



# Kashmir Continues To Reel Under Cold Wave Conditions

■ HT News Network

**SRINAGAR, JAN 8:** There was slight respite from the intense cold wave conditions in Kashmir on Monday but the minimum temperatures remained several degrees below the freezing point across the valley, owing to clear sky, MeT officials said.

Srinagar city recorded a minimum temperature of minus 4.3 degrees Celsius on Sunday night, up from minus 5.6 degrees Celsius noted the previous night, the officials said.

Qazigund recorded a low of minus 4.2 degrees Celsius, while the ski resort of Gulmarg in north Kashmir noted a minimum temperature of 4 degrees Celsius on Sunday night, slightly down from the previous night, they said.

Pahalgam in south Kashmir's Anantnag district, which serves as one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath Yatra, recorded a minimum temperature of minus 5.3 degrees Celsius, up from the previous night's minus 6.5 degrees Celsius, the officials said.



The minimum temperature in Kokernag town settled at minus 2.1 degrees Celsius and in Kupwara at minus 5 degrees Celsius,

they added. Kashmir is currently under the grip of "Chilla-i-Kalan", a 40-day harsh winter

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## Amit Shah's Jammu Visit Deferred Due To Inclement Weather: Official



■ HT News Network

**JAMMU, JAN 8:** In view of prevailing inclement weather conditions, the scheduled visit of Union Home Minister Amit Shah has been deferred, an official here said on Monday.

He said Union Home Minister and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah was scheduled to visit Jammu and Kashmir on January 9 (Tuesday).

"During the proposed visit, he was

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### Poor Will Become Prosperous By 2047 With Help Of Cooperative Societies: Amit Shah

■ HT News Network

**NEW DELHI, JAN 8:** Referring to the aim to make the country developed by 2047, Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said that the poor will also become prosperous with the help of cooperative societies and urged all Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) to adopt the 22 different works linked by the government.

Shah, who chaired 'National PACS Mega Conclave' on 'PACS as Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra', here on Monday, said that model bylaws of PACS have been accepted by 26 states and PACS will now be able to function as a dairy and fishermen committees, able to run petrol pumps, gas agencies, Common Service Centres (CSCs).

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## NEWS BRIEF

### ACB arrests a scientist of PCB for demanding & accepting bribe

**SRINAGAR, JAN 8:** J&K's Anti Corruption Bureau on Monday arrested a scientist in Pollution Control Board, Srinagar for allegedly demanding and accepting bribe of Rs 5,000.

ACB said they received a written complaint against Dr. Bilquees Ara, Scientist-B in State Pollution Control Board for demand of bribe for issuance of 'Consent To Operate' (CTO) for bakery unit located at Industrial Estate, Khummoh.

The complainant alleged that he had applied for CTO from Pollution

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### J&K, Ladakh to have four more NCC Units

**JAMMU, JAN 8:** The Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh will get four more units of National Cadet Corps.

As per the official handout, Union Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh on Monday has approved a proposal to raise four more National Cadet Corps (NCC) Units in the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

The approval includes one Mixed (Boys and Girls) Army Battalion each at Udhampur (J&K), Kupwara (J&K) and Kargil (Ladakh), and one Air Squadron at Udhampur (J&K).

Resultantly, in addition to the existing 27,870 cadets, the strength in J&K and Ladakh will increase by 12,860,

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### J&K ANTF nabs two smugglers with heroin

**JAMMU, JAN 8:** Jammu and Kashmir Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) on Monday arrested two persons with contraband of heroin from Narwal area here.

As per the handout issued by the ANTF, two smugglers namely Mohd Amin of Billawar and Nasir Ali of Nakki Majalta Udhampur have been apprehended while sitting in a car from Narwal.

The ANTF official said that from their possession 260 grams of heroin was recovered which is a commercial quantity.

The ANTF had launched a crackdown against the drug smugglers to

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## When Poor, Farmers, Women, Youth Are Empowered, Country Will Become Powerful: PM Modi

■ HT News Network

**NEW DELHI, JAN 8:** Asserting that the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra has not only become the journey of a Government but of the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said when the poor, farmers, women and youth are



empowered, the nation will become powerful.

Addressing the Yatra in various parts of the country via video conferencing, the Prime Minister said that under earlier Governments, the scope of discussions on agricultural policy was only limited to production and

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### J&K Admin Imposes Night Curfew Along International Border In Samba

■ HT News Network

**JAMMU, JAN 8:** Night curfew has been imposed along the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district to ensure better area domination by BSF troops and to foil any nefarious activities close to the borderline, according to an official order.

The step was taken to prevent cross-border infiltration and smuggling of weapons through drones in the extreme foggy weather conditions prevailing along the Indo-Pak border line, said the order issued by District Magistrate Abhishek Sharma on Sunday.

According to the order, the

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### BJP chalks out election plans in a meeting in Srinagar

■ HT News Network

**SRINAGAR, JAN 8:** BJP Parliamentary Constituency core group held a meeting to chalk out strategies for the upcoming Parliamentary elections in Kashmir valley on Monday.

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### Kashmir surpasses Switzerland as most Googled destination of 2023

■ HT News Network

**SRINAGAR, JAN 08:** Last year Kashmir surpassed Switzerland as the most Googled destination of the world, reveals the Google data.

As per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), in 2023, Kashmir was one among the top 10 online searched destinations

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### Hajj 2024: Soaring cost leads decline in application forms in J&K; Only 7000 applications received against 11500 quota

■ HT News Network

**SRINAGAR, JAN 07:** A considerable drop in applications for the Haj pilgrimage in 2024 has been attributed to the escalating costs, with only 7000 applications received against the expected quota of 11500 by J&K Haj committee.

In a stark contrast, last year witnessed a robust 14200 applications, of which 12067 pilgrims successfully embarked on the sacred journey.

Sources revealed that many potential pilgrims are turning to the more economical Umrah

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### Udhampur LS Constituency Achieves Near Saturation In 'Viksit Bharat' Schemes: Dr Jitendra

■ HT News Network

**KATHUA, JAN 8:** The Udhampur-Kathua Lok Sabha constituency has achieved near saturation in all schemes, such as agriculture, Kisan Credit Card, PM Ujjwal Yojana and PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, being covered under the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra, informed Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; Minister of State (Independent Charge) Earth Sciences; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh here today.

Dr Jitendra Singh was speaking at a Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra event held at Panchayat Bhorthain North (Baira) in Block



Barnoti of district Kathua district.

The Minister informed that out of 500 odd constituencies in the country, the Udhampur-Kathua Lok Sabha seat

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## LG Manoj Sinha Inaugurates Officers' Quarters Of Estates Department At Jammu

■ HT News Network

**JAMMU, JAN 8:** Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha

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## SARAH INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES Affiliated With University of Kashmir And J&K Paramedical Council

### Applications Are Invited For The Below Mentioned Posts...

POST	QUALIFICATION
Principal	M.Sc Nursing with minimum 12 Years experience.
Vice Principal	M.Sc Nursing with minimum 10 years experience.
Lecturers	M.sc Medical Surgical Nursing with 02 years teaching exp.
Tutors	B.Sc Nursing With Minimum 2 Year Experience.

Principal salary Rs 55000/ Vice Principal Rs50000  
Assistant professor/ Lecturer Rs 35000

Please submit relevant documents and resume  
by 15 January 2024

8491006658  
Bandipora, Kashmir







# District Administration Srinagar accord emotional adieu to outgoing DC Aijaz Asad

Accords warm welcome to Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat as Deputy Commissioner Srinagar

**SRINAGAR, JAN 08:** District Administration Srinagar Monday organized an impressive function here at Meeting Hall of DC Office Complex here to bid a warm farewell in the honour of former Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Mohammad Aijaz Asad who has been posted as Administrative Secretary, Planning & Monitoring Department and Civil Aviation Department.

On the occasion, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat who assumed the charge of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar was also accorded a warm welcome by the Officers and other Staff of the DC Office Srinagar.

Additional District Development Commissioner, Srinagar RTO Kashmir, Additional Deputy Commissioners of Srinagar, Chief Planning Officer, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, SDMs, ACD, Tehsidhars, all District & Sectoral Officers and Officials were present on the occasion.

While expressing their views on the occasion, all the Officers highlighted the contribution of outgoing DC Mohammad Aijaz as the Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar and unanimously lauded his efforts in shaping Developmental initiatives taken in Srinagar District and in measures to ensure a prompt and efficient public delivery system.



They also underscored his tireless efforts and measures taken in mitigation of Covid-19 pandemic, containment of drug menace, employment generation and infrastructure development.

They also thanked outgoing DC Mohammad Aijaz for bringing vibrancy in the Administration by showing keen interest in solving the public issues and guiding all the Officers of District Administration Srinagar. The Officers also enumerated the achievements made under his vibrant

and dynamic guidance.

During the event, the District Administration Srinagar also accorded a warm welcome to Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat on being posted as Deputy Commissioner Srinagar.

On the occasion, outgoing DC, Mohammad Aijaz Asad in his address spoke at length about the team spirit and the improved work culture in the District Administration at all levels. He advised all the Officers to work with a missionary zeal, sincerity and dedication for

the larger interest of the public.

Mohammad Aijaz also appreciated the efforts of the Officers for their support and cooperation during his about 3 years stay as Deputy Commissioner to make all developmental initiatives a success. He also praised the devotion, dedication and professionalism shown by the Officer in his working.

Former DC also welcomed Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat as Deputy Commissioner Srinagar and hoped that District Administration Srinagar carry forward the

will not leave any stone unturned in socio-economic development of the District under his able guidance. He thanked the staff of DC Office Srinagar for extending full support during his long tenure as DC and He also solicited the same cooperation, support and understanding towards the incoming DC, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat.

While addressing the occasion, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat said he expects complete dedication to public welfare and commitment to work from all Officers and assured them of his full support to honest work endeavours aimed at prompt work disposal and overall development in Srinagar District.

The incoming Deputy Commissioner said that he was honoured to take over as Deputy Commissioner of the historic, prestigious and the Capital City Srinagar. He also extended his heartfelt thanks to the outgoing DC Mohammad Aijaz Asad.

Others, who also spoke on the occasion include ADDC Srinagar Zahoor Ahmad Mir, RTO Kashmir, Syed Shahnawaz, ADC Srinagar Syed Shabir Ahmad, ADC Srinagar, Syed Ahmad Kataria, Chief Planning Officer, Mohammad Yaseen Lone, ACD, Syed Farooq and other senior Officers of the District Administration Srinagar.

## PDD shocker for Zafran Colony, Pantha Chowk Sgr residents: Bills up to Rs 6000 shot to consumers

**SRINAGAR, JAN 08:** The Power Development Department (PDD) Kashmir has come up with a monthly shocker for the residents of Achanambal and Zafran Colony area of Pantha Chowk Srinagar as power bills ranging from Rs 3500 to Rs 6000 have been shot to consumers for the month of December.

Irate locals of Achanambal, Zafran Colony, Pantha Chowk told news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), that they were surprised to see the exaggerated bills for the December month. “We checked the bills online and it shows Rs 2760 as the opening balance and 1048 as the bill and my December bill



shows Rs 3808 as amount due. We were the first to see installation of cables, digital meters and there is no chance of hooking,” said Adil Bashir, resident of Zafran Colony. “This is total injustice with us as I can’t afford to pay Rs 3808 power bill monthly when I haven’t used electricity upto this amount. The PDD should instead cut my power connection.”

For Lateef Ahmed, another consumer, December bill is Rs 6600. “This is for the first time I have received the bill that shows Rs 6600 outstanding. Units consumed shows 400 but bill is Rs 6600,” Lateef said and sought the immediate attention of PDD Chief Engineer and AEE Pantha Chowk.

Similarly, hundreds of consumers from Achanambal and Zafran Colony, narrated the same tale. “We can see the opening of Rs 2760 shown to all consumers, reasons best known to PDD officials,” said Sajad Ahmed, another frustrated consumer.

Pertinently, Zafran Colony is fully metered and cabling was done four months ago while it’s adjoining area Achanambal is metered but cabling is yet to be done. “We urge PDD department to clear the confusion and end disparity. We request AEE Pantha Chowk and Chief Engineer PDD Kashmir to clear what this ‘opening balance’ amount was all about?” asked elderly Ghulam Qadir.

The locals of Achanambal, Zafran Colony also appealed LG Manoj Sinha to intervene and direct the PDD officials to end the disparity. Meanwhile, PDD Inspector Abdul Ahad said that there has been some technical error in the system. He, however, said that aggrieved consumers should approach AEE’s office at Pantha Chowk for correction of bills.

## "KASHMIR UDYAMI" ONE DAY SEMINAR POSTPONED

**SRINAGAR, JAN 08:** The one-day seminar “Kashmir Udyami” on the promotion of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) units in the Kashmir Valley, organized by the Indian Chamber of Commerce for SC, ST, and Women Entrepreneurs (ICC-STWE) has been postponed.

The event was scheduled to take place on January



9, 2024, at Tagore Hall, Iqbal Park, Wazir Bag but due to unforeseen circumstances, the event has been temporarily deferred, and a new date will be communicated in due course.

