

# KONNECT

## THE NORTH KASHMIR CONNECTION

PHOTOGRAPH BY: SALMAN BHAT, QALAMABAD

### Bangus Valley Kashmir's Untouched Paradise



**T**ucked away in the far reaches of Kupwara district, Bangus Valley remains one of Kashmir's most enchanting secrets. A land of sprawling meadows, pine-fringed forests, and the gentle flow of the Mawri River, Bangus offers a pristine escape at an elevation of nearly 10,000 feet just 128 kilometers from Srinagar. Unlike the bustling tourist hubs, this high-altitude haven is a sanctuary of silence and serenity. Divided into two magnificent expanses Big Bangus and Small Bangus the valley lies cradled between the mighty Chowkibal, Qazinag, and Shamsbery mountains, forming part of the majestic Trans-Himalayan belt. Here, nature paints its finest canvas: wide-open grasslands, sparkling waters, and skies that stretch endlessly above. Now emerging as a must-visit destination for those seeking the unexplored, Bangus invites you to step off the beaten path. With curated Kashmir Offbeat Tour Packages from Johansen Travels, visitors can experience the valley in its purest form from guided walks into its untouched interiors to cozy stays surrounded by raw wilderness, far from the chaos of modern life. Let local guides introduce you to the hidden trails and stories of the valley, while you relax in eco-friendly lodgings that blend seamlessly with the landscape. Whether you're craving solitude, adventure, or simply the sight of unspoiled natural beauty, Bangus Valley promises a journey like no other.



Operation Sindoor:  
A Citizen's Perspective



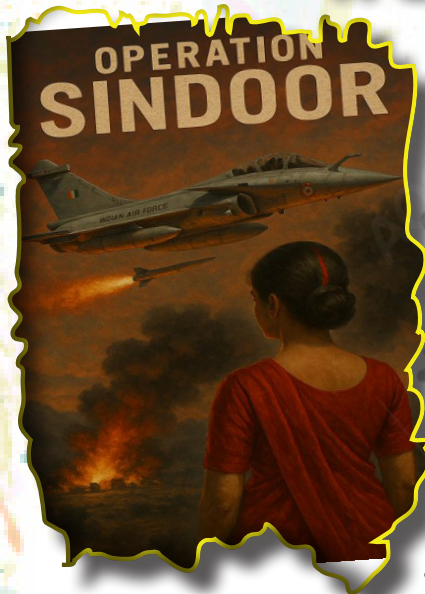
Baramulla's Reyaz Ganai Wins  
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Secures AIR 847 in UPSC



# OPERATION SINDOOR: A CITIZEN'S PERSPECTIVE



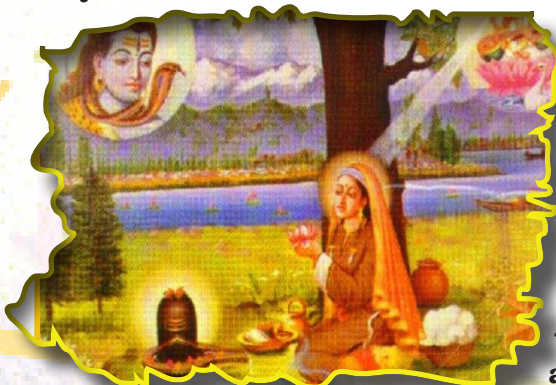
**T**he launch of Operation Sindoor against Pakistan has evoked a mix of pride and concern among Indians. Named after the sacred vermilion symbolizing strength and protection, the operation signifies India's resolve to address escalating border tensions. The nation united in support of the armed forces, with citizens expressing solidarity on social media and through prayer meetings. The tricolor fluttered in homes and streets, symbolizing unity across political and social divides. For many, this operation reflects India's determination to safeguard its sovereignty and protect its people. Yet, the human cost of conflict cannot be ignored. Candlelight vigils in my neighborhood reminded us of the sacrifices made by our soldiers and the innocent lives affected by war.

Families of troops live in constant anxiety, while civilians on both sides of the border bear the brunt of hostilities. However, lasting peace demands addressing the root causes of conflict through dialogue and trust-building. True strength lies in defending our borders while striving for reconciliation. Let us honor the spirit of Operation Sindoor not just by supporting our forces but by envisioning a future free from the need for such measures.



