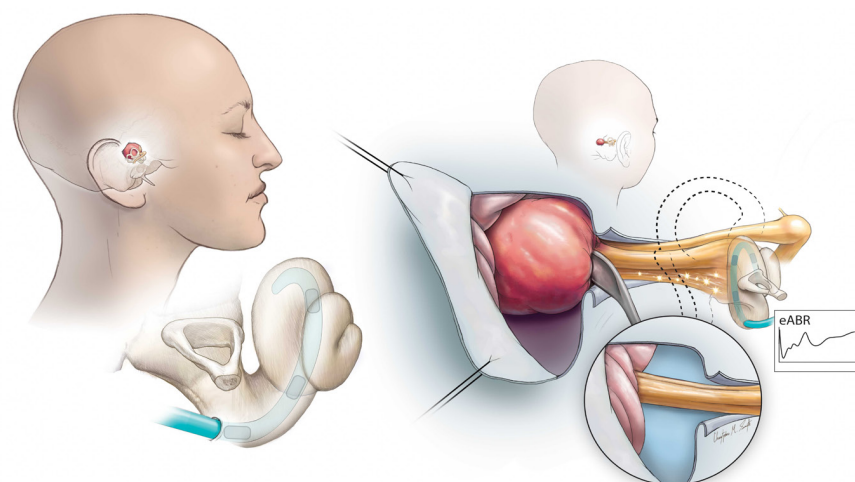
The cause of the development of acoustic neuroma is unknown. A rare hereditary disease "Neurofibromatosis" is associated with some cases of acoustic neuroma.

Acoustic Neuroma can also be caused by:

- Continuous exposure to loud noise
- Radiation on face and neck can lead to acoustic neuroma many years later.

In 1 out of 10 people, an acoustic neuroma is caused by neurofibromatosis type 2 (NF2). NF2 can run in further generations also. Person suffering from NF2 can develop benign tumours on the spinal cord and the coverings of the brain.

Acoustic neuromas are formed through type of cells called a Schwann cell. These cells cover the nerve cells of the body. That is why this tumour is also called vestibular schwannoma. Acoustic tumour grows with the nerve in the brain. This nerve is called cranial nerves or the acoustic or vestibulocochlear nerve. This nerve is responsible to control the sense of hearing and also the balance of the body. Acoustic tumour is rare and in between 1 and 20 people in every million worldwide are diagnosed each year with an acoustic neuroma. And it's more



common in women than men. Acoustic Neuroma Treated with Cyberknife

According to the survey published in the international journal 'Sage Journal' two out of 100,000 people aged 30 to 60 develop acoustic neuroma, which makes this condition incredibly rare.

The Acoustic Neuroma treatment depends on the size of the tumour. If the tumour is large, there will be more medical problems. The small size of the tumour is less than 1.5 cm, medium is between 1.5 cm and 2.5 cm and large is 2.5 cm or larger. Small tumours require cyberknife due to their size while the larger tumours typically require surgery.

The newest radiation therapy option for acoustic neuroma is a form of radio surgery that requires absolutely no incisions using new technology called CyberKnife. Patients treated with this new non-invasive experience minimal to no side effects. Radio surgery techniques can

stop tumours from growing by using high-dose exact precision radiation treatment. Patients treated by CyberKnife® technology experience minimal to no side effects, and receive treatment on an out-patient basis. After patients undergo radio surgery, the acoustic neuroma is closely monitored to confirm the growth has stopped or that the tumour has begun to shrink.

The surgery includes advanced robotics, tumour tracking and imaging capabilities. The patients with particular symptoms like pressure symptoms, tinnitus, or imbalance may be best treated with surgery because surgery will relieve the symptoms more rapidly. Also, the large tumours mean the size greater than 3.0 cm are best treated with surgery because these tumours can sometimes swell and cause obstruction in the flow of cerebrospinal fluid.

Treatment starts with the CT scan. The CT scan image is then imported to the CyberKnife Treatment Planning System. The oncologist team make a plan to treat the tumour while avoiding surrounding important sensitive structures.

The process involves typically 1 or 3 sittings and per sitting lasts for maximum 40 minutes. The treatment does not require any sedation and is painless.

The chances of side effect are next to negligible. Hearing is preserved and achieved in 50-75% of the time. Temporary numbness of one side of face is 2-3%. After the CyberKnife surgery tumours stabilize in size then shrink with time slowly.

Author is Director - Neurosurgery and Cyberknife, Artemis Hospital, Gurugram

The Storyteller: The Conflict Between Art And The Market

KALPANA PANDEY

Based on Satyajit Ray's short story "Golpo Boliye Tarini Khuro," Ananth Mahadevan's film *The Storyteller* (2025) centers on the conflict between authentic labour and money. The film focuses on two very different characters: Tarini Bandyopadhyay (Paresh Rawal), an elderly Bengali storyteller with communist ideals, and Ratan Garodia (Adil Hussain), a wealthy Gujarati businessman who hasn't been able to sleep for years as an insomniac.

Their contrasting worlds show how a profit-driven system often exploits creative work. The film's story isn't just entertaining—it explores who really owns stories, who gets credit, and how the creator fights back against this exploitation.

In *The Storyteller*, we see how art is misused in real life. Tarini, who has a deep passion for storytelling nurtured in the rich literary traditions of Bengal, is hired by Ratan Garodia, a rich cloth merchant from Ahmedabad suffering from chronic insomnia.

At first, the arrangement appears simple, but Ratan's true nature soon emerges. Despite his wealth, Ratan failed to impress his once-rejected, refined former lover Saraswati (Revathi) with his money. Instead, he exploits Tarini's fresh, oral stories by passing them off as his own work, trying to make his mark on Saraswati. This act of stealing ideas powerfully symbolizes how capitalist systems often exploit the creative work of ordinary people—like ghostwriters, artists, and working-class creatives—to generate profit.

Tarini is afraid to write and publish his stories because he fears criticism, failure, and not selling well. Ratan, a true businessman and a symbol of capitalist opportunism, takes advantage of Tarini's spontaneous stories by publishing them under his own name.

This act of theft is not just a plot twist—it is a clear example of how the capitalist system routinely steals the hard work and creativity of the working class for profit. The wealthy businessman who steals Tarini's stories feels no moral guilt; he calmly smiles as he uses the storyteller's work to achieve his own goals, rarely feeling that anything is wrong. This is the central theme of Satyajit Ray's story: how capitalism exploits the hard work and



creativity of ordinary people.

The Storyteller also shows how powerful cultures can overshadow smaller, local ones. The film compares two very different worlds: the Bengali culture of Kolkata and the Gujarati culture of Ahmedabad. In Kolkata, where Tarini lives, the city feels vibrant and steeped in tradition—with bustling fish markets, historic old buildings, and stories passed down through generations. Here, storytelling isn't about owning ideas; it is like a community treasure shared by everyone.

In contrast, Ratan Garodia's mansion in Ahmedabad represents the cold, emotionless side of capitalism. His home is filled with expensive furniture, costly books that are never read, and pricey artworks like Picasso prints, all of which serve only to show off his wealth and status.