“We appreciate the enthusiasm and interest shown by all stakeholders, and we assure you that the seminar will be rescheduled at the earliest convenience.”

Syed Tajamul Bukhari, Operations Manager/Coordinator at ICCSTWE.

## Doordarshan Srinagar Acknowledges Outstanding Performance of DD News Stringers in Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra Program

**SRINAGAR, DEC 08:** Doordarshan Srinagar organized a special function to recognize and appreciate the commendable efforts of DD News stringers who excelled during the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra program. The event was graced by esteemed Chief Guest, Director Doordarshan News, Qazi Salman, and attended by Head of Programme Rabiya Rasool and News Editor Shabir Ahmad Dar.

Among the distinguished awardees were Arshad Nawshari, Gulzar Ahmad Dahal, Ishfaq Ahmad Sofi, Mohammad Iqbal, Sajad Ahmad Khanyari, Shahid Farooqi, Mohd Imran Sofi, Khurshid Padroo, Dawood Ahmad, Wahid Maqbool, Sheikh Tariq, Mushtaq Ahmed, outstanding performance throughout the program.

During the ceremony, Director of News, Qazi Salman, expressed pride in the exceptional contributions of the DD News team in effectively conveying the welfare schemes of the central government to the people. He emphasized that the purpose of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra Program was to disseminate information about these schemes to the public and enroll potential beneficiaries on the spot.

Highlighting the success of the program, Qazi Salman stated, “It is a matter of pride for us that the dedicated efforts of our DD News string-



ers have played a crucial role in the successful completion of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra Program.”

The stringers extended their gratitude to the director and officials of Doordarshan Srinagar for recognizing their efforts and presenting them with appreciation certificates. They emphasized their commitment to

continuing their role in effectively communicating the government’s initiatives to the public.

The event served as a platform to celebrate the achievements of the DD News team in reaching out to the community and ensuring the effective implementation of the central government’s welfare schemes.

## IGP Kashmir takes stock of security scenario at PCR Kashmir

### Directed officers to uphold public safety, ensure secure environment

**SRINAGAR, JAN 08:** In order to enhance and evaluate security measures across the valley, the IGP Kashmir VK Birdi Monday conducted a comprehensive security review meeting at PCR Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by DD IB Nitin Tiwari, DIG CKR Srinagar Sujit Kumar, DIG SSB Srinagar Imtiyaz Ismail Parry, DIG IR Kashmir Abdul Qayoom, SSP Srinagar Ashish Mishra, SSP PCR Shoket Hussain Shah, SSP Traffic City Srinagar Muzaffar Ahmad Shah, SSP Security Kashmir Sheikh Faisal and SP PC Srinagar Iftikhar Talib.

DIG NKR Vivek Gupta & DIG SKR Rayees Mohammad Bhat along with district SSPs, PDs attended the meeting virtually.

Besides, officers from Army,

BSF, CRPF, CISF and SB also participated. During the meeting, the participating officers briefed IGP Kashmir about the overall security scenario and the security measures being adopted to counter the challenges, a police spokesman said in a statement issued to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

The discussions encompassed various facets, including intelligence gathering, threat assessments, emergency response protocols in view of VIP visits and upcoming events like R-Day functions.

The IGP Kashmir actively engaged with the officers, delving into discussions about initiatives aimed at maintaining law and order, as well as anti-terrorist



operations within the valley.

Highlighting the importance of continued efforts and coordination among different forces on the ground, IGP Kashmir stressed upon strengthening collaboration between different law enforcement agencies for seamless infor-

mation sharing and joint operations besides, exploring innovative technologies to augment existing security infrastructure and response capabilities.

He urged officers to intensify anti-terrorist operations and take stringent action against indi-

viduals or organizations supporting anti-national activities.

Besides, directed them to enhance joint patrolling especially during the night hours to prevent any terrorist movement.

During the meeting, the IGP Kashmir emphasized the importance of precision and coordination, outlining strategic measures to address potential challenges and uphold the highest standards of security.

VK Birdi expressed confidence in the preparedness of the security forces and assured the public of their commitment to ensuring a safe and secure environment, besides stressed the importance of community support in maintaining peace and security in the valley.

## Formative assessment: JKSCRT to conduct assessment upto 8th standard in first week of March

**SRINAGAR, JAN 08:** In view of the winter vacations, Jammu and Kashmir State Council of Educational Research and Training (JKSCERT) Monday said that it will conduct formative assessment upto 8th standard in first week of March instead of the previously notified date.

Under the Student Assessment and Evaluation (SA&E) scheme up to Class 8th, JKSCERT had notified the schedule and timeline for conduct of SA&E up to Class 8th (Elementary level) for the summer and winter zone schools from Academic Session 2023-24.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) Director of JKSCERT in a communique said, “For the convenience of students and keeping in view the announcement of winter vacation in winter zone schools by JKUT, the Formative Assessment scheduled to be conducted in the last week of December 2023 in winter zone schools of JKUT shall now be conducted by the respective schools by or before 1st week of March 2024.”

Earlier in October-2023, JKSCERT had devised a ‘Common’ format for the recording of the formative assessment under the Student Assessment and Evaluation (SA&E) scheme up to Class 8th.

Formative assessment is a range of formal and informal assessment procedures conducted by teachers during the learning process in order to modify teaching and learning activities to improve student attainment.

JKSCERT had said that the council earlier had notified SA&E scheme up to class 8th for all government and recognised schools in accordance with the provisions in National Education Policy-2020 and Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2019.

“Despite continuous orientation on the scheme by this Council, there was a continuous demand from the stakeholders to have a common format for the recording of the formative assessment and result sheet thereof,” it reads.

The communique further reads, “JKSCERT accordingly devised formats for; recording of formative assessment, Co-curricular Component and also devised result sheet which for wider dissemination to concerned Schools.”







# Vikramjit Singh chairs Investor Facilitation Meet of JKTPO

## HT News Network

JAMMU, JANUARY 8: Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce, Vikramjit Singh, today chaired an Investor Facilitation Meet at Udhog Bhawan, here to address the issues and concerns of the industries to whom land has already been allotted by the Government.

The agenda of the meet was to resolve the issues and concerns of the industrialists and to ensure that their projects start the production at the earliest.

The Investor Facilitation Meet was organised by Jammu & Kashmir Trade Promotion Organization (JKTPO) for Investors in both the Divisions of J&K, and this is the eighth meet since March 2023.

The primary objective of the meet was to engage with industries who have been allocated the land to understand their challenges, and collaboratively

devise effective solutions to accelerate the commencement of operations. It is important to note that 169 units with an investment of Rs. 7,096 crore have been allotted land in different industrial estates and are setting up their units at various stages. More than 60 Industrialists from both the divisions participated in this meet. Some of the investors also joined the meeting virtually.

Commissioner Secretary appreciated JKTPO for hosting such sessions saying that "Focus of the Government is to continue the interface with those investors who have commenced the work on ground and facilitated resolution of their issues to enable commencement of commercial production."

Vikramjit Singh, during the session, had one to one discussion with investors regarding the issues faced by them in different areas such as land, power supply, change of land use,



availing incentives & subsidies, infrastructure development, etc.

The meet was attended by Khalid Jahangir, Managing

Director, JKTPO, Inderjeet, Managing Director, SIDCO/SICOP, Arun Kumar Manhas, Director, Industries & Commerce Depart-

ment, Jammu, Khalid Majeed, Director Industries & Commerce Department, Kashmir, Imran Mehmood, FA/CAO, JKTPO and

Megha Baogia, General Manager, JKTPO.

Commissioner Secretary noted the grievances projected by the participants and assured that necessary support will be provided to the industries for smooth and hassle-free operations. The agenda of the meet was to resolve the issues and concerns of the industrialists and to ensure that their projects start the production at the earliest.

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## Transportation of bovine out of Samba district banned

### HT News Network

SAMBA, JANUARY 08: District Magistrate, Samba, Abhishek Sharma, in exercise of the powers vested under Section 144 Cr.P.C. imposed restriction on transportation of bovine animals such as Cow, Ox, Calf, Buffalo etc. except with the prior permission from this office.

Since it is not possible to serve the order individually, it is being issued ex- parte. Senior Superintendent of Police Samba shall ensure strict implementation of this order. Any person found violating this order shall be dealt with in accordance with law.

This order shall come into force with immediate effect and shall remain in force for a period of Sixty days from the date of its issuance, if not withdrawn/ rescinded earlier.

## ITI Kishtwar hosts National Apprenticeship Mela

### HT News Network

KISHTWAR, JANUARY 08: The Government Industrial Training Institute (ITI) Kishtwar, in collaboration with the District Industrial Centre, organized the Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Mela in line with the Prime Minister's Skill India Mission, here today.

The event saw the participation of over 80 applicants across 15 sectors, representing more than 10 establishments and offering 15 distinct trades. The objective was to encourage companies to hire more apprentices, promoting skill development and enhancing employability across various fields such as welding, electrical work, fashion designing, sewing technology, computer operation, carpentry, and more.

Hosted by Anoop Sharma, Principal ITI Kishtwar, and supported by Inamul Haq and Irshad Ahmed, Senior Faculty of ITI Kishtwar, the one-day event enabled applicants to shape their careers through apprenticeship training.

Applicants need an 8th-12th grade pass certificate, a skill training certificate, an ITI Diploma, or a graduate degree to participate. This initiative offers young and aspiring individuals the opportunity to select from over 15 trades, including welding, electrical work, fashion designing, sewing technology, computer operation, mechanical work, among others. Moreover, successful candidates will receive certifications recognized by the National Council for Vocational Education and Training, significantly enhancing their employability post-training. The primary aim of this program is to motivate companies and local establishments to engage more apprentices while aiding employers in identifying and nurturing talent through comprehensive training and practical skill development. The primary aim of this program is to motivate companies and local establishments to engage more apprentices while aiding employers in identifying and nurturing talent through comprehensive training and practical skill development.

## 76 CRPF Battalion organizes Health Checkup camp for Channi Rama Residents

### HT News Network

JAMMU, JANUARY 08: The 76 CRPF Battalion, in collaboration with J&K Health Department, organized a free medical camp under Civic Action Programme here today at Guru Ravidas Community Hall, Channi Rama.

The health camp was held under the guidance of Sandeep Khirwar, IPS IG Jammu Sector and Ramesh Kumar, DIG Jammu Range. The main objective of the camp was to reach out to the needy people of the area to provide free health care and make them aware about their health.

In the Medical Camp, the Medical Officers Dr. S. Sowmiya, 76 Battalion, CRPF and Dr. Neeyati Abrol, conducted

free] medical check-ups of around 300 civilians and provided free medicines.

T.H. Khan, Commandant-76 Bn inaugurated the Civic Action programme and appealed to all people of the area to go for physical exercises regularly to stay fit. He sensitized them about healthy lifestyle and hygiene. Besides, he also elaborated the role of the CRPF in maintaining a cordial relationship between locals & force.

Mahendra Singh 21C, Rajesh Kumar Yadav 21C, Debu Dhakarwal, Asstt. Comdt., Rajinder Pal Singh, Asstt. Comdt., Insp Vishnu Kumar Sharma of 76 Bn CRPF also participated in the camp. The initiative drew positive response and was received well by the locals with the urge that CRPF to organize such camps.

## DC Rajouri reviews progress on Rajouri Thanamandi-Surankote Road Project

### HT News Network

RAJOURI, JANUARY 08: Deputy Commissioner Rajouri Om Prakash Bhagat today convened a meeting to review the ongoing work on the pivotal Rajouri-Thanamandi-Surankote road project.

It is pertinent to mention here that this vital road serves as a lifeline for the Pir Panjal region, connecting the border district of Rajouri to the historic Mughal Road, maintained by the Border Roads Organization (BRO). The Rajouri-Thanamandi-Surankote Road is not just a transportation corridor but also the shortest route to the scenic Kashmir Valley.

This road intersects with the historical Mughal Road at Bafliaz in Poonch district. It serves as a pivotal conduit for hundreds of tourists, passenger vehicles, and trucks traveling to and from the Kashmir Valley, linking Jammu and various parts of the country. This crucial infrastructure



venture holds immense promise for enhancing connectivity and fostering development in the region, making the review imperative.

A comprehensive review during the meeting indicated that the road encompasses a total length of 32 kilometers, and significant progress has already been achieved. Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioner also discussed issues regarding the construction work and asked the officers to work in tandem to resolve the issues amicably.

The Deputy Commissioner, with a keen eye for quality and precision, directed the officers to steadfastly adhere to the prescribed specifications for the construction of the road. His emphasis on maintaining impeccable quality standards underscores the commitment of the administration to delivering a road that not only serves as a lifeline for the local populace but also stands the test of time in terms of durability and safety.

Furthermore, the Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned departments to expedite their efforts in completing the roadwork, recognizing the urgency and importance of timely project delivery.

