



J&K Budget 2025: CM presents Rs 1,12,310 crore annual financial statement in Assembly

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 07: JAMMU, March 07: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today presented his first Budget for Jammu and Kashmir, outlining a series of pro-people initiatives and governance reforms.

Beginning his speech, the Chief Minister stated, "With great humility and a profound sense of duty, I stand before you today to present my first budget as Finance Minister—marking the first Budget of an elected government in seven years. While it is an honour, I am acutely aware of the weight of responsibility that comes with being the custodian of Jammu and Kashmir's finances at this crucial juncture. This budget is more than just a financial statement—it is a roadmap for a new and prosperous Jammu and Kashmir, reflecting the aspirations of our people and laying a strong foundation for economic growth, social progress and sustainable development." The budget focuses on social welfare, infrastructure development and financial stability.

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CM Omar Abdullah vows to make J&K self-reliant, reduce its dependence on Delhi

Others will get 200 units free electricity after our financial condition improves

Key Highlights of Budget

- 200 units of free electricity for AAY households announced
- 10 kg additional ration per person for AAY beneficiaries from April 2025
- Pensions enhanced for over 10 lakh vulnerable persons in J&K
- Marriage Assistance for EWS girls increased from ₹50,000 to ₹75,000
- Free ridership for women in J&K on Government owned transport including e-buses from April 2025
- Stamp Duty exemption for property transfer within blood relations



■ HT News Network

Jammu, Mar 07: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday described the budget presented in the legislative assembly as

"historic," stating that it is the first time in the country that the concerns of every single legislator were taken into account

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

My government resolute in working towards restoration of statehood: CM

"Committed to hold local bodies polls; budget is roadmap for new and prosperous J&K"

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, Mar 07: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday said that his government remains resolute in working towards restoration of statehood.

In his budget speech, Omar, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said the restoration of full statehood is a deeply cherished aspiration of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"The restoration of full statehood is a deeply cherished aspiration of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and our Government remains resolute in working towards its fulfilment," he said.

Omar said his government is committed to holding elections to local bodies.

"My government is committed to strengthening grassroots democracy by empowering Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies, which play a crucial role in local governance and development. Our Government is committed to holding elections to these bodies, reinforcing our commitment to accountable, inclusive, and decentralized

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

Lieutenant Governor inaugurates Tawi Festival organised by Hari Tara Charitable Trust at Jammu

We need to have a fine balance between Technology and Arts: LG Sinha

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 07: Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha inaugurated the 3rd edition of Tawi Festival organised by Hari Tara Charitable Trust (HTCT), at Amar Mahal Palace, Jammu.

The event also marked the beginning of Golden Jubilee celebration commemorating 50 years of Amar Mahal Museum and Library.

In his address, the Lieutenant Governor extended his felicitations to Dr. Karan Singh and everyone associated with the Hari Tara Charitable Trust for organizing the unique festival, and bringing together experts and practitioners from different fields to share and



highlight new ideas in art, literature and history.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted the valuable contribution

of artists and litterateurs in inspiring change in the society and enriching the global knowledge

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

J&K to get 2 new universities

Law and Skill varsities proposed in budget 2025-26

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, Mar 07: In his budget speech, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday announced the setting up of National Law University and Skill & Entrepreneurship in Jammu & Kashmir.

Speaking in the Assembly, Omar, as per news agency—said that the government is committed to establishing a National Law University (NLU) in Jammu & Kashmir to drive legal education reforms and research.

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

Govt to dole out policy to attract private investments in higher education

Allocates Rs 1,388.97 Cr for School, Hr Education

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, Mar 07: The government on Friday said that it will roll out a policy to attract private investments in higher education. According to the news agency—, Chief Minister (CM) Omar Abdullah in his Budget 2025-26 speech said, "Our Government will roll out a policy to attract private investment in higher education."

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

Opposition terms J&K UT's maiden budget 'mere rhetoric'

Slams Omar led regime for 'complete reversal of its promises'

- LOP Sharma terms announcements as 'hollow claims'
- Nothing for youth, daily wagers, says Sajad
- Falls short on key sectors, asserts Para
- Farmers' issues missing, says AIP
- Misleading, claims Hakeem Yaseen

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, Mar 07: Terming the maiden budget of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir presented by the Omar Abdullah-led dispensation as 'mere rhetoric', the opposition parties on Friday accused the government of failing to



fulfil the promises it had made to the people.

Leader of Opposition in Legislative Assembly and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader, Sunil Sharma as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said that the budget presented by

the Chief Minister himself is nothing but a reflection of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's schemes. "In his 120 minute speech, the Chief Minister spoke about the Prime Minister's schemes for almost 118 minutes," the LOP said, adding, "The announcements including 200 free electricity units, free 10 kg ration and marriage assistance support has been announced only for the AAY category. What about other poor sections of the society. Where will they go?" Sharma said, as per KNO.

He said that the government had made tall claims about addressing unemployment, but nothing has been kept for the jobless

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

Cancer treatment, healthcare infra being upgraded: Health Ministe

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, Mar 07: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, today informed the House that the Health infrastructure for cancer detection and treatment is being upgraded in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister was replying to a question by Tanvir Sadiq in the Legislative Assembly.

She said that as per Population Based Cancer Registry, 50551 cases in Kashmir Division and 13912 cases in Jammu Division were registered between 2018-2024. She said that 2 percent to 3 percent case increase is also being witnessed annually.

The Minister informed that the cancer patients in J&K are given the specialized treatment at SKIMS Srinagar and GMC,

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Schools reopen in Kashmir Valley after Winter Vacations

DSEK participates in morning prayer at Higher Secondary School Kokernag, shares joy of school opening with children

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, Mar 07: Following re-opening of schools after months long winter break, Director School Education Kashmir (DSEK), Dr. G. N. Itoo today participated in morning prayer during the morning assembly of Government Model Higher Secondary School Kokernag in a remote area of Anantnag district and shared the joy of school opening with the children. On the occasion, the Director School Education Kashmir spoke to the children in their mother tongue and inquired about various activities during the winter vacations.



TURN ON.....PAGE 02

Fix timelines for each project under SBM (U) Action Plan:CS

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 7: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, while reviewing the action plan framed under Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U) here today, impressed upon the concerned officers to fix timeline for each of the projects proposed under this plan. The meeting besides Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD was attended by Chairman, JK Pollution Control Committee; DG, Rural Sanitation and MD, SBM- Urban along with other concerned officers.

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First Friday of Ramadan 2025: Ocean of devotees offer prayers across Kashmir

Massive gatherings witnessed at Jamia Masjid, Hazratbal, elsewhere; Mirwaiz-e-Kashmir, stresses 'spiritual reflection'

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, Mar 07: As Kashmir observed its sixth day of fasting and the first Friday of the holy month of Ramadan, devotees in large numbers gathered at mosques and shrines to offer prayers.

As per the details obtained by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) thousands of people offered congregational prayers at Srinagar's historic Jamia Masjid and Dargah Hazratbal shrine.

At Jamia Masjid in the old city, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who delivered the Friday sermon, stressed the importance of self-



purification, spiritual growth, and deepening one's connection with Allah during this sacred month.

"Ramadan is a time of reflection and self-discipline. It teaches us patience, righteousness, and the true essence of Taqwa (God-consciousness). By embracing these values, we can bring positive change in our personal lives and society," Mirwaiz-e-Kashmir said while addressing the gathering, as per KNO.

