



# India Failed to Thrive Under Congress Rule, Their Corrupt Practices : PM Modi

■ HT News Network

**NEW DELHI, FEB 16:** In a sharp attack on the Congress, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that India failed to deliver under the "corrupt" rule of the grand old party while asserting that the "country is moving forward with confidence."

"Congress is corrupt; it can't think of a future; India failed to thrive under Congress," the PM said ahead of the Lok Sabha elections due in April-May this year.

PM Modi was addressing a 'Viksit Bharat Viksit Rajasthan' programme via video conferencing.

Lashing out at Congress, the PM further said, "After independence, today this golden period has come. India has this opportunity to leave behind all the disappointments from 10 years ago."

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## Congress People Used To Call Lord Ram Imaginary, Are Chanting 'Jai Siya Ram' Now: PM Modi

■ HT News Network

**HARYANA, FEB 16:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi played the Congress on Friday over its stand on the Ram temple in Ayodhya, saying those who used to call Lord Ram imaginary and did not want a temple to be constructed are also chanting 'Jai Siya Ram' now.

Addressing a public gathering after he laid the foundation of an All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and inaugurated several projects in Rewari in Haryana, he said India has touched new heights in the world today and that it has been possible because of people's blessings.

Referring to his visit to the UAE and Qatar this week, he said the respect that India now gets from every corner is not of Modi alone, but of every Indian.

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## LG Pays Obeisance At Shri Martand Surya Temple, Paloura, Jammu

■ HT News Network

**JAMMU, FEB 16:** On the holy occasion of Surya Saptami, Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha paid obeisance to Lord Shri Martand at Shri Martand Surya Temple, Paloura, Jammu, today.

He participated in the Mahayagya organised by Shri



Martand Tirath Trust and prayed for the peace, progress and prosperity of one and all.

The Lt Governor interacted with the people and

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## NEWS BRIEF

### 'Education sector sees promising developments post 2019'

**SRINAGAR, FEB 16:** Authorities have claimed that from the year 2010 to 2019 only 819 civil works in schools under the Capex budget were completed in the erstwhile state while after 2019 to 2023; at least 2339 works under the UT Capex budget were completed.

The official documents accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) wherein the authorities have made comparison of major works and initiatives taken before and after 2019 reveal that prior to 2019,

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### Sinthan Top witnesses surge in tourist footfall in Jan-Feb this year

**ANANTNAG, FEB 16:** The scenic spots in the Kokernag area of south Kashmir's Anantnag district witnessed an increase in tourist arrivals during January and February this year, officials said.

According to reports obtained by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the delayed snowfall in prominent tourist destinations like Sinthan Top in Kokernag attracted a considerable number of tourists.

In January 2022, only 440 visitors explored Sinthan Top and Daksum, whereas in January 2023, the number rose to 1,364. However, this year, the

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### Over Dozen Structures Develop Cracks In Doda

**JAMMU, FEB 16:** Over a dozen residential houses and a mosque have developed cracks in a village in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district, forcing the inhabitants to move in temporary shelters, officials said.

Doda Deputy Commissioner Harvinder Singh said that a team of officials visited the affected Gatsu hamlet to take stock of the situation and provided a few tents to the affected families.

"We are there for the villagers of Gatsu and monitoring the situation. If required, the families will be

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

### Power Availability To Mark Substantial Improvement In Kishtwar: Official

■ HT News Network

**JAMMU, FEB 16:** Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district is set to witness significant improvement in power availability following the successful charging of 132KV Ramban-Khellani-Kishtwar transmission line and the concurrent availability of an additional 10-12 MW through 132-KV Dul Hasti line.

The Urban areas are set to receive more than 20 hours of power supply, while the rural areas will benefit with 18 hours of supply, Deputy Commissioner, Kishtwar Devansh Yadav has said.

He said the twin districts of Doda and Kishtwar had been relying on the 132KV DPS line constructed in 1987 for power supply.

Initiated in 2007, the construction of the 132KV Double-Circuit Ramban-Khellani-Kishtwar line faced various challenges, leading to delays and non-commissioning.

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## Ahead Of Wet Weather Forecast, Summer Like Weather Prevails In Kashmir

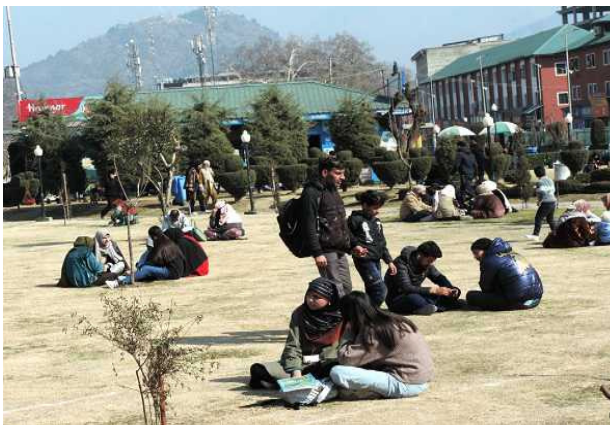
■ HT News Network

**SRINAGAR, FEB 16:** Ahead of wet weather forecast summer like weather conditions prevailed on Friday.

There was a significant improvement in night temperature, but stayed below freezing point, at most of the stations of Kashmir valley.

Bright sun appeared with clear sky in Srinagar and other parts of the Kashmir

TURN ON.....PAGE 02



### ₹18 Lakhs Penalty Imposed On Stone Crusher For Illegal Mining In Ravi River

■ HT News Network

**KATHUA, FEB 16:** A total of ₹18 lakhs penalty was imposed on Vasudev stone crusher for massive digging and mining by using two heavy excavators at Taraf Tajwal areas of Ravi River here today.

During surprise checking in Ravi

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

### Warm Send-off to DDI (PR) Bilal Mukhtar, Warm Welcome to Ehsan-ul-Haq Cheste as New DDI (PR)



■ HT News Network

**SRINAGAR, FEB 16:** The

Joint Directorate of Information Kashmir today accorded farewell to outgoing

Deputy Director Information (PR) Kashmir,

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

### Div Com Reviews Preparation Of Departments In View Of Expected Change In Weather

■ HT News Network

**SRINAGAR, FEB 16:** In view of the change in weather & forecast of heavy snowfall in the Valley in coming days, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Vijay Kumar Bidhuri today convened a meeting of Deputy Commissioners & Head of Civil Departments wherein he directed all the departments to keep men, material and machinery ready to tackle any exigency that

TURN ON.....PAGE 02



# SANAM

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# Secy RDD advocates enhanced convergence for amplified impact in Udhampur’s development

■ HT News Network

UDHAMPUR, FEBRUARY 16: In a concerted effort to assess and accelerate rural development initiatives, Secretary Rural Development Department (RDD) and Panchayati Raj, Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary on Friday made a comprehensive tour of Udhampur, signalling a robust push towards accelerating rural development initiatives in the district.

Dr Shahid emphasized the critical need for heightened convergence with various departments to amplify the impact of developmental efforts.

Secretary RDD delved into a plethora of pivotal aspects concerning development works, flagship schemes, and centrally sponsored initiatives earmarked for the fiscal year 2023-24 in Udhampur.

Chairing a meeting, he scrutinized



various initiatives and projects aimed at fortifying rural infrastructure and nurturing livelihood opportunities through sectoral convergence.

The agenda of the meeting spanned a broad spectrum of issues, including progress under flagship schemes like MGN-REGA, advancements in Local Body (LB)

projects, prompt payment of wages, meticulous monitoring of delays, the UNNATI project's trajectory, agricultural expenditures, status updates on ongoing projects, and strategies for social audits.

During the deliberations, Block Development Officers (BDOs) were unequivocally instructed to marshal resources with pre-

cision, ensuring the seamless execution of schemes while leaving no eligible beneficiary overlooked.

Secretary underscored the need for transparency, accountability, and the unwavering pursuit of set targets in all developmental endeavors.

Dr Shahid enjoined BDOs to harness innovative methodologies to expedite project execution without compromising on quality or adherence to timelines.

Reaffirming the pivotal role of officers in driving effective scheme implementation for public welfare, he stressed the imperative of achieving 100% Aadhaar seeding of beneficiaries.

Secretary also emphasized the vital importance of livelihood generation and the sustainable operation and maintenance of assets, urging concerted efforts in these spheres.

## Pariksha Pe Charcha DC Baramulla presides an event to promote Stress Free Examinations programme

■ HT News Network

BARAMULLA, FEBRUARY 16: National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) in collaboration with School Education department Baramulla today held a day-long event at Govt. Boys' Higher Secondary School Baramulla to celebrate Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 7th edition of envisaged program, 'Pariksha Pe Charcha 6.0'.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa was the chief guest on the occasion. The event was attended by CEO Baramulla, Balbir Singh Raina, Deputy CEO, HoD DIET, representative from NCPCR, teachers, parents and school children.

During his address, the DC emphasized the crucial role that both teachers and parents play in creating a supportive and stress-free environment for students as they prepare for their upcoming exams.

Minga Sherpa further urged parents to relinquish the burdensome "make it or break it" mentality regarding their children's exam results and encouraged them to view this period as an opportunity for their wards to learn

## DC Kulgam reviews status of various work projects of Health sector

■ Farooq Rather

KULGAM, FEBRUARY 16: To review the status of various health sector work projects including NTPHC Chowgam, MCH Kulgam, PHC Devsar and other buildings of health department, a meeting of officers was Friday held under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan at mini-secretariat, here.

During the meeting, the chair was informed about the status of all aforementioned work projects.

After reviewing the status of NTPHC building Chowgam and Devsar, DC directed the concerned officers of the executing agency to finish incomplete work at both the buildings and handover the same to the health department within the stipulated time frame.

He also instructed Chief Medical Officer and Medical Superintendent District Hospital Kulgam to make MCH building operational within days.

## Subject: - Grant of Registration of the Proposed Travel unit under the name & style

"M/s Triplex Tour and Travels Situated at SHUHUMA ALUSTENG

### Public Notice

Whereas, I Mr./Ms. Zahid Ahmad Kambay S/o/D/o/W/o Mr. Abdul Ahad Kambay R/o Batapora Hazratbal Srinagar, Kashmir intends to apply in the Department of Tourism for Registration of my proposed Travel Unit under the name and style "M/s Triplex Tour and Travels situated at SHUHUMA ALUSTENG Kashmir under Tourist Trade Act 1978/82/2011-12.

Whereas, I will submit State Subject/Domicile Certificate, Qualification Certificate, Pan Card, Experience Certificate (Minimum 05 Years), Character Certificate (Police Department), Bank Statement (Minimum Balance 10000), Site Plan, Affidavit, Rent Deed duly attested by Sub-Registrar, Printing Material (Letter Head/Visiting Card), Photograph of the Unit (Indoor and Outdoor) and Two Passport size photographs to the Department of Tourism as per prescribed checklist prior to Registration of my unit as an Excursion Agency. / Adventine tour Operator Now as per J&K Registration of Tourist Trade Act 1978/82/2011/12, before the Competent Authority, the matter, processes my case for registration is hereby notified for information of general Public/Financial Institutions/Bank/Organization, etc for objection, if any and the same should reach to the Deputy Director Tourism Registration (e-mail Id:- ddtreg123@gmail.com) within a period of 7 days from the publication of this notice in leading local newspaper/news-papers of the valley. No objections beyond a period of 7 days shall be entertained.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

I informed to general public that my Son namely MOHAMMAD IBRAAR NAJAR S/O MUSHTAQ AHMAD NAJAR his Date of birth (DOB) is 10/03/2015.....Now I am applying for his date of birth certificate(DOB)if anybody have any objection in this regard He/She may file His / her objection in the (BDO ) office WAGOORA within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained

NAME..MUSHTAQ AHMAD NAJAR  
F/O.....MOHAMMAD IBRAAR NAJAR  
R/O.....KACHWA MUQAM  
BLOCK..... WAGOORA

## PUBLIC NOTICE

### Registration of Non-Institutional Birth Event

This is for information to the general public that I want to register the Birth Event of my Child namely Toiba D/O Mohammad Shafi Khatana R/O Khellan Gojaan District Anantnag with date of birth as 13/08/2017 at Block Development Office Pahalgam (Registrar Birth & Death). The said Birth event has occurred at my home and not in any Hospital. Anybody having any objection in this regard, can file his/her objection in the office of BDO Pahalgam within 07 days from the publication of this notice.

NAME: MOHAMMA SHAFI KHATANA  
S/O: ABDUL SHAKOOR  
R/O: KHELLAN GOJAAN  
CONTACT NO:- 00000000

## PUBLIC NOTICE

### Registration of Non-Institutional Birth Event

This is for information to the general public that I want to register the Birth Event of my Child namely Aliya Jan D/O Mohammad Shafi Khatana R/O Khellan Gojaan District Anantnag with date of birth as 01/01/2020 at Block Development Office Pahalgam (Registrar Birth & Death). The said Birth event has occurred at my home and not in any Hospital. Anybody having any objection in this regard, can file his/her objection in the office of BDO Pahalgam within 07 days from the publication of this notice.

NAME: MOHAMMAD SHAFI KHATANA  
S/O: ABDUL SHAKOOR KHATANA  
R/O: KHELLAN GOJJAN  
CONTACT NO:- 8082670400

## PUBLIC NOTICE

### Registration of Non-Institutional Birth Event

This is for information to the general public that I want to register the Birth Event of my Child namely Misra Jan D/O Nazir Chohan R/O Khellan Gojaan District Anantnag with date of birth as 07/04/2005 at Block Development Office Pahalgam (Registrar Birth & Death). The said Birth event has occurred at my home and not in any Hospital. Anybody having any objection in this regard, can file his/her objection in the office of BDO Pahalgam within 07 days from the publication of this notice.