In conclusion, this review meeting provided an opportunity to assess the progress of the Rajouri-Thanamandi-Surankote road project. It highlighted the critical role of the road as a lifeline for the Pir Panjal region and emphasized the need for maintaining high-quality standards throughout the construction process.

## BJP Leaders Strategize Election Plans in Crucial Meeting at party Office kashmir

### HT News Network

Srinagar, 8 Jan 2023— Today, a pivotal meeting convened at the BJP Head Kashmir J-53 Jawahar Nagar, Srinagar. Members of the Srinagar Parliamentary Constituency Core Group gathered to deliberate on strategies and construct a comprehensive work plan in preparation for the upcoming parliamentary elections 2024.

In attendance were distinguished leaders including Dr. Ali Mohammad Mir, Arif Raja, Mudassir wani, Adv. sajid yousuf Shah, Salinder Singh, Bilal Parray, Ashok Bhat, Shiekh Bashir, Er. sahil Bashir, Adv. Salman, Ashraf Azad, Gazi Ruhullah, Mohd Latief, mohd. Amin shah, adil Ahmad, Er. sajad Reshi, ruheena shahzad each contributing their expertise and commitment to the discussions. "Our concerted efforts and meticulous planning will shape our approach to representing the aspirations of Srinagar's populace in the upcoming parliamentary elections," emphasized by BJP leaders. The meeting's agenda revolved



around crafting a detailed roadmap that emphasized grassroots engagement, innovative outreach initiatives, and the strategic utilization of technological advancements to effectively communicate the party's vision throughout the Srinagar constituency. Key areas of focus identified during the discussions included community-centric programs, tailored voter awareness campaigns, and specific strategies to address localized concerns effectively. The BJP reaffirms its unwavering dedication to serving the community, promoting progress, and championing the welfare of the constituents.

## Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra

## Kathua's Mushroom Marvel: Agriculture Department's guidance Sparks Rural Women's Economic Triumph

### HT News Network

KATHUA, JANUARY 08: In the enchanting district of Kathua, a heartwarming success story unfolded reflecting how the Agriculture Department has taken center stage in transforming the lives of rural women.

Neelam Rani, once a homemaker with boundless dreams, steps into the spotlight during the "Meri Kahani Meri Zubani" segment of the ongoing Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra.

With heartfelt gratitude, Neelam narrates how the Agriculture Department's initiatives became the driving force behind a remarkable journey towards economic independence. "Our humble homes have become the epicenter of change," she expresses, acknowledging the unwavering support that the government schemes provided.

Neelam applauds the dedication of the District



Agriculture Department, emphasizing their crucial role in the transformative process. "They believed in us when others doubted, turning unused poultry sheds into thriving mushroom units. Their continuous support has made Jandi village a testament to the impact of government schemes."

The self-help groups formed under Neelam's leadership became a pivotal part of the narrative. "Venturing into entrepreneurship with the guidance of the Agriculture Depart-

ment, we have become proud owners of mushroom production units. It's not just about mushrooms; it's about breaking barriers and redefining possibilities."

Neelam proudly announces the establishment of the district's first women's FPO (Farmer Producer Organisation), a milestone achieved through the foresight and commitment of the Agriculture Department. "This is a symbol of women's empowerment, made possible by the government's support," she declares.

## Awareness event on Gender equality held at Kishtwar

### HT News Network

KISHTWAR, JANUARY 08: The Department of Social Welfare, in collaboration with Mission Shakti Kishtwar, conducted an awareness program at SBI, RSETI campus, aimed at fostering gender sensitivity and promoting equality among genders. The event was graced by the presence of Director RSETI, Vikash Sindhu, and staff members of RSETI.

The primary objective of this camp was to sensitize females about various women-centric schemes, focusing on gender sensitivity to encourage parity among genders.

Detailed information was imparted to the participants regarding the services provided by the center, encompassing Legal Aid, Medical Aid, Police Assistance, Temporary Shelter, and Psychosocial Courses in cases of gender discrimination.

Participants were introduced to a spectrum of welfare schemes offered by the Government of India, specifically targeting women. They were also provided guidance on the importance of gender sensitivity and informed about available assistance in situations involving gender discrimination.

The initiative by the Department of Social Welfare under Mission Shakti Kishtwar

## DM Samba orders Police verification, disclosure of details of tenants & hired persons

### HT News Network

SAMBA, JANUARY 08: District Magistrate, Samba Abhishek Sharma, by virtue of powers vested under section 144 of CPC, 1, has ordered all landlord(s), landowner(s) owner(s) of properties, owner(s) of business establishment, attorney holder(s), person(s) in charge of properties in any capacity (hereafter called as owners) located in jurisdiction of district Samba, to mandatory disclose details of outsiders working in Industries/ construction companies/ business establishments/ domestic helpers/ tenants (commercial and agricultural) after proper police verifica-

tion. All owners shall after the issuance of this order and within ten days of letting/ sub-letting/ renting out his/her their premises/ house / business establishment or part thereof to any tenant(s) as per the prescribed Declaration Form, to be signed by both the owner(s) and the tenant(s), to the concerned Police Station, either in person or by registered post addressed to the concerned Station House Officer (SHO). The owners who have already let / sub-let/ rented out their house(s)/ business establishment or part(s) thereof to any tenant(s) on any date prior to the Issuance of this order, shall within ten days after the issuance of this order,

submit without fail the detailed particulars of the outsider(s) working in Industries/ construction companies/ business establishment / domestic helpers/ tenants (commercial and agricultural) as per the declaration form to the concerned Police Station. It is clarified that individuals relating to all arrangements of letting or sub-letting the property like Paying Guest, Tenants (Commercial and Agricultural) etc. shall also be covered by this order.

Owners who have allowed Jhuggi's in their lands shall also be required to disclose the details as per the declaration form.

Every SHO in district Samba shall conduct verification of outsiders

working in Industries/ construction companies/ business establishment / domestic helpers/ tenants (commercial & agricultural) and also maintain a separate register for such purpose. Every Tehsildar, through the Institution of Lambardar, Chowkddar and through PRI Members shall disseminate the information about this order and the need for mandatory disclosure of details of outsiders especially in border villages. Any person found violating the aforementioned order shall be dealt with, in accordance with law. Since it is not possible to serve the order individually, it is being issued ex-parte. Sr. Superintendent of Police.



EDITORIAL

## Kashmir's Unending Dry Spell - Agricultural Woes and Tourist Discontent

In recent months, Kashmir has been grappling with an unusual climatic challenge that has significant repercussions for both its agrarian sector and the tourism industry. The absence of snowfall and an enduring dry spell have created a landscape of hardships, impacting the livelihoods of farmers and leaving tourists discontented.

According to the latest weather statistics, the region has experienced an alarming decrease in precipitation, with snowfall levels far below the average for this time of year. This deficiency in snow in upper reaches and no snow at all on plains is concerning for Kashmir's agricultural community, as the winter precipitation is crucial for replenishing the soil and ensuring a successful spring harvest.

Farmers, who heavily rely on snowmelt for irrigation, are facing unprecedented challenges. The scarcity of water has led to reduced crop yields, threatening the sustenance of traditional agricultural practices that have been the backbone of Kashmir's economy for generations. This distressing situation not only jeopardizes the livelihoods of farmers but also raises concerns about food security in the region.

Simultaneously, the dry spell has cast a shadow over Kashmir's tourism industry, known for its picturesque snow-covered landscapes during winter. The absence of snowfall has left tourists disheartened, as the iconic winter charm of the region has faded. Ski resorts, usually bustling with activity, now wear a deserted look, and the lack of snow-related recreational activities has dampened the spirits of those seeking winter adventures.

Tourist-dependent businesses, such as hotels and restaurants, are experiencing a slump in revenue as visitors opt for destinations with more favorable weather conditions. This decline not only impacts the immediate economic interests of local businesses but also threatens the long-term sustainability of the tourism sector in Kashmir.

The combination of agricultural difficulties and tourist discontent paints a grim picture for the region's overall economic health. Urgent measures are needed to address the water scarcity issue and support farmers through these challenging times. Additionally, efforts to diversify the tourism offerings beyond winter-centric activities could help mitigate the impact on the industry.

As the region grapples with the consequences of this prolonged dry spell, it is crucial for policymakers to implement sustainable solutions that address the root causes of these challenges. The resilience of Kashmir's people and its unique blend of natural beauty remain, but proactive measures are essential to ensure that these qualities endure despite the unpredictable twists of climate change.



■ By Mool Raj

In the most generic sense, social media refers to a collection of engaging online applications that facilitate the creation, curation, and sharing of content formed by others. Though all social media platforms use similar features, yet they differ from one another in their designs, systems, standards, and client base.

It is argued that if early conflicts involved combat with weapons such as stones and sticks, contemporary battle is waged on a technologically advanced battleground wherein communication via social media has become an unexpected, and potent weapon. A number of the groups are exploiting disinformation and phoney profiles to sow terror, instigate aggression, and manipulate results. It is argued that the unintended outcome of peoples' improved accessibility is the deterioration of unity in society causing detrimental effects on social cohesion and greater cultural harmony.

Conventional conceptions of both conflict and peace are impacted by 5th Generation Warfare and postmodernism. It is necessary to take a transformative approach to the definition of peace, where comparative and contextual peacebuilding techniques can affect how societies organise themselves and foster a peaceful perspective. While 5th Generation and Postmodern Warfare embrace a variety and kinds of conflict, involving non-kinetic force and soft aggression, traditional conceptions of security merely encompass a lack of physical force. Conflict in the 5th generation war is seen as involving not just intra-state disputes but also conflicts between cultural groups that are carried over international borders and used by organisations and individual affiliates.

Social media networks are armaments because they implicitly magnify whatever content that appears on their sites and tailor it to the people who would respond to it most effectively employing extremely private information and algorithms. It is an



established fact that political and social entities in Pakistan use social media to promote disinformation or discontents, idealising combats, or specifically aiming their attacks at those most at risk. These indoctrinations through social media include the national security apparatus, national solidarity, social unity, and discarding allegiance to India should develop clear legislation to regulate social media, establish an independent authority, ensure user privacy and data protection, and hold platforms accountable for misuse of user data.

The 5th Generation warfare through social media has added to insecurity and instability in India. The dissemination of propaganda is one of the main uses of social media networks. This is essential to all other facets of digital planning since it gives all other types of material relevance and significance. In India, it is substantiated with evidences that militant and some political organisations, general masses especially the youth, and non-state actors frequently use social networking to publicise the claims of their challengers and the opponents' violations of human rights abuses or their wins on arenas, or inciting violence, or releasing fake documents or the videos despite the fact this could involve deception. In the era of postmodern warfare through the social media, the

culture of disagreements among political, ethnic and different social groups both aims at aggressive and hostile behaviours that encourage confrontation at the lowest level. The information war is becoming more prevalent as a result of the development of communication tools. As a result, it is crucial to understand how contemporary technologies for communication and info fit into the framework of hybrid warfare, where social media is a potent tool. By implementing various techniques of adeptly combining security measures with financial constraints, hacking attempts, and propagation, among other things, tactical and electoral objectives are achieved. National Cyber Security Policy should tackle the challenges and risks of the 5th Generation Warfare and to use against a variety of social media thuggeries, such as stealing money using spamming or phishing, hacking elections, or damaging or fiddling with essential systems. With these policies, Acts and Ordinances, the involvement of social media in divergence and confrontation has been under close examination, especially in the wake of violent crimes of prominence. Despite all efforts, social media still active in playing out the conflicts, including the encouragement of aggression, the dissemination of propaganda and false information, the

hiring of new members to militant organisations, and the expanding use of social media to silence critics.

The real threat to national security is from the forces that create hype and channelize indoctrination. In this era of social media, private companies provide propaganda services that people can employ which has led to a significant portion of this activity becoming professionalised. Researchers looked at how digital warriors utilise various communication techniques to sway the public's view, including fabricating misleading or altered media, information-driven focusing, and the use of malicious strategies like launching disinformation initiatives or harassing people on the India should develop clear legislation to regulate social media, establish an independent authority, ensure user privacy and data protection, and hold platforms accountable for misuse of user data. Combat disinformation, digital literacy, account verification, and collaboration with social media companies. Ensure judicial oversight, public consultation, and international cooperation to ensure fair regulations. Protect freedom of expression while maintaining transparency and a democratic process.

The author is a columnist and freelance writer

## Learning New Skills related to the field of Artificial intelligence will be a Strategic and Beneficial step



■ Vijay Garg

If studies are to be believed, a report from LinkedIn predicts that the skills required for jobs globally will change at least 65% by 2030 due to AI. In a joint survey of large companies, expertise in AI and machine learning emerged as the top two fastest growing job roles. Talking about India, in the last two years India and similar countries have seen a doubling of job postings mentioning AI or Generative AI. Has been. Understand its importance from the fact that now AI training is being given even during school education.

In such a situation, for the youth who are going to graduate and are confused about the area of specialization, or want to do ups killing or want to switch jobs, learning new skills related to the field of AI will be a strategic and beneficial step. What are the skills of AI? Machine Learn-



ing (ML): Expertise in ML is in high demand. In Deep Learning, Reinforcement Learning and Natural Language Processing (NLP) This skill proves particularly useful.