Additionally, at Dargah Hazratbal Srinagar, a large number of devotees also participated in the prayers, offering sup

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BUDGET

n his budget speech, CM stated that J&K's economy is projected to grow at 9.5% in 2025-26, with major investments in infrastructure, tourism, agriculture, and industry. On governance and fiscal reforms, CM outlined the priorities of the government to bring in fiscal discipline and reforms to reduce reliance on central grants, improve revenue collection, and ensure financial stability. He said J&K is leading in digital governance with 1,166 online government services on the e-Unnat portal and having a real-time grievance redressal mechanism through JKSAMADHAN&RAABITA platforms.

Free Electricity for AAY Households
Fulfilling a major poll promise, the Chief Minister announced 200 units of free electricity per month for all Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households in Jammu and Kashmir. Integrated with the PM Suryaghar Bijli Yojana, this initiative will facilitate the installation of grid-connected solar systems, ensuring energy security for the most vulnerable sections of society while eliminating electricity bills.

"With an investment of 750 crore over five years, this step will reduce AT&C losses and promote sustainable energy. I urge this august House to support this transformative move towards a greener, more inclusive, and self-reliant Jammu & Kashmir," he said.

Additionally, the chief minister stated, the government will construct dedicated Linemen huts and provide essential facilities for thousands of power sector workers who operate in extreme conditions. A Training Institute will also be established to enhance skills and train the technical support staff of power development department to ensure they are fully equipped with the technical skills.

For 2025-26, the Power Sector has been allocated 2,021.37 crore under capital expenditure, marking an increase of 762.80 crore from the revised allocation of 2024-25, he informed the House.

10 kg Free Ration for AAY Households
As an additional measure of social security, the Chief Minister announced that all AAY beneficiaries will receive 10 kg of free ration per person per month starting April 1, 2025. This initiative will ensure enhanced nutritional support for vulnerable families.

"Our government is committed to strengthening food security through a robust and efficient Public Distribution System (PDS). Smart PDS will be implemented in 2025-26 to enhance service delivery, prevent leakages, and ensure fair and transparent distribution of essential commodities across Jammu & Kashmir," he said.

Free bus rides for women in J&K
Marking International Women's Day, the Chief Minister announced that women across Jammu and Kashmir will enjoy free ridership on government-owned public transport, including e-Buses, starting April 2025.

Marriage Assistance enhanced
In a significant relief for economically weaker sections, the Marriage Assistance under the Scheme for EWS category girls has been enhanced from 50,000 to 75,000. Pension Enhancements for vulnerable sections

Fulfilling another commitment, the Chief Minister increased pensions for 10,07,324 individuals across J&K under the Integrated Social Assistance Scheme (ISSS) and the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP). The revised pension structure is 1,250 per month for individuals below 60 years; 1,500 per month for those aged between 60 and below 80 years and 2,000 per month for those aged 80 years and above.

Stamp duty exemption for property transfers within blood relations

The Chief Minister announced a complete exemption of stamp duty on property transfers through gifts within blood relations. The move will promote ease of transactions, reduce inheritance disputes and encourage legal documentation of property transfers.

Sectoral Allocations and Development Initiatives

- Agriculture & Allied Sectors: 2,221.58 crore allocated, an increase of 332.72 crore from the revised 2024-25 allocation.
 - Rural Development: 3,773.93 crore allocated, an increase of 990.04 crore from the revised 2024-25 allocation.
 - Tourism: 390.20 crore allocated, an increase of 121.77 crore.
 - Industries: 602.85 crore allocated, an increase of 291.44 crore.
 - Health & Medical Sector: 1,750.50 crore allocated, an increase of 643.71 crore. The SEHAT App will soon be launched to improve healthcare accessibility.
 - Education Sector: 1,388.97 crore allocated, an increase of 242.75 crore.
 - Sports Sector: 152.69 crore allocated, an increase of 36.91 crore.
 - Roads & Bridges: 4,062.93 crore allocated, an increase of 439.28 crore.
 - Irrigation & Water Supply: 2,662.71 crore allocated, an increase of 817.87 crore.
 - Housing & Urban Development: 2,761.74 crore allocated, an increase of 823.53 crore.
- Giving details of budgetary proposals in various sectors, CM said that in power sector, J&K shall aim to achieve self sufficiency in power & energy by 2027-28 with 7,500 MW new hydro projects & smart grid investments

to ensure 24/7 power supply.

To further improve power efficiency, the Chief Minister's Awards will be instituted to recognize outstanding efforts in reducing Aggregate Technical & Commercial (AT&C) losses and conducting energy audits.

Highlighting that major highways and tunnels were under execution, and rail connectivity via USBRL project was progressing rapidly, CM said that the budget has proposed 4,000 km of roads to be blacktopped in 2025-26 to improve connectivity across J&K.

CM said that Agriculture and allied sectors are crucial for the livelihoods of most of our population and Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) has an outlay of Rs 5013 crore until 2027-28 which is reshaping subsistence farming into commercial agri-economy.

DELHI

during its formulation.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), correspondent, addressing the post-budget press conference, Omar said that his goal is to make Jammu and Kashmir economically self-reliant and reduce its dependence on Delhi for minor and meagre issues.

He acknowledged that achieving economic independence would require difficult decisions, which, though not painless, would ultimately serve the interests of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Fulfillment of Manifesto Promises

Responding to opposition criticism about the non-fulfillment of manifesto promises, Omar asserted that the promises are being fulfilled one by one.

"But I have repeatedly said that people did not give us a five-week or five-month government; they gave us a five-year government. Now, don't ask me every day which promise has been fulfilled. Ask me after five years when the term is over. On that day, sit down and ask me what I have done in these five years. Then I will tell you. I don't have to give you a daily checklist of promises fulfilled. After five years, I will present my checklist to you and say, these were my promises, and these are my achievements," Omar said, as per KNO.

Free Electricity and Welfare Measures

Asked why free electricity was provided only to the AAY (Antyodaya) category and not the entire populace, the Chief Minister said, "For now, we will focus on the areas that need the most attention first. Moreover, if you look at it, we are providing much more free electricity than what is given in other states. If you see how much electricity we generate and how much revenue we collect, it is much higher than in other states. Despite this, we are committed to providing 200 units of free electricity to the most deserving people. We have started with AAY households, and as our financial condition improves, we will expand this benefit further."

Regularization of Daily Wagers

On the issue of regularizing daily wagers in Jammu and Kashmir, Omar said the government would first ascertain their numbers in the initial phase before formulating a comprehensive policy for their regularization.

Return of Migrant Kashmiri Pandits

Regarding the return of migrant Kashmiri Pandits, Omar stated, "We have mentioned in the budget that we will improve their living conditions and complete the transit accommodation project for them. As for the issue of bringing them back, it depends on the budget and the situation. I have repeatedly said that Kashmiri Pandits did not leave Kashmir because of their financial condition; they left because their lives were in danger. Until we address this threat, we cannot expect them to return fully. Therefore, for now, it is our shared responsibility in the UT, along with the LG and the elected government, to create such conditions in Kashmir that Kashmiri Pandits who left can return voluntarily."

Omar Abdullah as Ambassador Against Obesity

Asked about his nomination as an ambassador by Prime Minister Modi to combat obesity, Omar said, "We can only talk and set examples. We want to set an example for others to follow. For instance, at my age, I can run 20 kilometers. So, what excuse do 20-22-year-olds have if they are medically fit but cannot maintain their weight? I am not trying to scare people or force them, but I am trying to set an example that most people can follow. That would be a good thing. First, I will ask my ministerial colleagues to start with me by running five kilometers, and then I will push the rest of Jammu and Kashmir to do the same."