The film criticizes this kind of "culture" where art and stories lose their soul and are merely packaged for sale, causing the unique character of regional traditions to disappear. Capitalism transforms diverse cultures into a uniform, market-friendly form, stripping them of their distinctiveness and beauty. The collective joy of Kolkata and the emptiness of the mansion in Ahmedabad symbolize this struggle.

The film's message is about how

artistic integrity can both protect and challenge capitalist pressures. In the end, Tarini and Ratan begin to write each other's stories. Tarini starts writing his stories to protect his intellectual property and reclaim his identity, while Ratan also begins to write.

Both characters undergo a transformation, although the ending feels very idealistic. When the strictly vegetarian Ratan, known for his contradictory behavior, asks his servant if he fed the fish and gave feed the fish, referring Tarini as fish feed, it exposes the true cost of his actions.

In this film, a cat—naturally inclined to crave fish—is forced to eat vegetarian food. Eventually, it rebels by stealing fish from its owner's tank. The cat's struggle between its innate desire for fish and the imposed vegetarian diet serves as a metaphor for the tension between primal instincts and societal constraints.

Forced to suppress its biological needs, the theft symbolizes defiance against artificial control, highlighting themes of autonomy and the futility of denying natural urges. The vegetarian food represents oppressive norms or misguided ideals, while the stolen fish embodies authenticity and self-fulfilment.

Ethically, the act questions whether

survival or conformity holds greater moral weight, critiquing systems that force individuals into unnatural roles. Whether seen as a triumphant rebellion or a cautionary tale, the story mirrors broader struggles—resisting societal expectations or reclaiming identity—underscoring the universal conflict between nature and nurture, freedom and control. Tarini, who understands the true nature of the cat, feeds it fish. When Tarini leaves Ahmedabad, he takes the cat with him to Kolkata, where he continues to nourish it with fish.

The film's key female characters are portrayed as independent and strong. The widow Saraswati (Revathi) is smart and values her own principles. She tells Ratan, "I might have managed with a businessman's values, but not with a thief," and leaves him with her best wishes.

Ratan appears weak and helpless in comparison. Saraswati values knowledge and wisdom over material wealth, showing that true strength comes from within. The librarian Suzi (Tanishtha Chatterjee) is also shown as confident and offers her unique perspective.

Even the memory of Tarini's late wife, who gifted him a pen to write, becomes a lasting source of inspiration, highlighting the powerful influ-

ence women have on art and creativity. These women are not the pitiable figures of old literature but are strong characters created by Satyajit Ray's progressive vision, giving the story a rich, positive dimension.

Unlike the fast pace of modern films, *The Storyteller* invites viewers to slow down and savor the details of human life. Mahadevan deliberately uses a slow, thoughtful pace, while Alphonse Roy's beautiful cinematography captures nostalgic scenes like hand-pulled rickshaws in Kolkata and the grand marble buildings in Ahmedabad.

This calm, almost meditative style is very different from today's quick cuts and flashy editing. By providing a reflective and immersive experience, the film emphasizes the lasting power of art that is created slowly. It teaches us that real art takes time—it is a process that cannot be rushed but requires patience, sacrifice and courage. To truly understand life and the essence of a story, taking time to pause and reflect is the real strength of art.

The impact of the film is further enhanced by its lead actors. Paresh Rawal gives a strong performance as Tarini. When Tarini realizes the deceit by Ratan, he thoughtfully and calmly confronts him by staying at his house for three to four months.

He rejects being objectified and rebels, proving to be a supportive and thoughtful comrade, friend and family member despite being a common man. On the other hand, Ratan appears as a lonely rich man. Adil Hussain portrays Ratan Garodia, a capitalist caught in his own insecurities, with great restraint.

The Storyteller is not just a retelling of Satyajit Ray's classic—it forces us to rethink the role of art in a society driven by profit. The film shows how the capitalist system exploits creative work and devalues it. When Tarini finally begins to write his stories to establish his identity, he takes steps to reclaim control over his creativity.

The film is all about this struggle. When Tarini humorously remarks, "Even copying requires brains," he mocks a world where stealing ideas is easier than creating them. The *Storyteller* is a story about reclaiming creativity from the market and giving justice to those who work hard to create.

(The author hails from Mumbai, Maharashtra)

Sarthal: The Unexplored Paradise

MUDASAR ALI

Sarthal, located in the Tehsil Bani of District Kathua, is a beautiful tourist destination, situated near Bhaderwah, Basohli, and Pathankot. It is approximately 50 kilometers away from Bhaderwah and is one of the most charming places in Jammu and Kashmir, often referred to as "Mini Kashmir."

The area is blessed with abundant natural beauty, with lush greenery, dense forests, towering mountains, and clear air. Sarthal's scenery rivals popular destinations like Gulmarg, Pahalgam, and Sonamarg. The beauty of the region has been further enhanced by snowfall, attracting visitors year-round.

Mudasar Ali, a prominent social activist from Bani, has dedicated extensive efforts to the development of the Sarthal tourist destination. His deep passion for the region and its potential has led him to conceptualize several visionary plans to enhance its appeal and infrastructure.

With a clear understanding of the area's rich natural beauty and untapped potential, Mudasar Ali is not only a driving force in local activism but also a key figure whose insights could play a pivotal role in transforming Sarthal into a nationally recognized tourist hub.

It is now essential for the government to recognize his invaluable contribution and actively seek his guidance in advancing the region's development. His visionary plans and profound knowledge of the area's needs could provide the necessary momentum to catapult Sarthal to the national stage, ensuring it receives the attention and resources it deserves.

Through collaboration with forward-thinking leaders like Mudasar Ali, the government can help realize



the full potential of this beautiful destination and make it a must-visit spot for tourists from across the country.

The region is enriched in natural beauty and offers an enchanting atmosphere that draws both local and international tourists. Each year, thousands of tourists from Bhaderwah, Jammu, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi, and other states come to enjoy the serene landscape of Sarthal. Particularly, during the summer, tourists flock here because the weather remains neither too hot nor too cold, providing a comfortable environment for them to enjoy the lush greenery and scenic beauty.

In the winter, the area is covered in snow, and visitors enjoy playing with snowballs, making the experience even more delightful. In addition to being a popular tourist spot, Sarthal is also a location for film shootings, with several songs having been recorded here.

The region also hosts various events like cricket tournaments and the annual Chinj Mela/Dangal (wrestling competition) held every year from June 25th to 27th. This mela has been celebrated for over a hundred years

and attracts people from Bhaderwah, Kathua, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, and beyond.

Sarthal's attractiveness is not only due to its beauty but also because it serves as a picnic destination for schools and colleges. As the summer season begins, the Gujjars and Bakarwals bring their livestock to the area, adding to the charm of this picturesque place. The locals are always happy to see tourists enjoying the beauty of the area, as it brings life and prosperity to the region.