While searching while writing the article, 16000 ML Engineer job postings were visible on LinkedIn and 8000 on

Indeed. Data science requires feeding data into AI models. For that, data visualization, analysis and visualization are important and require experts. Cloud Computing As AI models become more complex, the ability to leverage cloud platforms for training and their practical use is becoming

increasingly important.

That's why Demand for skills has increased in platforms like AWS, Azure and GCP. Generative AI: With the advent of tools like ChatGPT and Dell-E2, there is a market for skills related to the use and management of generative AI models for

creative content creation, marketing and product development. What roles will be in demand? Knowledge of programming languages like Python, R and Julia will be required more and more. Whereas, Robotics and AI Engineer, Data Analyst Manager, ML Engineer, Data Engineer etc. The roles of others will become important. Along with this there are some emerging roles.

Business Intelligence Engineer A business intelligence (BI) engineer is trained in seeing patterns and interdependencies in different features of a dataset. Qualifications: Educational background in engineering, computer science or related fields, practical experience in data analysis and familiarity with web-based tools required. AI Software Engineers The architecture of AI applications is usually designed by AI software engineers.

Ability: Bachelor's degree in related fields with programming and analytical skills is required. Whereas a certificate in AI or Data Science will improve job prospects. Prompt Engineer/Researcher Prompt engineers primarily develop and refine AI generated text, allowing the AI model to respond accurately and meaningfully to user instructions.

Vijay Garg Retired Principal Educational Columnist Malout Punjab



# Book Review Of "Canary's Voice" By Shafkat Aziz Hajam



■ Rayees Ahmad Kumar

Shafkat Aziz Hajam hailing from the north Kashmir's border district of Kupwara is a noted poet of international repute as his poetry items are often carried by esteemed magazines and anthologies of global reputation. Whenever any poetry competition is held at national or international level or poems are invited for submission in anthologies, Shafkat's poems most often get a chance to be featured. Not only this Shafkat participates in poetry recitation events too on varied global level platforms. Be it Haiku, Limerick, Odes or simple poems, Shafkat's poetic prowess is acclaimed by literary circles.

On social media platforms one can feel his poems being recited by children from Asian, African and even European countries. Tens of his poems have already been translated into many living languages of the globe which reflects the impact of his skill and thought. He is an avid poetry writer and has a couple of poetry collections to his credit. Presently his masterpiece poetry collection which is under my review is "Canary's Voice" published by Wular Publishing House Anantnag.

This collection spread over 84 pages mostly unfold children's Islamic poems. It contains 72 Islamic poems for children. It is pertinent to mention here that Shafkat mostly writes children's literature especially poems about our little chaps. The cover page of this beautiful collection is adorably designed to lure poetry lovers. In the foreword of this book Dr Zainul Hussain of Azad Narang Inter-College Bareilly UP writes "Shafkat Aziz Hajam from India Kashmir, has made a tremendous effort with two magnificent inking prowess in writing a collection of rhymes (most of which are Islamic).

Dr Fizza Younis from Pakistan has written a detailed account titled "the words of appreciation" about this collection. She

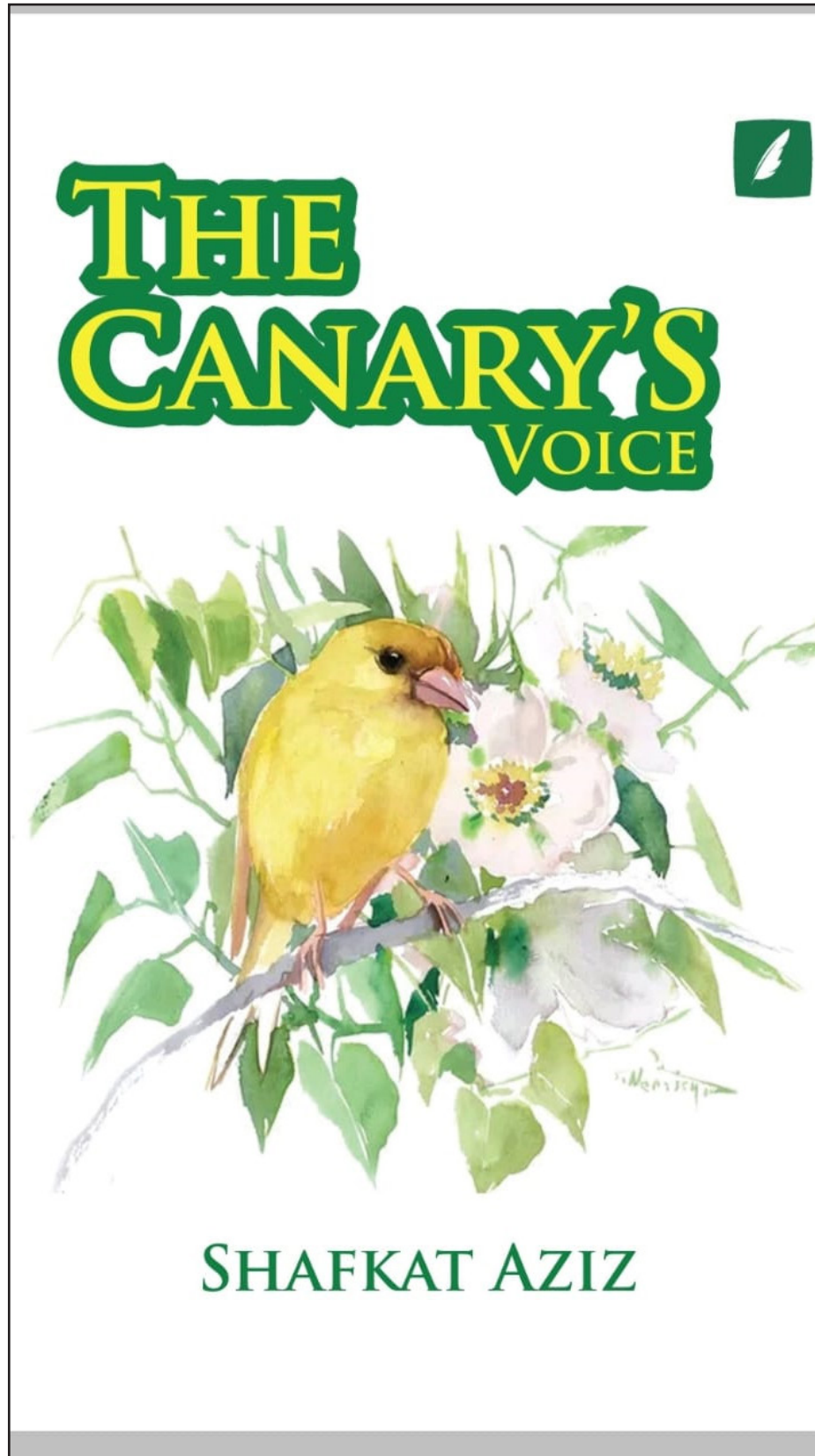
writes "Although I don't know Shafkat Aziz Hajam on a personal level, I know him from his work. And nothing speaks more about a person than the words they write from their heart". Hamida Foud, poetess and English language teacher from Egypt writes in "Words of Encouragement"- In some poems the Poet emphasizes the value of time. He deals with the blessings of Allah's mercy.

He reveals how we can enjoy our lives when we are keen on satisfying Allah so that we become happy and get peace of mind". The poetic prowess of Shafkat gets unfolded in the book with it's first poem appearing on page 13, about remembering our Allah in times of joy, sorrow and every-time and everywhere we go. He goes on with mini-Islamic poems like Allah is one and I am a Muslim. He uses simplest of his vocabulary just to aim at developing an affection and love for understanding Islamic concepts among the little children through his poetry.

These micro-poems are so nicely composed that our children easily comprehend the message stored in them. Allah hates liars, Ask only Allah and A true Muslim are some of the poems found in the book which are artistically woven reflecting religious bent of the author. O Allah for Hajj and My dear teacher like many other poems of the book, help in inculcating moral values among the little school going children or those still enjoying the mother's sweet lap at home. Hate the Shaytan and Come to Masjid like poems would surely help our children to develop a love for offering prayers in Mosque and hate devil and devilish acts.

Fear Allah and Shower upon me your Mercy poems are in the form of a morning prayer composed by author which children can sing during their morning assembly. When Allah wishes, is another one making children believe that Rain, grain, snow and wind can be there only if Allah wishes and even a tiny straw can't change it's position without being ordered by one omnipotent. O Allah I have no Words, is a poem in which author has expressed his gratitude to Allah in the language of a child who keeps us away from committing sins, feeds us and shows us the right path.

O dear Allah you know, in this one Shafkat has made a reflection of child's innocence who never harms or hurts anyone, never does anything wrong nor hates any soul. Get up early Every day and A good



student I am, poems are in the form of moral lessons for children who after waking up early in the morning would make ablution followed by a prayer to Allah. If I were a bird, this one takes our children to the world of birds who sing different melodious songs early in the morning in nearby gardens and on tall trees, move anywhere they like across fields and even borders not restricted by the laws of land and enjoying fully in the world of absolute freedom.

This all is impossible for us being humans and living on the same planet but following the rules and laws. Singing Birds and O dear Butterfly, have successfully expressed the emotions of a child who possess inherent love for birds and flying moths like butterfly. O dear Rainbow, children express a special kind of joy and are somewhat thrilled to watch a Rainbow soon after the rain showers over the sky. They immediately move out of their homes to have a first glimpse of this seven-coloured head and tail-less natural phenomena. In a child's language author has skillfully crafted this one on page 66.

Let's end Strife and Read the Holy Quran, like poems can potentially remove animal instincts among children and make them responsible and civilized future citizens of the country, as ending strifes and reading the global message of peace and tranquility is the foundational principle of all religions of the world. O dear Teacher and Come to School, engraves in the minds of little children the role played by teachers in moulding and shaping students and schools as the seats of learning and transformation. I am a Princess and I am a Prince, reflect the aspirations of four years boy and girl found in this poetry collection.

In the literary landscape of valley Shafkat Aziz Hajam stands tall for being a widely published and anthologized young poet who has received applauds and appreciation from all quarters since he embarked on literary Odyssey. He has a unique style of expressing his emotions through his thoughts and inking them through poetry. I wish him all the best ahead and I hope if he relentlessly carries his work forward and through perseverance he can touch the skies in literary world.

Writer is a columnist hailing from Qazigund Kashmir

## AI regulations for patient safety and equity

Its integration into various aspects of life, including critical areas like healthcare, finance, and law, poses unique challenges

■ Aditya Sinha

The need for a robust regulatory framework for emerging technologies is exemplified by historical examples that reveal the risks of both overregulation and regulatory lag. In the late 1800s, British laws overly restricted automobile development, emphasising the danger of imposing stringent regulations based on an outdated understanding of technology. Similarly, the continued exposure to radioactivity well into the mid-20th century, despite early warnings about its dangers, illustrates the perils of slow regulatory response to emerging scientific knowledge.

This historical context is highly relevant to the regulation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in modern times. AI's integration into various aspects of life, including critical areas like healthcare, finance, and law, poses unique challenges. The often opaque nature of AI algorithms, which can lead to biased decision-making, underscores the urgency for a regulatory framework that is both adaptive and forward-thinking. Particularly in healthcare, where AI has the potential to significantly influence patient outcomes and medical practices, ensuring transparent, ethical, and safe application of AI is paramount.

Today, AI is being deployed in various facets of the healthcare industry. For instance, a recent study published in Nature Medicine highlighted how PANDA, an innovative AI model, has significantly advanced pancreatic cancer detection by accurately identifying common pancreatic lesions and their subtypes through routine non-contrast CT scans, a task previously unachievable by radiologists alone. It's

built upon a substantial dataset and a sophisticated deep learning architecture, allowing for high sensitivity and specificity in lesion detection, outperforming traditional diagnostic methods. PANDA's ability to enhance radiologists' diagnostic capabilities, especially in less specialised settings, and its potential for early cancer detection and screening in asymptomatic individuals marks a transformative step in cancer diagnosis, extending its utility beyond pancreatic cancer to other types where early detection is crucial.

However, AI is as good as the data it is trained on. Empirical research studies have revealed significant bias in AI applications within healthcare. A study by Obermeyer et al. (2019) in Science reported racial bias in a healthcare algorithm widely used in US hospitals, which systematically discriminated against Black patients. This was echoed by research demonstrating that the Framingham Heart Study cardiovascular risk score, used for decades in industrialised countries, showed biased results favouring Caucasian patients over African American patients, leading to unequal and inaccurate care distribution. Another study published in the Journal of Global Health on algorithmic biases emphasises that bias can emerge at any stage of creating algorithms, from study design and data collection to implementation and dissemination, necessitating mitigation strategies at each step. This study defines algorithmic biases as "the application of an algorithm that compounds existing inequities in socioeconomic status, race, ethnic background, religion, gender, disability, or sexual orientation and amplifies inequities in health systems."