Film Shooting Policy and Tourism Promotion

Omar also highlighted plans to strengthen the film shooting policy in Jammu and Kashmir. He noted that while promoting the region in Bollywood is not difficult, there is an entire film industry in South India where Jammu and Kashmir is not actively promoted.

"Our effort will be to encourage the film industries of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala to shoot in Jammu and Kashmir. This will have two benefits: one, the use of local resources for shooting, and two, attracting tourists from South India. Currently, most of our tourists come from

Gujarat, West Bengal, and Maharashtra. We hope that through film shootings, we can divert South Indian tourists to Jammu and Kashmir," Omar said.

STATEHOOD

governance for the holistic development of Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

He said this Budget is more than just a financial statement.

"It is a roadmap for a new and prosperous Jammu and Kashmir, reflecting the aspirations of our people and laying a strong foundation for economic growth, social progress, and sustainable development," he said.

He said the budget emphasizes inclusive growth, fiscal prudence, and strategic investments in infrastructure, agriculture, industry, healthcare, education, and digital governance.

"We are focused on bridging regional disparities, empowering youth and women, and fostering a business-friendly environment to attract investment and innovation," he said, adding that the budget truly reflects the aspirations of our people.

"We engaged with elected representatives, industry leaders, and key stakeholders, incorporating their insights to create a people-centric roadmap for a better quality of life for all," he said—(KNO)

LG

platforms.

The Lieutenant Governor said, "Art is the essential element for building an enlightened society and helping the growth of citizens with value system and creativity. Art and Culture is as important for a prosperous and peaceful world as science and technology.

Science and Technology has provided new facilities and redefined the way human society works and lives. But the modern instruments are incomplete without rich and vibrant tradition of art and culture.

We need to have a fine balance between Technology and Arts. The role of new inventions of science and technology in making our civilization alive is incomparable. Therefore, I believe that society needs artists and spiritualists along with scientists".

The Lieutenant Governor reiterated the commitment of the government, under the guidance of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, to work with the resolve of 'Vikas Bhi Virasat Bhi'.

He further emphasized the important role of artists and intelligentsia in promoting education based on local culture, moral values and traditional knowledge.

"Society's economic development is powered by art and culture. For sustainable development we need more creative leaders. Our efforts to connect the young generation with our culture and values should be further deepened," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also shared the dedicated measures taken by the government to promote rich diversity and uniqueness of artistic, cultural and linguistic heritage of Jammu Kashmir.

Dr. Karan Singh, former Union Minister and Chairman, Hari Tara Charitable Trust; Trustees and members of the Trust and various dignitaries including Sh Vikramaditya Singh, Sh Ajatshatru Singh, Dr Jyotsna Singh, Ms Ritu Singh, Sh Martand Singh; senior officials of Police and Civil administration and renowned artists were present.

OPPOSITION

youth in this budget, adding that the daily wagers have been neglected, there has been no mention of any power amnesty scheme, contractors have been pushed to the wall despite getting the money from the Centre. "The government has done nothing for the OBCs, SC and ST," he said while terming the budget as "hollow claims."

Peoples Conference

Peoples Conference (PC) Chairman and MLA Handwara, Sajad Gani Lone, while reacting to the Chief Minister's speech wrote on X: "The budget speech was on expected lines a disappointment. Same old style of parroting Centrally Sponsored Schemes with Hindi nomenclature. Vast gulf between electoral political innuendos and economic arithmetics of Budget. Glorified and endorsed the BJP Naya Kashmir discourse and statistics, that have been berated by NC in the last decade. All of a sudden every government statistic of the past 5 years is the gospel truth and the incumbent government seems eager to jump into the frame and take credit for those statistics which until the other day they told all of us —were either fudged or fiction."

"I was expecting a politically viable & economically vibrant budget rather than an annual statement of outlay & expenditure. Even 200 units of electricity promised is for AAY only and linked to the Centrally Sponsored Roof Top scheme which has appx 65% central share with a cap of 3 KV. Too many strings attached," he wrote and added that "Linking social welfare payments to DA means we have to pray for a miraculous zero inflation for real increase," he added.

"This budget is bereft of anything visible which will impact the lives of common man positively. Petrol and diesel prices set to increase by 1/Lt and 2/Lt respectively due to reduction in rebate on petrol and

diesel," he wrote.

"Nothing for employment Nothing for daily Wagers Nothing for contractual employees Nothing for minimum wages Shifting of police budget was mentioned as if it was an achievement. The soul of statehood which we believe was stolen from us, was relegated to yet another statistic. If the LG address was a political relegation of aspirations, this budget is a statistical relegation of aspirations," Lone wrote further.

"And hang on— here is some good news. The PM, The HM and the Union Finance Minister were praised more than once. Saga of love letter continues. This love letter to BJP part II," he wrote.

Awami Ittehad Party

Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) strongly criticized the Jammu and Kashmir Budget 2025, calling it a "complete U-turn" from the promises made by the National Conference (NC) during elections.

AIP Chief Spokesperson Inam Un Nabi accused the NC government of deceiving the people by failing to fulfil key pledges. "During the elections, they promised 200 units of free electricity for all households. But now, they have limited it to Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) beneficiaries, that too with the unrealistic condition of installing solar panels. This is nothing but a cruel joke on the economically weaker sections," he said.

The AIP leader also slammed the government for neglecting thousands of workers awaiting job security. "During elections, the NC promised regularization of daily wagers, casual laborers, contractual employees, vocational trainers and others. Yet, this budget has absolutely no mention of them. These hardworking individuals, who form the backbone of various departments, have been left in limbo once again," he said.

Peoples Democratic Party

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) legislative leader and MLA Pulwama, Waheed Parra expressed "deep disappointment" over the budget, calling it a mere compilation of centrally sponsored schemes rather than a people-centric financial roadmap.

Parra criticized the budget for failing to address critical issues like poverty alleviation, unemployment, and economic revival. "This budget is nothing but a U-turn from the commitments made in the election manifesto. Instead of prioritizing grassroots development, it merely repackages old schemes without any substantial allocations or vision for the future," he said.

Parra pointed out that despite tall promises of a transformative economic strategy, the budget falls short on key sectors such as agriculture, youth employment, and social welfare, raising serious concerns about the government's intent in fulfilling its electoral pledges.

He slammed the government for sidelining the aspirations of the youth, calling the budget a complete letdown. "With an allocation of 1.12 lakh crore, one would expect a clear roadmap for tackling unemployment, economic recovery, and public welfare. Shockingly, the budget does not even mention crucial terms like 'youth' or 'unemployment' at a time when J&K's jobless rate stands at a staggering 32%," he stated.

He accused the government of betraying the region's youth, who had been waiting for decisive action. "Instead of being a step towards empowerment and development, this budget is merely an exercise in numbers, offering no real relief to the common citizen." Another PDP leader, Iltija Mufti while speaking to the media persons said that the budget presented by the government was quite disappointing, saying that the National Conference (NC) government has completely failed to deliver on its promises.

"Nothing has been mentioned for the daily wagers. NC has failed to deliver on the promises done with the people. The party has taken a different direction, it is a complete reversal on their part as whatever they had promised including one lakh jobs, 12 gas cylinders, none of the promises have been fulfilled while only 5 per cent people have been given benefits of free electricity units and ration," she said.

NEW UNIVERSITY

"With world-class training aligned to contemporary standards, the NLU will empower future legal professionals and enhance justice delivery," he said.

He said Rs 50 crore have been proposed in the budget for the "transformative initiative".