NAME: NAZIR CHOCHAN  
S/O: LAL DIN  
R/O: KHELLAN GOJAAN  
CELL NO:- 9541153913

## PUBLIC NOTICE

### Registration of Non-Institutional Birth Event

This is for information to the general public that I want to register the Birth Event of my Child namely Iqra Nazir D/O NAZIR AHMAD CHOCHAN R/O Khellan Virsaran District Anantnag with date of birth as 01/04/2010 at Block Development Office Pahalgam (Registrar Birth & Death). The said Birth event has occurred at my home and not in any Hospital. Anybody having any objection in this regard, can file his/her objection in the office of BDO Pahalgam within 07 days from the publication of this notice.

NAME: NAZIR AHMAD CHOCHAN  
S/O: LAL DIN  
R/O: KHELLAN VIRSARAN  
CONTACT NO:- 941935 3394

# HT - NEWS

## PUBLIC NOTICE

I informed to general public that my daughter namely ZARA SAFEER D/O SAFEER AHMAD BEIGH her Date of birth (DOB) is 14/07/2021..... Now I am applying for her date of birth certificate(DOB)if anybody have any objection in this regard He/She may file His /her objection in the (BDO ) office WAGOORA within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained

NAME..SAFEER AHMAD BEIGH  
F/O.... ZARA SAFEER  
R/O....CHANDOOSA  
BLOCK.... WAGOORA

## PUBLIC NOTICE

I informed to general public that my Son namely ABDUL MANAN LONE S/O NASEER AHMAD LONE his Date of birth (DOB) is 02/07/2022 ..... Now I am applying for his date of birth certificate(DOB)if anybody have any objection in this regard He/She may file His /her objection in the (BDO ) office WAGOORA within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained .

NAME..NASEER AHMAD LONE  
F/O.... ABDUL MANAN LONE  
R/O....MURANTANGMARG  
BLOCK..... WAGOORA

## GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR BIRTHS & DEATHS BLOCK WAGOORA

Subject: Issuance of Registration Orders in respect of delayed Birth/ Death certificate.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

The Registrar Births and Deaths (Block Development Officer Wagoora)/ chokedar has submitted case file pertaining to Birth of ABSAAR UL HAQ S/O MUSAIB MANZOOR R/O ROHAMA Tehsil BARAMULLA Distt. Baramulla having verified the date of Birth, as 04/08/2023and event has been shown to be occurred at S.D.H Kreeeri for issuance of delay order .In this connection . if anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of birth certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertaine.

EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE  
1ST CLASS KREEERI

## GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE TEHSILDAR KREEERI (Executive Magistrate 1st Class)

Subject: Issuance of Registration Orders in respect of delayed Birth/ Death certificate.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

The Registrar Births and Deaths (Block Development Officer Wagoora)/ chokedar has submitted case file pertaining to Birth of ZUHAIB SHOWKAT S/O SHOWKAT AHMAD KHAN R/O CHECKI DARGAM Tehsil Kreeeri Distt. Baramulla having verified the date of Birth, as 26/11/2019and event has been shown to be occurred at S.D.H Kreeeri for issuance of delay order .In this connection . if anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of birth certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertaine.

EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE  
1ST CLASS KREEERI

## GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE TEHSILDAR KREEERI (Executive Magistrate 1st Class)

Subject: Issuance of Registration Orders in respect of delayed Birth/ Death certificate.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

The Registrar Births and Deaths (Block Development Officer Wagoora)/ chokedar has submitted case file pertaining to Birth of AZAAN AHMAD KHAN S/O MUDASIR AHMAD KHAN R/O CHECKI DARGAM Tehsil Kreeeri Distt. Baramulla having verified the date of Birth, as 29/07/2020and event has been shown to be occurred at S.D.H Kreeeri for issuance of delay order .In this connection . if anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of birth certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertaine

EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE  
1ST CLASS KREEERI

## GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

### OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR BIRTHS & DEATHS BLOCK WAGOORA

Subject: Issuance of Registration Orders in respect of delayed Birth/ Death certificate.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

his office is in receipt of representation from: AFROZA BEGUM W/O SHABIR AHMAD GANAIE R/O, Saloosa Tehsil Kreeeri District Baramulla for issuance of Birth Certificate in favour of my daughter namely MOHAMMAD USMAN GANAIE S/O SHABIR AHMAD BHAT whose D.O.B as per documents is 13/06/2021 & event shown to be occurred at SDH Kreeeri .In this connection if anyone have any objection in the registration of birth certificate shall present his/her claim to this office or Tehsildar Kreeeri/Wagoora /BDO office Wagoora within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained.

REGISTRATION BIRTH & DEATH  
(BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICE WAGOORA)

## GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

### OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR BIRTHS & DEATHS BLOCK WAGOORA

Subject: Issuance of Registration Orders in respect of delayed Birth/ Death certificate.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

This office is in receipt of representation from: NIGHAT MUSHTAQ W/O MOHAMMAD IQBAL BHAT R/O, TAKIYA Wagoora Tehsil Wagoora District Baramulla for issuance of Birth Certificate in favour of my daughter namely : NOORAIN IQBAL D/O MOHAMMAD IQBAL BHAT whose D.O.B as per documents is 10/02/2024 & event shown to be occurred at home .In this connection if anyone have any objection in the registration of birth certificate shall present his/her claim to this office or Tehsildar Kreeeri/Wagoora /BDO office Wagoora within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained.

REGISTRATION BIRTH & DEATH  
(BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICE WAGOORA)

## GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

### OFFICE OF THE TEHSILDAR KREEERI (Executive Magistrate 1st Class)

Subject: Issuance of Registration Orders in respect of delayed Birth/ Death certificate.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

The Registrar Births and Deaths (Block Development Officer Wagoora)/ chokedar has submitted case file pertaining to Birth of MALEEKAH MANZOOR D/O MANZOOR AHMAD SHEIKH R/O KHAIPORA BALA Tehsil Tangmarg Distt. Baramulla having verified the date of Birth, as 17/02/2022 and event has been shown to be occurred at S.D.H Kreeeri for issuance of delay order .In this connection . if anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of birth certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertaine

EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE  
1ST CLASS KREEERI

## GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE TEHSILDAR KREEERI (Executive Magistrate 1st Class)

Subject: Issuance of Registration Orders in respect of delayed Birth/ Death certificate.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

The Registrar Births and Deaths (Block Development Officer Wagoora)/ chokedar has submitted case file pertaining to Birth of FATIMA FAROOQ D/O FAROOQ AHMAD BHAT R/O VIZER Tehsil Wagoora Distt. Baramulla having verified the date of Birth, as 30/04/2022 and event has been shown to be occurred at S.D.H Kreeeri for issuance of delay order .In this connection . if anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of birth certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertaine .

EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE  
1ST CLASS KREEERI



## Secretary Planning chairs public grievances redressal camp at Bhambla panchayat

Terms "LG's Mulakat" as effective platform for grievance redressal of common masses

■ HT News Network

REASI, FEBRUARY 16: Secretary Planning Development and Monitoring Department, Mohammad Aijaz Asad, today chaired a public grievances redressal camp at Bhambla panchayat in Pouni block to assess and address public issues and concerns.

District Development Commissioner Reasi, Vishesh Paul Mahajan, besides other senior officers were present on the occasion.

The locals apprised the Secretary of their grievances and demands seeking an early redressal to the same. The issues raised inter alia included infrastructure development,



healthcare facilities, staff shortage in health department, construction of bridge near Kalidhar temple, completion of pending roads, school upgradation, fresh survey of PMAY, monkey menace, ambulance availability, school building repairs, low voltage in certain areas and construction

of a playground in the area. Various government departments, including Agriculture, Health, Animal Husbandry, Horticulture and Social Welfare, set up their stalls to raise awareness among the people about the central and Jammu and Kashmir government schemes.

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary emphasized the government's commitment towards addressing the needs of the people on priority basis while highlighting the importance of holding these grievance camps for resolving public issues at their doorsteps.

He mentioned the LG Mulakat programme as an effective platform for people to directly raise grievances with the Lieutenant Governor, encouraging the public to use the platform to get their genuine concerns redressed. This unique initiative is one of his many programs aimed to infuse accountability and transparency in the system making the governance more people centric, he added.

## DC Rajouri inaugurates 10 day Digital Awareness Program for students of Parisha & Palaash

■ HT News Network

RAJOURI, FEBRUARY 16: Deputy Commissioner Rajouri, Om Prakash Bhagat today inaugurated a transformative ten-day digital awareness program for a group of fifty students of Parisha and Palaash-Child Care Institutions.

The initiative has been taken under Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan, a visionary scheme aimed to empower rural populace across the States and Union Territories of the country by enhancing their digital literacy.

The core objective of the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan is to equip citizens in rural regions with essential digital skills, enabling them to proficiently operate com-



puters and digital access devices such as tablets and smart phones. Through comprehensive training, participants will learn to navigate the digital landscape, enabling them to perform tasks like sending and receiving emails, browsing the internet, accessing government services, seeking information, and conducting digital payments. The scheme's inclusive approach targets rural

populations, including Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), minorities, individuals below the poverty line (BPL), women, and persons with disabilities. By using the Information Technology and its applications, especially digital payment mechanisms, the scheme endeavors to foster active participation from rural communities in the nation-building process. Speaking

at the inaugural ceremony, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized the significance of embracing digital literacy as a catalyst for socio-economic advancement. He underscored the pivotal role of the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan in bridging the digital divide, particularly among marginalized segments of society. The DC urged participants to wholeheartedly engage with the training program, recognizing its potential to uplift communities and facilitate greater access to opportunities in the digital age. By equipping individuals with essential digital skills, the initiative not only empowers them to use the digital platforms but also fosters their active participation in the socio-economic.

## DIC Jammu hosts awareness programme on PM Vishwakarma scheme

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 16: District Industries Centre Jammu, in collaboration with the District Administration today hosted an awareness programme on PM Vishwakarma scheme here in Teachers Bhavan for the stakeholders. The awareness event was chaired by Joint Director IEDS, MSME DFO, G Velladurai. The PM Vishwakarma scheme has been launched on Sep 17, 2023 by the Prime Minister. Under the scheme 18 categories of artisans have been covered. After successful registration at CSC and due step wise verifications by the authorities, the artisans will be eligible for a toolkit of Rs. 15000; A Collateral free loan up to Rs. 300000 at just 5% interest rate. For more details of the scheme the artisans can contact Gram Panchayat/ Panchayat Secy./GRS/BDO/DIC Office/DC Office. At the outset, Rajesh Kumar, IEDS Assistant Director delivered welcome address and a brief about the seminar. Detailed presentation and clarifications regarding the registrations process of the scheme was given by D K Tyagi, IEDS Assistant Director Officer from MSME DFO, Jammu.

Representatives of CSC Centre, Ministry of Skill Development Government of India and Lead District Manager gave presentations on the role of their respective Department in PM Vishwakarma verification & execution. Guest of honour, Shehzada, Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, Jammu motivated the participants and officers of district administration to bring maximum number of potential beneficiaries on the platform.

## Deputy Commissioner leads inspection team to combat encroachment in Main Market Kishtwar

■ HT News Network

KISHTWAR, FEBRUARY 16: In continuation to the proactive move of district administration Kishtwar towards reclaiming public spaces, Deputy Commissioner Dr. Devansh Yadav today conducted a comprehensive inspection in the Kishtwar town. The focus of the inspection was on monitoring the progress of the ongoing anti-encroachment drive targeting the Main Bus Stand and Market areas along the National Highway.

Accompanied by authorities from Revenue and the Municipal Council, the Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar underscored the importance of removing



illegally installed stalls, reharis, and the unauthorized extension of shops in public spaces.

During the inspection, the Deputy Commissioner issued firm directives to Municipal and Revenue officers, urging them to implement stringent actions. This includes the

issuance of challans and notices, accompanied by a stern warning against encroaching on footpaths and roads. The emphasis was on creating a clear and obstruction-free environment for pedestrians and commuters.

In a bid to streamline traffic, auto-rickshaw opera-

tors were specifically advised to park only at authorized stands. This measure aims to enhance the flow of traffic and ensure a more organized public space.

Furthermore, street vendors, hawkers, and rehadi walas were encouraged to utilize designated Market and Vendor spaces. The goal is to contribute to a revitalized market landscape, free from congestion and encroachments along footpaths.

Deputy Commissioner expressed optimism that the collective efforts of the administration, coupled with cooperation from stakeholders, would lead to a more orderly and aesthetically pleasing urban environment in Kishtwar.

## GDC Vijaypur organises workshop on Communication Skills

■ HT News Network

SAMBA, FEBRUARY 16: IQAC of Government Degree College Vijaypur in collaboration with Department of Commerce and Department of English organized a highly successful workshop on "Communication Skills" that aimed at guiding students towards career ambitions and developing personality. Students of the college attended the lecture with great fervor and zeal. Prof. Ritu Bhagat (Convenor, IQAC) welcomed the guest. The speaker of the event was Kiran Kurwade, Director- Strategic Initiatives, Chitkara University, Chandigarh. He focused on the importance of holistic development for improving the Intelligent quotient among the students. He also stressed that for achieving higher IQ there is an important role of Emotional quotient (EQ). More than 100 students and all the faculty members participated in the workshop. Prof Mamta Gupta (HOD Commerce) concluded the session by motivating the students towards improving their communication skills for the better future perspective. The whole event was conducted under able guidance of Principal of the college Dr. (Prof.) Vandana Gupta. The proceedings of the program was done by Dr. Tisha Singh (Lecturer, Dept of Commerce) and Dr. Gunjeet Mahiwal (Lecturer, Dept of Education) presented formal vote of thanks. Pens were distributed to all the students who attended the workshop.