The absence of a comprehensive regulatory framework to eliminate algorithmic bias in AI deployed in healthcare could lead to significant negative impacts on patient outcomes. Addressing this challenge starts with acknowledging that bias can infiltrate the algorithm creation process at any point, from study design to data collection and model implementation. To mitigate this, data science teams in healthcare must be diverse, including not just technical experts but also professionals from various backgrounds, such as clinicians who understand the nuances of clinical contexts. This diversity in teams can contribute to more balanced and equitable AI models.

Furthermore, it's important to recognise the inherent tradeoff between algorithm performance and bias. Since societal inequities influence algorithm development, there is always a potential for bias. Short-

term strategies might include adjusting algorithms to protect disadvantaged groups, even if it means compromising on overall accuracy. This approach, while technically challenging, is crucial for ensuring equitable care. Long-term solutions require broader, more diverse teams and the implementation of checklists or safeguards throughout the algorithm development process.

On a larger scale, awareness of algorithmic bias is growing, and efforts are being made to combat it through calibrated incentives and formal legislation. However, current legal measures are still evolving and may not fully address the complexity of the issue. The goal is to not just optimise algorithm performance but also to minimise bias, ideally through a system of checks and balances. This ongoing effort underscores the need for continuous refinement in algorithm development and a collaborative approach across sectors to

harness the power of AI in healthcare effectively.

Policymakers can leverage the World Health Organisation's framework on AI in healthcare by ensuring rigorous documentation and transparency throughout the AI system's lifecycle. This includes pre-specifying medical purposes, development processes, and maintaining records that trace the AI development steps, adopting a risk-based approach for documentation levels. Moreover, implementing a total product lifecycle approach encompassing pre-market management, post-market surveillance, and risk management strategies to address issues such as cybersecurity and algorithmic bias is crucial.

Additionally, policymakers should mandate clear documentation of an AI system's intended use, training dataset details, and demographic composition. They must advocate for external analytical validation to test the system's performance in real-world settings, alongside clinical validation scaled by risk, with randomised clinical trials for high-risk tools. Emphasising data quality, privacy, and protection, as well as fostering engagement and collaboration among stakeholders, will ensure that AI systems are developed and deployed responsibly. This collaborative approach may facilitate regulatory convergence and harmonisation globally, adapting to the rapidly evolving AI landscape.

Aditya Sinha is Officer on Special Duty, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister of India. He tweets @adityasinha004. Views are personal.



# Bilkis Bano Gangrape: SC sets aside remission of 11 convicts by Guj govt

■ HT News Network

New Delhi, Jan 8 (UNI) The Supreme Court on Monday set aside the Gujarat government's decision to grant remission (premature release) to 11 convicts sentenced to life term for the gang rape of Bilkis Bano and killing her family members during the 2002 Gujarat communal riots.

A bench comprising Justice BV Nagarathna and Justice Ujjal Bhuvan held that it was not Gujarat but the Maharashtra government that was competent to pass orders as the trial was conducted there.

The bench said that for passing the remission orders, it is not important to see the place of occurrence or the place of imprisonment of the accused, but it is important to see in which state the case was tried and the sentence was pronounced.

Ruling that since the trial was conducted in Maharashtra, the Gujarat government was not empowered to make such a decision. The court said it is apparent that the appropriate government had to obtain permission from the court before passing remission orders, which means the place of occurrence or the place of imprisonment of convicts is not relevant for remission.

The Court said, "The definition of appropriate government is oth-



erwise. The government intends that the state under whom the convict was tried and sentenced is the appropriate government.

"This emphasises the place of trial rather than where the crime took place," the court said.

It is not the government of the state within whose territory the offense has occurred that can pass the remission, and thus, the order by the Gujarat government has to be quashed," the bench held.

The Gujarat government had granted remission to 11 accused, following a Supreme Court order passed in May 2022 by which the top court had allowed remission to

an accused Radhyesham under the same terms and conditions.

The Supreme Court strongly came down upon the convict, Radhyesham, for playing fraud upon the Court by suppressing material facts and getting a favorable order from the top court in May 2022, which eventually led to the release of all the eleven convicts.

The Court said that the May 2022 judgment was obtained by fraud and therefore is not good in the eyes of the law.

The Supreme Court order came on a batch of petitions filed by Bilkis Bano and others challenging the remission granted to the convicts

in the 2002 Gujarat communal riots. The 11 convicts who were granted remission are Jaswant Nai, Govind Nai, Shailesh Bhatt, Radhyesham Shah, Bipin Chandra Joshi, Kesarbhai Vohania, Pradeep Mordhiya, Bakabhai Vohania, Rajubhai Soni, Mitesh Bhatt, and Ramesh Chandana.

The Gujarat government had applied its remission policy to release the convicts, though the trial in the case had taken place in Maharashtra. The state government and the convicts had argued that the remission was considered after the May 2022 judgment by the Supreme Court, which directed the Gujarat government to decide the remission of one of the convicts, Radheshyam Bhagwandas Shah, under the 1992 remission plea within two months.

But the top court, in its verdict on Monday, noted that the May 2022 judgment came in an Article 32 petition filed by Radhey Shyam, one of the convicts (respondent no. 3), after his petition was dismissed by the Gujarat High Court, which said that the Maharashtra government will have to consider the plea for remission. He then filed a remission application in Maharashtra, and the presiding judge of the trial and DGP Maharashtra gave their opinions on it.

## Home Minister Amit Shah, Dr Mansukh Mandaviya Address National Mega Conclave on PACS as PMBJAK

■ HT News Network

New Delhi Shri Amit Shah, Union Minister for Home Affairs and Cooperation and Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers & Health and Family Welfare addressed the National Mega Conclave on "PACS as Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra", here today. Shri B L Verma, Minister of State, Ministry of Cooperation was also present. The conclave was organised with the motto "Sahakar-se-Samridhi" to highlight the major initiatives taken by the Ministry of Cooperation and progress achieved so far. As per the new model byelaws adopted by the Ministry of Cooperation, the scope of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) has been widened beyond their original function of dealing with agricultural credits in the grassroot level. PACS are now empowered to access many other avenues like opening of Jan Aushadhi Kendras. Shri Amit Shah highlighted that "the benefits of the decision to allow PACS to open Jan Aushadhi Kendras will not only be accessed by the cooperative societies but will flow down



to the lowest strata of the community". He pointed out that in the last 9 years, approximately Rs. 26,000 crores of poor people's money have been saved through the Jan Aushadhi Kendras. Generic medicines are available at 50-90% of market prices at these Kendras, ensuring affordable healthcare.

Shri Amit Shah also shed light on other important initiatives of the Union Government like the Ayushman Bharat initiative, Mission Indradhanush, Jal Jeevan Mission, Digital Health, Malaria Elimination Mission, TB Mukta Bharat Initiative etc. He said that these initiatives have transformed the healthcare landscape of the country. He highlighted that besides improving healthcare infrastructure in the country through PM-ABHIM and

providing free health insurance for the poor through AB-PMJAY, the government has also substantially reduced the over-the-counter cost of buying medicines by the expanding the network of Jan Aushadhi Kendras and ensuring the availability of diverse high-quality medicines in these centres. "Medicines for dialysis that costs Rs. 65 are available for only Rs. 5 in Jan Aushadhi Kendras", he stated. Addressing the gathering, Dr Mansukh Mandaviya informed that "in the first phase, 2,000 Jan Aushadhi Kendras are planned to be opened through PACS". He also informed that the Dept. of Pharmaceuticals have already approved more than 2,300 applications from PACS for opening Jan Aushadhi Kendras.

## AAP's RS candidate Sanjay Singh, ND Gupta, Swati Maliwal file nominations

■ HT News Network

New Delhi, Jan 8 (UNI) The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MPs Sanjay Singh, Narain Das Gupta and former Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) chairperson Swati Maliwal have filed their nominations for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections on Monday here.

Taking to microblogging site X, the AAP extended wishes to the candidates who filed their nominations for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections scheduled to be held on January 19.

"@SanjayAzadSIn, @SwatiJaiHind & @AAPNDGupta filed their nominations for Rajya Sabha today. Wishing them all the strength in representing the voice of common citizens of India to the upper house," the AAP said.

Referring to Sanjay Singh as the People's leader, the AAP said, "People's leader Sanjay Singh Azad will once again raise the voice of public in the assembly."

Sanjay Singh, a senior Aam Aadmi party, is currently in jail in connection with the alleged Delhi liquor policy scam. He was arrested on October 4, 2023, by the enforcement directorate.

The party's Political Affairs Committee, led by its national convenor and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, on Friday, nominated former DCW chief Swati Maliwal and renominated sitting MPs ND Gupta and Sanjay Singh as its candidates for the Rajya Sabha.

Maliwal resigned from the post of chief of DCW after the party nominated her as a candidate for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections.

## Maldives row: MEA summons Maldivian envoy to India over derogatory remarks against PM Modi

■ HT News Network

New Delhi, Jan 08 (UNI) The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Monday summoned Maldivian envoy to India Ibrahim Shaheeb on Monday and conveyed strong concern over remarks posted on social media against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

As per reports, the Maldives High Commissioner was seen arriving at the MEA office building and leaving a short while later. The Ministry summoned the envoy amid the ongoing row between India and the Maldives over derogatory remarks made by Maldivian leaders against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Lakshadweep. Earlier, On Monday Indian High Commissioner to Maldives, Munu Mahawar held a "pre-arranged meeting" with Ali Naseer Mohamed, Ambassador at Large at the Maldivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Male. The Indian High Commission in Maldives posted on X, "High Commissioner Munu Mahawar had a pre-arranged meeting with H.E. Dr Ali Naseer Mohamed, Ambassador at Large, at MoFA, Maldives, today to discuss bilateral issues." Meanwhile, the Maldives government has distanced itself from the remarks made by its ministers. Maldivian Minister of Foreign Affairs Moosa Zameer said that these remarks against foreign leaders are "unacceptable" and do not reflect the official position of the Maldives government. Meanwhile, the Maldives government has distanced itself from the remarks made by its ministers. Maldivian Minister of Foreign Affairs Moosa Zameer said that these remarks against foreign leaders are "unacceptable".

## Yogi govt issues 'Paying Guest certification' to 75 new building owners in Ayodhya

■ HT News Network

Ayodhya, Jan 7 (UNI) In line with the preparations for the consecration ceremony of Lord Ram to be held on January 22, an increasing number of people are being included in the Paying Guest Scheme in Ayodhya. More than 500 building owners have been connected with it so far.

In this sequence, Commissioner Gaurav Dayal and District Magistrate Nitish Kumar presented certificates to 75 new building owners in the Commissioner Auditorium on Friday. The process of connecting new building owners through the scheme is progressing continuously.

Notably, Ayodhya Development Authority's consultant Rakesh Singh and building owners were present during the distribution event. Commissioner Gaurav Dayal requested that being a resident of Ayodhya, everyone must provide good facilities to the guests. He further appealed to the building owners to provide the best facilities to their guests, making them feel at home. District Magistrate Nitish Kumar said that by joining this scheme, everyone must keep the tradition of hospitality alive. "If we provide them with better facilities, our cultural relationship will strengthen,



and more people will visit. Everyone should pay special attention to cleanliness and behave well towards guests. If we take care of these aspects, guests will leave with pleasant memories, and they are likely to visit again. This will not only strengthen building owners financially but also contribute to the exchange of ideas, culture, and more," he said.

It is noteworthy that the Home Stay/ Paying Guest Scheme is inspired by the spirit of 'Atithi Devo Bhava', which is an important scheme of the UP Government and is being run by the Tourism Department. Under the Paying Guest Scheme, building owners who have 2 to 5 additional rooms in their house can join this scheme and benefit from generating additional income.

## "Will Have To Constitute Bench": Chief Justice On Collegium System

■ HT News Network

New Delhi: The Supreme Court said on Monday it will have to constitute a bench to hear a plea against the collegium system of appointment of judges to the top court and high courts.

"I will have to constitute a bench," Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud told advocate Mathews J Nedumpara tersely after the latter mentioned an old plea filed by him for urgent listing.

Mr Nedumpara referred to the recent interviews of former top court judge Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, who retired on December 25 last year.

In an interview with the news agency PTI on December 29, Justice (retd) Kaul had said the National Judicial Appointments Commission was never given a chance to work, leading to angst in political circles and friction in the working of the collegium system of judges appointing judges



to the higher judiciary.

The Narendra Modi government, after coming to power in 2014, had got enacted the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act.

The NJAC, tasked with the responsibility of making judicial appointments, comprised the Chief Justice of India, two senior Supreme Court judges, the union law minister and two other eminent persons nominated by the CJI, the prime minister, and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha.

However, in October 2015, the Supreme Court struck down the NJAC Act holding it unconstitutional. In the interview, Justice (retd) Kaul said one has to accept there is a problem with the collegium system and it will be "unrealistic" to say that it is working smoothly.