Omar said the Government proposes the establishment of the Jammu & Kashmir Skill and Entrepreneurship University (J&K SEU) to empower the youth of Jammu & Kashmir with industry-relevant skills and entrepreneurial Opportunities.

EDUCATION

"Efforts will be made to encourage renowned private universities to establish satellite campuses in J&K, creating large-scale education and employment opportunities for the youth," Omar said.

In the budget session, the CM further announced that for the School and Higher Education sectors, a capital expenditure allocation of Rs 1,388.97 crore has been made for 2025-26, reflecting an increase of Rs 242.75

crore over the revised allocation of 2024-25.

The CM on the occasion further said the government is committed to strengthening early childhood education by developing 15,000 pre-primary schools with an enrolment target of 1.80 lakh children.

CANCER

Jammu with availability of different facilities including radiation oncology, Critical Care ICU, Nuero ICU, CVTS ICU, Pulmonary ICU and Paediatric ICU at SKIMS.

She said that the Government Medical College, Jammu is presently providing OPD Services, Chemotherapy, PET CT Scan. Brachytherapy, Radiology Tests, Digital Radiography and Colposcopy to the cancer patients.

The Minister said that the State Cancer Institute is functional at SKIMS Soura which was commissioned on December 05, 2020 and houses Day Care facility for Medical Oncology patients, Clinical Haematology and Radiation Oncology, Medical Oncology and Radiation Oncology for the in-patients.

SCHOOLS

DSEK addressed the teachers and asked them to equip the children with moral education, become role models for the them, and to keep the surrounding environment clean besides protecting water bodies.

Dr. Ittoo urged the teachers to provide awareness to the children about the harmful effects of drugs especially on Wednesdays in view of the current challenges of the society and to play their full role in character building of the children.

He emphasized that children should use mobile phones properly so that they do not have negative effects on their minds.

FRIDAY

plications in a spiritually charged atmosphere. "Worshippers expressed gratitude for witnessing another Ramadan and prayed for peace and prosperity in the region."

Mohammad Younis, a devotee at Hazratbal, said, "The first Friday of Ramadan always feels special. The sense of unity and devotion is overwhelming. We pray for better days ahead and seek Allah's mercy."

Another local, Sahil, said he always visits Hazratbal Shrine, whether it is Ramadan or normal days. "I feel peace and a divine connection whenever I visit Hazratbal. There is peace, and the atmosphere automatically becomes electric while asking for mercy from your Lord," he said.

Meanwhile, authorities had made elaborate arrangements at Jamia Masjid and Hazratbal Shrine, along with other major mosques and shrines, to facilitate the smooth conduct of prayers.

Moreover, traffic management and security measures were in place to handle the large gatherings, ensuring that devotees could pray without any inconvenience— (KNO)

CS

The Chief Secretary had component wise review of the actions proposed for management of waste anticipated to be generated till 2035. He said that the action plan thus framed is worth applicable so demands further thought process to delineate the timelines for its successful implementation.

He took note of the quantum of waste generated in each of the ULBs along with that of the capital cities. He called for having an end to end solution for effective treatment and management of each kind of the waste generated here.

Dulloo maintained that funds for such a crucial activity would never act as a stumbling block. He observed that the proposed costs are well within the range to be arranged over next few years. He advised the Department to enhance their capacity simultaneously for fruitifying these projects within the set deadlines.

He said that besides the facilities for treatment of legacy waste, solid waste, grey water, used water, plastic waste and Construction & Demolition (C&D) waste the department should take into account inclusion of integrated sewerage network to take such waste to the sites of their treatment and processing.

In addition, the Chief Secretary asked them to explore the option of taking up projects under AMRUT 2.0 wherever feasible as per its guidelines. He also suggested to include projects under Capex where there is no other scheme to support the activity.

Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD, Mandeep Kaur, while speaking in the meeting, said this action plan is in consonance with the NGT directions besides a roadmap for scientific disposal of urban waste for the next 10 years.

She made out that the action plan had been framed after taking into account the decadal growth rate of the population and the waste expected to be generated by this population on daily basis. The remediation of legacy waste besides other aspects of processing, treatment and disposal had been considered while framing this updated plan, she added.

MD, SBM (U), Devansh Yadav, informed the meeting that it is expected that the population of the urban areas of the UT would reach to about 51.50 lakh till 2035 generating 2481 TPD. He also mentioned about segregation of each ULB and Cantonment Board as per the quantum



DC Srinagar chairs meeting of District Level Advisory Committee on Food Safety

Directs intensifying market inspections to curb sale of unhygienic/ misbranded food items in City

HT News Network

Srinagar, March 07: A meeting of District Level Advisory Committee (DLAC) on Food Safety and Healthy Diets was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat at Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex here to review the measures in place to ensure quality food to people in the District.

At the outset, DC took a comprehensive review of the functioning and achievements of the Food Safety Department with regard to public health.

The meeting held a detailed deliberation on the crucial issues related to food safety standards and hygiene being followed by the Food Business Operators in the District.

On the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner, who is also the Chairman of DLAC was apprised about the current status of food safety measures in place in Srinagar District and various proactive measures undertaken by the Food Safety Department.



ment to ensure the provision of safe and healthy food for the public. Underlining the importance of maintaining high standards of food safety for the well-being of the public, the DC issued instructions to Officers to ensure availability of quality and hygienic food in the market. He emphasized the need for inspection squads to monitor and curb

the sale of unhealthy and expired food products, especially those targeted at children, besides to give focused attention towards curbing sale of misbranded food items. The DC exhorted upon the Srinagar Food Safety Team to strengthen and upgrade the laboratories for conducting tests of food items. He assured all possible support from District Administration

for the purpose to ensure quality and hygienic food items to the people. Dr Bilal stressed on intensifying market checking across the District and laid emphasis on increasing the volume of lifting the food samples by adopting scientific procedures for study and sharing the findings with the Administration for the safety of human lives. He instructed for taking strict action under law against the FBOs involved in violation of the Food Safety Act. The DC also stressed further strengthening the Complaint Redressal Mechanism in Srinagar District to encourage the genuine complaints of the consumers and taking timely action against the violators to control the most vital and concerned area related to the public health. In addition, the DC directed the Officers to conduct awareness programs involving all stakeholders to educate the public on the importance of safe food and maintaining a healthy diet. He asked them to ensure effective implementation of the Food Safety and Standards Act 2006, Rules and Regulations framed there under by the Food Safety.

National Conference Faces Backlash Over Selective Free Electricity Scheme

HT News Network

Srinagar, Mai 7, KNT: The National Conference-led government in Jammu and Kashmir is facing sharp criticism from both political opponents and the public after limiting its promise of 200 units of free electricity to Antyodaya (AAY) families only. The decision, announced by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, has sparked outrage, with political leaders accusing the party of betraying its pre-election commitments.

The government's move has led to widespread disappointment, as many had expected the benefit to be extended to all households. Former Congress district president Imtiyaz Khan minced no words, accusing the National Conference of deceit. "You have cheated the people, but don't forget, you will have to face them again when seeking votes," he remarked.

Echoing similar sentiments, BJP leader Altaf Thakur and legislator Waheed Parra accused the National Conference of misleading the public.

"People are shocked and are now searching for the party's manifesto online. It clearly states that 200 units of electricity will be given to all, while 12 free cylinders are promised for the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) category. This is a betrayal," said a local. Notably, the party had outlined 12 key guarantees, including the restoration of Article 370 and 35A, the repeal of the Public Safety Act (PSA), the release of political prisoners, the creation of one lakh jobs, and improved access to basic services like electricity and water.