## GDC Marh organises two day workshop on 'Campus Bird Count'

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 16: NSS unit joined hands with Bird watching club of Government Degree College Marh organised two day workshop on 'Campus Bird Count, here on the college campus. The college is registered on e-bird world's largest citizen Science Project. The programme was inaugurated by Chief Guest Prof Rakesh Kumar Koul (College Principal) along with Dr Parmil Kumar. The workshop was conducted by Sachin Kumar Bhagat, Assistant Prof. in Political Science, a famous bird lover of Jammu and Kashmir under the overall supervision of Prof. Rakesh Kumar Koul Principal, GDC Marh who explained the mystic connection between birds and humans.

## National Campaign on "Ashwagandha: A Medicinal Plant" organised by J&K Ayush

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 16: J&K State Medicinal Plant Board, Directorate of Ayush, J&K in collaboration with Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Jammu organized a one day National Campaign cum Training Programme on "Ashwagandha: A Medicinal Plant" under National Campaign on Ashwagandha.

Dr. Mohan Singh, Director Ayush J&K/CEO J&K Medicinal Plants Board and Prof. Amrish Vaid, Director Extension, SKUAST-Jammu, were chief guests on the occasion.

The training programme was attended by 80 medicinal plant growers of Jammu District.

Speaking on the occasion Prof. Amrish Vaid appreciated the efforts of KVK Jammu for conducting this National Level campaign on medicinal plants



particularly focusing on Ashwagandha for the medicinal plant growers of Jammu District. He also asked the farmers to grow other medicinal plants also because of their high market demand and price as compared to other crops. He apprised them that medicinal plants are less prone to Insect and Disease attack.

## Rattan Lal slams BJP's false propaganda against NC leaders joining Saffron Party

### NC guarantees to bail out people from clutches of inefficient administration

■ HT News Network

JAMMU Feb, 16th : Rattan Lal Gupta, Provincial President of J&K National Conference, slammed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for spreading false propaganda of NC leaders joining the Saffron Party, despite knowing the fact that they have been thrown out of the party for their anti-party activities. In a statement issued here today, Rattan Lal Gupta has called out the BJP for shamelessly issuing such statements with a sole aim to deceive the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He clarified that the claims made by the BJP are baseless and misleading. He emphasized that some former NC leaders who are now being touted as BJP recruits were actually expelled from the National Conference due to their anti-party activities since long.

One such example is the former NC leader Mushtaq Ahmed Bukhari, who was ousted from the party following his involvement in activities that were detrimental to the Party's principles and objectives, he said. Furthermore,



he highlighted the case of another former NC leader, Dr Shehnaz Ganaï, who left the party nearly four years ago to contest the DDC election as an independent candidate in 2020 but unfortunately she was defeated by the NC

candidate. The Provincial President criticized the BJP for its deceitful tactics in spreading false narratives. He stressed the importance of countering such misleading information and urged the people of Jammu and Kashmir not to be swayed by the BJP's attempts to mislead and deceive them.

Exposing BJP's apprehension regarding the Assembly elections, the senior NC leader claimed that the entire BJP leadership is fully aware of the increasing popularity of the National Conference and its potential to secure a majority of seats in the Assembly polls whenever they are conducted in the union territory. Supported by surveys conducted by various news channels, they confidently asserted that the National Conference is on the verge of forming a government with a resounding majority.

Raising serious concern over the hardships being faced by the common masses in absence of popular government in Jammu and Kashmir, Rattan Lal Gupta made a bold promise to the people, asserting that the National Conference guarantees to rescue them from the clutches of an inefficient administration that has failed to address.



EDITORIAL

## A Critical Challenge for Ambulance Services

The issue of traffic jams poses a critical threat to the efficacy of ambulance services. The intricate network of narrow streets and unpredictable traffic patterns exacerbates the already challenging task of navigating through the valley's bustling thoroughfares during emergencies. As ambulances struggle to weave through congested roads, precious minutes tick away, potentially jeopardizing lives.

Traffic jams in Kashmir not only impede the swift movement of ambulances but also amplify the chaos surrounding emergency situations. The cacophony of honking horns and the jostling of vehicles often create an insurmountable barrier for ambulances, delaying their arrival at critical scenes. In a region where every second counts, these delays can be the difference between life and death.

The consequences of traffic congestion on ambulance services extend beyond mere inconvenience; they represent a dire threat to public health and safety. Patients in need of urgent medical attention face heightened risks as ambulances struggle to navigate through the labyrinthine streets of Kashmir's cities and towns. Moreover, the psychological toll on patients and their families, forced to endure agonizing waits amidst the clamor of traffic, is immeasurable.

To mitigate the impact of traffic congestion on ambulance services, it is imperative to prioritize the expansion and enhancement of emergency medical infrastructure in Kashmir. Increasing the availability of ambulances equipped with advanced life-saving technology and trained medical personnel is paramount. Moreover, investments in road infrastructure and traffic management systems are essential to streamline the flow of vehicles and ensure unimpeded access for emergency responders.

Furthermore, public awareness campaigns emphasizing the importance of yielding to emergency vehicles and adhering to traffic regulations can foster a culture of cooperation and solidarity within Kashmir's communities. By rallying together to address the challenges posed by traffic congestion, we can safeguard the well-being of our fellow citizens and uphold the sanctity of human life in the face of adversity.

In the pursuit of a safer and more resilient Kashmir, combating traffic jams and bolstering ambulance services must remain steadfast priorities. Only through collective action and unwavering commitment can we surmount the obstacles that threaten to derail our efforts to provide timely and effective emergency medical care to those in need.

## Empowering Kashmiri Youth: The Inspirational Journey of Khurshid Malik, Visionary Entrepreneur, and Champion of Change



■ Irfan Attari Kashmiri

In the picturesque valleys of Kashmir, amidst the serene backdrop of Srinagar, there emerges a beacon of hope for the youth of the region – Er. Khurshid Malik. This visionary entrepreneur has not only ignited the flames of ambition but has also provided tangible opportunities for thousands of young Kashmiris, shaping their destinies through education, empowerment, and entrepreneurship.

Khurshid Malik's journey is one of resilience, determination, and unwavering commitment to uplifting his community. Born and raised in Kashmir, he understood the challenges faced by the youth firsthand. Armed with a passion for change, Malik embarked on a mission to transform lives through education and skill development.

Through his organization, Zinorain Group of Institutions, Malik has pioneered initiatives to bridge the gap between education and employment. With a focus on skill development, the institution has trained over 10,000 youth from the districts of Budgam and Srinagar, providing them with valuable skills and opportunities for economic empowerment. Leveraging government-sponsored schemes, Malik has collaborated with various skill development programs to offer free training to the youth, ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder their path to success.

Recognizing the potential of emerging sectors such as information technology, apparel, and electronics, Malik established partnerships with industry bodies and councils to deliver specialized training programs. These programs not only equip the youth with technical skills but also foster an entrepreneurial mindset, encouraging them to explore innovative solutions and create their own ventures.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to Kashmir, exacerbating existing socio-economic disparities. In response, Malik demonstrated remarkable compassion and solidarity by extending support to marginalized communities. Through his efforts, he distributed COVID relief aid to those most affected, providing essential supplies and assistance during these trying times.

A true visionary, Khurshid Malik's commitment to empowering the youth of Kashmir is exemplified by his personal sacrifices. Despite the allure of a stable government job, he chose to forgo this path



multiple times, driven by his unwavering belief in the power of education and entrepreneurship to bring about transformative change. His actions inspire not only admiration but also emulation, encouraging others to follow in his footsteps and contribute to the betterment of society.

In recognition of his exemplary contributions, Malik has been honored with numerous awards from local organizations. These accolades serve as a testament to his tireless efforts and unwavering dedication to the welfare of his community.

Looking ahead, Khurshid Malik's vision remains resolute – to foster a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship, and self-reliance among Kashmiri youth. His endeavors have already borne fruit, with many of his students successfully establishing their own ventures and contributing to the socio-economic development of the region.

As Kashmir continues on its path of progress and development, individuals like Khurshid Malik stand as guiding lights, illuminating the way forward for the youth of the region. With his steadfast commitment and pioneering spirit, Malik continues to inspire generations, leaving an indelible mark on the landscape of Kashmiri entrepreneurship and empowerment.

With a steadfast commitment to his vision, Khurshid Malik is not content to rest on his laurels. He envisions a future where every Kashmiri youth is equipped with the skills and mindset to thrive in the rapidly evolving global landscape. To achieve this, he remains actively involved in mentoring and guiding the next generation of aspiring entrepreneurs, sharing his knowledge and experiences to empower them to reach their full potential. One of Malik's proudest achievements is witnessing the success stories that have emerged from his mentorship and training programs. Many of his former students have gone on to establish their own businesses, thereby creating



employment opportunities for others in their communities. These success stories serve as a testament to the transformative power of education and entrepreneurship in uplifting individuals and communities.

Moreover, Malik's impact extends beyond the realms of education and entrepreneurship. He is deeply invested in community development initiatives, working tirelessly to address pressing social issues and improve the quality of life for all Kashmiris. From promoting environmental sustainability to advocating for gender equality, Malik's holistic approach to community development reflects his commitment to building a more inclusive and equitable society.

As he continues to chart new paths and break down barriers, Khurshid Malik remains guided by his unwavering belief in the potential of Kashmiri youth. He sees them not as beneficiaries of charity, but as agents of change capable of shaping their own destinies and contributing meaningfully to the progress of their communities.

In the years to come, it is certain that Khurshid Malik's legacy will endure as a shining example of what can be achieved through passion, perseverance, and a deep sense of purpose. His tireless efforts to empower the youth of Kashmir have not only transformed individual lives but have also laid the foundation for a brighter and more prosperous future for the entire region. As we reflect on his remarkable journey, one thing becomes clear: Khurshid Malik is not just an entrepreneur; he is a visionary leader, a catalyst for change, and a true champion of the human spirit. In a world often marked by uncertainty and adversity, his story serves as a powerful reminder that with courage, compassion, and determination, anything is possible.

Khurshid Malik's impact reverberates far beyond the borders of Kashmir, inspiring individuals across the nation and

beyond. His story serves as a testament to the transformative power of education, entrepreneurship, and community engagement in driving positive change in even the most challenging of circumstances.

In an increasingly interconnected world, where opportunities abound but obstacles remain, Khurshid Malik stands as a guiding light, showing us that with perseverance and a sense of purpose, we can overcome any adversity and create a better future for ourselves and generations to come.

As we look to the future, one thing is certain: Khurshid Malik's journey is far from over. With each passing day, he continues to sow the seeds of hope and empowerment, nurturing the dreams of Kashmiri youth and paving the way for a brighter tomorrow.

In the annals of history, Khurshid Malik's name will be remembered not only for his entrepreneurial endeavors but also for his unwavering commitment to the upliftment of his community. His legacy will endure as a symbol of resilience, compassion, and the indomitable human spirit.

As we bid farewell to this chapter of Khurshid Malik's journey, we do so with a sense of awe and gratitude for all that he has accomplished. And as we eagerly await the next chapter, we do so with renewed hope and determination, knowing that with leaders like Khurshid Malik leading the way, the future is indeed bright.

In the tapestry of Kashmir's landscape, Er. Khurshid Malik has woven threads of hope, opportunity, and transformation. His journey from humble beginnings to becoming a catalyst for change embodies the resilience and potential of the Kashmiri youth. Through his visionary leadership, Malik has not only equipped thousands with the tools to succeed but has also instilled a sense of empowerment and possibility in a region often overshadowed by adversity. As we draw the curtains on Khurshid Malik's remarkable story, let us carry forward the lessons he has imparted. Let us remember that true progress stems from empowering individuals to chart their own destinies and creating an environment where dreams can flourish. Malik's legacy will continue to inspire generations to come, reminding us that with determination, compassion, and a commitment to the greater good, we can build a future filled with promise and opportunity for all.

As the sun sets on one chapter, let us eagerly await the dawn of a new era, guided by the enduring spirit of Khurshid Malik and the countless others who strive to make the world a better place. In their footsteps, may we walk with purpose and conviction, shaping a brighter tomorrow for Kashmir and beyond.

**The Author is a Renowned Social Activist/ Writer , President of Foundation For Youth Web & Student Of Cybersecurity, Email- askirfanattari@gmail.com**

## Family is Emotion



■ Ehmad Ruff

Family is like a part of your body. If separated, it can leave adverse effect on the body. An individual goes through ups and downs in his life. And it's the family that stands with us shoulder to shoulder in these tough times.

I can remember when I was pursuing my higher studies, during the time of examination, it was my family that helped me cope with the examination pressure. Whenever thoughts of failure came to my mind, my family stood by me and talked me out of depression by spending time with me and talking to me about many great things I was to accomplish if I kept my nerve. In my conversations with family, and I am sure you feel the same, I feel relaxed and a certain calmness wraps me in.



My family boosts my energy and fills me with undying hope. It gives me the strength to face failures of life and motivates me to keep going. And needless to say, it saves me from anxiety and negative thoughts.

You family understands your feelings and supports you financially and psychologically. A family can be the best counsellor providing that necessary healing touch that

you so desperately need. In fact, I can say without a doubt that my family is the force, which brings me back on the right path whenever I go astray. That emotional support of mother when she cries for you to quit the life of bad habits; that stern look in eyes of your sister indirectly nudging you to pull yourself up when you feel low; all this is nothing but selfless familial support for your

own betterment. It is the sacrifice that your family members make for you own good.