Traditional attire in Sarthal includes churidar pajamas, phadi woolen coats in winter, and pherans (long, loose-fitting garments) for both men and women. Men also wear a dastar (turban), while women wear ghagras. The region's cuisine includes local delicacies like rajma chawal, kasrod ki sabzi (fiddlehead), and sarson ka saag. Dairy products such as kadhi or karhi (a yogurt-based dish), kalari cheese, desi lassi (yogurt drink), and makhan (butter) are also staples. Local sweets like barfi and jalebi are favorites, while fruits such as apples, pears, peaches,

plums, apricots, and cherries, along with dry fruits like almonds and walnuts, are commonly found here.

The languages spoken in Sarthal include Pahari, Dogri, Hindi, Kashmiri, and Urdu. Local music and dance styles include Dogri and Pahari songs, along with the Kud and Gaddi dances.

Despite its natural beauty, Sarthal, and the Bani Tehsil, in general, has been often overlooked by both tourists and authorities. The region faces several challenges, including a lack of basic infrastructure that could make it a more viable tourist destination. Sarthal suffers from power issues, and although a mobile tower has been installed, it has yet to be activated.

Public toilet complexes and health facilities are also lacking. Tourists often face difficulties in finding accommodation or food, as the area lacks hotels or restaurants to cater to the growing number of visitors. Furthermore, cleanliness is a concern, with a shortage of dustbins and proper waste management.

The people of Sarthal want the government to improve infrastructure, build parks, install fountains,

and create better facilities for visitors. They also urge for the development of the Chattergala Tunnel, which has been awaited for over five years, as it would help connect Bani to Bhaderwah more efficiently, opening up opportunities for locals, especially the educated youth, who are currently struggling with unemployment. This project could be a game-changer for the region, providing employment opportunities and boosting tourism.

Additionally, the locals hope that the government will consider installing a Gondola lift in Sarthal to attract more tourists and improve the overall infrastructure. A better road network, including the year-round opening of the Bhaderwah, Basohli, Pathankot highway, would make the region more accessible, encouraging tourism and benefiting the economy.

The locals also believe that promoting Sarthal and Bani as a tourism hub will help curb the growing issues of unemployment and drug abuse among the youth. The tourism industry could provide a stable source of income for families, allowing them to lead better lives.

In conclusion, Sarthal is a hidden gem that deserves more attention and promotion. With its natural beauty, rich culture, and potential for growth, the area could become a major tourist destination if the government takes the necessary steps to improve its infrastructure.

By focusing on Sarthal, the government can provide employment opportunities, enhance the local economy, and create a better future for the residents. Local authorities, such as Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh, Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, and the Director of Tourism Jammu, are urged to visit the area and help elevate its status on the tourism map of Jammu and Kashmir.

Are Peanuts A Good Snack Choice? Benefits & Downsides

Peanuts can be a great snack choice due to their rich nutrient profile, high protein content, and satisfying crunch. They provide a good balance of healthy fats, fibre, and essential vitamins like niacin, folate, and vitamin E. Peanuts also contain antioxidants, such as resveratrol, which contribute to heart health. However, they are calorie-dense, so portion control is important. Additionally, some people may have peanut allergies, which can be severe. Eating plain, roasted, or lightly salted peanuts is ideal, while avoiding heavily processed versions with added sugars and unhealthy oils ensures the healthiest option. Read on as we underline the benefits and downsides of consuming peanuts.



5 Benefits of consuming peanuts as a snack

- 1. High in protein and fibre**
Peanuts are a rich source of plant-based protein and dietary fibre, making them an excellent snack for sustained energy. The combination of protein and fibre helps to keep you full for longer, reducing overall calorie intake and aiding in weight management.
- 2. Supports heart health**
Peanuts contain healthy monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, which help lower

bad cholesterol (LDL) while maintaining good cholesterol (HDL). They are also rich in arginine, an amino acid that helps improve blood flow and reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases.

- 3. Good for brain function**
The niacin and folate in peanuts support brain function and cognitive health. Niacin helps maintain healthy nerve func-

tion and reduces the risk of age-related cognitive decline, such as Alzheimer's disease.

- 4. Regulates blood sugar levels**

Despite being energy-dense, peanuts have a low glycemic index (GI), which means they do not cause rapid spikes in blood sugar. Their protein, fibre, and healthy fat content help stabilise blood sugar levels, making

them a good snack option for individuals with diabetes.

- 5. Rich in antioxidants**

Peanuts contain a variety of antioxidants, including polyphenols, vitamin E, and resveratrol, which help protect cells from oxidative stress and inflammation. Boiled peanuts, in particular, have been found to contain higher levels of antioxidants than raw or roasted

peanuts.

- 5 Downsides of consuming peanuts as a snack**

- 1. High in calories and fats**
A small handful (about 28g) contains roughly 160-200 calories, so portion control is crucial, especially for individuals trying to lose or maintain weight. Overeating peanuts, particularly those with added salt or sugar, can lead to excess

calorie intake.

- 2. Allergy risk**

Peanut allergies are among the most common and can be life-threatening. Even small traces can trigger severe allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis. This makes peanuts a risky snack for individuals with allergies or in settings where cross-contamination could occur.

- 3. Potential for aflatoxin contamination**

Peanuts are susceptible to contamination by aflatoxins, toxic compounds produced by moulds that grow on improperly stored peanuts. Aflatoxin exposure has been linked to liver damage and an increased risk of liver cancer.

- 4. High in omega-6 fatty acids**

While peanuts contain healthy fats, they are also high in omega-6 fatty acids. An imbalanced ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids can contribute to inflammation, increasing the risk of chronic diseases such as arthritis, heart disease, and metabolic disorders.

- 5. Possible digestive issues**

Peanuts contain phytic acid, an anti-nutrient that can interfere with the absorption of minerals like iron, zinc, and calcium. This may contribute to deficiencies in individuals who consume large amounts of peanuts regularly.

By consuming peanuts in moderation and choosing the right preparation method, you can enjoy their health benefits while minimising potential downsides.

Disclaimer: This content including advice provides generic information only. It is in no way a substitute for a qualified medical opinion. Always consult a specialist or your own doctor for more

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

'Chillai Khurd' Likely

develop over Afghanistan on February 19 and quickly move towards Jammu and Kashmir by February 20, bringing widespread rain and snow across the Union Territory.

"The first signs of the disturbance will be felt in the higher reaches from late night on February 19, with precipitation gradually intensifying as it spreads across the region. Most parts of Jammu and Kashmir are likely to witness a moderate spell of rain/snow, along with the possibility of a heavy spell in some parts," he said.

"Overall, on average, Jammu region may record higher precipitation than Kashmir Valley. The Chenab Valley districts - Ramban, Kishtwar, and Doda - are also expected to receive moderate to heavy precipitation. In Kashmir Valley plains, rains may dominate on that day, but a sharp drop in temperature could trigger a transition to snowfall, especially under prolonged heavy precipitation," Keng added.

Temperatures, which will remain in the range of 15 - 18°C on February 19, are expected to drop below 7°C on February 20. The Pir Panjal range is expected to receive heavy snowfall, affecting areas such as Gulmarg, Sinthan Top, Peer Ki Gali, and other parts of Mughal Road, Keng added.

Due to higher temperatures, lightning and thundershowers may remain a common feature on that day, especially in Jammu region. There is a risk of shooting stones/landslides on Jammu-Srinagar National Highway on 20th February. Weather is expected to improve from 21st February onward," he said.