Govt to relocate GMC Handwara at alternate site: Sakeeka Itoo

Existing site non-tenable due to high risk flooding; says committee report

HT News Network

Jammu, Mar 07: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, today said that the Government Medical College (GMC) Handwara will be constructed at an alternate site to address the healthcare needs of people of Kupwara district. Replying to a question by Sajad Gani Lone, the Minister informed that unprecedented floods have been reported in the recent times on 29th March 2024, 16th and 28th April 2024 when the maximum flood level recorded was 0.6m, 3.8m and 4.0m respectively above Ground Level (GL) which is at the right bank of Nallah Pohru (the existing construction site for New GMC and Hostels for GMC Handwara), making it un-feasible for undertaking construction of such a prestigious facility. She informed that a Com-



mittee was formed to check feasibility of the existing site after floods. "Committee headed by the Engineer-in-Chief, PW (R&B) Department reported that the present site is non-tenable due to the high risk of flooding, which would put students, faculty and infrastructure at risk", she stated. The Minister further said, "Engineer-in-Chief, PW Department (Chairman of Committee) in subsequent meetings reiterated that the present site is not in a position to take forward

the project and the proposed flood protection measures would not mitigate the risk of flooding, making it impossible to proceed with construction at the current site".

"Technical report of the Joint Committee headed by Engineer-in-Chief, PW Department has also reflected that the present site is not tenable", she added. The Minister also informed the house that the Government has constituted a committee under the Chairmanship of the Divisional Commissioner,

Kashmir to resolve the issue of land for relocation of Government Medical College, Handwara. "Based on the recommendations of the committee, the matter has now been taken up with Agriculture Production Department for finalization of alternate sites for relocating GMC Handwara", she stated. The Minister also informed that the project for New GMC Handwara was sanctioned under the under Centrally Sponsored Scheme 'Establishment of New Medical Colleges Attached with District / Referral Hospitals (Phase III)'. She said the Ministry has extended the timelines for the project for one year upto March 2025 and now Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, has again been approached for extension of the timelines for completion.

SKUAST-Kashmir and IIT Bombay Sign MoU to Foster Academic and Research Collaboration

HT News Network

Srinagar, March 07: In a landmark step towards fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and advancing research-driven solutions for sustainable agriculture and environmental management, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay, Mumbai on March 7, 2025. The MoU signing ceremony was attended by Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai, Vice-Chancellor, SKUAST-K, along with Prof. Haroon Rashid Naik, Director Research, Dr. Shabir Bangroo, Assistant Professor, and Dr. Showkat Rasool, Assistant Professor, representing SKUAST-K. From IIT Bombay, key officials present included Prof. Shireesh B Kedar, Director, Prof. Upendra V Bhandarkar, Associate Dean (R&D), Prof. Anand Rao, Head of C-TARA, Prof. Pennan Chinnasamy, Associate Professor, C-TARA, and Mr. Mohamed Kasim Khan, National Coordinator- FOSSEE GIS (NMEICT), demonstrating the commitment of both institutions.



tutions to fostering long-term cooperation in research, innovation, and knowledge sharing. The MoU is designed to facilitate collaborative research projects, joint academic programs, faculty and student exchanges, and capacity building initiatives in areas of mutual interest. Specifically, the partnership will focus on integrating technological advancements into agricultural research, with an emphasis on remote sensing and GIS-based land-use planning, climate resilience, precision agriculture, water resource management,

and digital agriculture platforms. Both institutions will work together to develop innovative tools and data-driven solutions that address climate change impacts, resource optimization, and sustainable land management. This collaboration is expected to leverage the technological expertise of IIT Bombay and the domain-specific agricultural knowledge of SKUASt-K, creating a robust platform for transdisciplinary innovation and real-world impact.

Speaking at the ceremony, Prof. Nazir

Ahmad Ganai, Vice-Chancellor, SKUAST-K, underscored the importance of building strong academic linkages with premier institutions like IIT Bombay to equip researchers, students, and farmers with cutting-edge technologies that enhance resilience and productivity in the agriculture sector. He emphasized that integrating technology with agricultural sciences can unlock innovative solutions for climate-smart farming, resource-efficient practices, and real-time environmental monitoring. Prof. Shireesh B Kedare, Director, IIT Bombay, expressed confidence that this partnership will serve as a model for collaborative research, blending scientific excellence with technological innovation to address pressing global challenges in food security, environmental sustainability, and rural development. As part of the MoU, SKUAST-K shall enter into an agreement with the Rural Data Research and Analysis (RuDRA) Lab, IIT Bombay to develop state of the art data driven decision support systems dedicated for rural development, joint research, curriculum design, knowledge transfer, and internship to start with.

Poonch-Tangmarg road project to be taken up with MORTH afresh: Dy CM

■ **HT News Network**

JAMMU, MARCH 07: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Kumar Choudhary today said that Poonch-Tangmarg road project will be taken up with Union Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways (MORTH) afresh. The Deputy Chief Minister was replying to a question raised by Farooq Ahmad Shah and subsequent supplementaries raised by Aijaz Jan and Mohammad Akram Choudhary. He said that the Poonch-Tangmarg road via Loran has not been sanctioned by the Government of India. Addressing the concerns raised by the legislators regarding change in alignment of road, the Deputy Chief Minister said that an inquiry will be conducted to resolve the road change issue. He also added that a committee will also be constituted to look into the matter which will be comprised of the concerned officers and authorities. He further said that it is an important road to connect the Pir-Panjal to Kashmir valley and will boost tourism besides creating employment avenues for the youth. He also added that the road has cultural and societal significance for the people of both the regions.

Drive against encroachments on irrigation canals a regular exercise: Javed Rana

■ **HT News Network**

Jammu, Mar 7 : Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmed Rana, today informed the House that the department undertakes coordinated action with the District Administration to remove encroachment from irrigation canals in Bijbehara.

The Minister was replying to a question raised by MLA, Basheer Ahmad Veeri.

The Minister stated that anti-encroachment drive is a continuous process and a total of 39 notices have been served to the general public during the year 2024-25. It further informed that 700 trees have been removed from the Nandi canal.

Regarding desilting and dredging, the Minister said that it is a routine process which is being conducted before onset of the irrigation season under the Convergence programme.

He further informed the House that the Irrigation network in the Srigufwara Bijbehara Constituency relies on the Nandi and Dubji Canals. These canals have leakages and embankment breaches, which are immediately acted upon and encroachments are removed as and when reported.

Defunct Fire Plugs Put Anantnag's Old Town at Risk of Devastation

■ **HT News Network**

Anantnag, Mar 7 : The congested old town areas of South Kashmir's Anantnag remain highly vulnerable to devastating fires due to the absence of a functional fireproof mechanism, with locals raising serious concerns over defunct fire plugs across several localities.

Residents of Reeshi Bazar, Cheeni Chowk, Malkahnag, Sherpora, Kadipora, Bakshiabad, and Sarnal complain that most fire hydrants installed decades ago are now non-functional, making firefighting operations difficult in case of emergencies.

Zahoor Waza, a resident of Kadipora, highlighted the severity of the issue. "A few days ago, a fire broke out in a residential house. Had there been no nearby spring water, the flames could have engulfed the entire locality, as all the fire plugs were defunct," he said. The town, however, is fortunate to have several natural water springs—Reshmol Sahib, Malakhnag, Sunarpakhur, Gajnah, and Heemal Nag—that have helped mitigate fire-related disasters. "It takes time for firemen to fetch water from these springs, and during major infernos, the water sources can drain quickly, leaving entire areas at risk," said Manzoor Ahmad, a shop owner who lost his business in a fire four months ago.