But family doesn't have to be your blood relations only! Your friends can be your family, too! A good friend who is pious and inspires piety in you, brings out the best character in you, and rekindles your social life, indeed is a blessing from Almighty. Otherwise, you know the famous saying

that one bad apple can spoil a bunch.

A good friend can bring about a great revolution in your life, in your carrier by providing you with better environment in which your aspirations can thrive. He can be the guiding light, slowly bringing you closer to your dreams with no ulterior motive but only goodwill for his friend.

I am grateful to God that I've such friends in my life with whom I can share my personal issues and relieve my heart's burden without fearing being judged. Not only the emotional support, friends are a great source of physical strength who would shield you from any harm coming your way! When I am with my friends, I am sure we inspire dread in the hearts of our enemies. Likewise, a pious friend can be your gateway to Jannah as well!

However, while counting all these good things about friends and families, there it's also my responsibility to not do anything inappropriate that would make other members of my family suffer because of my actions. As a family, we are impacted by each other's actions: good or bad. So, we have to be modest in our actions and courteous in our speech so that we have a good time together as a family. May Allah shower His mercy and blessings on my family and on the families of my readers, aameen, and take care of your families!

instagram @ Ehmad.ruff



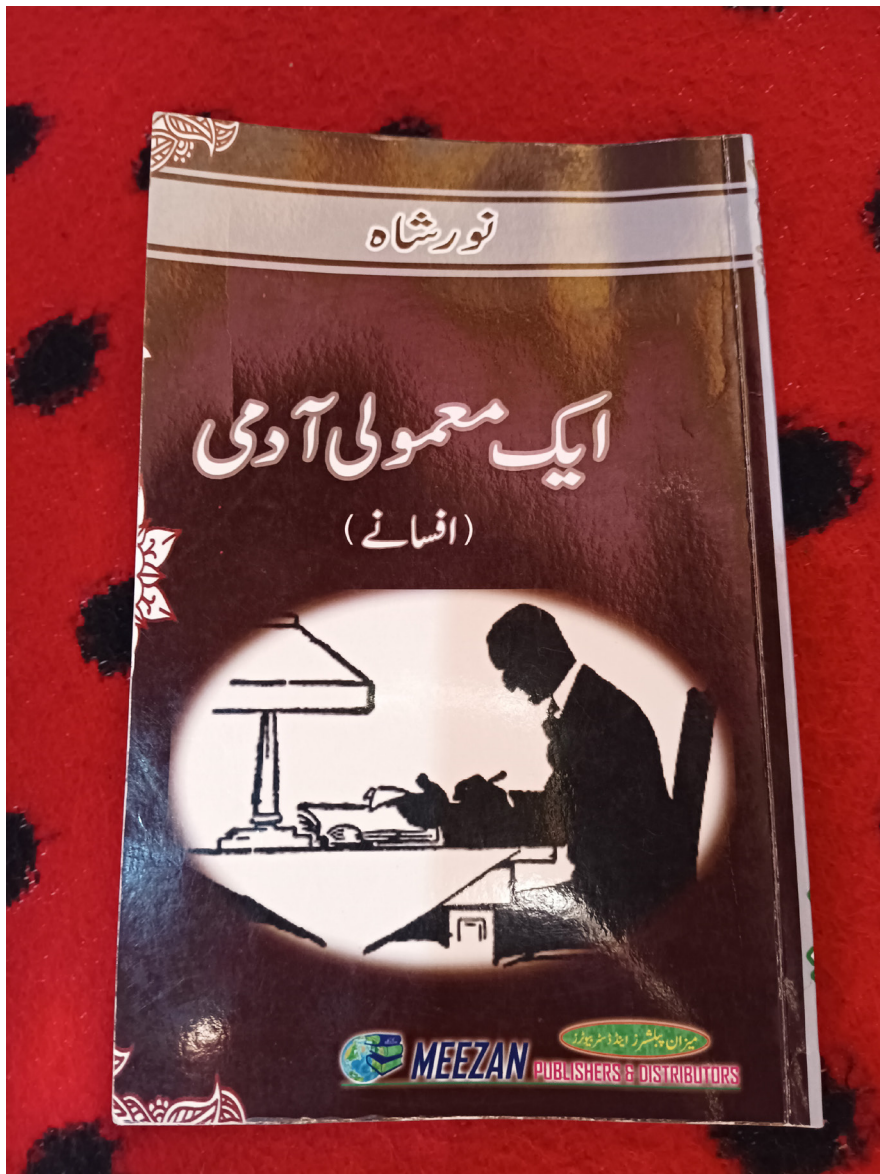
# Book Review Of "Ek Mamuli Aadmi" By Noor Shah



■ Rayees Ahmad Kumar

Amidst the vivid cultural mosaic of valley, one luminary stands tall - Noor Shah a literary virtuous and genius whose inked prose paint a portrait of linguistic richness and creative profundity. Born at picturesque Dalgate area of Srinagar in 1936, Noor Shah has embarked on a literary Odyssey spanning many decades. Through his magical pen, he has profoundly enriched the fictional landscape of valley. Distinguished fiction writer Asmat Chagtai says that she knew Kashmir through Noor Shah's stories. Another noted fiction writer Krishan Chander says that he knew Kashmir through the stories of Noor Shah and Hamidi Kashmiri. During his service tenure Noor Shah has held many powerful administrative posts viz Director Rural development, Director Science and Technology, Deputy Commissioner and Chief executive officer JK energy development agency. Apart from short stories, Noor Shah has written eighty dramas for Radio. His resourcefulness can be assessed by going through his Novels like Payal Ke Zakhm, Neeli Jheel Kalay Saye and Aao Sou Jayein. The novelist has also to his credit a few novelettes like Adhi Raat Ka Suraj, Lamhe Aur Zan-jeerien. Not only dramas and novels, but he has written several TV serials like Dard Ka Rishta (13 episodes), Gul Aur Bulbul (13 episodes), Neelma (13 episodes), Solar Energy in J&K (4 episodes), Gull (a 30 minute documentary) and a feature film Urdu in Kashmiri. Noor Shah's short story collection include Be Ghat Ki Nav, Veeranay Ke Phool, Ek Raat Ki Malika, Man Ka Aagan Udas Udas, Geelay Pathroun Ki Mehak, Be Samar Sach and Aasman, Phool Aur Lahoo. Many M.Phil and Doctorate degrees have been conferred to scholars for analysing the literary works of Noor Shah. The habit of writing diary proved so fruitful to the him that he could write Band Kamrey Ki Khidki out of his diary entries. It is because of this, Noor Shah has earned a name as a proactive fiction writer of

India. Presently the one which I am reviewing is Ek Mamuli Aadmi a collection of thirty short stories. The book spans 120 pages, boasting a crafted cover and premium paper quality is published by Meezan Publishers Srinagar. Noor Shah has dedicated this masterpiece to Ahmad Furqan, Ahmad Fawad, Ahmad Dawood and Qasim Kamili. This handsome collection opens with Baat Eik Raat Ki (p7) a magnificently crafted and beautifully woven short story reflecting the different forms of poverty prevalent in our society, where some are bound to beg before public to feed their families while some even sell their chastity to earn through illegal means. Taali (9-11)- the second short story is a clear reflection of the unfair treatment met by our daughter in-laws at the hands of their mother in-laws in new home particularly when they fail to give birth to a baby. The relationship takes many ugly turns and get strained with each passing day. Without checking the potency of sons, parents go for divorcing the daughter in-laws and most embarrassing moment is faced when medical reports prove the fault of their own son. Neeli Lout Aye Gi (12-20), Noor Shah is an expert romantic fictional story writer who is well-versed about how to begin and finish a heart melting love story of two souls. This one of a couple of house sparrow has been skillfully shaped enduring the sharp pangs of pain of solitude alongside a man who craves and longs for the company of Neeli his beloved. Apni Apni Kahani (p21-25), this one portrays the cunning and deceptive nature of women who always stand in the queue to lure a big chunk of gullible and simpleton men in the name of love and pious relationship. They maintain temporary relations with men, visit health resorts, spend nights in hotels intending to earn big money thereby deceiving them. Shakhi Be Samar (p26-27) - Noor Shah has artistically woven this one reflecting how two girl friends were so closer to each other living as husband wife against the norms and traditions of social and religious ethics. Both had impregnated themselves by a male servant secretly who was accompanying them and doing their house chores. Be Nam Kahani Ka Akhri Warq (p32-34), this one skillfully crafted illustrates the dwindling human values and cultural ethos among valley dwellers. In past Kashmir was famous for it's hospitality and rich human values but alas suddenly such blessings have altogether vanished from the land of ever-flowing Jhelum and beautiful Dal Lake. Ek



Mamuli Aadmi (p43-48), this title short story is wellcrafted by Noor Shah Sahab, revolving around a romantic story of Asima and Nadir who once were classmates during college life now aspiring to tie the nuptial but Asima's brother becomes a hurdle in their true love story. Nadir belonged to an impoverished class while Asima was from a well-off family, so her brother didn't allow her to strengthen their relationship. Instead he married her to Salman a rich guy but his tragic death due to an accident distressed Asima further. Nadir had excelled in journalism and was a capable and competent guy but while capturing a firing scene he too lost his life on the same day of Salman's accidental death. Call Bell (p49-51), We have previously heard many incidents about begging women being duped by thirsty men in their own homes who aimed to earn for

their children but were exploited sexually or sometimes they themselves were interested in the same. Allah Khair Kare (57-60), while going through this meticulously penned story, we are reminded of the era of arrests and beating of our youth allegedly involved in stone pelting by police. It can't be denied that only those involved in anti-national or anti-social activities are put behind the bars, but sometimes even innocent ones too are labelled as criminals and fall prey to the draconian laws as has been shown in the story. Kashmir Kahani (70), this one manifests and reflects the pain of pelt victims who either have been partially blinded or have completely lost their vision. Ghar Ki Baat (71), this one is a clear reflection of the corruptive practices adopted by Policemen while dealing with people on daily basis who often keep it secret to their spouses and later

beg before them not to make it public. Khandani Rewayat (72-73), Tricky and sophisticated people always lure and dupe naive and artless people, however this unfair and illegal means doesn't suit a literary person especially a poet as has been vividly painted in his story. Du Gaz Zamin (82-84), Pathetic and melancholic conditions of people dwelling across two sides of the artificially created border have been expertly demonstrated where the people having same skin colour, traditions, culture and history are made to endure pain and live hostilely. They continue to loose their loved ones, their dreams get shattered and become homeless this whole for two yards of land. Jugno (85-86), Noor Shah Sahab has analogised children with fireflies in this story who live together with brotherhood, amicably and with utmost love and care. They are devoid of hatred, avarice and cupidity. Pehchan (90-91), This one unveils the inner longing and yearning desires of some women who instead of day's bright light, love the black and dark night. It is because nobody recognises them while doing immoral and unscrupulous activities. Kitabain (92-94), There is a famed proverb - books must be few and good. While choosing a book, it is crucial we must always buy the morally upright one's, which develop morality and ethical values amongst ourselves and our children. These mustn't be like those we are bound to keep away from our own children. Waapsi (109-11), Noor Shah Sahab has brilliantly reflected the impact of division of people among several sects of the same religion and region of Kashmir. People are erecting few yard mosques in each lane and street, which ultimately has divided them amongst different ideologies, sects and communities. Apna Apna Dukh (115-18), In this tech-savvy and ultra-modern era when science and technological developments have eased our lives, every facility is easily available at our doorsteps, our unethical and conservative nature has seen no transformation. We still consider our daughter in-laws as our maid servants and labourers for each family member, which contradicts the teachings and orders of holy religion. Lazati Be Gunah (119), this brief and closing one of the book depicts Noor Shah's technical aspects of creating fictional pieces. That is why he is acclaimed among few distinguished and noted fiction writers of country.

Writer is a columnist hailing from Qazigund Kashmir

## Melting Of Glaciers In Kashmir Time To Act



■ By Mool Raj

The state of glaciers in Kashmir is alarming. Climate change, coupled with unplanned development and pollution, is causing glaciers to melt at an unprecedented rate. According to a study published in the journal Scientific Reports, glaciers in the region have lost mass at an average rate of 35 centimeters per year. This is significantly higher than the global average of 19 centimeters per year.

The melting of glaciers in Jammu and Kashmir is having a number of negative impacts. Glaciers are the main source of water for the Jhelum, Chenab, Tawi, Sindh,



Lidder, Veshaw and other rivers and tributaries, which provide drinking water and

irrigation for millions of people in the region. The melting of glaciers is reducing

the amount of water available in these rivers, which could lead to water scarcity in Jammu & Kashmir in the future, something that is already happening in several areas.

The rapid melting of glaciers is also leading to more frequent and severe floods and flash floods and drought conditions in some areas of Kashmir. This is because glaciers act as natural reservoirs, storing water during the winter and releasing it slowly during the summer. When glaciers melt more quickly, there is more water runoff during the spring, which now often lead to flooding in many areas of Jammu and Kashmir. However, once the glaciers have melted, there is less water available during the summer, which now creates drought situations as well. Glaciers also provide habitat for a variety of unique plants and animals. As glaciers melt, these species are losing their habitat and are at risk of extinction. Moreover, glaciers are a major tourist attraction in Jammu and Kashmir.

Even as the government of Jammu and Kashmir has been taking a few steps to address the melting of glaciers, however,

more needs to be done to protect glaciers in Jammu and Kashmir. The central government should also take more proactive steps to address this challenge.