Shah Asks J&K

new criminal laws, made under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in Jammu and Kashmir by April 2025.

For the full implementation of the new laws, Shah said, it is imperative to change the attitude of the police personnel and the administration and create awareness about the new laws among the citizens.

He also stressed on the need to fix responsibility of police officers to expedite the process of filing chargesheets. He said that every police station in Jammu and Kashmir should put the maximum use of the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS) into practice.

The Home Minister said that 100% training of investigating officers regarding the provisions of the new laws should be ensured, at the earliest.

"Decisions on provisions related to terrorism and organised crime should be taken only after thorough scrutiny at the level of Superintendent of Police. Strict monitoring is required to ensure that these provisions under the new laws are not misused," he said.

Shah said that the Jammu and Kashmir administration and government have done satisfactory work towards the implementation of the new criminal laws despite difficult circumstances.

He said that the progress of implementation of the three new laws in Jammu and Kashmir should be reviewed on a monthly, fortnightly and weekly basis at the level of the Chief Minister, Chief Secretary and Director General of Police, respectively.

Will Aware People

during a meeting in the Parliament complex, but added that the security was

not discussed during Tuesday's meeting.

When asked about his absence from the security review meetings, CM Omar Abdullah said if it had been decided to exclude elected government representatives from such meetings, what could he say about it?

"Today's was about new laws and their implementation," he added.

About the reaction of Rahul Gandhi to the appointment of the new Election Commissioner of India, CM Abdullah said as Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi has the right to dissent from such a selection. "The opposition does not need to always agree with the government. As the Leader of the Opposition, he has the right to express disagreement, where it has been said that the opposition should agree with what the government does. He has the right to express disagreement. As far as the hearing is concerned, the hearing is going on in the Supreme Court and the decision will come. What can I say in this, I am the Chief Minister of a state, and this is a matter of 'Markaz' (Central government)."

The Union Home Minister has already reviewed the implementation of three new criminal laws in 11 states so far. Tuesday's meeting chaired by Amit Shah was also attended by J&K Lt Governor Manoj Sinha besides senior officials of the Central and the UT government.

The Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Indian Criminal Procedure Code (CrPc) and the Evidence Act of 1872 enforced by the British have been replaced by the new three criminal laws—the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam.

2 Kashmiri

a huge quantity of cash packed in polybags and placed in the footrest area of the passenger seat.

The cash was seized and counted in the presence of the magistrate, which amounts over Rs 2 crore in denominations of Rs 500 notes.

Two Kashmir based youth were also arrested and taken to Lakhampur Police Station for further questioning.

"An investigation is underway to find out the reason behind carrying so much money. We are exploring all the angles including drugs, terror fund and tax evasion to find the sources of cash," a police officer said.

The authorities have registered a case and are proceeding with their investigation into the incident.

Suspected IEDs

disposal squads have reached both spots to defuse the suspicious objects, which could be improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

The security forces have been aggressively carrying out anti-terrorist operations in the union territory.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah chaired two high-level security review meetings on J&K recently. The Home Minister gave orders to the security forces to ensure zero infiltration and zero tolerance to terrorists.

Lt Governor Manoj Sinha also chaired two security review meetings, one in Srinagar and the other in Jammu. He directed the security forces to dismantle the terror ecosystem by carrying out operations against terrorists, their over-ground workers (OGWs) and sympathisers.

The Lt Governor said the terror ecosystem comprises those running hawala rackets, drug smuggling and drug peddling as the money so generated is used to sustain terrorism in Jammu and Kash-

mir.

There are also intelligence reports that terrorists are waiting across the Line of Control (LoC) to infiltrate into J&K since the traditional mountain routes used by the infiltrators are still open because of little snowfall this winter.

On February 11, two soldiers, including a captain, were killed in an IED explosion in the Akhnour sector of the LoC in Jammu district. The IED that killed the two soldiers had been planted by the terrorists, the officials said later.

Two soldiers were injured last week in firing from the Pakistan side of the LoC in the Poonch and Rajouri districts of the Jammu division. As per reports, the Pakistan Army suffered 'heavy casualties' following action by the Indian Army.

Later, the Indian Army, in an official statement, said the ceasefire along the LoC was intact and continued to be observed as per the understanding between both armies.

The ceasefire violation along the LoC has been rare ever since India and Pakistan renewed the agreement on February 25, 2021.

Bank Officer Among

of the accused and thus, managed to fraudulently obtain loans amounting to Rs 5 crore from different branches of the Jammu and Kashmir Bank, causing a huge wrongful loss to the bank.

Taking its investigation forward, the crime branch arrested five accused — then manager (scale-II) of the bank's Rajouri branch Jatinder Singh (now demoted) of Jammu, impersonators Mohammad Kabir, Mohammad Zafeer Khan and Zafar Iqbal of Poonch and Mohammad Shakeel of Rajouri, the spokesperson said

Jammu & Kashmr

widespread joy and firecrack celebration in Mundji village of Sopore sub-division when the conviction of the paedophile was announced yesterday.

Kashmir has seen many imposters and fraudsters impersonating as religious leaders and cheating the gullible locals.

Recently, police took an insane person into custody and debt him to the hospital for psychiatric diseases. This insane person had constricted a replica of the holiest Muslim place of worship the Kaaba in Mecca.

He asked those who could not perform the Hajj or the Umrah to go around this replica. Police arrested five workers including a carpenter and others who had made the replica at the instance of the insane person.

Some years earlier, another so-called faith healer, Gulzar Peer asked young girls to enter his bedroom, which he called the gateway to heaven. This imposter and maniac was also arrested by police and tried for his alleged heinous crime.

IGP Kashmir Discusses

Group (SOG), reviewing their operational readiness and capabilities. Birdi expressed satisfaction with their high level of training and professionalism, acknowledging their critical role in counter-terror operations. Discussions also included the summer operation strategy, outlining key security tactics and contingency plans for the upcoming season.

Later, IGP Birdi visited the 90th Battalion CRPF camp, where a joint demonstration of operational tactics was conducted by SOG and CRPF personnel. The demon-

stration showcased advanced operational skills, coordination, and response strategies, reaffirming the commitment of both forces to maintaining peace and security in the region.

Speaking on the occasion, IGP Birdi praised the dedication and professionalism of the personnel, emphasizing the importance of sustained collaboration and proactive measures to counter evolving security challenges.

The visit was attended by IG Ops CRPF Mitesh Jain, Joint Director IB Pankaj Thakur, DIG SKR Javid Iqbal Matoo, DIG CRPF Anantnag Kulvir Singh Deswal, DIG CRPF Awantipora Alok Awasthi, SSP Anantnag Dr. G.V. Sundeep Chakravarthy, SSP Kulgam Sahil Sarangal, SSP Pulwama P.D. Nitya, SSP Shopian Anayat Ali Choudhary, SSP Awantipora Sajad Ahmad, and commandants of CRPF, IRP, among other Senior officers.

MHA Re-Designates

was born in Jammu & Kashmir in 1965 and holds a degree in Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS).