J&K to Get National Law University, ₹50 Crore Allocated in Budget

■ **HT News Network**

Srinagar, Mar 7, KNT: Jammu and Kashmir will soon have its own National Law University (NLU), Chief Minister Omar Abdullah announced while presenting the budget in the Legislative Assembly on Friday.

Abdullah stated that 50 crore has been earmarked for the establishment of the institution, which will be the 28th NLU in the country. The initiative aims to elevate legal education in the region to national standards and provide aspiring law students with better academic and professional opportunities.

The move fulfills a long-pending demand and is expected to strengthen the legal framework in Jammu and Kashmir while enhancing career prospects for students in the legal field. [KNT]

EDITORIAL

Make Boulevard Road
a world class walkway
for locals, tourists

Boulevard Road is one of the sought after tourist areas in the Srinagar district and tourists both domestic as well as foreign can be strolling along the banks of the world famous Dal lake on the Boulevard Road. These tourists can be seen enjoying the breeze on the Boulevard Road and this gives a feeling that one is walking along some of the famous rivers across the globe. The Boulevard Road is iconic and over the years it has been covered in the films as well.

Despite all this importance the Boulevard Road has not been developed to the level it should have been. Under the Srinagar smart city project the pavement was developed and one was expecting that the pavement would be developed to the modern lines. No quality check was carried out by the authorities and it has been observed that inferior material has been used in the construction of pavement. It was due to this reason that a portion of the pavement caved in some time back.

It is imperative that a probe is carried out in the construction works on the Boulevard Road so that the responsibility is fixed on the people. Many of the tiles that have been laid along the banks of Dal lake have come off and some of them have even been broken into multiple pieces. This gives a bad shape to the whole surroundings and the tourists can be seen perplexed over this state of affairs. It is important that the stay of a particular tourist is comfortable and the same is possible if the pedestrian path is not in proper shape.

Not long ago a portion of the Boulevard Road caved in and at that time it took many months to carry out the necessary repairs. This time around one can hope that the authorities would pull up the socks and make the necessary repairs sooner rather than later. Since the full fledged tourism season is about to start it is important that all the facilities are in a proper shape.

Sprucing up the roads and pavement is an important component in this regard and proper consideration towards this aspect of infrastructure development. The department of tourism should carry a comprehensive review of the roads, pavements and other infrastructure facilities so that the corrections wherever needed are made. These works need to be completed by the first week of next month so that everything is in place at the start of the tourism season.

Understanding
God and the Guru

AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We must understand the distinction between these fundamental entities in our lives. First, let me enumerate some commonly known qualities of God. He is omnipotent. This word is defined as having unlimited power. Only God fits this description. Is He not the Creator of innumerable galaxies? Similarly, God is omniscient. This word is defined as knowing everything. Who else except God fits this description? How much can a mere mortal know?

Albert Einstein famously said, "The more I learn, the more I realize how much I don't know." Then, God is omnipresent too. This word is defined as being present everywhere at the same time. And God is one and we are many. Lord Krishna states, "An eternal soul is My part only." (The Bhagavad-Geeta 15.7) Let us see how a genuine guru fares in these characteristics. He knows that whatever he has learnt in terms of spiritual knowledge, oratory skills, etc., is due to God's empowerment. God is much pleased by preaching amongst devotees. A genuine guru realizes that the source of his knowledge is God only. As regards omnipresence, a genuine guru humbly accepts that he is severely limited in being present with his disciples. Additionally, a genuine guru never claims any similarity with God except being part of God. Because God is completely different from us.

A genuine guru knows this fact more than others, who are not so knowledgeable. Being an incarnation of God never crosses his mind, because he knows that God incarnates for specific purposes. A guru's role is extremely limited. It is just to help get his disciples connected with God. And he strictly avoids attracting them to himself personally. Adi Shankaracharya is the role model for him, who preached "bhaja govindam". Now I will take up the famous verse, which is, "gurur brahma, gurur vishnu, gurur devo maheshvara, gurur sakshat parambrahma tasmai shri guruve namah."

Can any mere mortal claim to be Brahma or Vishnu or Mahadeva, never mind all three of them? It is ludicrous to even imagine. These are manifestations of God, not some ordinary entities; they are eternal, whereas we are subject to repeated birth and death till liberated. So what is the meaning of this verse? It is simply that whatever a guru speaks has sanction from God; he is not deviating from His instructions. He is simply conveying the essence of His teachings.

That is how he represents God. A genuine guru ensures that he protects his disciples from any harm by his inappropriate actions. He does not promise anything more than helping them to establish a good connection with God. He tries to become a role model for taking shelter from God because that is how all can benefit. He knows that he cannot give anything more. He is aware of his severe limitations in this regard. He guides his disciples to get connected to God such that they can get what all God can give. (9.25) The conclusion is to seek help from a genuine guru, who can help in progressing in our eternal journey. And we should never get side-tracked by hopes of easy gains, because there are none. We have to deserve all that we hope to get including liberation by our efforts, not someone else's.

A genuine guru knows this fact and never leaves any doubt in the minds of those who trust him. He thus gets respect from his disciples, which he richly deserves. Additionally, some disciples may serve him personally and some may donate so that the guru can maintain himself.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

The impact of social isolation on mental, Physical health

SAIMA HAMID

Social isolation is a growing concern that affects millions of people worldwide. It is a complex issue that can have severe consequences on both mental and physical health. In this article, we will explore the causes, effects, and solutions to social isolation, and discuss the importance of addressing this issue.

The Prevalence of Social Isolation

Social isolation is a widespread problem that affects people of all ages, backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses. According to recent studies, approximately 47% of adults in the United States report feeling alone, with 27% reporting feeling isolated. This is a alarming trend that has significant implications for public health.

The Mental Health Consequences of

Social Isolation

Social isolation can have a profound impact on mental health, increasing the risk of depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders. Research has shown that social isolation can lead to a decline in cognitive function, including memory and attention.

Furthermore, social isolation can also lead to an increase in symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), including flashbacks, nightmares, and avoidance of triggers.

The Physical Health Consequences of Social Isolation

Social isolation can also have a significant impact on physical health, increasing the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. Studies have shown that social isolation can lead to an increase in blood pressure, body mass index (BMI), and waist circum-

ference. Furthermore, social isolation can also lead to a decline in immune function, making us more susceptible to illnesses.

The Causes of Social Isolation

There are many factors that contribute to social isolation, including:

The Digital Age: While technology has made it easier to connect with others, it has also contributed to social isolation. Excessive use of social media, for example, can lead to a decline in face-to-face interactions and a sense of community.

Urbanization: The rise of urbanization has led to a decline in community and social connections. In cities, people are more likely to live alone and have fewer social connections.

Changing Social Norms: Changing social norms, such as the decline of traditional family structures and the rise of single-person households, have also

contributed to social isolation.

Mental Health: Mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety, can also contribute to social isolation.

Breaking the Cycle of Social Isolation

There are many ways to address social isolation, including:

Joining a Community Group: Joining a community group, such as a sports team or book club, can help to increase social connections and a sense of community.

Volunteering: Volunteering can help to increase social connections and a sense of purpose.

Using Technology to Connect with Others: While technology can contribute to social isolation, it can also be used to connect with others. Video conferencing, for example, can help to increase social connections and reduce feelings of loneliness.