At J&K level, we need to develop and implement a comprehensive glacier protection plan. This plan should include measures to reduce pollution, manage development in glacier-fed areas, and monitor and assess glacier health. J&K also needs to invest in water conservation and efficiency measures. This could include rainwater harvesting, drip irrigation, and wastewater recycling. Besides promoting sustainable agriculture and forestry practices, J&K also needs to increase public awareness about climate change and the importance of glacier protection. At the national level, considering J&K's ecological sensitivity, there has to be more investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency. Similarly, more support is needed in research and development on glacier protection and climate change adaptation.

The author is a columnist and freelance writer



# "115 Crores Frozen, Don't Have That Much": Congress On Bank Accounts Row

■ HT News Network

New Delhi: The Congress today faced a temporary hurdle after the Income Tax department froze its main bank accounts, including those of the Youth Congress. However, the party swiftly challenged the move, and the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal granted relief by de-freezing the accounts until a final hearing next week.

The Congress issued a clarification stating that the party is mandated to ensure that a sum of 115 crore has to be maintained in their bank accounts. The amount has to remain untouched in compliance with the directive from the tax authorities, implying a freeze on these funds.

"This means that 115 crore have been frozen. This 115 crore is much more than we have in our current accounts," the Congress said. In a press conference earlier today, party treasurer Ajay Maken described the move as a "disturbing blow to the democratic process". The freeze reportedly stems from a tax demand of 210 crore raised by the Income Tax department, a move that the Congress claims is politically motivated and strategically timed to disrupt the party's election preparations.

"Democracy doesn't exist; this is like a one-rule party, and the prin-



cipal opposition party has been subjugated. We seek justice from the judiciary, media, and the people," Mr Maken said.

The Congress leader said that the party has taken legal action in response to the freeze, with the matter currently before the income tax appellate tribunal. In a press conference, Mr Maken explained that they chose not to disclose the information earlier as the hearing is pending.

The party learned about the freezing of its accounts yesterday, and the party's lawyer Vivek Tankha said that a total of four accounts have been affected. Banks have been instructed not to accept or

honour Congress' cheques, with the frozen funds to be submitted to the Income Tax department.

Mr Maken claimed that in the election year of 2018-19, the party submitted its accounts 45 days late, but freezing the accounts is an extreme measure. He argued that there have been cases and precedents where such actions were not taken. "We have given the names of all MLAs and MPs who have contributed, based on the Manmohan Singh committee report," Mr Maken stated.

The Congress leader claimed that timing of the freeze, coming just ahead of the crucial general elections, raises suspicions about the

motives behind the Income Tax department's actions

"Right now, we have no money to spend. Electricity bills, staff salaries, our Nyaya yatra, everything is impacted. Look at the timing; this is clear," he said. "We have only one PAN, and the four accounts are all linked." Party president Mallikarjun Kharge voiced his apprehension, stating, "Intoxicated with power, the Modi government has frozen the accounts of the country's largest opposition party - the Indian National Congress - just before the Lok Sabha elections. This is a deep blow to democracy." "The unconstitutional money that BJP has collected will be used in the elections, but the money we have collected through crowdfunding will be sealed. That is why we have said that there will be no elections in the future! We appeal to the judiciary to save the multi-party system in this country and secure India's democracy. We will take to the streets and fight strongly against this injustice and dictatorship," he added, in a post on X.

This development comes on the heels of the Supreme Court, in a landmark judgment, striking down the electoral bonds scheme. The electoral bonds scheme, introduced by the government on January 2, 2018, was seen as a solution to replace cash donations and enhance transparency in political funding.

## "Nitish Kumar Begged Lalu Yadav For Forgiveness In 2022": Tejashwi Yadav

■ HT News Network

Mohania (Bihar): RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Friday claimed that Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had "begged for forgiveness for past betrayals" before his parents, party supremo Lalu Prasad and ex-CM Rabri Devi, before they allied with the JD(U) president in 2022.

Mr Yadav, who lost the Deputy Chief Minister's chair last month when Kumar abruptly went back to the BJP-led NDA, made the claim at a rally in Mohania, in the state's Kaimur district, which was organised as part of former Congress president Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyaya Yatra.

Breaking into the local dialect Bhojpuri, the young RJD leader said, "Nitish ji had, after begging for forgiveness, told my parents that the BJP was trying to split his party and wean away his MLAs".

Mr Kumar dumped the BJP and joined the RJD-led Mahagathbandhan in 2022.

The RJD leader added: "We were initially not very inclined towards trusting him again. But there were talks with leaders across the country, all of whom



were of the opinion that in the larger interest of the fight against BJP, we should agree. So we made a sacrifice".

Calling his ex-boss "a tired Chief Minister", the RJD leader said he is proud that in just 17 months the Mahagathbandhan made him give government jobs on an unprecedented scale.

"He (Kumar) had earlier mocked me by asking whether I would use my father's money to pay them salary. But I had told him that our support to his government would require him to help us fulfil the promise of 10 lakh government jobs that I had promised to the people ahead of the 2020 assembly polls," Mr Yadav said.

Mr Yadav claimed the Mahagathbandhan would have won the assembly polls, but for manipulations

by the administration, which worked overtime to ensure that its candidates were shown defeated by margins of as low as 12 votes.

Fishing in troubled waters of the NDA, which Mr Kumar has joined claiming he was there "for ever" even as the BJP has made it clear that it will not give up its ambition to form its own government in Bihar, Mr Yadav said, "Now that Nitish ji is back with the BJP, there is no guarantee that he will not make a flip-flop again". Cries of "palturam (Mr turncoat)" emanated from the crowds, even as the RJD leader added that he had said in the assembly that Prime Minister Narendra Modi prides himself on his guarantees, but even he cannot guarantee that Nitish Kumar will not do another volte-face".

## 11 killed, 4 injured after fire at paint factory in North

■ HT News Network

New Delhi, Feb 16 (UNI) At least eleven Delhi's Alipuren people were killed and four reported injured after a massive fire broke out in a paint and chemical factory at Dayalpur market in Alipur, North Delhi on Thursday evening.

"All the injured have been taken to the nearest Raja Harishchandra hospital," an official from Delhi Fire Services (DFS).

According to the official, the fire was reported at 5.25 pm yesterday and nearly 22 fire tenders were rushed to the spot.

The fire had been brought under

control at around 9 pm, the official said.

Additionally, two motorcycles, two cars, and one mini-truck were engulfed by the flames.

A search operation is currently underway at the incident site, he added. UNI

## SC to give urgent hearing of Sharad Pawar's plea against EC decision on real NCP

■ HT News Network

New Delhi, Feb 16 (UNI) NCP leader Sharad Pawar on Friday requested the Supreme Court to give an urgent hearing to his pending petition (Sharad Pawar vs Ajit Pawar dispute) as there is a likelihood of a whip being issued against him by his rival Ajit Pawar faction.

The Supreme Court assured Sharad Pawar, that it will give an urgent hearing to his petition challenging the decision of the Election Commission of India (ECI) which recognized Ajit Pawar's Faction as the real Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).

Senior Advocate Dr Abhishek Manu Singhvi appearing on behalf of Sha-



rad Pawar said, "It is a matter of extreme urgency. Because of the election commission order, Sharad Pawar will be subject to the whip of Ajit Pawar. The session in Maharashtra starts next week. We have not been given any symbol at all." Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud replied, "We will look into it, let me see. We will list it." "It will be a strange situ-

ation, because of the ECI order, Sharad Pawar will be subject to the whip of Ajit Pawar when the Assembly starts next week, Dr. Singhvi told the court. That order is under challenge, it is identical to the questions of law raised in the other matter (UBT-Shinde dispute)...please list it on Monday or Tuesday, because the session in Maharashtra starts at the end of the week

on the 20th. They have not given me any symbol at all, it is worse than the Uddhav Thackeray Case."

The bench comprising CJI DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra agreed to list the matter at the earliest.

Sharad Pawar filed a Petition in the Supreme Court on February 13, challenging the order passed by the ECI on February 6 by which the official 'clock' symbol of NCP was allotted to the Ajit Pawar group.

The decision of the ECI to allot the symbol to the Ajit Pawar group was taken on the criterion of "legislative majority," acknowledging that the Ajit Pawar faction possesses the majority of legislators with 51 out of 81.

## Defence Ministry clears proposals worth ₹84,560 crore

■ HT News Network

New Delhi: The Defence Ministry said the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) approved Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for various capital acquisition proposals amounting to 84,560 crore. MSD distances itself from agency behind Poonam Pandey's "death" publicity event

The approvals accorded by the DAC, which is chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, lay special emphasis on the procurement of various equipment from Indian vendors, the Defence Ministry said.

The DAC has accorded AoN under the Buy Indian-Indigenously Designed Developed and Manufactured (IDDM) category for procurement of a new generation of anti-tank mines having seismic sensors and provision of remote deactivation with additional safety features, it added. In order to enhance operational efficiency and domination in the tactical battle area



for engaging targets that are beyond visual line of sight by the mechanised forces, the AoN under Buy (Indian-IDDM) category has been accorded for procurement of Canister Launched Anti-Armour Loiter Munition System. The AoN also has been accorded for procurement of Air Defence Tactical Control Radar under Buy (Indian-IDDM) category to strengthen Air Defence Systems, especially capabilities to detect slow, small and low-flying targets as well as surveillance, detection and tracking of different targets.

To enhance surveillance and inter-

diction capabilities of the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), the AoN for procurement of medium range maritime reconnaissance and multi-mission maritime aircraft, through the Buy and Make category, has been granted. Besides, to keep the Indian Naval ships one step ahead of the threats posed by adversaries, the AoN under the Buy (Indian) category has been accorded for procurement of Active Towed Array Sonar having capabilities to operate at low frequencies and various depths for long range detections of adversary submarines.

"The AoN has also been accorded for procurement of Heavy Weight Torpedoes for enhancing attacking capabilities of Kalvari Class submarines. The AoN for sustainment support through Follow On Support (FOS) and Repair Replenishment support through Follow On Supply Support (FOSS) for 24 MH60R aircraft under Foreign Military Sale route with the US Government has also been accorded," the Ministry said.

## UP residents witnessed importance of law & order over last 7 yrs: Yogi

■ HT News Network

Lucknow, Feb 16 (UNI) Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday said that the citizens of the state have witnessed the importance of law and order over the past seven years.

Addressing the closing ceremony of the 67th All India Police Duty Meet, the CM said, "Their decision to re-elect this government stems from witnessing the improved law and order situation and security environment in the state. The robust law and order situation in the state has resulted in receiving investment proposals of Rs 40 lakh crores in Global Investors Summit. Whereas before 2017, no one wanted to invest in the state."

He said that on February 19 investment proposals of more than Rs 10 lakh crore are going to be implemented through a Ground Breaking Ceremony in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "This will



directly provide jobs to 35 lakh youths, demonstrating that when law and order is applied with determination, positive results follow," he said.

Yogi mentioned that various police forces play a crucial role in creating a better environment for the country's internal security, law and order and safety. "Not only that, but the police force also has a vital role in determining public perception. They face significant challenges in creating this perception and have to work with a dual mindset," he said.

He emphasised that the police force operate under a zero-tolerance policy towards anti-social and anti-national elements while actively engaging in dialogue and delivering justice to the common man. "This creates a new confidence in the minds of common people. It also reflects the sensitivity of the police force," he said.

The CM said, "The event is being attended by officers and staff of various forces from across the country. They have their own experiences. Understanding and benefiting

from these experiences is essential."

He mentioned that the tradition of exchange of knowledge in our country has been ancient. Naimisharanya, located 70 kilometers from the capital Lucknow, was a center of exchanging the knowledge of sages thousands of years ago. "It played a significant role in documenting the tradition of Vedic knowledge of India, with 88,000 sages and saints from across the country being part of it," he said.

He said that the All India Police Duty Meet carries forward this heritage. Knowledge is not just what is written in books but what you experience during field duty.

Yogi said, "We all have to prepare ourselves according to the changing nature of crime. "When we share our best practices in front of the public, we get to know and learn a lot. Similarly, through such competitions and contests, one gets the opportunity to see and learn many things.



# Sheikh Fayaz Ahmad convenes Mega Public Darbar at Handwara, assesses public grievances.

■ DR.AB QAYOOM

Handwara, Feb 16: Administrative Secretary, Floriculture, Parks and Gardens Department (J&K) Sheikh Fayaz Ahmad, today, presided over a mega Public Darbar here at Town Hall Handwara under the ambitious public outreach-cum-grievance redressal programme of the government.

Member DDC Mawar, Member DDC Nutnoosa, President traders Federation Handwara and a large number of people put forth issues of public importance before the Administrative secretary.

ADC Kupwara Mohammad Rouf Rehman, ACD Kupwara, ACP Kupwara and other senior Officers of civil and police Administration attended the mega public outreach program. The Public Darbar witnessed overwhelming response from the public during which people from various areas of Handwara participated. The participating delegations and general public on the occasion projected several demands and grievances pertaining to their respective regions, encompassing both developmental and



administrative concerns that need immediate attention of the government.

Some of the major development demands included construction of public park near Degree College Handwara, for which 32

Kanals of land already stands identified; construction of lavatory block near children's Park at Handwara, recreational Park at Bagatpora on Bungas road, for which 200 kanals of land is available; making of

slaughter house operational, Tribal Sub Plan for tribal villages, development of Saranwali Moanbal as tourist spot, release of second and third installments of PMAY(G) and wages under MGNREGA etc.

While highlighting the importance of the Public Darbar, administrative Secretary, Sheikh Fayaz Ahmad said Public Darbars act as a bridge between the administration and the people where highest level government functionaries connect with people on rotation basis. Sheikh Fayaz assured all individuals and delegations that genuine demands projected by them have been noted and would be redressed on priority. He impressed upon the concerned officer to adopt a proactive and people friendly approach in delivery of public services.