Over the course of his career, Dr Kotwal has held various key positions across Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh including Divisional Commissioner of Jammu, Deputy Commissioner in multiple Districts of J&K and Principal Secretary in Departments such as Health & Medical Education, Revenue, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Planning Development & Monitoring Department as well as Commissioner/Secretary and Administrative Secretary in various other Departments. He has also served as Financial Commissioner in the Revenue Department, as Inspector General of Registration and as Secretary to the Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir—(KNO)

Those Playing

education minister further said, "Textbooks of 70-80 percent have almost reached the district levels and before the culmination of winter break, 100 percent of books will reach the students."

Earlier, the government issued admit cards to all of the applicants following the hue and cry regarding denying of exam registration forms to 22 students of 10th standard.

Education Minister had said that the academic year of the students is very precious and the government will not waste it at any cost—(KNO)

CPI (M) Resolutions

special status. "Those who are jailed outside should be shifted back to J-K. We want those who do not face any serious charges to be released as a confidence-building measure," he said, also demanding an end to alleged harassment of people on the pretext of fighting militancy.

"Anyone allegedly involved in militancy should be dealt with as per the law but no innocent person should be harmed," he said, referring to the suicide of a man in Kathua after alleged harassment by police and the killing of a truck driver in Baramulla district early this month.

Efforts should be intensified to ensure the return and rehabilitation of Kashmiri migrants who have been living in exile for the last over three decades, he added.

Tarigami said the conference concluded by electing a state committee of 23 members headed by secretary Mohd Abass Rather.

Gujarat local body elections: BJP establishes strong lead as counting continues

IAN S

GANDHINAGAR : The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was maintaining a steady lead over the Congress in local body elections in Gujarat as the counting was underway on Tuesday.

The counting of votes commenced at 9 a.m. for the elections held on February 16 for the Junagadh Municipal Corporation, 68 Municipalities, and three Taluka Panchayats. Notably, Chorwad Municipality recorded the highest voter turnout at a record-breaking 76 per cent. An average voter turnout of 57 per cent was recorded.

Early trends indicate a strong performance by the BJP, with significant victories across multiple wards. In Sanand Municipality, the BJP panel clinched a win in Ward No. 1, while a similar victory was recorded in Mansa Municipality's Ward No. 1.

The party also marked a successful start in Lunawada-Balasinar. The BJP panel has secured a lead in Lunawada and Balasinar while gaining an advantage in Ward No. 1 of Santrampur.

The Congress party was ahead in Khanpur-Kanod



Taluka Panchayat.

Additionally, in Bhanvad, all 24 BJP candidates were declared winners unopposed. Further victories for the BJP were registered in Ward No. 1 of Kutiyana Municipality, Valsad Municipality, and Vanthali in Junagadh. Similarly, in Halol Municipality, the BJP panel emerged victorious in Ward No. 1. In Khedbrahma, all four BJP candidates from Ward No. 1 secured a win, reinforcing the party's stronghold.

The ruling party also claimed Ward No. 1 in Halol Municipality.

Early results show a victorious start for the BJP

in Raipur's Gandhinagar Taluka Panchayat seat and Ward No. 1 of Jamjodhpur. The first ward of Chorwad Municipality also went in favour of the BJP.

Elsewhere, the party registered significant wins in Chalala, Amreli, securing four seats in the 24-seat Chalala Napa. The BJP also swept Ward No. 1 in Prantij (Sabarkantha), Talod, and Kodinar. Another notable win was recorded in Mansa Municipality's Ward No. 1. In Lunawada, all four BJP candidates clinched victory in Ward No. 1, while in Dhrol Napa, the BJP secured a win in the same ward.

The party also triumphed in Ward No. 1 in Sanand Napa, Jamjodhpur, and Kodinar. Additionally, the BJP won in Sabarkantha's Prantij and Talod. The elections in Songadh Municipality (Tapi) saw the BJP securing four seats, marking a significant opening in the 28-seat municipal body.

The local body elections are divided into two main categories: Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Rural Local Bodies (RLBs). ULBs include Municipal Corporations and Municipalities that govern cities and towns, while RLBs comprise Dis-

trict Panchayats, Taluka Panchayats, and Gram Panchayats, which oversee rural administration.

Gujarat has six major Municipal Corporations -- Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodra, Rajkot, Bhavnagar, and Jamnagar -- each responsible for managing urban infrastructure, sanitation, water supply, and public amenities. Additionally, there are over 150 Municipalities that govern smaller towns.

The state also has 33 District Panchayats and 248 Taluka Panchayats that handle rural development programs, village infrastructure, and local governance matters.

Village Panchayats, which form the lowest tier of local governance, play a significant role in implementing state and Central government schemes at the grassroots level. Elections for these bodies are keenly contested, with major political parties like the BJP, Indian National Congress (INC), and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) competing for control. Historically, the BJP has dominated Gujarat's local body elections, especially in urban areas where it has consistently secured major victories in Municipal Corporations.

Qatar's Amir to hold meeting with PM Modi, receive ceremonial welcome at Rashtrapati Bhavan today



IAN S

NEW DELHI : Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani is in India for a two-day state visit, marking his second visit to the country since March 2015 at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Emir, accompanied by a high-level delegation that includes ministers, senior officials, and a business delegation, will be accorded a ceremonial welcome at the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi, at 10:00 a.m. Tuesday for a ceremonial reception.

The Emir will then proceed to a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Nar-

endra Modi at Hyderabad House at 12:00 p.m.

This meeting will focus on strengthening the long-standing relationship between the two nations, with various issues of mutual interest expected to be discussed.

At 1:00 p.m., an exchange of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) will take place at the same venue, marking a key milestone in the collaboration between India and Qatar.

In the evening, at 7:00 p.m., Sheikh Tamim will meet with President Draupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan. The day will conclude with the Emir's departure from India at 9:05 p.m.

In a special gesture, Prime Minister Modi personally welcomed Sheikh Tamim at the Air Force Station in Palam on Monday evening. The warm embrace shared between the two leaders reflected the deep bond and special relationship between India and Qatar.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) posted on X, "A special gesture for a special friend! PM Modi welcomed HH Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, Amir of Qatar, at the airport, as he arrived in New Delhi on his second state visit to India. The visit will further strengthen the bonds of India-Qatar partnership."

Tesla ramps up hiring in India after Elon Musk-PM Modi meet in US

IAN S

NEW DELHI : After the successful visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the US, Elon Musk-run Tesla has ramped up hiring in India, a market where it is slated to enter anytime soon.

The hiring by Tesla in India comes as Musk met PM Modi in Washington, DC, last week and discussed various issues, including space, mobility, technology and innovation. On its LinkedIn page, the electric car-maker has posted hiring alerts for at least 13 roles -- mostly in Mumbai and Delhi.

The jobs include business operation analyst, service technician and various advisory roles, including customer engagement manager and order operations specialist, as per its LinkedIn advertisements.

The hiring comes at a time when India has now reduced basic customs duty on high-end cars priced above \$40,000 from 110 per cent to 70 per cent.

Musk has toyed with the idea of developing a more affordable version of Tesla for the India market but there has not been much movement on it yet.

After meeting PM Modi, Musk said it was an "honour to meet" him.