## Lalleshwari: The Saint Who United Kashmir Through Verse

**L**alleshwari, widely revered as Lal Ded, stands as one of Kashmir's most iconic spiritual voices. Born in the 14th century, she emerged during a time of profound social and religious transformation. Renouncing a troubled marriage, she embraced the life of a mystic, wandering across the valleys of Kashmir, expressing her spiritual insights through 'vakhs' brief, poignant verses rich in metaphysical depth. Lal Ded's poetry transcended barriers of caste, creed, and gender. Her vakhs, composed in the native Kashmiri language, reflect themes of inner awakening, self-realization, and unity with the divine. Rooted in Shaivism, yet inclusive of Sufi



and Bhakti thought, her verses emphasize the futility of ritual and the need for direct personal experience of the truth. What sets Lal Ded apart is her fearless voice challenging dogma and societal norms with wisdom and clarity. She became a bridge between communities, a symbol of spiritual freedom and resilience. Even today, centuries later, Lal Ded's legacy continues to inspire poets, philosophers, and seekers. Her words echo not only through literature but also in the hearts of those drawn to the mystical path. In her life and work, Lal Ded remains a beacon of light from Kashmir's spiritual heritage.



# BREAKING BARRIERS IN KASHMIR: DISHA PANDITA'S GOLDEN JOURNEY IN SQAY MARTIAL ARTS



**I**n a proud moment for India, Disha Pandita from Pandit Colony, Sheikhpora, Budgam, has made history by clinching gold at the International Sqay Cup 2025 held in Podolsk, Moscow. As the first non-displaced Kashmiri Hindu girl to reach such heights in martial arts, her victory is more than just a personal milestone it symbolizes courage, resilience, and hope. Facing off against athletes from 19 countries, Disha's performance helped India secure second place overall.

This win marks her sixth international medal, reaffirming her status as one of the country's top talents in Sqay, a traditional martial art. Disha balances her sporting excellence with academics, currently pursuing Integrated Zoology, and credits her success to the unwavering support of her parents, Predman Krishan Pandita and Jyoti, and her mentor, Grandmaster Nazir Ahmad Mir. Through her Strong Waves Martial Arts Academy in Budgam, Disha is empowering the next generation especially girls with self-defense training and promoting a positive, drug-free lifestyle. From a small town to the global stage, Disha's journey inspires countless young athletes. "Martial arts build more than strength they build character, confidence, and clarity," she says. Disha Pandita isn't just collecting medals she's crafting a legacy.



## "Baramulla's Reyaz Ganai Wins BML Munjal Award"

**B**aramulla Teacher Reyaz Ahmad Ganai Wins Dr. BML Munjal Social Impact Award 2024-25 In a prestigious ceremony at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, Reyaz Ahmad Ganai, a passionate educator from Government Middle School Sheeri Payeen, Baramulla, was honoured with the Dr. BML Munjal Social Impact Award 2024-25 in the Outstanding Teacher category. Presented by the Raman Kant Munjal Foundation in collaboration with Hero Future Energies, the award recognizes individuals driving transformative change in education and community development. Reyaz made history as the first government school teacher from Jammu & Kashmir to receive this national honour. Renowned for his innovative teaching methods, Reyaz has mentored students who have won five INSPIRE Awards and guided Shahida Bano, the first J&K student to participate in Japan's SAKURA Science Exchange Program.



Shahida also earned national acclaim through the Invent India Challenge, winning ₹10 lakh and presenting her work at National Technology Week 2023. "This award belongs to my students and every dedicated government school teacher," said Reyaz emotionally. His efforts have significantly enhanced rural education and inspired countless young minds in Kashmir. The awards, inspired by Dr. BML Munjal's legacy, honoured changemakers across 12 categories. Reyaz's recognition stands as a proud moment for Jammu & Kashmir and a testament to the power of passionate educators.