DDC Member Mawar, Khurshid Ahmad Dar, DDC Member Nutnoosa adv. Zahoor Ahmad and President Traders Federation Handwara, Aijaz Ahmad Sofi while highlighting issues of diverse nature faced by the public, expressed their gratitude to the UT govt for organizing a public darbar in Handwara.

## DC Bandipora reviews functioning of Revenue Department



■ HT News Network

BANDIPORA, FEBRUARY 16: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Sha-keel UI Rehman Rather today chaired a meeting of revenue officers at mini Secretariat to review the status of various revenue matters.

The DC took a review of digitization of Jamabandis, encroachment, PSGA services, e-Office in revenue offices, pending Mutations, allotment of land to land-

less, encroachment and other related issues.

He said that revenue officers/officials are custodian of government land, and we must take care of it with added responsibility.

While reviewing the status of encroachment, the DC asked the concerned revenue officers to take strict action in cases of encroachment of Government Land(s) and ensure that no government land is encroached.

Rather stressed upon revenue officials to meet the timeline of online ser-

vices as per the Public Service Guarantee Act and ensure that no service is provided in offline mode, which is available on the online portal. He also warned that strict action shall be taken against officers and officials not adhering to the PSGA timelines.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Bandipora Umar Shafi Pandit, ACR Bandipora Shabir Ahmad Wani, Sub Divisional Magistrates in virtual mode, Tehsildars and other concerned.

## Nazim Zai reviews implementation of NTEP, adult BCG vaccination trial in J&K

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 16: Mission Director, National Health Mission (NHM), J&K, Nazim Zai Khan, today chaired a meeting held to review implementation of National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP), Sub National Certification Claims and Adult BCG Vaccination Trial in Jammu and Kashmir.

Nazim Zai directed the concerned officers and officials of Health Department to work diligently to achieve the targets set for elimination of tuberculosis from the UT by 2025 as per National Strategic Plan (NSP) 2017-2025. He instructed them to expedite procurement of pending lab equipment in the Intermediate Reference Laboratory (IRL) of Jammu division for making it operational at the earliest.



He exhorted upon the concerned to conduct external death audit of TB patients and Contact Tracing of active pulmonary TB cases. He also asked for mapping of all Ayushman Arogya Mandirs with Nikshay Portal for providing TB drugs as per the mandate of Central TB division, Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Emphasizing the importance of Nikshay Poshan Yojana, the MD directed the officers to bring all the eligible beneficiaries under the ambit of NPY without any fail.

Among others the meeting was attended by the Director Health, Services Kashmir, Director Family Welfare and Immunization, J&K, State Tuberculosis Officer Kashmir, State Immunization Officer J&K besides Chief Medical Officers, District TB Officers and other officers and officials from NHM and Health Department. Emphasizing the importance of Nikshay Poshan Yojana, the MD directed the officers to bring all the eligible beneficiaries under the ambit of NPY without any fail.

## Drug Control Authorities close down 06 medical shops at Kulgam

■ HT News Network

KULGAM, FEBRUARY 16: Drug Control Authorities today closed down 06 medical shops in Kelam, Agroo, Devsar, Brinal and Lammar of district Kulgam after they were found violating the conditions of licenses besides other mandatory Govt. directive regarding CCTV and Computerized Billing System and issuance of cash memos/invoices.

Moreover, many other pharmacies were also inspected and statutory drug samples were lifted for analysis purposes to ascertain their quality parameters.

The team of officers headed by Assistant Drug Controller Anantnag informed that such inspections are routinely carried out as mandated under law.

He added that our organisation has already sensitized chemists to adopt a robust system for maintenance of records and CCTV Surveillance to plug in gaps to avoid misuse of essential life saving scheduled formulations along with observing conditions of licenses.

## KVK-Anantnag launches Training program on 'Organic Fruit Production for Sustainable Agriculture'

■ HT News Network

ANANTNAG, FEBRUARY 16: The Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Anantnag, affiliated with SKUAST-Kashmir today inaugurated a 4-day training program titled 'Organic Fruit Production - A Way Forward' as part of the HADP project, which focuses on 'Alternate System of Agriculture for Sustainability'. Dr. I. A. Mir, in his opening remarks, welcomed the participants, signaling the commencement of this significant initiative. This training program aligns with the broader efforts of SKUAST-Kashmir, guided by Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai, Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Dil Mohammad Makdooi, Director Extension & Education, Prof. H. R. Naik, Director Research, and Prof. Parmeet Singh, the Principal Investigator of the project. Dr. Ishtiyak A. Khan, Head of KVK-Anantnag and Training Coordinator, emphasized the growing global demand for organic food and underscored the importance of embracing organic practices. During his address, Dr. Khan shed light on the scope and various aspects of organic fruit production, with a special focus on Jammu & Kashmir and the entire nation. The training program aims to equip participants with knowledge and skills related to sustainable agriculture practices, specifically in the context of organic fruit production. This initiative is a step forward in promoting sustainable and eco-friendly agricultural practices, aligning with the increasing global trend towards organic farming. The KVK Anantnag's efforts, under the umbrella of SKUAST-Kashmir, are geared towards fostering awareness and expertise in organic fruit production, contributing to both local and national agricultural sustainability goals. The strong emphasis on organic practices is expected to have a positive impact on the agricultural landscape, enhancing productivity while preserving the environment.

## GDC Ramgarh organises Nukkad Natak

■ HT News Network

SAMBA, FEBRUARY 16: NSS unit 'Prabha' of Government Degree College, Ramgarh today organised a Nukkad Natak on the theme "Nasha Mukti" under the aegis of NMBA. The nukkad natak was organised under able guidance and supervision of Principal, Prof. (Dr.) Geetanjali Andotra. Speaking on the occasion, she threw light on existing challenges associated with drug abuse and the urgent need of the hour to curb this issue. She also informed the students about the role of parents, teachers and society in stopping the menace of drug abuse in the society.

## J&K Pollution Control Shuts Down Brick Kiln in Budgam District to Tackle Pollution Concerns

■ HT News Network

Budgam, Feb 16 (KS) : The J&K Pollution Control Jammu has taken swift action to address pollution concerns in central Kashmir's Budgam district.

An official order of which a copy lies with News Agency Kashmir Scroll reads J&K pollution control board has directed Deputy Commissioner/District Magistrate Budgam to close the Brick Kiln owned by Mr. Abdul Rehman Sofi, known as MIS RBC Brick Kiln Utligam, Tehsil Beerwah, District Budgam.

The order reads the J&K Pollution Control Jammu issued a communication, bearing No: JKPCC/LSK 17361426/023/973-78, dated 22/12/2023 which reads this communication passed an order, with endorsement No: 180/JKPCC of 2023, dated 22/12/2023, which directed the Deputy Commissioner/District Magistrate Budgam to immediately close the Brick Kiln owned by Mr. Abdul Rehman Sofi, known as MIS RBC Brick Kiln Utligam, located in Tehsil Beerwah, District Budgam.

As per the order, acting upon this directive, the Deputy Commissioner of Budgam issued an office communication, with reference No: DCB/Relief/SC-171886/2023-24/3502-12, dated 05/01/2024.

## Director Agriculture visits Khanmoh & Balhama areas of Srinagar

Inspects Vermicompost Units, Borewell & Packhouse Units established under HADP

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 16: The Director Agriculture Kashmir, Chowdhury Mohammad Iqbal today visited Kanmoh, Balhama areas of Srinagar district and inspected Vermicompost Units, Borewell and Packhouse units established under Holistic Agriculture development programme (HADP) in these areas.

Speaking to the farmers at different places, Director Agriculture highlighted the importance of HADP and said that it will have a long



term impact on agriculture and allied sectors in the region.

Director Agriculture

asked the farmers to take advantage of all the projects under HADP. He underscored the importance of

coordinated efforts among the agriculture and allied departments for the successful implementation of all the projects under HADP.

Iqbal impressed upon the officers of the department to organise farmers awareness programs and to accelerate the frequency of field visits so that the farmers could remain updated regarding the benefits of different programmes by the department.

Director was accompanied by Chief Agriculture officer Srinagar, Manohar Lal Sharma and other officers from the district.

## GDC Vijaypur organises Symposium on "Voting is Everyone's Right and We Must Vote During Elections"

■ HT News Network

SAMBA, FEBRUARY 16: Department of Sociology in collaboration with NSS unit of Government Degree College Vijaypur under the banner of Voting Awareness Campaign organised a symposium on the theme, "Voting is Everyone's Right and We Must Vote During Elections" under the supervision and guidance of Prof. (Dr.) Vandana Gupta, Principal of the college. The main objective of the event was to increase the enrolment of the voters, especially the eligible ones and was to create awareness among the students about their voting rights and how they can enrol themselves in the voter list. More than 15 college students participated in the activity with great enthusiasm, fervour and zeal. The event commenced with the welcome address by Prof. (Dr.) Anoop Kumar Bhagat, HOD Sociology. He briefed the students about the importance of voting in a democracy and explained in detail how to register in the electoral rolls through online mode and also enlightened the students about the history of election commission.

## DC Kathua chairs District NCORD meeting to review Anti-Drug Measures

■ HT News Network

KATHUA, FEBRUARY 16: Deputy Commissioner Rakesh Minhas today chaired a meeting of the District Level Committee under the Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) to discuss and review measures aimed at curbing drug abuse and the narcotics trade in the district.

During the meeting, extensive deliberations were held on issues pertaining to drug addiction, identification of areas of concern, and hotspots of drug abuse. Additionally, measures undertaken by law enforcement agencies to combat this menace were thoroughly examined.

The Assistant Drug Controller provided an update on the installation of CCTV cameras in pharmacies, with a total of 638



out of 692 cameras already operational. These cameras are crucial in monitoring the sale of psychotropic drugs over the counter.

Furthermore, it was highlighted that 50 pharmacy licenses were revoked due to non-compliance with guidelines and directives.

Instructing ADCs and SDMs to maintain

a stringent vigilance on the sale of over-the-counter drugs, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized the need for random inspections of pharmaceutical establishments to ensure the efficacy of CCTV surveillance systems. SDM Bani was specifically directed to prevent the cultivation of narcotics and psychotropic substances in the hilly terrains known for such activities.

The DC urged concerned authorities to take action against unregistered de-addiction centers operating within Kathua. Reviewing the Nasha Mukat Panchayat campaign, the DC directed ADC Basohli, ADC Billawar, SDM Hiranagar, and SDM Bani to identify and declare five panchayats each in their respective jurisdictions as Nasha Mukat Panchayats.

Chief Education Officer was tasked with launching an extensive awareness campaign in schools to educate students about the perils of drug abuse. Lastly, the DC instructed the Chief Medical Officer to compile a comprehensive list of de-addiction centers and clinics operating in the district.

Among others, SSP Kathua, ADC Kathua, ACD, CMO, CEO, Officers from BSF and other departments were also present.



## ADC chairs STF meeting on Pulse Polio Immunization at Ganderbal

■ **Farooq Rather**

GANDERBAL, FEBRUARY 15: In a proactive move to enhance public health initiatives, a District Task Force (DTF) meeting for Intensified Pulse Polio Immunization (IPPI) was today held in the VC Room of Mini Secretariat Ganderbal. The meeting was chaired by Additional Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal (ADC), Gulzar Ahmad and was attended by key stakeholders to strategize and coordinate efforts for the upcoming immunization



program. The meeting was attended by Dr. Afroza Shah, Chief Medical Officer Ganderbal; Mirza Asif Ali Beigh, Executive Officer of Municipal Council Ganderbal; Muzaamil Akhter, Chief Education Officer Ganderbal; Dr. Nighat Yasmeen, Dy. CMO Ganderbal and Dr. Bushra

Yousuf, District Immunization Officer Ganderbal. Representatives from the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) were also present. During the deliberations, the ADC emphasized the importance of meticulous planning and dedicated efforts to ensure the success

of the IPPI program covering the set target Population of 46,689. The ADC emphasized that the hilly and hard-to-reach areas, where accessibility and adverse weather conditions pose significant challenges, need special and extra attention to ensure no one is left out. On-the-spot instructions were issued to concerned departments to streamline their operations and enhance coordination for effective implementation of the program scheduled on 3rd, 4th and 5th of March 2024.

## DDC inaugurates first batch of training under PM Vishwakarma Scheme at Govt. ITI Poonch

■ **HT News Network**

POONCH, FEBRUARY 16: Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Yasin M. Choudhary inaugurated the first batch of training under the PM Vishwakarma Scheme, here today. The inaugural ceremony took place at Government Industrial Training Institute (ITI) Poonch and witnessed the commencement of Tailoring (Darzi) training, providing an invaluable source of skilled enhancement for aspiring Vishwakarma candidates. The Superintendent Govt. ITI Poonch, Er.



Jawaid Ahmed, extended warm welcome to Deputy Commissioner and members of District Level implementing Committee members including the General Manager District Industries Centre Poonch, Khalid Hussain Wafa, District Treasury Officer, Rashid Dostum and staff members of Govt. ITI Poonch.

In his address, the Deputy Commissioner shed light on the Vishwakarma Scheme and various other government initiatives. He informed that the training program would span six days, with participants receiving a daily stipend of 500, amounting to 3000 in total. Additionally, a sum of 15000 would be granted

for procuring a toolkit. Furthermore, the government would extend a loan of 100000, accompanied by a 5% interest subsidy on first tranche. Deputy Commissioner encouraged the trainees to leverage their skills and open their own businesses in the market, such as carpentry, boutique, plumbing, among others, in order to seize opportunities, earn a livelihood, and lead fulfilling lives. The General Manager of DIC, Khalid Hussain Wafa also addressed the gathering and provided further insights into the Vishwakarma Scheme and its associated benefits.