Seeking Professional Help: If

social isolation is affecting our mental or physical health,

seeking professional help is essential. A mental health professional can help to address underlying mental health problems and develop strategies to increase social connections.

Conclusion

Social isolation is a complex issue that requires a comprehensive approach to address. By understanding the causes, effects, and solutions to social isolation, we can work towards creating a more connected and supportive community. It is essential to recognize the importance of social connections and to take steps to address social isolation, both at the individual and societal levels.

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Spiritual Vibes of Shehri-khaas

MUSHTAQ HURRA

Marvelled lanes and bylanes of Old Srinagar city entwine a labyrinth to leave visitors in a state of awe and admiration. Elevated minarets and domes of mosques and shrines make silent renditions about piety, peace and religious fervour of the region. Visiting Shehri-Khaas (Old Srinagar City) is somewhat exploring the entire culture, customs, traditions and heritage of a civilization. Famed Vitasta bears witness to its centuries old glory, grandeur and elegance. Some marquee bridges across the Vaeth have earned eternity. Even most of the Mohallas of Shehri-Khaas have been baptized on these bridges.

Though rapid pace of urbanization and modernization has not spared the sui generis region of the city, yet, the reverence of its gloriously majestic past at display, swells up our chests with pride and joy, for being the custodians of the illustrious civilization. Aroma of dried spices and condiments, redolence of fresh and dried fruits, veneration of old houses of architectural marvels resembling Mughal and central Asian hues, serene tombs and shrines preserving our rich secular traditions, sophistication of arts and crafts exhibiting the eminence and ace of our adept artisans,



purity of hearts brimming with warmth of cherished human values - Shehri-khaas manifests a saga of resilience, resistance and cultural legacy of more than two millennia old civilization that is attributed to Raja Praversena's reign who is believed to be the founder of the old city.

The downtown area of the prestigiously revered Srinagar city is almost a confined yet vast museum. I won't exaggerate to call it an open book because the cultural inheritance at display is quite enormously captivating and engrossing. It proclaims a cherished past of the glorious civilization that had trade, cultural and educational links with central Asia and many parts of Europe. The region is abode to political stalwarts, acclaimed artisans, saints, Sufis

and craftsmen. The area is home to the last resting places of our exalted and acclaimed saints and sages. Shrines of Dastageer Sahab AR, Rehbab Sahab AR, khanqahi Mulla, Naqshbandi Sahab AR, Shariqa Devi temple Hari-Parbhat, renowned Jamia Masjid Srinagar etc... spread special spiritual vibes across the Shehri-Khaas to encompass every devotee and visitor under the divine refuge and protection. A devotional flavour proliferates with every step while treading the streets and alleys of the area. Your visit to the area attains prominence if you are accompanied by your mother.

Very recently, I had the privilege to attend the Mausoleum of Makhdoom Sahab AR along with my mother. The shrine at the

alpine heights of Kohi-Maran up-holds our centuries old ethereal and extra-mundane Sufi traditions. The mausoleum at the engaging elevations of Kohi Maaraan in the bosom of the old city, safeguards our spiritual, social and human values. Flanked by mosques and residential houses, the ornately carved stone stairs of rectangular igneous rocks leading to the tomb of Makhdoom Sahab AR, balms and solaces rusty souls in pure spiritual ambience. The oily yet coarse rectangular slabs of stairs are more than stair steps for Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits equally. The stairs are but a great source of reverence, awe and tranquility for Kashmiris. Belief and faith etched to the stairs is somewhat ineffable. The

elevated stairs have exhibited miracles of unimaginable magnitude. The amount of devotion and piety associated with flight of stairs is mammoth. My mother made the ascension to the shrine very special. Chanting Durood, Manqabat and supplications for entire humanity, she made the journey sweeter and memorable .

The ambience in and around the shrine is quite demulcent and placid. Waves of air seem to intone hymns and oneness of Allah SWT, fairies donning apparels of Jannah seem to shower aromatic scarlet-red rose petals on the devotees within the precinct of the shrine. damsels from heavens carol to welcome visitors with supplications and prayers while as pleasant breeze at the alpine heights of

Kohi-Maran refreshes scalded souls with the fragrance of serene divinity. The trees with dense green canopy seem to cast shadows of tranquility on everything there, a pleasant hangover caused by the numinous atmosphere communes everyone with Allah, water cauldron kept in front of the shrine has elixir like effects. Votives tied against the grills seem to create miracles, earnest implorations for divine mercy and forgiveness resonate in the environs of the shrine to create an aura of deep devotion. I found myself relieved and relaxed. The transcendental milieu mitigates and alleviates miseries miraculously.

Staring at the Rouza (Shrine) fills hearts with contentment and gratification, pains and sorrows exhaust with a glance at its windows, I experienced the truest quietude and contentment within the premises of the mausoleum. Every devotee there looked immersed and sunken in the river of divine mercy. Greed, avarice and cupidity vanish with a glimpse of the unseen spiritual aura. My heart longs for the pleasant hangover once again.

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Reopening of schools in the Kashmir Valley



SAHIL MANZOOR

Schools are the place where the foundation of any nation is laid. School is the garden where we can find all kinds of flowers with sensuous aromas. School is a land where every blooming bud is nourished with love and care. School is the home where every member is enjoying and taking care of each other. School is the orchard where fruits are grown with no expiration date. School is the kitchen where a single dish is cooked for all colors, castes, and sexes. School is the place

where no blooming bud has any fear or threat. School is the tape recorder where the music is so heart-touching and soothing to all the hearts and is liked by everyone. School is a cafeteria where every child enjoys the coffee of success and happiness.

Schools is the most common word throughout the world. Every individual has an affection for school, is well aware of their basic schooling, and remembers all the events that occurred during school days. Every country emphasizes the upgrading of school buildings, school infrastructure, school staff, and all that a full-fledged school should be. Today, every individual knows the importance of education. For me, there is no alternative that replaces education today. Education has changed the fate of nations. Where there is more literacy, there are more powerful and great personalities. Actually, our mind is just like a cotton ball, where every

microscopic part of it has the potential to carry a gallery of information. By getting educated, we know our potential, we know our value, we know each other's standards, and we know what is wrong and what is right. So this is something interesting I have shared with you through this medium.

In this article, I am going to share with you some interesting facts about our schools in the valley and discuss some important points regarding the resumption of school after winter vacations. As we know, Kashmir Valley lies in an extreme part of the northern direction, so we experience cold and harsh winters here. But I do like all the seasons in the Kashmir Valley throughout the year. From the arrival of autumn every year, the face of Kashmir sheds off due to the falling of leaves from the branches of the trees. With the arrival of December, the outlook of homes and people gets

changed due to the cold wave. Every individual wants to cover from bottom to top to avoid a cold wave and to avoid common colds, fevers, and coughs. With the passing of every single day since the arrival of December, we have started observing the addition of heating appliances in homes, offices, etc.

So it has been a concern for the authorities to safeguard the school-going children from the cold wave. They have to come out of their homes early in the morning to go to school, and there are a good number of schools where there are no heating arrangements. Even in some areas of the Kashmir Valley, the heating appliances are not able to give their best due to the extremely chilly season. Every parent, teacher, and government administration is concerned regarding their blooming buds and ensures all the possible measures to tackle such contexts.

The winter vacation remains in the Kashmir Valley from December to March up to the middle level, and all the educational institutions are closing their classwork tasks phase-wise. One thing that is interesting is that the government administration is taking impressive steps towards the education sector. Opening school from 7th of March 2025. Every student is looking joyous, meeting their friends, and having glamor on their faces. The school administration made all the measurements prior to the reopening of schools, like making preparations like snow clearance, cleanliness of school surroundings, classrooms, preparing and decorating schools, and keeping everything ready to welcome their children with such a charming smile on their faces. I welcome all the students back to their schools and salute all the teacher fraternity for their efforts.