"If people say it (collegium) works smoothly, that would be unrealistic in a sense because that is not a fact. That is reflected by the number of appointments which remain pending. Even till today, certain

names which have been recommended, are pending," Justice (retd) Kaul had said.

"We have to accept that there is a problem in the system. If we close our eyes to the problem, we will not come to a solution. You must acknowledge the problem first and then only you can come up with a solution," he had said. Justice (retd) Kaul, who was a member of the Supreme Court collegium for over a year, had said at present the collegium system is the law of the land and it must be implemented as it stands. "If people say it (collegium) works smoothly, that would be unrealistic in a sense because that is not a fact. That is reflected by the number of appointments which remain pending. Even till today, certain names which have been recommended, are pending," Justice (retd) Kaul had said. "We have to accept that there is a problem in the system. If we close our eyes to the problem.

## India's First Inland Waterways Development Council commits Rs 45,000 crore for development of River Cruise Tourism

■ HT News Network

New Delhi: The maiden edition of Inland Waterways Development Council (IWDC) in Kolkata culminated with many firsts in an effort to ramp up capacity and augment viability of inland waterways of the country. The meet, chaired by the Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal was attended by key stakeholders including ministerial representations from states as well as prominent stakeholders including policy makers and the industry leaders.

The meet, with an objective to enable inland waterways as conduits of economic growth and commerce in the country, committed an investment of 45,000 crore for development of river cruise tourism in the country. Of this ambitious sum, an estimated 35,000 crore has been earmarked for cruise vessels and another 10,000 crore for development of cruise terminal infrastructure at the end of Amrit Kaal, i.e. by 2047. To amp up inland waterways for cargo trade, an investment of 15,200 crore has been arrived at the Global Maritime India Summit (GMIS) held in Mumbai in October, 2023. This is likely to register a growth rate of more than 400%, increasing the volume upto 500 Million



Tonnes Per Annum (MTPA) by 2047. Shri Sonowal also launched 'Harit Nauka' guidelines and 'River Cruise Tourism Roadmap, 2047' at the inaugural session of IWDC in Kolkata today. Speaking on the occasion, Shri Sonowal said, "India has been growing impressively under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji since 2014. The immense potential of blue economy must be realised as we work towards becoming a leader in the Blue Economy of the world, a vision of Modi ji. The Inland Waterways Development Council was conceived with an objective rejuvenate our rich, complex and dynamic waterways. From the days of yore, waterways has been the conduit of economic growth and development of human civilisation. However, these brilliant proven tracks of prosperity remained neglected for decades, resulting in waste.

## AMU minority status: Seven-judge SC bench to start hearing FROM TODAY

■ HT News Network

New Delhi, Jan 8 (UNI) A Seven-Judge Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court of India will start hearing from January 9 the plea of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) on retaining minority institution status.

The seven-judge bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud will decide on the question of whether an educational institution created by a parliamentary statute enjoys minority status under Article 30 of the Constitution. Other members of the bench are Justice Sanjay Khanna, Justice Surya Kant, Justice JB Pardiwala, Justice Dipankar Datta, Justice Manoj Misra and Justice KV Vishwanathan.

Earlier, the bench consisted of Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, who retired on December 25, 2023.

In 2005, AMU reserved 50 per cent of seats in post-graduate medical courses for Muslim candidates by claiming it to be a minority institution. This was challenged in the Allahabad High Court and was set aside. In 2006, the Union government and AMU challenged the High Court's decision before the Supreme Court.

Later, in 2016, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government withdrew itself from the appeal, contending that it did not acknowledge the minority status of the University. Aligarh Muslim University had filed the petition through its registrar, Faizan Mustafa, with the Supreme Court to look into the issue of minority status to the University. The Supreme Court has entrusted the case to the Constitutional Bench comprising of Seven Judges. The CJI-headed bench will start hearing the arguments tomorrow (Jan 9) on the parameters for granting minority status to an educational institution under Article 30 of the Constitution.

Article 30 of the Constitution is - Right of Minorities to Establish and Administer Educational Institutions.



# DC Doda reviews functioning of Revenue, Rural Development departments

■ HT News Network

DODA, JANUARY 08: Deputy Commissioner Harvinder Singh today reviewed the functioning of Revenue, Rural Development departments here in two separate meetings held in the conference hall of the DC office complex.

Chairing a meeting of Revenue Department officials, he assessed the progress achieved in the digitization of land records, scanning, and digitization of massavi in different areas, as well as the reconstruction of damaged massavi. The meeting also addressed issues such as land acquisition for National Highways, mutation pendency, online services, construction of patwarkhana and tehsil offices, domicile certificate status, and eviction of encroachment on forest and state lands.

Deputy Commissioner Harvinder Singh issued several directives in the meeting. He instructed the ACR to constitute an expert team of patwaris for massavi recreation.

The DC asked for meticulous verification and identification process for issuing domicile certificates. Furthermore, he directed ACR and tehsildars to resolve all revenue-related cases pending from the past five years within one month. The meeting concluded with strict directives regarding encroachment, instructing officers to remove structures on government land



and ensure proper fencing for all state-owned lands.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioner presided over a crucial meeting to address key issues regarding the developmental activities in Rural areas. The meeting focused on fund expenditure in the blocks and status of the projects taken up under different schemes. The DC directed the ACD Doda to form a committee to ensure proper utilization of funds.

A significant portion of the meeting

focused on the execution of works in the education sector. Block-wise assessment and expenditures related to education sector projects was reviewed. The ACD provided a comprehensive overview of expenditure status across various sectors, urging BDOs to accelerate execution works without delay.

The meeting delved into repair and renovation works, particularly addressing damage to old government buildings. The status of projects under schemes like

MNREGA, PMAY, and Amrit Sarovar was meticulously reviewed. The DC emphasized the timely payment of wages, discussed Aadhar card seeding, and directed officers to resolve PMAY scheme cases promptly. The meeting also touched upon job card issues and progress under the Unnati project.

In a separate segment, the DC highlighted the importance of proper assessment for material procurement and discussed the target status for Amrit Sarovar projects. Land-related issues for Amrit Sarovar construction were addressed, with instructions given to inform the concerned tehsildar for land provision. The meeting concluded with a review of physical and financial progress across various works under RDD.

The meeting covered progress and challenges under the District Capex Budget, MGNREGA, PMAY-G, Unnati project with RSETI, Amritsarovars, CD&PYT, ABDP/APDP, tribal development, SBM, door-to-door collection, PM Vishwakarma, and MPLAD. These discussions aimed at ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the district's development landscape and addressing issues for effective implementation of various projects.

The meeting was attended by ACD Doda Phulial Singh, DPO/Incharge DIO Doda Suraj Singh, BDOs and representatives of concerned departments.

## DC Kishtwar discusses MGNREGA Annual Plan for FY 2024-25

■ HT News Network

KISHTWAR, JANUARY 08: Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar, Dr. Devansh Yadav today chaired a comprehensive meeting to evaluate the performance of the Rural Development Department and formulation of MGNREGA Annual Plan for FY 2024-25.

The session focused on a detailed assessment of initiatives undertaken during the Financial Year 2023-24 including construction of pacca paths, Community kitchens, playgrounds, irrigation kuhls, Contour/wire-mesh bunding, Panchayat Bhawans, Plantation etc under MGNREGA.

The meeting placed a special emphasis on the convergence of MGNREGA with other schemes of Horticulture, Social forestry, for plantation on kahcharai land in vulnerable areas of District especially in block Nagsemi. Deputy Commissioner Dr. Yadav asked to



include proposals for check dams in the Chatroo area, as well as action to be taken for the sustainability/utility of soakage pits in MGNREGA plan FY 2024-25. Furthermore, the meeting highlighted the collaboration between the Revenue and Horticulture departments, supervised by ACR, to identify 5 kanal of Kahcharai land in each block for model plantation sites, focusing on Kiwi, plum, apple, apricot, among other crops to be provided by Horticulture Department. Acknowledging the progress, the meeting revealed that a total of 80

works have been successfully completed as on date. Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned Block Development Officers (BDOs) to provide block-wise updates on the physical and financial progress, stressing the synchronization of financial targets with physical achievements for timely billing. Besides this Shelf of plan under MGNREGA for FY 2024-25 was thoroughly discussed and necessary directions were imparted to BDOs for incorporation of NRM works, Tangible assets, under the shelf and accordingly ACD Kishtwar.

## DC Kupwara chairs DCDC meeting, reviews Cooperative sector

■ HT News Network

KUPWARA, JANUARY 08: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan today chaired the District Cooperative Development Committee (DCDC) meeting at DC office Complex here to review the Cooperative sector in the district.

During the meeting, Assistant Registrar Cooperatives (Headquarters) Kupwara, Irshad Jeelani, while giving the overview of the present status of cooperative societies in the district, informed the chair that the department has taken several initiatives to strengthen the cooperative movement in the district.

It was given out in the meeting that there are a total of 48 Functional Cooperative Societies in the district which include 22 PACS (Primary Agriculture credit Societies), 5 Cooperative marketing societies, 6 Sales and service societies, 4 tribal Sale and service societies, 5 Poultry co-



operative societies, 4 Dairy Co-operative societies besides 119 Cooperatives (Under J&K Self Reliant cooperative Act 1999).

Chair was apprised that total membership of 22 PACS in the district is 19816 and out of total 385 Panchayat Halqas, 315 Panchayat Halqas have been covered by PACS.

The DC directed the Cooperative department and other allied departments to work towards the objective of strengthening the cooperative movement in the district and deepening its reach to the grassroots level. She further directed the concerned officials to make vigorous efforts to increase the viability of PACS and diversify

their business activities to make them vibrant economic entities at grassroots level. The DC also reviewed the progress of adoption of model by-laws of PACS for making them multipurpose and multidimensional. While reviewing the district wise targets for establishing new Multipurpose PACS or Primary Dairy/ Fisheries cooperative societies in uncovered Panchayats/Villages, the DC directed the Cooperative department to cover the uncovered areas and Panchayats and handhold the PACS properly to make their activities successful.

DC further directed to establish Rural Haats in all sub divisions of the district.

## Director Agriculture Kashmir inaugurates 07 days DLTP on Scientific Beekeeping under NBHM

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 08: The Director Agriculture Kashmir, Chowdhury Mohammad Iqbal today inaugurated seven days divisional level training programme (DLTP) on scientific beekeeping under (NBHM) at Agriculture Complex Lalmandi Srinagar.

The inaugural session of the week-long program was attended by beekeepers, students and officers of the department.

Addressing the session, Director Agriculture Kashmir, Chowdhury Mohammad Iqbal highlighted the importance of small scale Agri-Cottage industries like beekeeping, Mushroom Cultivation and other allied activities in the overall development of agriculture sector.

He said the main focus of organising such training programmes is to promote small scale agri-cottage industries like beekeeping among the farmers and educated youth of the region.

Chowdhury Iqbal said the agriculture diversification is the key to reduce risk in



farming activities and hence beekeeping has emerged as one of the important tools which not only enhance agricultural income of the farming community but also secure it against changes in climate and soil resources.

Director Agriculture expressed satisfaction and said many people; mostly educated youth are able to earn their livelihood, because of honey bee colonies. With time, more and more young men and women are turning towards beekeeping. He said beekeeping forms the potential part of integrated farming and could play an important role in increasing the farm-

ers income.

Director said that beekeeping as an off-farm activity has a potential of employment generation due to wide agro-climatic diversity enabling round the year bee flora availability.

The National Beekeeping and Honey mission (NBHM) aims at promoting beekeeping and providing self sustaining employment opportunities among the farmers and unemployed youth in rural India.

Joint Director Agriculture Inputs, Tabassum Naz; Assistant Entomologist, Dr Qazi Showkat also addressed the participants of the program.

## Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra: IEC Van Traverses through Panchayats of block Kalakote & Qila Darhal in Rajouri District

■ HT News Network

RAJOURI, JANUARY 08: The Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra (VBSY) is rapidly gaining momentum in Rajouri, becoming a driving force behind the implementation of various government schemes and ushering in comprehensive development throughout the district. This ambitious initiative is strategically crafted to transform Rajouri by extending its reach to underserved areas and ensuring the effective execution of government programs, ultimately enhancing the quality of life for its residents.

Central to this endeavor is an Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) van, a dynamic mobile platform designed to effectively communicate and create awareness about the diverse initiatives undertaken as part of the Yatra. The van plays a pivotal role in engaging with local communities, imparting crucial knowledge, and empowering residents to avail themselves



of the benefits offered by government schemes.

The VBSY has recorded notable success in the implementation of various government schemes in Rajouri District. These schemes, crafted to elevate living standards and provide essential services, have been executed with exceptional efficiency on the ground. Conse-

quently, the community has experienced tangible improvements and witnessed positive changes in their daily lives.

Today, the VBSY IEC vans traversed through the panchayats of Sialsui, Kothain-B, Panhar, Khadarian, Bagla Androoth, Rajpur Bhatta, and Rajpur Kamila of block Kalakote, as well as Qila Darhal. This

strategic journey highlights the Yatra's commitment to reaching every corner of the district and ensuring that the benefits of government initiatives are felt at the grassroots level.