"It was a delight to meet Elon Musk's family and to talk about a wide range of subjects," PM Modi earlier posted on X. "We discussed various issues, including those he is passionate about such as space, mobility, technology, and innovation. I talked about India's efforts towards reform and furthering 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance'."

The Tesla and SpaceX CEO called on PM Modi at the Blair House in Washington, DC.

"PM Modi and Musk discussed strengthening collaboration between Indian and US entities in innovation, space exploration, artificial intelligence, and sustainable development. Their discussion also touched on opportunities to deepen

cooperation in emerging technologies, entrepreneurship, and good governance," according to a statement from the MEA.

During the meeting, the PM also presented books to Elon Musk's three children. He gifted them 'The Crescent Moon by Rabi-ndranath Tagore, The Great RK Narayan Collection, and Panchatantra by Pandit Vishnu Sharma. He later also shared photos that show the children reading the books.

Meanwhile, Musk also presented PM Modi with a gift. It is speculated to be a heat shield tile that flew on SpaceX's Starship flight test 5 which took place in October last year. The object was engraved with the words: "Starship flight test 5, October 12, 2024."

Politically motivated: Amit Malviya hits back at Rahul Gandhi over CEC appointment dissent note

IAN S

NEW DELHI : BJP IT Cell Chief Amit Malviya has hit back at the Leader of Opposition (LoP) in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, for submitting a dissent note over the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), calling it "politically motivated" and lacking merit.

"It is an attempt to undermine the constitutional mandate of the elected government through malicious judicial activism. Additionally, it conveniently misreads and misinterprets the Supreme Court's judgment on the CEC's appointment," Malviya stated in a post on X on Tuesday.

Gandhi, in his dissent note, cited a March 2023 ruling by a five-judge Constitution Bench led by Justice K.M. Joseph, which revised the process for appointing members of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

Giving reference to the same ruling, Malviya argued, "To determine the original intent of the Constitution's framers, the Court analyzed the 1949 Constituent Assembly Debates and noted that the phrase 'subject to the

provisions of any law to be made by Parliament' in Article 324(2) explicitly left the appointment process to Parliament's discretion."

Before this ruling, the President appointed the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners solely on the Prime Minister's recommendation. The appointment process is now gov-

new CEC based on their recommendation.

"The Congress, and the Gandhis in particular, should be the last to sermonize on the appointment of the CEC, given their record of abusing the office, appointing pliant candidates, and later rewarding them with political appointments after stepping down," Malviya added.

Earlier, Rahul Gandhi questioned the urgency of the appointment, highlighting that the composition of the selection committee is under judicial review.

"The Modi government has exacerbated concerns over the integrity of our electoral process by violating the Supreme Court's order and removing the Chief Justice of India from the selection panel," he wrote in a post on X on Tuesday.

Gandhi, who participated in the selection meeting, submitted a dissent note to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, arguing that an independent Election Commission depends on a transparent selection process, free from executive influence.



erned by the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service, and Term of Office) Act, 2023, Malviya said further.

Malviya elaborated that under this Act, a search committee led by the Law Minister, along with two senior bureaucrats, shortlists five candidates. This list is then sent to a selection committee comprising the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition, and a Union Cabinet Minister (in this case, the Home Minister). The President appoints the

Cong can never be true, trustworthy to Ambedkar's thinking and policies: Mayawati

IAN S

NEW DELHI : Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati on Tuesday slammed Congress, saying the party can never be true and trustworthy to Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar's thinking and policies.

Mayawati's remarks came after Congress leader and former MP Udit Raj made some controversial comments and alleged death threats against her.

In a post on X, she said Congress never respected Ambedkar, and no matter how many programmes the party claims to run in his honour, they are meaningless since these are only for political gains.

She wrote in Hindi on X

(loosely translated as): "The Congress party, especially, which has disdained at every level the humanitarian struggle of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar for self-respect and self-esteem of millions of exploited and oppressed Dalits/ Bahujans, even during his lifetime and after his death, can never be true and trustworthy to his thinking and policies. Therefore, no matter how many programmes the Congress organizes in the name of 'Jai Babu, Jai Bhim, Jai Mandal, Jai Samvidhan' etc. for purely political and electoral gains, the followers of Baba Saheb are not going to be misled by them. They are aware and alert and are struggling to stand on their own feet.

The BSP chief also cautioned the Dalits against those within the community who misuse the cause for personal benefits. She said, "Along with this, the Bahujan Samaj needs to be cautious of some party-changing opportunists and selfish Dalits who keep making baseless statements etc. to please their masters and should not take them seriously because they are ignorant and unfamiliar with the 'social change and economic liberation' movement."

Udit Raj, during an event in Lucknow, has allegedly said that Mayawati has "strangled the social movement and it was time to strangle her".

The controversial statement has instigated a row and con-



cerns have been raised about the security of the BSP chief. Mayawati's nephew and BSP

leader Akash Anand in a post on X on Monday demanded legal action against Udit Raj. "I

want to clearly tell @upolice that these criminals should be arrested within 24 hours and strict action should be taken under the law, otherwise the Bahujan youth of the country is not going to sit quietly, I know very well how to teach them a lesson."

He wrote in Hindi that some old associates of Kanshiram Saheb, and sometimes BJP and sometimes Congress sycophant, Udit Raj spoke on Saheb's mission in Lucknow on Monday

"Whereas Udit Raj is notorious for looking for opportunities in other parties for his selfish interests. He is concerned about the Bahujan Movement only so that he can become an MP or MLA from some party.

This has nothing to do with the upliftment of the Bahujan society."

He said that the language used was unacceptable. "I am a young soldier of the Bahujan Mission, but I understand the mission of Baba Saheb and Manjavar Saheb more than him. The kind of threat that is in his language today is absolutely unacceptable to us, to crores of soldiers of the Bahujan Mission...Forgetting the mission of Saheb in his selfishness, this sycophant is today threatening to 'strangle' our Mayawati, who has given social and economic freedom to millions of Dalits, exploited, deprived the poor of the country with political power," Anand said.

Asian Water bird census to be conducted across 25 Wetlands in Kashmir



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: The Department of Wildlife Protection, in collaboration with the Wular Conservation and Management Authority (WUCMA), is set to conduct the Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) 2025 on February 19.

This annual initiative plays a crucial role in estimating the population of migratory birds visiting Kashmir's wetlands and assessing the ecological health of these vital habitats.

Ahead of the census, an orientation program was conducted on Today, at IMPA, where volunteers received specialized training in bird identification, population estimation techniques, and data collection methods.

The session saw participation from scholars from SKUAST, students from various colleges, and members of prominent NGOs such as Wildlife Conservation Fund, SRDE, Wildlife SOS, WRCF, and SEEDS.

Also, officials from the Forest Territorial Department, Forest Protection Force, Wildlife Depart-

ment, and WUCMA, along with experienced bird-watchers and conservationists, took part in the training.

Speaking at the event, Rashid Yahya Naqash, Regional Wildlife Warden elaborated on the migratory patterns of birds arriving in Kashmir's wetlands between November and March.