# THE SPICE TRAIL OF NORTH KASHMIR: HERITAGE ON A PLATE



**K**ashmir, often celebrated for its breathtaking landscapes, is equally rich in culinary heritage. The traditional cuisine of Kashmir, known for its deep-rooted cultural significance and aromatic complexity, offers a true reflection of the Valley's identity. Every dish tells a story of the land, its people, and centuries-old traditions. At the heart of Kashmiri cuisine lies the world-renowned Wazwan, a royal multi-course meal prepared on special occasions. With over 30 elaborate dishes, including Rogan Josh, Yakhni, Dum Aloo, Gushtaba, and Rista, Wazwan is not merely food it is an experience of hospitality and celebration. Kashmiri Pandit cuisine, while similar in base, avoids onion and garlic, focusing instead on yogurt, fennel, and dried ginger to enhance flavor. Vegetarian specialties like Nadru Yakhni (lotus stem in yogurt curry) and Chaman (paneer in turmeric gravy) showcase subtlety and depth. The cuisine is incomplete without Kahwa and Noon Chai traditional teas served with breads like Lavasa and Tchot. Prepared with patience and served with pride, Kashmiri food is a celebration of flavour, aroma, and tradition. It invites the world to taste not just a dish, but the cultural soul of the Valley one rich in warmth, unity, and heritage.

## ROHI JAN: A BEACON OF COURAGE, DETERMINATION

### AND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE



**V**isually Impaired Rohi Jan of Kulgam Becomes Assistant Professor at University of Kashmir From the quiet village of Hanjan in Kulgam, Rohi Jan, 100% visually impaired since birth, has achieved a remarkable feat appointed as Assistant Professor in the Department of Education, University of Kashmir. Her inspiring journey is a beacon of hope, not just for the disability community, but for every dreamer battling adversity. Rohi's academic journey began in a local school in Hanjan, later continuing at Army School Behibagh and Govt. Higher Secondary School Yaripora. With unwavering determination, she graduated from Govt. Degree College Kulgam and went on to crack the UGC-NET and Junior Re-

search Fellowship (JRF) milestones that mark academic excellence in India. Currently pursuing a Ph.D. at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), one of India's top institutions, Rohi continues to break barriers and redefine possibility. Her appointment has drawn admiration from educators, activists, and civil society, who hail her as a symbol of resilience and empowerment. "Disability is not inability," her story proclaims. Rohi's success is a proud moment for Kulgam, Kashmir, and the nation, proving that when determination meets opportunity, dreams take flight even from the most unlikely places.





# Mysteries of Kalaroos: Kashmir's Forgotten Gateways

**K**ashmir, often called "Paradise on Earth," is famed for its breathtaking natural beauty and rich cultural history. Among its many hidden treasures are the mysterious Kalaroos caves in Kupwara district, located around 130 kilometers from Srinagar at an altitude of 1,900 meters. The caves are wrapped in local legends, the most popular being that secret tunnels lead all the way to Russia. The name 'Kalaroos' itself is believed to come from 'Qila-e-Roos,' meaning 'Russian Fort.' Adding to the mystery is the Satbaran Rock near Lashtyal village, featuring seven carved doorways. Locals call



them the "Seven Doors to Russia," though no one knows who built them or when. These myths have thrived for generations due



to the caves' difficult terrain and unexplored passages. One nearby cave, Tramkhan, known for its red-copper deposits, also adds to the area's enigmatic charm. In 2018, a team of American cave explorers led by Amber and Eric Fies explored three of the caves. Their findings revealed that the caves are shallow, with none exceeding 50 meters in depth. One cave had been sealed by the army, possibly to block entry by animals or militants. While the caves held no archaeological significance, they offered some geological insights. Despite these revelations, the legends surrounding Kalaroos continue to captivate both locals and tourists. The caves remain an important part of Kashmir's cultural and natu-

**J**ammu and Kashmir has long faced periods of instability and uncertainty, which have impacted the development and aspirations of its youth. Despite these challenges, the people of the region possess immense potential and talent. However, what many lack is the financial support to turn their dreams into reality. To bridge this gap, the Mumkin Scheme JK

was introduced as a ray of hope for the unemployed youth of the Union Territory. The scheme young individuals

subsidized loans to help them start their own ventures, particularly in the transport sector. By enabling self-employment, the scheme not only offers a stable source of income but also contributes to the overall socio-economic growth of the region. What sets the Mumkin scheme apart is its transparent and streamlined digital implementation. The entire process has been made accessible through the JK-e Services portal, ensuring quick and efficient execution with minimal paperwork and delays. By helping the youth take confident steps toward self-reliance, the Mumkin Scheme JK is turning broken dreams into new beginnings and steering Jammu and Kashmir toward a brighter, more progressive future driven by its own people.