The impact of the Yatra is evident in enhanced access to healthcare, education, and basic amenities, contributing to the overall progress of Rajouri District. Meticulously planned and executed, this initiative aligns with the core objective of holistic development, leaving a lasting and positive impact on the community. The VBSY symbolizes progress and collaboration, embodying the spirit of Viksit Bharat Sankalp. By bringing government schemes to the grassroots level and ensuring comprehensive coverage, it has created a platform for empowerment and upliftment. This transformative journey in Rajouri District stands as an exemplary model of effective governance, community engagement, and collective determination to build a better and prosperous India.

## Mohd Ashraf Bhat assumes charge as ADDC Bandipora

■ HT News Network

BANDIPORA, JANUARY 08: Mohd Ashraf Bhat on Tuesday officially assumed the charge as the Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) of Bandipora.

The ADDC received a vibrant welcome from the officers and officials of the district administration.

While taking the responsibilities of ADDC, Bhat expressed his commitment to enhance developmental initiatives and efficient governance in the Bandipora district.

On the occasion, senior officers of district administration were present besides officials from different departments were also present to welcome Mohammad Ashraf Bhat.

## SDM Kangan reviews arrangements for Republic Day celebration

■ HT News Network

GANDERBAL, JANUARY 08: The Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Kangan, Javid Ahmad Rather today convened a meeting of concerned officers to review the arrangements being put in place by different departments for smooth celebration of Republic Day, 2024 in the subdivision.

SDM impressed upon all the officers to ensure all arrangements are made well in advance.

He directed ZEO to make necessary arrangements and prepare students of schools from subdivision for cultural programs on patriotic themes and also showcase local culture on the Republic Day.

He impressed upon the officers to work in coordinated manner so that all arrangements are ensured well on time.

The meeting was attended by Tehsildar Kangan, Executive Engineer R&B, SDPO Kangan and other sectoral officers.

## Distt Admin Ganderbal launches massive User Charge Collection Drive for SWM

■ HT News Network

GANDERBAL, JANUARY 08: In a concerted effort to ensure the effective implementation of Solid Waste Management (SWM) in the Panchayats of district, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Shyambir called upon all sections of society to rally behind the district administration's initiatives. For the comprehensive and vast involvement of the area and for effective management of various aspects of SWM, the DC emphasized that the district administration has engaged agencies for waste collection, segregation, and final disposition. To ensure uniformity in user charge collection across the district, officers have been deployed at the Panchayat level, designated as 'Sanitation Mentors.' Their role is crucial in overseeing that fee collection is meticulously carried out, and the public is urged to pay the specified charges set by the administration. Additionally, Block Development Officers (BDOs) are instructed to nominate an official for each Panchayat, collaborating with the 'Sanitation Mentors.' These nominated officials will be responsible for record-keeping and all documentation, including fee collection within their respective Panchayats.

Assistant Commissioner Ganderbal, Dr Bashir Ahmad highlighted that the district administration has been actively working on Solid Waste Management for the past year. He affirmed that the necessary infrastructure is in place, and door-to-door waste collection has already commenced in all blocks of the district.

Stressing the importance of community involvement, ACD appealed to all residents to pay the user charges as stipulated by the administration for the sustainability of the SWM program.



# Secretary Health reviews functioning of Health & Medical Education Department

## HT News Network

JAMMU, JANUARY 8: Secretary, Health & Medical Education, Dr. Syed Abid Rasheed Shah, conducted a comprehensive review of department's operations during a meeting held here at Civil Secretariat today. The meeting was attended by various senior officers including Director SKIMS Soura, Principals from all Medical and Dental Colleges, Mission Director NHM, CEO Ayushman Bharat, Directors Health Services Kashmir and Jammu, Director AYUSH, Director Family Welfare MCH, and

Immunization, Director Finance HME, Managing Director JKMSCL, Joint Director (Planning) HME and other senior officers from Health & Medical Education Department. Dr. Yashpal Sharma, Director (Coordination) New Medical Colleges J&K, delivered a presentation on various aspects of Health and Medical Education Department, encompassing existing health facilities, status of manpower, upcoming infrastructure, Centrally Sponsored Schemes, operational status of new Government Medical Colleges, as well as imminent operationalization of Bone & Joint



Hospitals and State Cancer Institutes in Jammu and Srinagar.

Secretary enjoined upon all officials to work conscientiously in providing

best healthcare facilities to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He instructed all Heads of Departments to work with utmost dedication to ensure delivery of quality health services to the general public. Dr. Abid Rasheed directed the MD JKMSCL to ensure timely procurement of drugs, diagnostic and treatment machinery and equipment to prevent any disruptions in patient care services. He further emphasized facilitating necessary procurements for operationalization of State Cancer Institutes, Bone and Joint Hospitals, and other healthcare institutions.

Highlighting the importance of digital interventions in healthcare delivery, Secretary stressed the need of imperative utilization of technology to expedite and enhance the quality of healthcare services for patients in need. He asked for removal of any impediments hindering the use of technology in the healthcare sector. During the review of implementation of PMJAY Sehat and functioning of Health & Wellness Centers, Dr. Abid Rasheed directed for conducting impact assessment studies for these flagship programs. Additionally, instructions.

## Jal Jeevan Mission: Revised District Action Plan approved at Rajouri

## HT News Network

RAJOURI, JANUARY 08: District Development Commissioner Rajouri Om Prakash Bhagat presided over a pivotal meeting today, to deliberate and approve the revised district action plan aimed at ensuring comprehensive coverage of left out beneficiaries under the ambitious Jal Jeevan Mission. Jal Jeevan Mission, a visionary initiative, is steadfast in its commitment to providing safe and ample drinking water through individual household tap connections reaching every rural household in India. In addition to ensuring access to clean water, the program emphasizes the implementation of source sustainability measures, making greywater management, recharge, and reuse integral components of its mandate. The detailed deliberations during the meeting centered on the proposed action plan, reflecting the ongoing evolution of the mission. Previously encom-



passing 293 schemes with an estimated cost of Rs 1942.80 crores, the revised plan has not only streamlined existing initiatives but has also introduced five additional schemes. Consequently, the total number of schemes now stands at an impressive 298, with an estimated cost of

Rs 1974.77 crores. The District Development Commissioner Rajouri expressed optimism about the potential of the revised plan to significantly enhance the reach of the mission, ensuring that no community is left without the essential resource of clean water.

The commitment and collaborative efforts of the officers present underscore the dedication of the district administration to achieving the overarching goal of the mission. This meeting serves as a testament to the proactive approach adopted by the district administration in addressing the challenges and evolving needs of water resource management. As the revised action plan gains momentum, it is anticipated to bring about transformative changes in the lives of residents, reinforcing the district's commitment to sustainable development. ADDC Pawan Kumar, DFO Rajouri Arshdeep Singh, DFO Nowshera, Satyendra Maurya, CPO Mohammad Khurshid, SE Hydraulics Bhram Jyoti Sharma, ACD Vijay Kumar, CEO Education Bishamber Dass, CMO, Dr Rajinder Sharma; CAO Sohan Singh, EXEN Jal Shakti Rajouri Ashwini Sharma, SE Jal Shakti Nowshera Bipin Kumar and other officers attended the meeting.

## Shakeel ul Rehman Rather assumes charge as DC Bandipora, relieving Dr Owais Ahmad

## HT News Network



BANDIPORA, JANUARY 08: Shakeel ul Rehman Rather Tuesday assumed charge as the new Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Bandipora district, taking over from Dr Owais Ahmad. In a formal ceremony held at the office of Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Shakeel ul Rehman received the charge from Dr Owais Ahmad, marking the official transition of leadership in the district administration. In his address to the officials and public present at the ceremony, Shakeel ul Rehman expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve the people of Bandipora. Rehman also acknowledged the contributions of his predecessor, Dr Owais Ahmad, and thanked him for his service to the district. Dr Owais, in his farewell speech, wished Shakeel ul Rehman all the best in his new role and expressed confidence in his ability to lead Bandipora towards development and prosperity. The handover ceremony was attended by senior officials from the district administration, representatives from various civil societies, and members of the local community.

## Doordarshan Srinagar Acknowledges Outstanding Performance of DD News Stringers in Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra Program

## Tajamul Bukhari

Srinagar, 8 December 24- Doordarshan Srinagar organized a special function to recognize and appreciate the commendable efforts of DD News stringers who excelled during the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra program. The event was graced by esteemed Chief Guest, Director Doordarshan News, Qazi Salman, and attended by Head of Programme Rabiya Rasool and News Editor Shabir Ahmad Dar. Among the distinguished awardees were Arshad Nawshari, Gulzar Ahmad Dahal, Ishfaq Ahmad Sofi, Mohammad Iqbal, Sajad Ahmad Khanyari, Shahid Farooqi, Mohd Imran Sofi, Khurshid Padroo, Dawood Ahmad, Wahid Maqbool, Sheikh Tariq, Mushtaq Ahmed, outstanding performance throughout the program.

During the ceremony, Director of News, Qazi Salman, expressed pride in the exceptional contributions of the DD News team in effectively conveying the welfare schemes of the central government to the people. He emphasized that the purpose of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra Program was to disseminate information about



these schemes to the public and enroll potential beneficiaries on the spot. Highlighting the success of the program, Qazi Salman stated, "It is a matter of pride for us that the dedicated efforts of our DD News stringers have played a crucial role in the successful completion of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra Program."

The stringers extended their gratitude to the director and officials of Doordarshan Srinagar for recognizing their efforts and presenting them with appreciation certificates. They emphasized their commitment to continuing their role in effectively communicating the government's initiatives to the public.

## DC Rajouri chairs introductory meeting with District & Sectoral Officers

## HT News Network

RAJOURI, JANUARY 08: Deputy Commissioner Rajouri, Om Prakash Bhagat today chaired an introductory meeting with District and sectoral officers here in the Conference Hall of the PWD Dak Bungalow, setting the stage for a productive and proactive approach towards the holistic development of the district.

Addressing the officers, Deputy Commissioner Om Prakash Bhagat emphasized the importance of prompt and efficient execution of the developmental projects. He asked the officers to work with utmost dedication and commitment, keeping the welfare of the public at the forefront of their endeavors.

Recognizing the importance of coordination and collaboration, the Deputy Commissioner directed the officers to ensure close interdepartmental coordination. This would play a crucial role in the planned and seamless execution of various developmen-



tal works throughout the district. By working together as a cohesive unit, the officers can maximize their impact and deliver tangible results that will positively transform the lives of the residents of Rajouri.

The Deputy Commissioner further emphasized the need for well-organized arrangements for Republic Day celebrations. It is imperative to ensure a smooth and efficient execution of the event, with all necessary preparations made well in advance.

## Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra continues to uplift Pulwama's Spirit

## HT News Network

PULWAMA, JANUARY 08: In the heart of District Pulwama, a compelling force for holistic development unfolds as the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra continues its transformative journey transcending boundaries, resonating not only in Panchayats and Municipalities but weaving its influence into the very fabric of Pulwama's villages.

Today, the Yatra reached six villages, sparking lively celebrations and nurturing a deep sense of community spirit. Like heralds of change, Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) vans traversed these villages, delivering the visionary message of the Prime Minister and the Yatra's mission. The residents embraced the Sankalp pledge with enthusiasm, embodying the Yatra's ideals.

Cultural programs unfolded, capturing the essence of the Yatra through captivating performances by students and locals. Government departments actively



participated, setting up stalls to showcase schemes and provide on-the-spot services. This engagement not only spotlighted initiatives but also opened avenues for the community to explore diverse opportunities. The 'Meri Kahani Meri Zubani' segment unveiled heartfelt stories from beneficiaries, illustrating the tangible impact of Government interventions. In a notable development, today's events included an impactful interaction as the Prime Minister engaged with the public across the Nation through virtual mode.

## SMC expands VBSY campaign to Basant Bagh & Fateh Kadal

## HT News Network

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 08: The Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), today expanded the reach of Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra (VBSY) to Basant Bagh and Fateh Kadal areas of Srinagar.

On the occasion, IEC Van was welcomed by Mudasir Hussain Bandy Chief Transport Officer SMC to encompass events in Hindu High School Shetal Nag and Gandhi Memorial College Srinagar, marking a significant milestone in the Corporation's efforts to engage with the general public within its jurisdiction.

Representatives from designated departments actively participated in the VBSY event, utilizing the platform to elucidate the core objectives and procedural intricacies of their respective schemes.

The primary aim of this concerted effort is to bridge information gaps and ensure that citizens are well-informed about the multitude of benefits and assistance programs made by the Government of India available to them.

## DLRAC approves 19 cases in Udhampur

## HT News Network

UDHAMPUR, JANUARY 08: The District Level Rent Assessment Committee meeting was held today under the Chairpersonship of Deputy Commissioner Udhampur, Saloni Rai in the Conference Hall, DC Office Complex.

Senior Superintendent of Police Joginder Singh Sambyal, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Rafiq Ahmad Jaral, and other concerned officers, along with building owners attended the meeting.