He highlighted the Central Asian Flyway, a significant migration route used by birds traveling from Russia, Siberia, Europe, and China, and stressed the importance of Kashmir's wetlands as crucial stopover points. The Central Asian Flyway, a significant migration route used by birds traveling from Russia, Siberia, Europe, and China, and stressed the importance of Kashmir's wetlands as crucial stopover points.

Tawheed Ahmad Deva, Regional Wildlife Warden, Kashmir, emphasized that the census is a key scientific exercise, as bird migration serves as an essential indicator of wetland health.

He also noted that over the past two years, more than 12 lakh migratory birds have been recorded in Kashmir's wetlands, reaffirming their global ecological importance.

Altaf Hussain, Wildlife Warden, Wetlands Kashmir,

and Coordinator of Wular Conservation and Management Authority (WUCMA), expressed satisfaction that most of Kashmir's major wetlands currently hold sufficient water levels to sustain migratory birds.

He highlighted that interventions such as the construction of regulatory gates at Hokersar, in collaboration with the Irrigation and Flood Control Department, have significantly improved water retention in the Hokersar wetland.

He further noted that Hokersar's water levels are now higher than they have been in the past decade, ensuring a more stable and suitable habitat for migratory birds.

The Asian Waterbird Census 2025 will cover 25 key wetlands, including four Ramsar sites—Hokersar, Haigam, Shallabugh, and Wular Lake—each serving as a critical habitat for thousands of migratory birds.

The census will be carried out under strict supervision by trained personnel from the Wildlife Department, WUCMA, Forest Protection Force, and the Forest Department.

Teams of experts and volunteers will systematically record bird species, count populations, and document behavioral patterns to ensure accurate data collection.

Following the field survey, avian experts will analyze the collected data, compiling a comprehensive report on species diversity, population trends, and overall wetland health.

This report will be instrumental in shaping future conservation policies and wetland management strategies.

Owais Farooq Mir, Coordinator, Wular Conservation Authority, expressed gratitude to all participants, emphasizing that the census is directly linked to the long-term preservation of Kashmir's wetlands, which play a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance and supporting biodiversity.

As the Asian Waterbird Census 2025 unfolds, conservationists and wildlife officials remain committed to protecting these vital ecosystems and ensuring the continued survival of migratory bird populations.

IT Commissioner Secretary Reviews Progress On CSCs, e-Unnat portal

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Commissioner Secretary, Information Technology, Saurabh Bhagat, held a meeting to review progress on Common Service Centres (CSCs) and e-Unnat portal at Civil Secretariat, Srinagar.

The meeting was attended by Rupesh Kumar, CEO, JaKeGA; Ajaz Qaiser, Additional Secretary, IT; Manju Gupta, DGM, J&K Bank; Faizan Manzoor, State Head, J&K, CSC e-Governance Service Limited; Malika Raina, Under Secretary, IT and SeMT (State e-Mission Team), J&K besides other officers and officials.

Regarding improvements in access to digital services and bridging the digital divide, particularly in remote and challenging terrains of J&K, the Commissioner Secretary directed CSC-SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle) to expeditiously complete its target of establishing 940 new CSC touch points. He was informed that, so far, 650 new touch points have already been established in various government offices and institutions. He directed the officers to ensure even distribution of CSCs across the UT while establishing new



points in order to achieve saturation.

The Commissioner Secretary had detailed discussion with J&K Bank regarding the steps which need to be taken up by J&K Bank to enable onboarding of CSCs to work as Business Correspondents (BCs). He was informed that 313 CSCs in J&K are already working as BCs for several banks like IDBI, PNB, BOB, HDFC and AXIS. Working as BCs for J&K Bank will further enhance financial inclusion across the Union Territory, he added.

Currently, UT of J&K aims at onboarding 700 more CSCs as Business Correspondents to give further thrust to financial inclusion.

It was informed in the meeting that the IT department has notified rates to avail various online services which envisage Rs. 50 per service for government

to citizen services and Rs. 75 for government to business services to prevent cases of overcharging by VLEs.

In addition to fixation of charges, the department also carries out regular inspection drives to mitigate overcharging instances.

The Commissioner Secretary asked the concerned to integrate all 1166 online services available at e-Unnat Portal of Jammu and Kashmir into Digital CSC Seva Portal, a CSC platform.

Pertinently, e-Unnat is the integrated services delivery portal of J&K facilitating citizens with easy access to all government schemes and services under one umbrella. Jammu and Kashmir is one of the leading States/UTs in whole country in initiating the integration of its services with CSC platform. This initiative of integration aims at providing streamlined,

effective, hassle-free and robust service delivery to general public living even in the remotest areas.

Saurabh Bhagat directed the officers to ensure completion of all major deliverables identified by the Chief Secretary in a time bound manner. These deliverables included even distribution of new CSC touch points; enabling onboarding of CSCs as BCs with J&K Bank; strict adherence to notified service charges by the CSCs; regular inspections of CSCs by IT Department and support of JaKeGA and all departments in integrating their services expeditiously with CSC platform. All these efforts shall strengthen the CSC ecosystem by making it more sustainable besides providing more opportunities of livelihood for the youth and enabling CSCs to deliver wide range of services evenly and effectively at grassroots level.

'TALEEM HAQ HAI HAMARA'

SYSF leads anti-drug awareness campaign at GSCI Pulwama



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: In a resolute effort to combat the growing drug menace, the Save Youth Save Future Foundation (SYSF) organized an Anti-Drug Awareness Program at GSCI Pulwama under its flagship initiative, "Taleem Haq Hai Hamara." The initiative, aimed at empowering youth through education while tackling critical social issues, saw active participation from students, educators, and community leaders.

The program was attended by several distinguished dignitaries, including SP Pulwama Shafat Ahmad, Head of Awqaf Drusus Pulwama Nazir Ahmad Mir, District Coordinator SYSF Pulwama Jasib Shabir, renowned educator Inayat Ahmad, social activist Junaid Yousuf, and Hoops & Art Designer Nisha Fayaz Wani. Their presence underscored a shared commitment to protecting Kashmir's youth from the dangers of drug abuse.

Students engaged in meaningful discussions, sharing their experiences and insights on the devastating effects of drug addic-

tion in their communities. The program focused on preventive strategies and the importance of early intervention.

In his address, SP Pulwama Shri Shafat Ahmad emphasized the crucial role of education in combating drug abuse. He highlighted the importance of community-driven efforts in tackling the issue and urged the youth to stay vigilant and proactive in the fight against substance addiction.

SYSF Pulwama District Coordinator Jasib Shabir delivered a powerful speech, shedding light on the alarming rise in drug consumption among the youth and stressing the need for preventive measures. He shared key strategies to counter the crisis effectively, leaving a strong impact on the students and inspiring them to take a stand against drug abuse.

The event concluded with students, faculty, and community members taking a collective pledge to work towards building a healthier, drug-free society. The initiative reinforced the commitment to fostering a safer environment for the youth of Kashmir.

H&ME Minister reviews progress on development works, welfare schemes in Srinagar



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, today convened a marathon meeting here to review progress on development works besides assessing implementation of government sponsored schemes across Srinagar district.