## Mumkin Scheme: A Dawn for J&K Youth



aims to empower by providing small,





## Zahoor Ahmad War: Blending Scholarship with Skilled Craftsmanship

**Z**ahoor Ahmad War, hailing from Handwara in North Kashmir, has carved an inspiring path by combining academic excellence with practical skill. After completing his graduation from Government Degree College (GDC) Handwara in 2010, Zahoor pursued a B.Ed in 2013. In 2015, he moved to Indore, Madhya Pradesh, where he completed his Master's in Urdu from Islamia Karimia College, securing 69% marks. As the eldest son in his family, Zahoor felt compelled to support his household financially. Upon returning home, he joined his uncle, a renowned carpenter, to learn the art of carpentry. "Initially, it was about supporting my family, but gradually I fell in love with the craft," Zahoor told Greater Kashmir. While in Indore, Zahoor's friends who were pursuing research encouraged him to apply for an MPhil. With their help, he enrolled in DAVV Indore and completed his MPhil in 2020 with 82% marks. Though he had dreams of pursuing a Ph.D., family responsibilities brought him back to Kashmir. Today, Zahoor lives with his uncle in Soura, Srinagar, and earns around 1000 a day through carpentry. His work includes paneling, wardrobe-making, and roofing. "Many customers are surprised by my educational background and often appreciate it by paying me extra," he said. Zahoor firmly believes that no work is small. "If I hadn't learned this skill, I would be sitting idle like many other youth. Every student should be taught at least one skill during college," he stressed. His story is a powerful reminder that dignity lies in both intellect and labor. Zahoor Ahmad War stands as a role model for young Kashmiris, proving that combining education with craftsmanship can lead to a fulfilling and self-reliant life.



## "Army Goodwill Schools Celebrate Academic Excellence in 2025"

Army Goodwill Schools (AGS) in North Kashmir have once again proven their commitment to academic excellence with outstanding results in the 2025 board examinations. Several AGS institutions, including AGS Krusan in Kupwara, AGS Ashutosh in Budkoot, and AGS Chandigam in Lolab, recorded 100% pass rates, with many students earning distinctions and scoring high marks.



At AGS Krusan, all students passed with commendable scores, and a significant number crossed the 80% mark. The school community, including teachers and parents, celebrated this success as a reflection of dedication, discipline, and effective teaching methods. AGS Ashutosh in Budkoot also demonstrated strong academic results. Students excelled across core subjects, and the school received appreciation from local leaders and community members for its role in delivering quality education in rural areas. AGS Chandigam in Lolab maintained its tradition of academic excellence. Several students earned distinctions and top grades, making the school one of the leading educational institutions in the region. These results highlight the vital role that Army Goodwill Schools play in transforming the educational landscape of remote and border areas in Jammu and Kashmir. With a focus on quality education, character-building, and holistic development, AGS continues to provide students with the tools to succeed in both academics and life. The success stories emerging from these schools stand as a source of inspiration for the entire region, proving that with the right support and environment, students from even the most remote areas can achieve academic excellence.



# GUESS THE FAMOUS BUSINESSMAN



Answers of April  
Edition Quiz are

Virat Kohli

Rohit Sharma

KL Rahul

Ravindra Jadeja

Winner

Umar Rashid Dar

Handwara



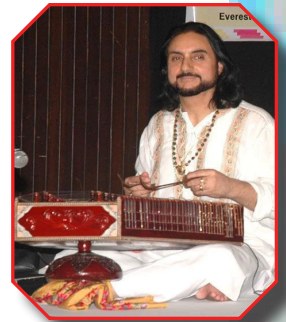
Quiztime

YOU CAN SEND THE CORRECT ANSWERS AT : [konnctkashmirconnection@gmail.com](mailto:konnctkashmirconnection@gmail.com)