## DC Bandipora launches Mobile Milk ATM Initiative

Identify more youth to be engaged under Government Sponsored schemes: Shakeel Ul Rehman

■ **HT News Network**

BANDIPORA, FEBRUARY 16: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Shakeel Ul Rehman Friday launched the Mobile Milk dispenser Van initiative at Animal Husbandry Complex, here.

This innovative project aims to bring locally sourced, farm-fresh milk directly to the doorsteps of residents in the surrounding areas.

Milk dispensers commonly known as milk ATM, equipped with refrigeration and storage facilities, will traverse neighborhoods and communities, offering residents convenient access to high-quality milk.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC stressed upon concerned officers from the Animal Husbandry Department to identify more youth to be engaged under Govt sponsored schemes of the Department.

He said the schemes provided by the Government are



meant for sustainable business and profitable enterprise and emphasized on more awareness in the upper reaches of the district.

The DC said schemes under the Animal Husbandry Department have the potential to provide self-employment

in addition to providing direct or indirect sources of income to others.

Earlier, the DC inspected various units of animal husbandry, including Mobile Veterinary Unit, Pet care unit, stray animal shed, laboratory, milk analyzer, hematology analyzer and other blocks.

He also handed over keys of milk distributing vans among beneficiaries under IDDS Scheme.

Chief Animal Husbandry Officer Bandipora, Gh. Ahmad Lone informed the DC that Bandipora is self-sufficient in milk production with per capita availability of 1000ml, which is double the National Average.

He informed that in value addition, the department has sponsored milk processing units involving local youth at Papchan Bandipora besides engaging around 2000 youth under different schemes.

Dr. Lone informed the department also succeeded in establishing a first of its kind broiler farm and started artificial insemination in remote areas of Gurez.

## Social Welfare Budgam organizes Awareness programme

■ **HT News Network**

BUDGAM, FEBRUARY 14: The District Social Welfare Budgam today organized a day long awareness programme on 'Children in Conflict with Law & Children in Need of Care and Protection' at the conference hall of Juvenile Justice Board Budgam.

The programme witnessed the presence and active participation of Staff of DSWO/DCPU office Budgam, members of Juvenile Justice Board Budgam, staff of District Hub for Empowerment of Women, One Stop Centre, Child Welfare Committee, Child Help Line Budgam, Staff members of Juvenile Justice Board Budgam, representatives from Education department, Teachers, ASHA workers from medical and health department and dedicated Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs) of DLSA and Tehsils of Budgam.

Speaking on the occasion, Adv. Feroz Ahmad Khan briefed the audience about the benefits and importance of Juvenile Justice Care and Protection Act.

He threw light on the role of PLVs before the Juvenile Justice Board, when a child in conflict with law is produced before the board. He also highlighted the role of DLSA, especially Panel Lawyers and LADCs and Para Legal Volunteers. Furthermore, he also briefed the audience about the services and schemes of NALSA vis-a-vis DLSA likewise free legal Aid, ADR Mechanism, Victim Compensation Scheme. In his speech, he also apprised the audience about the role and responsibilities of the Child Welfare Committee and constitutional safeguards meant for women and child etc. Other speakers including Rukaya Tasleem, Sandeep Kour, Muneer Ahmed also spoke on the occasion.

## ADDC Shopian inaugurates Sensitization/ Training programme on 'Implementation of Child Rights'

■ **HT News Network**

SHOPIAN, FEBRUARY 16: The Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Shopian, Dr. Nasir Ahmed Lone today inaugurated one day sensitisation cum training programme of Child Protection Committee under Mission Vatsalya on the 'Implementation of Child Rights' at Government Degree College Shopian.

ADDC graced the occasion as the chief guest, while Principal Government Degree College, Shopian, Prof. Mohammad Shafiq was the Guest of Honour.

During his address, ADDC highlighted the significance of such training programmes in creating awareness and fostering a collective approach. He underscored the essential role played by collaborative efforts in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children within the community.



The ADDC emphasised that the primary objective of the programme was to enlighten stakeholders about the Mission Vatsalya guidelines, ensuring a comprehensive understanding and implementation of child.

He appealed to the stakeholders to exhibit their best to implement the juvenile justice for child protection in the district. He laid emphasis on child protection to stop the child abuse prevailing in the society in different manifestations.

He said that the aim of the programme was to raise awareness regarding Child Rights and ensure the proper implementation of the Juvenile Justice Act in the district.

Speaking at the event, Tehsil Social Welfare Officer, Shopian, Farhana Tak explained the importance of the programme and gave a detailed description of the topic and its working mechanism at the district level.

Chairperson, CWC, Farooq Ahmed also high-

lighted that under the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), the department focuses on providing preventive, statutory care, and rehabilitation services to vulnerable children, including those from potentially vulnerable families, families at risk, orphans, child drug abusers, child beggars, trafficked or sexually exploited children.

He said that District Child Protection Unit, Child Welfare Committee (CWC), and Juvenile Justice Board (JJB), are actively working to ensure the implementation of child rights and juvenile justice acts, while also combating child labour and violations of relates laws." He also focused on understanding child rights.

Various stakeholders, including, DDC Member, Raja Waheed, Administrator, OSC, Sumaira Gulzar, Members CWC, Representatives from DLSA, Police, Teachers, Media, Asha Workers and Anganwadi workers attended the programme.

Srinagar, Feb 16 KNT: HDFC Bank shared an update on its Home Loan Business which has witnessed healthy growth post the merger of HDFC Ltd with itself.

The Bank's market share has grown approximately by 18% to 20% on incremental disbursements, post the merger. It has exhibited robust and consistent higher double-digit, year-on-year growth across its Home Loan Business for the first six months, post the merger. On a sequential basis, the Bank has gained a leading position as it recorded a growth of 3.6% which was the highest amongst its peers in home loans.

By mid-March, the Bank will be launching a seamless straight through journey for Home Refurbishment Loans which can become a strong product offering for customers. Also, by April 2024, the Bank proposes to launch a Home Saver product. This will lay a robust foundation for a lucrative offering to the existing and prospective home buyers. Despite a substantially larger book than peers, the Bank's model is generating huge benefits on a monthly basis and its differentiated strengths are expected to generate substantial value for customers and the Bank in the future.

"One of the biggest opportunities was to generate CASA and initial signs are encouraging. Pre-merger about 30% to 35% of incremental disbursements were to customers with an HDFC Bank savings account. This has reached about 80% of incremental disbursements, post-merger. The Home Loan Business for the Bank has become both an asset and liability generator and is growing sizeably. This leads to a higher stickiness quotient and a stronger customer connect with the Bank for a longer duration," says Mr. Arvind Kapil, Country Head - Mortgage Banking, Home Loan, LAP, HDFC Bank. All this has been done without compromising on the Bank's traditional underwriting standards. The foundation is now in place and the Home Loan Business is on its way to becoming a springboard for larger customer engagements. Current trends indicate interesting and encouraging signs that the Bank seems to be emerging as a preferred option for customers with higher credit scores which has exhibited a 10% growth, post merger. On the operational front, the Bank will convert all erstwhile HDFC Ltd.'s service centres to branches in a phased manner and its entire mortgage team will also become relationship managers. The Bank has already commenced cross selling its products/services, through these service centres from February 01, 2024. As a part of enhancing the cross-sell strategy, home loan customers will be able to avail of a wide range of products/services like Consumer Durable Loans, Credit Cards, Wealth Advisory Product, Unsecured Loans and Home Refurbishment Loans. Going forward, cross-sell will be a continuing focus for both existing as well as new customers. The strength of this team is expected to be able to cross-sell at no incremental acquisition cost thanks to digital journeys.

The Bank believes that structural demand for housing will continue to be strong in the long run in India, due to a conducive environment. India is expected to have the largest working population by 2050, estimated at 900 million which is likely to give a major fillip to urbanisation in the country. This is projected to go up to 40% by 2030 from 34% today.

## Special Training on NMBA program held at different blocks of Budgam

■ **HT News Network**

BUDGAM, FEBRUARY 16: The District Hub for Empowerment of Women, Mission Shakti Budgam and One Stop Centre Budgam held a series of training programmes under Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA) at Block Budgam, Beerwah, B.K.Pora and Chadoora

The events, held from 10th to 15th February, brought together a diverse group of participants, including supervisors, SHG (NRLM) members, and health workers. This collaborative initiative aimed to build capacity and enhance awareness regarding the vital Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan.

Participants were engaged in meaningful discussions and interactive sessions, fostering a deep understanding of the initiative's goals. The focus was on equipping supervisors, AWWs ASHA Workers, community Mobilizers (SHG-NRLM) with the necessary knowledge and skills to actively contribute to the success of Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhi-



yan. Resource persons, including Afroza Bhat (DMC DHEW) delivered a speech on NMBA, providing major information regarding the rise of drug abuse and awareness.

Shafiq, Psychiatric Counselor OSC addressed the gathering on gender-based violence, domestic violence and also raised awareness on detrimental effects of drug abuse. She also elaborated various steps to combat such abuse through rehabilitation centres and ATFs available in the district.

DHEW-Mission Shakti Budgam remains steadfast in its commitment to positively impact women's lives.

## Pahari Tribe ST Forum Congratulates Senior Leader Mirza Abdul Rashid for Pahari ST Movement

■ **Syed Nazakat Khaleefa**

Srinagar, 16 February 2024: The Pahari Tribe ST Forum extends heartfelt congratulations to senior leader Mirza Abdul Rashid, a member of the Pahari movement and former Minister and Member of Parliament. The felicitation ceremony was held at his residence in Bhatindi, Jammu.

Mirza Abdul Rashid, a venerable leader, highlighted the three-decade-long struggle of the Pahari community, commending the BJP government for its unwavering commitment to inclusive development and welfare. The Pahari Tribe expressed gratitude for Rashid's relentless efforts in empowering the community.

In a collaborative spirit, Pahari leaders appreciated Prime Minister



Narendra Modi for his commitment to empowering not only the Pahari community but also safeguarding the interests of Gujjar, Bakarwals, and other listed tribes. "We are all brothers working towards the com-

mon goal of nation-building," emphasized one of the leaders.

The Pahari Tribe also extended thanks to the Union Territory administration for bridging the gap between the community and the

central government, ensuring justice for the Pahari community, and fostering a stronger connection with the central government.

The unwavering commitment of Prime Minister Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, State President Ravindra Rana, alongside the collective efforts of BJP leaders in Jammu and Kashmir, played a pivotal role in achieving this significant triumph.

Acknowledging the dedicated Pahari leadership emphasizes their relentless pursuit of securing Schedule Tribe (ST) status. The sacrifices made by Pahari leaders underscore their steadfast dedication to the cause, and their contributions are held in the highest esteem.

This victory stands as a testament to the unity and vision of the Bharatiya Janata Party, showcasing the effectiveness of cohesive efforts.



# WHO says tobacco use declines globally, urges to keep enforcing tobacco control policies

■ HT News Network

Washington, Feb 16 (UNI) The World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Friday that nations are successfully reducing tobacco use, with about 1 in 5 adults worldwide consuming tobacco in 2022, and urged countries to continue putting in place tobacco control policies and fighting against interference by the tobacco industry.

"Trends in 2022 show a continued decline in tobacco use rates globally. With about 1 in 5 adults worldwide consuming tobacco compared to 1 in 3 in 2000. The report shows that 150 countries are successfully reducing tobacco use. Brazil and the Netherlands are seeing success after they implemented MPOWER tobacco control measures, with Brazil making a relative reduction of 35% since 2010 and the Netherlands on the verge



of reaching the 30% target," WHO said in a fresh tobacco trends report. The report said the total number of tobacco users aged 15 years and over has declined steadily to an estimated 1.245 billion people in 2022 from 1.362 billion people in 2000 and is projected to further decrease to 1.20 billion people by 2025. At the same time, the WHO South-East Asian region and the European region have the highest percentage of tobacco users of about 26.5% and 25.3%

respectively. However, WHO said the voluntary global goal of a 30% reduction in tobacco use by 2025 will not be achieved. Only 56 countries globally will reach this goal, while the world will make it to a 25% reduction in tobacco use by 2025. The organisation urged governments to "continue putting in place tobacco control policies and continue to fight against tobacco industry interference," saying that "efforts to protect health policy from increased tobacco industry

interference have deteriorated around the world."

"Good progress has been made in tobacco control in recent years, but there is no time for complacency. I'm astounded at the depths the tobacco industry will go to pursue profits at the expense of countless lives. We see that the minute a government thinks they have won the fight against tobacco the tobacco industry seizes the opportunity to manipulate health policies and sell their deadly product," the report quoted Director of WHO Department of Health Promotion Dr. Ruediger Krech as saying. The organisation also said children aged 13-15 years old continue regularly using tobacco and nicotine products in most countries despite countries' efforts to restrict legal access to adults only due to "easy access to purchasing" nicotine products and "low concerns about becoming addicted."

# Japanese Cabinet slams N Korea's position on abduction issue as 'unacceptable'

■ HT News Network

Tokyo, Feb 16 (UNI) Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi on Friday called "completely unacceptable" Pyongyang's claim that the issue of abducted Japanese nationals allegedly held in North Korea had already been solved, adding that Tokyo was committed to addressing the problem in a proper manner.

On Thursday, Kim Yo Jong, sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, said that if Tokyo abandoned the idea of putting forward "the already settled abduction issue" as a condition for mending bilateral relations, there would be no reason for the two nations not to become close and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's visit to North Korea might take place.