Detailed deliberations took place on various aspects related to determining the rent for private buildings utilized for government offices. In the meeting, the Committee approved 19 rent cases concerning different government departments. Deputy Commissioner urged the officers responsible for hiring of private buildings for government offices to expedite the remaining cases, ensuring a timely resolution to avoid inconvenience to building owners.

Furthermore, the DC directed the concerned departments to ensure the prompt disbursement of rent and urged the owners to maintain the assets and ensure better facilities for rentee Government offices.

## DEO reviews Assured Minimum Facilities in Polling Stations at Udhampur

## HT News Network

UDHAMPUR, JANUARY 08: To ensure compliance to the Election Commission of India (ECI) guidelines, the District Election Officer Udhampur Saloni Rai led a meeting at the Mini Conference Hall in the DC Office Complex Udhampur. The focus was on evaluating the status of Assured Minimum Facilities polling stations in the district.

During the meeting, the DEO meticulously examined polling stations to identify areas lacking essential amenities such as drinking water, toilet facility, electricity connections and ramps, emphasizing adherence to prescribed standards.

DEO urged officers to ensure that each polling station is equipped with the specified facilities as per ECI norms. A directive was issued to have these provisions in place at identified polling stations by January 15, 2024.

The meeting was attended by Deputy District Election Officer, Gurdev Kumar, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Rafiq Ahmed Jaral, Divisional Forest Officer Rushal Garg, Chief Education Officer and Executive Engineers from PDD, PHE and other concerned departments joined the meeting through virtual mode.

## Tehsildar Dinga Amb refutes social media report

## HT News Network

KATHUA, JANUARY 08: Tehsildar Dinga Amb Predhyum Attri has refuted the social media post claiming that the revenue authority has deliberately stopped construction work of one Bal Krishan R/o village Sunkhal, Tehsil Dinga Amb. Tehsildar Dinga Amb further clarified that the video has been posted on the facebook page to malign the image of the Revenue Department. He said the ground report is contrary to the claim as the temporary stay was vacated within a week's time.







# Sharma, Kohli get final shot at T20 glory but will selectors' safe approach cost India another WC?

**NEWDELHI:** The selectors have clearly gone for the status quo rather than addressing the elephant in the room by picking Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli for their first T20 series in 14 months.

Will it have a bearing on India's chances in another T20 World Cup? Only time can tell.

Having endured a heartbreak in the previous two editions of the T20 World Cup, the two greats of the game can't be faulted for wanting a final shot at glory in the format.

But the same can't be said about the selectors, who picked a fresh bunch of players to take the team forward since the crushing semifinal loss to England in November 2022.

Now that Rohit and Kohli have been picked for the home series against Afghanistan beginning on January 11, it is a given that the famed duo will be a part of India's squad for the ICC showpiece in the US and Caribbean in June.

It also means that India, who have been guilty of playing conservative cricket at the top of the order, are also back to square one as far as their planning for the T20 mega event is concerned.

The two superstars played a

massive role in taking India to the ODI World Cup final but can they step up to the demands of the shortest format where one needs to go after the bowlers from ball one? Rohit, who did not score tons of runs in the recently held ODI showpiece but yet managed to make a compelling impact with his high-risk game, will most likely carry on in the same vein when the Afghanistan series begins in Mohali.

On the other hand, Kohli's game is tailor-made for the 50-over format but he has also managed to maintain more than a decent strike rate of 137.96 over 148 T20s.

Rohit strikes at almost 140 in T20s but he too will need to bat at a higher clip to keep up with the fast-changing demands of the modern game.

In contrast, their teammate and the world's best T20 batter, Suryakumar Yadav, bats at a 170-plus strike rate. The likes of Yashasvi Jaiswal and Ruturaj Gaikwad showed promise in the opportunities they got in the absence of senior players but there is no substitute to experience at an ICC event.

It's a sentiment that has been unanimously voiced by former players including Sunil Gavaskar and



Sourav Ganguly, who have backed the inclusion of Rohit and Kohli in the T20 squad. Former India selector Sarandeep Singh too feels Rohit and Kohli are best suited for the job.

"It is the right call. In ICC events, you need players who can handle pressure well. They both were great in the ODI World Cup and are in top

form. However, this development means it would be very difficult to accommodate Jaiswal and Ruturaj," he told PTI. He also justified the celebrated pair not playing the shortest format since November 2022.

"You have to prepare bench strength also. In all probability, this will be their last T20 World Cup. If

Rohit and Virat were not rested, you could not have tried the likes of Jaiswal, Ruturaj, Jitesh (Sharma) and others. Having said that, these two greats don't need to play the shortest format to make a comeback. Eventually, the performance of all the World Cup probables in the IPL will make the picture clearer for

the subsequent World Cup," the former India spinner added.

With Rohit and Kohli's inclusion, it is amply clear that selectors did not want to rock the boat.

Former India opener Aakash Chopra feels the selectors had to pick both the greats as they could not have left one and included the other.

"It seemed they won't play another T20 World Cup (after 2022) as they had not been playing since the previous edition. Both are in the same boat. Even if the selectors thought about leaving out one of the two, I don't think they would have been able to do that. It was always about picking both or otherwise," Chopra said on his YouTube channel.

Hardik Pandya had led the T20 side in Rohit's absence and was expected to lead the team in the US and Caribbean but another injury setback seems to have cost him that chance. Rohit is back as captain and will have Kohli by his side to rely on when India takes on the sprightly bunch of Afghans in the three-match series. But most significantly, will they finally be able to land an elusive ICC title? That question will be answered in five months' time.

## South African wicketkeeper-batter Heinrich Klaassen announces Test retirement

**PRETORIA:** South African wicketkeeper-batter Heinrich Klaassen has announced his retirement from red-ball cricket, bringing curtains to his brief stint in the format.

Having made his debut against India in Ranchi in 2019, the 32-year-old played four matches in his brief Test career with his final outing against the West Indies in Johannesburg last year.

He has scored 104 runs at an average of 13.00, while his top score was 35 against Australia in Sydney.

Klaassen will continue to be available for the Proteas in white-ball cricket.

"After a few sleepless nights wondering if I am making the right decision, I have decided to retire from red ball cricket," he said in a statement.

"It's a difficult decision that I have made because it is by far my favourite format of the game. The battles that I faced on and off the field have made me the cricketer I am today. It has been a great journey and I am glad I could have represented my country. My baggy Test cap is the most precious cap I have ever been handed. Thanks to everyone who has played a part in my red ball career and shaped me into the cricketer I am today. But for now, a new challenge awaits and looking forward to it," he said.

It is understood that the explosive batter is keen on the T20 franchise leagues with his commitments in the IPL, Hundred, and MLC.

He has become the second South African player to retire from red-ball cricket within a week.

Dean Elgar also hung up his boots following the conclusion of the two-Test series against India that ended in a 1-1 draw last week.

Klaassen was dropped for the India series, as head coach Shukri Conrad went ahead with Kyle Verreynne.



## 'Sleeping giant' India awakening, says coach Stimac ahead of Asian Cup

**NEW DELHI:** Igor Stimac says Indian football is "definitely out of its slumber" but the outspoken coach warned against big expectations at the Asian Cup starting on Friday in Qatar.

Football has struggled to find its feet in the cricket-obsessed nation of 1.4 billion people, with former FIFA president Sepp Blatter once calling India "a sleeping giant" of the sport.

Former West Ham and Derby defender Stimac was appointed coach in May 2019 and India briefly broke into the top 100 of FIFA's world rankings for only the second time in nearly three decades.

They are now 102nd, a spot below Kosovo, whose population is less than two million.

"A giant is definitely out of its slumber now," declared Stimac, before cautioning: "But I reckon it will take us another four years to enter the top 10 in Asia."

Under the former Croatia international, India qualified for the Asian Cup with three wins



from three against Hong Kong, Afghanistan and Cambodia, scoring eight times and conceding once. India's campaign starts on Saturday against 25th-ranked Australia and they have a mountain to climb in Qatar to get out of a group also containing Uzbekistan and Syria.

"We are far from being happy with the draw but it is what it is," the 56-year-old Stimac, part of the Croatia team that finished third at the 1998 World Cup, said in an email interview.

"With a very short time for

preparation it's difficult to expect great things, but my even greater concern are the injuries to some of our key players.

"Anyway, we are going to give our best and make it very difficult for our opponents."

This will be India's fifth Asian Cup. They were runners-up in 1964 in a tournament that had only four teams, but apart from that they have never got out of the group phase.

They have never reached the World Cup.

Stimac's side lost 3-0 at home

to reigning Asian champions Qatar in World Cup qualifying in November, underlining the task facing them in the coming weeks.

They also suffered friendly defeats to Malaysia and Iraq, before beating Kuwait 1-0 away in World Cup qualifying.

Stimac blamed the Malaysia and Iraq losses on "terrible refereeing".

"I hate talking about it but this area in Asian football needs to improve a lot," says the Croat, who has a reputation for his straight talking.

Indian sports administrations are regularly embroiled in controversy and in 2022 Stimac threatened to quit unless there were "drastic" changes in the domestic game.

"As a professional I have absolute freedom but I can work only with what I get from our decision-makers," he says.

In September Stimac called a news report claiming he consulted an astrologer to pick his team "a disgrace" and again

hinted his time as coach might be coming to an end.

Stimac says more than 20 youngsters have been brought into the squad during his reign "and our supporters are finally enjoying some exciting football watching their national team".

But it is an indication of the limitations of his squad that skipper Sunil Chhetri, at 39, remains India's biggest star.

Chhetri has plundered 93 international goals, putting him among the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo (128) and Lionel Messi (106) on the all-time list.

Stimac says the forward can bow out at a time of his choosing.

"We are not putting any pressure on him whatsoever," said Stimac. "That's up to him. If he keeps enjoying his game with the same hunger and maintaining such brilliant fitness levels then we are there for him as long as it takes," he added.

"He is a proper role model for many Indian kids dreaming about becoming football players."

## Rybakina blitzes Sabalenka to win Brisbane International; Dimitrov wins first title in six years

**BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA:** Elena Rybakina claimed her sixth career title with a 6-0, 6-3 rout of top-seeded Aryna Sabalenka to win the Brisbane International in a perfect tune-up for the first major of 2024.

Second-seeded Grigor Dimitrov beat top-seeded Holger Rune 7-6 (5), 6-4 in a tightly-fought men's final for his first tour title in six years.

Sabalenka, who had won five of her seven previous meetings against the fourth-seeded Rybakina, had no answer Sunday to the world No. 4's laser-like groundstrokes and deft touches at the net as Rybakina dominated the final and stamped her credentials as one of the favourites for the upcoming Australian Open.

Almost a year after contesting the Australian Open final,



where Sabalenka beat Rybakina in a tight three-setter, the tables were turned dramatically as the 2022 Wimbledon winner broke Sabalenka three times in a one-sided first set of just 24 minutes on Pat Rafter Arena in Brisbane.

It capped a dominant week for Rybakina, who conceded just 15 games across five straight-set wins and was the 24-year-old's sixth career title and first since Indian Wells last year.

"I'd like to say congrats Aryna for a great week and great season last year and hopefully we meet in Melbourne," Rybakina said. "Despite the score, it's always tough to play against you, we always push each other."

The loss ended Sabalenka's streak of 15 wins on Australian soil, including a title run in Adelaide last year before her Grand Slam breakthrough at Melbourne Park.

The final was the first to feature the top two seeds in Brisbane since 2015, when No. 1 Maria Sharapova held off No. 2 Ana Ivanovic in three sets. It was Dimitrov's, ranked 14th, ninth career title and his first since the ATP finals in 2017, the same year he won his first Brisbane title.

"It's been a while since I held one of these, I'm a little emotional," Dimitrov said at the trophy presentation. "It's difficult to describe. Holger, what a competitor."

## Coco Gauff heads to Australian Open with confidence high after Auckland win

**WELLINGTON:** U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff will head to the Australian Open with greater confidence in her form and fitness after beating Elina Svitolina in three sets in the Auckland Classic final.

The third-ranked Gauff became only the fourth player to win back-to-back singles in Auckland, achieving the feat at the age of 19.

Gauff didn't drop a set on the way to her first Auckland title in 2023 and extended that run to nine matches when she reached Sunday's final, again without dropping a set.

But she lost the opening set against second-seeded Svitolina and had to work hard to win the match 6-7 (4), 6-3, 6-3 in just under three hours. Previously, she had spent only four hours on court in four matches and had dropped only 15 games on her way through the semifinals.

Her serve, which had been a formidable component of her matches throughout the tournament — she served 10 aces in beating American Emma Navarro 6-3, 6-1 in a semifinal — deserted her on Sunday. She served only three aces but mixed those with seven double faults and had to find new ways to win points against the resilient Svitolina who reached a career-high ranking of three in 2017.

The final turned into the tough workout Gauff needed before heading to the first major of the season in Melbourne. Had she continued her relatively effortless progress through the tournament she might not have been as well prepared for the rigors of Grand Slam play.