## Echoes of Valor: Remembering North Kashmir's Silent Warriors

**P**andit Bhajan Sopori was an Indian instrumentalist. He was a player of the santoor, an ancient stringed musical instrument. Sopori was born in Srinagar into a Kashmiri Pandit family to Shambhu Nath Sopori on 22 June 1948. Sopori hailed from Sopore in the Baramulla district of the Kashmir Valley. He belonged to the Sufiana gharana of Indian classical music. His family has played santoor for over six generations. His first public performance was at a conference organized by Prayag Sangeet Samiti andm the University of Allahabad when he was 10 years old. He learned western classical music from Washington University and Hindustani from his grandfather S.C. Sopori and

father Shambhoo Nath. Pandit Sopori is considered as the cultural link between Jammu and Kashmir and rest of India. He also ran a music academy called Sa Ma Pa (Sopori Academy for Music and Performing Arts), which is actively involved in promoting Indian classical music. Sopori was awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1992 and the Padma Shri in 2004. In 2009 he was honored with the Baba Allaudin Khan Award. He was also awarded the M N Mathur award in 2011 for his contribution to Indian classical music and Jammu and Kashmir State lifetime achievement award. Sopori was married and had two sons. His son Abhay Rustum Sopori is also a santoor player. Sopori died in Gurugram from colon cancer on 2 June 2022 at the age of 73.





# Nazir Bijran, BDO Mawer Secures AIR 847 in UPSC



In the serene valley of Kangan, Ganderbal, where the snow-fed rivers weave through lush meadows, dreams often rise quietly sometimes unnoticed, sometimes underestimated. But every once in a while, one of those dreams takes flight and soars to the national stage. Such is the story of Nazir Ahmad Bijran, a name now etched with pride in the heart of Jammu and Kashmir. Currently posted as Block Development Officer (BDO) in Mawer Qalamabad, Nazir Ahmad Bijran's journey from a modest background to cracking the prestigious UPSC Civil Services Examination with an impressive rank is not just a personal triumph it's a beacon of hope for countless oth-

ers. What sets this story apart is not just the end result, but the values it embodies: dedication, discipline, and quiet determination. Nazir's achievement has deeply moved the teaching community across North Kashmir, particularly the Jammu and Kashmir Teachers Forum (JKTF) District Kupwara. Under the leadership of Chief Patron Zone Mawer, Master Nazir Ahmad Bhat, the forum recognized the significance of this moment not just for Nazir, but for every young person daring to dream in the face of adversity. His success is a reminder that potential, when nurtured, knows no boundaries not even the rugged terrains of Kashmir.

## Employment Updates

Rail Land Development Authority Recruitment 2025 website: <https://jkadworld.com/jammu-kashmir-jobs/rail-land-development-authority-recruitment-2025/>

25 Professor, over 150 Assistant Professor posts vacant at GMC Srinagar website: <https://jkadworld.com/jk-news-today/25-professor-over-150-assistant-professor-posts-vacant-at-gmc-srinagar/>

354 Posts: BHEL Recruitment 2025 website: <https://jkadworld.com/jammu-kashmir-jobs/354-posts-bhel-recruitment-2025/>

403 Posts: CISF Recruitment 2025 website: <https://jkadworld.com/category/jammu-kashmir-jobs/>

**I**n North Kashmir's Kupwara district, women are emerging as strong agents of change, overcoming decades of conflict, social restrictions, and limited access to education and employment. Supported by government schemes and Indian Army's Sadbhavna initiatives, women now receive training, health support, and leadership opportunities. Vocational centres, SHGs Barkat-e-Bistro, and programmes like Umeed have helped women gain financial independence and social recognition. Though challenges such as early marriage, low literacy, political underrepresentation, and lack of healthcare persist, progress is evident. Thousands of women have entered local governance roles, taken up entrepreneurship, and excelled in diverse fields from technology to mountaineering. Notable achievers like Mehvish Mushtaq and Nahida Manzoor inspire others to dream big. With continuous support and focused efforts, women empowerment in North Kashmir is transforming communities, bridging gender gaps, and building a more resilient, inclusive society.

Leading  
Change: The  
Woman  
from Pattan  
Transforming  
Young Lives  
in 2025