The meeting was attended by Members of Legislative Assembly from Srinagar district including Mubarak Gul, Salman Sagar, Tanveer Sadiq, Ehsan Pardesi and Mush-taq Ahmad Guru besides Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Dr Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat; Commissioner SMC, Dr Owais Ahmad; Director School Education Kashmir; Director Health Services Kashmir and other senior officers of police and district administration.

During the meeting, the Minister held detailed deliberations regarding various ongoing key projects and development works undertaken in the district. She also had a comprehensive review of implementation of vari-

ous beneficiary oriented schemes.

Addressing the officers on the occasion, the Minister emphasized that the present dispensation led by Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah, is committed to address the public issues on priority basis and improve their socio-economic conditions at grassroots level. We are resolute to fulfill public aspirations and ensure better facilities and services to them.

The Minister stressed on choosing priority projects with achievable deadlines that align with the budget cycle and fulfill public needs and their aspirations. She impressed upon the officers to work with added zeal and sense of responsibility and attend public in a compassionate manner, ensuring prompt redressal of their issues and developmental needs.

The Minister underlined that Srinagar is the face of Kashmir and all necessary measures must be taken to make it more beautiful besides ensuring up to mark facilities to its residents and the visitors as well.

Mission YUVA accomplishes baseline survey of over 1.1 cr people

CS terms exercise crucial in shaping roadmap to tackle unemployment

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today convened a meeting with all the stakeholders to assess outcomes of a month long baseline survey conducted under Mission Yuva Udyami Vikas Abhiyan (YUVA) aiming identification of potential entrepreneurs and challenges faced by the existing enterprises in J&K.

The survey, carried out digitally from Ist of January this year, encompassed whole adult population of the UT residing in both rural and urban areas. The mammoth exercise was accomplished with the help of nearly 18,000 investigators and 800 supervisors who visited around 23.64 lakh households in different districts of J&K to identify the potential entrepreneurs (PEs).

Dulloo, while making observations about this survey, remarked that carrying out such a massive exercise in record time is commendable. He termed it crucial for determining a roadmap to deal with the unemployment issue in the region. He impressed upon the concerned to come up with a comprehensive report based on the insights made in the survey. He advised for stacking the data so that the relevant stacks are used by the Universities and research institutions for completing research papers over the same subject matter.

The Chief Secretary also advised the developers to separately categorise the self employment schemes from social security and others. He stressed on making provision of scheme advisor in the YUVA application so that the potential entre-



preneurs are guided as per their strengths and area of interest.

He reiterated the significance of augmenting the institutional structure envisaged under this scheme so that the hand-holding of applicants is done to transform them into successful entrepreneurs. He directed the bank authorities to make a customised loan product to be offered under YUVA scheme.

Dulloo also enjoined upon the Deputy Commissioners to identify the quality manpower in their districts for acting as 'YUVA Doots' who would groom the PEs in strategising to become entrepreneurs of their choice. He sought suggestions from the participating Vice Chancellors of local Universities, Chairman J&K Bank, Director IIM Jammu, IIT, CGM NABARD in framing a better roadmap to deal with unemployment across J&K.

While speaking about this baseline survey, DG, E&S, Satveer Kour, gave out some insights about the data collected from each surveyed member. She revealed that the questionnaire was comprised of 15 household related queries, 10 individual specific questions and 42 questions posed to PEs. Besides, 37 queries were related to unregis-

tered enterprises and 88 to registered enterprises.

She elaborated that these questions were aimed at capturing demographic details like age, employment status, sector, activity etc. It simultaneously recorded financial, market and skill details of each individual/enterprises as the case may be. Lastly, it delved into determining the challenges faced by the individuals and enterprises in starting their enterprises or challenges faced by the existing units to flourish their business.

Secretary, L&E, Kumar Rajeev Ranjan, in his presentation highlighted the methodology and outcomes of the baseline survey. He also explained the working of Mission YUVA app in creation of successful enterprises together with capacity building of these entrepreneurs.

He said that among the key pillars of this mission is formulation of scheme for creating mass awareness and institutional mechanism to support this whole process to ensure that the set objectives are accomplished in a time bound manner. He further apprised the meeting that survey dataset is organised and structured to enable data analysis as each respondent had been assigned a unique ID with metadata saved and GIS location/time stamps pre-

served to verify each set of data anytime later.

He divulged that a comprehensive report is going to be compiled in next 2 months and will be put in public domain for academic purpose and informed decision making by the policymakers.

Giving insights into the observations made after analysing this data, Director Employment and MD, Mission YUVA, Shahzad Alam made out that around 64.86 lakh individuals in the age group of 18-60 years were surveyed finding around 8.27 lakh potential entrepreneurs as per the operational guidelines.

Regarding dynamics of the data, he illustrated that the above number when filtered using certain criterion like age group of 18-39 years came down to 7.038 lakh and got further reduced to 5.52 lakh when filtered as per education standard of 'Secondary & above' and 5.13 lakh when aspirants pursuing higher education were excluded to be identified as Potential Entrepreneurs.

About the key insights made after this baseline survey, it was revealed that 16.7% of individuals in unregistered activity have reported to have availed loans less than Rs 5 lakh. The major challenge, they enumerated, in availing loans is high interest rates and collaterals.

Jal Shakti Minister attends 'All India State Ministers' conference on water in Rajasthan

Terms initiative a significant milestone in shaping India's water security future

GMK NEWS NETWORK

UDAIPUR, (RAJASTHAN): Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmed Rana, today attended the second All India State Ministers' Conference 2025 on Water held at Udaipur, Rajasthan.

The two day conference being convened from February 18 to 19 themed "Water Vision@2047, A Water Secure Nation," is being organised by the National Water Mission, Ministry for Jal Shakti.

The Minister, while addressing the conference, shared perspectives on the broad approach of government of Jammu and Kashmir towards sustainable use of water resources. He

highlighted Jammu Kashmir's Water Policy on the subject of water supply and storage management.

"We have to keep a focussed approach towards augmenting our water sources and ensure sustainable water resource management for future generations," maintained the Minister. Rana said that change in the weather pattern due to global warming has put extra pressure on our water resources and there is a need to protect and preserve them for the generations to come.

"Effective management of water resources demands a holistic and participatory approach. It is the responsibility of each and every one of

us, to be aware of the value of water and act to preserve this vital resource," asserted the Minister.

He added that there is a need to undertake scientific measures towards this direction including planting of trees around the water sources and maintaining cleanliness. He said that the vision of a developed, water-secure India emphasises the importance of sustainable water management to support agriculture, industry and domestic use while preserving our rivers and ecosystems for generations to come. He shared the ideas, vision and the steps being taken up by the Jammu and Kashmir government for integrated

and sustainable water management. He also highlighted the initiatives being taken up by the government to provide safe drinking water to people, improve groundwater levels and formulate the plans under Water Vision-2047.

Sharing his thoughts on the Conference, Rana said that this innovative conference will be a significant milestone in shaping India's water security future. He said that the conference focussed on the concrete actions required to turn the Water Vision@2047 into reality and it is certainly a landmark event, bringing together top policymakers and experts to shape India's water security vision.