"I would like to refrain from commenting on every statement by



North Korea, but the claim that the issue of Japanese nationals held in North Korea has been resolved is completely unacceptable. There is no change in our government's course, which aims to address complex problems such as the issues of Japanese nationals held in North Korea, the missile program and the nuclear program," Hayashi

told a press conference.

Kishida has on many occasions confirmed his desire to hold high-level talks with the North Korean leader to resolve problems in bilateral relations and has made it clear that efforts to do so are being made "through various channels," Hayashi added.

On Tuesday, the Financial Times

reported, citing people familiar with the talks, that the Japanese prime minister had intensified his efforts to meet with the North Korean leader. The summit is expected to focus on securing the release of Japanese citizens abducted decades ago, among other things, the report said.

Tokyo claims that the North Korean intelligence services have abducted at least 17 Japanese citizens since the 1970s, but Pyongyang has recognized only 13 cases of abductions. Five of them managed to return to Japan following visits to North Korea by former Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in 2002. Pyongyang claims that the remaining eight people have died, but Japan considers the evidence presented for their deaths unconvincing or false, and continues to demand the extradition of all abductees.

# Blinken to meet Chinese FM at Munich Security Forum

■ HT News Network

Berlin, Feb 16 (UNI) US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will meet with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi during the Munich Security Conference in Germany on Friday, according to a schedule on the US Department of State website.

"[At] 3:30 p.m. LOCAL [14:30 GMT] Secretary Blinken meets with People's Republic of China Director of the Office of Foreign Affairs Commission and Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Munich, Germany," the schedule read.

The encounter comes after, in January, Wang held a meeting with US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan in Thailand's capital of Bangkok. Following the meeting, a senior US administration official announced that a phone



call between US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping would be arranged in spring.

This year, the Munich Security Conference takes place from February 16-18. Over 450 high-profile officials, including heads of state, ministers, leading personalities of international and non-governmental organizations, high-ranking representatives of industry, media, academia, and civil society are expected to attend the meeting to discuss inter-

national security issues. The forum was founded in 1963 and this year it celebrates its 60th US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will meet with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi during the Munich Security Conference in Germany on Friday, according to a schedule on the US Department of State website. Security Conference takes place from February 16-18. Over 450 high-profile officials, including heads of state, ministers, leading personalities.

# Greek parliament passes bill on same-sex marriage

■ HT News Network

Athens, Feb 16 (UNI) Greece's parliament approved a landmark bill allowing same-sex civil marriage on Thursday, granting same-sex couples the right to wed and adopt children. A majority of 176 lawmakers in the 300-seat parliament voted in favor of the bill, entitled "equality in civil marriage," Greek national broadcaster ERT reported. A total of 254 participated in the roll call vote. "We are here to deal with an existing social reality together, with responsibility, putting an end to an inequality that is serious for our democracy," Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said, addressing the plenary shortly before the roll call vote. The new law also



grants same-sex couples full parental rights for both partners, but not the use of assisted reproduction methods. Legal systems are adapted internationally in response to trends in societies and same-sex marriage is legal already in 36 countries worldwide, the premier stressed.

There are already parents in same-sex couples who cannot legally care for their children, pick them up from school or accompany them to hos-

pital, he added. However, recent opinion polls showed that the Greeks were divided on the reform. Even when the bill was voted on, opposite groups were both in demonstrations on Thursday.

"In a Christian Orthodox country, we should not allow the ratification of something that goes against the teachings of the Bible," Dionisis Makris told Xinhua during a protest of conservative groups near the parliament.

# Israel claims killing Hezbollah leader; 14 others die in strike

■ HT News Network

BEIRUT: An Israeli strike killed a Hezbollah commander and 14 others in the southern Lebanese city of Nabatiyeh, a security source said on Thursday, raising fears of further escalation.

Hezbollah movement and Israel have been exchanging near-daily fire across the border since Oct 7. In the bloodiest day since then, the Israeli military said in a statement it had killed Hezbollah commander Ali al-Debs, his deputy and another fighter in Nabatiyeh on Wednesday.

A source in Lebanon said that, along with Debs and two other Hezbollah members, the strike had killed eleven civilians, including seven from the same family. The deaths brought to 15 the total number of civilians killed in Israeli strikes on Wednesday, the highest such toll since the cross-border hostilities erupted.

In its statement, the Israeli military said Debs, his deputy and another fighter were killed "in a precise air strike carried out by an IDF (Israeli army) aircraft on a Hezbollah military structure in Nabatiyeh". Hezbollah announced

on Thursday that three of its fighters including Debs had been killed, without specifying where they had died. It had already said two other members were killed on Wednesday.

The Israeli army had said it lost a soldier in unclaimed rocket fire from Lebanon on Wednesday and that its warplanes carried out strikes on Lebanon. Debs had already been targeted and wounded in an Israeli drone strike in the southern city on February 8.

Lebanon's official National News Agency had identified five of the dead civilians in Nabatiyeh

as Hussein Barjawi, his two daughters, his sister and his grandson. His wife and niece were also killed, the security source said. Emergency responders pulled a boy alive from the rubble, the NNA added, while another relative and at least six other people were taken to hospital. The agency said the Israeli strike was carried out by "a drone with a guided missile".

A photographer said the ground and first floors of the three-storey residential building were hit, with pieces of furniture strewn among the rubble.

# Trump judge sets March date for historic criminal trial

■ HT News Network

NEW YORK: A New York judge on Thursday rejected Donald Trump's attempts to dismiss charges of covering up hush money payments to a porn star, setting the stage for the first criminal trial ever of a former US president to begin on March 25. At the same time, Trump's representatives attended a separate hearing in Atlanta, pushing to have the lead prosecutor bringing charges of election fraud and racketeering against Trump disqualified from the case. They are just two of four



criminal cases facing the Republican frontrunner as he campaigns to retake the White House, with his legal teams thus far failing to push the actual trials until after the Nov 5 vote.

Trump, who has seized on his legal woes to fire up his supporters and denounce Democratic opponent Joe Biden, reiterated his claim

that the charges were "just a way of hurting me in the election." "How can you run for election if you are sitting in a courthouse in Manhattan all day long," he said as he arrived. In the courtroom, his legal team argued he would not receive a fair trial in New York because another Manhattan jury awarded \$83 million to E. Jean Carroll, a writer whom Trump was found to have sexually assaulted and defamed. Judge Juan Merchan rejected that, as well as arguments by Trump's lawyers that there was too much media coverage for a jury to be unbiased.

# Ukraine reinforces 'critical' frontline town

■ HT News Network

KYIV: Ukraine has rushed soldiers to the embattled eastern town of Avdiivka, surrounded on three sides by Russian forces, where the military said the situation was "extremely critical". The announcement of reinforcements came as a Ukrainian rocket strike on the Russian border city of Belgorod killed at least six people, officials there said. Both sides are escalating aerial attacks as the war nears the end of its second year. Ukraine's position around Avdiivka in the eastern Donetsk region has grown increasingly precarious. "The Third Separate Assault Brigade confirms that it was urgently redeployed to strengthen Ukrainian troops in the Avdiivka area," the brigade said in a Telegram post. It described the situation as "extremely



critical," "threatening" and "unstable", adding that Russia was "throwing new forces and resources into the town". Russian troops, who have managed to almost encircle the town through a series of bloody attacks launched last year, have made progress in recent days. Bringing in supplies and evacuating the few hundred civilians who remained was "complicated", a Ukrainian army spokes-

man said on Thursday. Russian President Vladimir Putin said in late January that Russian troops had reached the city's outskirts. They have also cut a key access road, according to reports from both Ukrainian and Russian military bloggers. The battle for the industrial hub, less than 10 kilometres north of the city of Donetsk, has been one of the bloodiest of the two-year war. It has drawn comparisons with last year's grinding fight for Bakhmut, in which tens of thousands of soldiers were killed. Should Russian forces punch through Ukraine's stretched defences, it would be the most significant territorial gain for Moscow since it seized Bakhmut last May. In the eastern city of Kramatorsk, a Ukrainian serviceman echoed widespread concerns over a lack of ammunition and fatigue among troops fighting to hold back Russian efforts to advance.

# Bad news for big economies as UK, Japan slide into recession

■ HT News Network

LONDON: Two major world economies — Japan and the UK — have fallen into a recession in the second half of 2023.

While Japan's "unexpected fall comes off the back of a contracting gross domestic product (GDP) — its economy also shrank by 3.3pc in the previous quarter, the UK's decline comes ahead of this year's expected election for PM Rishi Sunak, who has promised to boost growth.

The figures from Japan's Cabinet Office also indicate that the country has lost its position as the world's third-largest economy to Germany, BBC News reported.

Economists had expected the new data

to show that Japan's GDP grew by more than 1pc in the fourth quarter of last year.

The latest figures were the first reading of Japan's economic growth for the period and could still be revised.

Two quarters in a row of economic contraction are typically considered the definition of a technical recession.

In October, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecast that Germany was likely to overtake Japan as the world's third-largest economy when measured in US dollars.

The IMF will only declare a change in its rankings once both countries have published the final versions of their economic growth figures. It began publishing data comparing economies in 1980.





## 'Accidental spinner' Ashwin enters 500 club

**RAJKOT:** As R Ashwin walked towards the bowling crease from mid-off after 11 overs of the England innings on Friday, the scoreboard read 71/0. After dismissing India for 445, England openers — Ben Duckett and Zak Crawley — had gotten off to a flying start, and Rohit turned towards the most reliable and experienced craftsman in his arsenal. India needed a wicket and Ashwin was one away from getting into the 500 club.

Everyone knew it was coming, and yet there was a sense of anticipation in the air as to when and how it was going to happen. In fact, if you ask around, every single

person who has watched him and followed his career would say they expected it to have happened by now. Even his teammate and partner-in-crime Ravindra Jadeja thought so. "I thought he would complete it in the first Test," Jadeja had said a couple of days ago.

At the start of the series, Ashwin needed ten wickets to get to 500, and Jadeja wasn't alone in thinking what he did. After all, that is what the off-spinner's reputation was. 490 Test wickets in 95 matches, a tad above five wickets every match in a career that has spanned just over 13 years. Fastest to get to 250, 300, and 350, second fastest

to get to 400 and 450, second most player of the series awards, the list just goes on. These numbers, as phenomenal as they are, don't do enough justice to what Ashwin has achieved.

For someone who started as a batter all through his age-group career, and who took off-spin as a primary skill much later than most international spinners would have, Ashwin made his Test debut only when he was 25. He calls himself an "accidental spinner" and rightly so. By the time Ashwin played for India, he had already won two Indian Premier League titles with Chennai Super Kings, and had five years of

Ranji Trophy cricket behind him. On debut, he returned with nine wickets and the Player of the Match award as he belonged at that level. Since then, it has been a rollercoaster ride for him. He has had his share of ups and downs, and had a forgettable series here and there, but seldom has he had a year where he wasn't good.

In the past 13 years, only twice his annual average went over 30 (not including 2024), and thrice he averaged less than 20. At home, he averages 21.30 and away 30.40. Among spinners with more than 200 wickets (at home), only Muttiah Muralitharan (19.56). And among

spinners with 149 (same as Ashwin) away wickets or more, the Indian stands sixth on the list. But, all top five have played more matches than he has so far. To put his overall record into context, the bowlers above him on the all-time list — Muralitharan (20), Shane Warne (22), James Anderson (20), Anil Kumble (19), Stuart Broad (21), Glenn McGrath (23), Courtney Walsh (22), Nathan Lyon (23) — all made their debuts at a relatively younger age. Among spinners, barring Graeme Swann (29), no one else has taken 250 Test wickets while making his Test debut at an age older than Ashwin.

## Harmanpreet: Domestic players can use WPL to earn India call-up for T20 World Cup



**SYDNEY:** India's domestic players can use the upcoming second season of the WPL to make themselves known on the big stage and earn an India call-up in the lead-up to the T20 World Cup later this year, India and Mumbai Indians captain Harmanpreet Kaur has said.

Harmanpreet, who lifted the inaugural WPL trophy as Mumbai captain last season, has led India in three T20 World Cups before. In 2018 and 2023 India made the semi-final, while in 2020 they lost in the final against Australia.

With the next T20 World Cup slated for September-October later this year in Bangladesh, Harmanpreet said: "WPL is the kind of platform where domestic players will get opportunities," at the pre-season press conference in Mumbai. "If they do well here then it means they're kind of ready for international cricket. It makes

things easier for the BCCI [selectors] because you've proven yourself at a good level and under pressure. If we get to see good talent and performances here, then it'll be really good for us [Indian team] to look at such players and give them opportunities while thinking of the team for the T20 World Cup.

"I think players getting such opportunities will want to grab them with both hands because if you can perform here then everyone is looking at you and your performance won't be wasted, and you'll get chances going ahead."

Harmanpreet cited the example of left-arm spinner Saika Ishaque who shot to fame in the maiden WPL season with 15 wickets that earned her ODI and T20I debuts later in the same year, and a maiden Test call-up as well. Ishaque first made a memorable WPL debut with figures of 4 for 11 in the opening game against Gujarat Giants, then wore the purple cap for a while in

the league stage before finishing the tournament as the joint second-highest wicket-taker along with her team-mates Issy Wong and Amelia Kerr.

"Last year we saw Saika do well and other players too who were picked later in the team," Harmanpreet said. "Later on they got opportunities in the Indian team. So it's a good platform for players because if you do well here, you can get picked [for the Indian team]."

As has been in the IPL, the Mumbai Indians women's team could also create a legacy for unearthing unknown talent from domestic cricket and fast-forwarding their path to international cricket. The Mumbai set-up is known for its scouting system and their team management is banking on some more domestic spinners this time.

"We're trying to give chances to young girls in domestic cricket," bowling coach Jhulan Goswami said.

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