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Rural shops on Extinction : The Battle of Traditional Markets in the Digital Era

NAWAZZ IBN AHAD

The rise of online shopping has transformed the way people buy and sell goods, reaching even the most remote villages. E-commerce platforms offer convenience, competitive pricing, and a vast range of products that local shops struggle to match. As a result, many traditional village markets are witnessing a decline in footfall and revenue. But is online shopping truly pushing rural shops towards extinction, or is there still a way for them to survive in this digital age. For decades, local markets and small kirana stores have been the backbone of rural economies. These shops have provided villagers with essential goods, credit-based purchasing options, and a personal touch that online retailers cannot replicate. However, with the growing penetration of affordable smartphones and internet access, shopping habits in villages are changing rapidly.

In the heart of rural landscapes, where modest establishments once stood as the pillars of local trade, an unrelenting transformation is unfolding. The shadow of digital commerce looms over these time-honored emporiums, casting uncertainty upon their survival. The emergence of virtual marketplaces has revolutionized purchasing habits, drawing villagers into the realm of swift transactions, doorstep deliveries, and boundless product choices. What was once a thriving community of shopkeepers and traders now finds itself struggling against the relentless tide of online retail dominance. The corridors of traditional commerce, once bustling with familiar exchanges, now wear an air of stillness. The warmth of personal interactions, the trust built over generations, and the understanding that extended beyond mere transactions are gradually being replaced by impersonal digital interfaces. Inhabitants, who once relied on the intimate familiarity of their local vendors, are now enticed by the limitless reach of digital storefronts. The scent of fresh produce mingling with the chatter of bargaining voices in the village market is fading, drowned out by the silent efficiency of electronic transactions. The very essence of rural marketplaces was woven with the fabric of community engagement. These small trading posts were more than mere points of purchase; they were spaces where conversations flowed, relationships flourished, and commerce carried a human touch. The shopkeeper knew not only the preferences of each buyer but also the trials and triumphs of their daily lives. The nature of these transactions was built on more than currency—it was a delicate balance of mutual reliance, trust, and shared existence. Now, with the advent of online shopping, this cherished dynamic teeters on the brink of obsolescence. Behind the gleaming façade of virtual discounts and lightning deals lies a truth seldom acknowledged. The battle between rustic merchants and digital conglomerates is neither fair nor equitable. The sprawling networks of e-commerce giants, backed by unfathomable financial reservoirs, have constructed an ecosystem where traditional shopkeepers find themselves perpetually outmatched. Products that

once adorned the shelves of village stores now arrive at doorsteps in sleek packaging, often priced far below what local vendors can afford to offer. The unrelenting wave of markdowns, incentives, and seasonal bonanzas orchestrated by digital retail titans creates a mirage of affordability, masking the long-term consequences of their dominance. Within the corridors of small-town trade, the battle for sustenance grows ever more arduous. Rural shopkeepers, bound by the constraints of limited supply chains and localized clientele, cannot partake in the ruthless price wars waged in the digital sphere. The power of bulk procurement, the advantage of direct manufacturer tie-ups, and the ability to sustain prolonged losses in pursuit of market control are luxuries unknown to these humble traders. They stand, not merely as merchants of goods, but as custodians of an age-old tradition—one that is eroding with every passing day. The slow unraveling of rural trade brings with it a host of deeper repercussions. As one shop after another downshutters, the economic fabric of these regions frays. The livelihood of countless individuals, once interwoven with these marketplaces, begins to wither. The young, who once sought apprenticeships in family-owned establishments, now find themselves migrating toward cities in search of uncertain prospects. The departure of these businesses does not merely signify the loss of a commercial entity; it signals the erosion of self-reliance, the fading of an identity rooted in community-driven commerce. Yet, amid the encroaching shadows, faint glimmers of resilience persist. The spirit of the village trader, though battered, refuses to be extinguished. Some have begun to embrace the tools of modernity, integrating digital payment systems, utilizing social platforms for localized trade, and forging hybrid models that merge the warmth of physical commerce with the efficiency of technology. The path ahead is uncertain, fraught with challenges and riddled with obstacles, yet within this uncertainty lies a possibility—the possibility of adaptation, reinvention, and survival. The future of rustic marketplaces is not an inevitability carved in stone but a narrative yet to be written. If supported by policies that ensure equitable competition, if empowered with tools that allow them to harness the strengths of both traditional and digital commerce, these humble traders may yet carve a space for themselves in the evolving landscape. The coexistence of old and new need not be a battle; it can be a symphony where time-honored wisdom harmonizes with modern convenience. The road ahead is steep, but within the heart of every small shopkeeper beats the rhythm of perseverance. Whether these establishments fade into relics of the past or emerge as reimagined pillars of tomorrow will depend not just on market forces but on the collective will of those who understand their true worth. In the grand theater of commerce, where giants dominate the stage, the silent struggle of rural traders remains an untold story—one that deserves to be heard, preserved, and nurtured before it vanishes into the annals of forgotten history.

Breaking the silence: Overcoming the stigma of mental health counseling in Kashmir

IQRA NAZIR

It's okay to not be okay, but it's not okay to stay that way. Seek help, you are not alone.

Mental health is one of the most ignored but critical components of our well-being. Seeking mental health help is generally viewed as a show of weakness in Kashmir, as well as in many other societies, rather than a step towards healing. Many people suffer silently from anxiety, depression, stress, and other psychological problems yet refuse to seek help due to fear of judgment and social shame.

The hesitation to seek professional assistance stems from deeply ingrained cultural views, disinformation, and the societal belief that one must face difficulties alone. This perspective leads people to suffer in silence, resulting in increasing mental health disorders that could have been controlled or avoided with the right support.

In today's fast-paced and busy world, mental health counselling is not a luxury, but rather a necessity. It assists people in overcoming obstacles like personal issues, job demands, relationships, trauma, or emotional well-being. To build a mentally healthier society, we must eliminate the stigma associated with mental health counselling and promote open discussions about receiving help when necessary.

The stigma behind mental health counselling arises from a variety of sociocultural misconceptions, including:

Fear of Being Labelled “Weak” or “Crazy”: Many people ignore therapy due to concerns about being judged by others. They dread being perceived as unstable or unable to deal with life's issues on their



own.

Lack of Awareness: In many societies, mental health is not treated as seriously as physical health. People are unaware that mental health issues, like physical illnesses, require expert assistance.

Social and Family Pressures: Families frequently prevent people from obtaining counselling, believing that it may harm their social reputation or future opportunities, such as marriage or work.

Cultural and religious misconceptions: Some people assume that mental health issues are caused by a lack of faith or willpower, rather than physiological disorders that necessitate psychological support.

Limited Access to Mental Health Services: In many areas, particularly rural ones, mental health services are either unavailable or prohibitively expensive, making professional assistance unavailable to individuals who want it.

“These myths and barriers discourage people from seeking care, resulting in long-term emotional pain, unresolved trauma, and worse mental health disorders.”

Apart from stigma, multiple factors in today's world contribute to

increased mental health difficulties, making counselling even more important:

The Pressure to succeed: The pressure to succeed, whether in education, work, or personal life, has become tremendous. Many young people, particularly in Kashmir, suffer unrealistic expectations from their families and society, resulting in stress, self-doubt, and worry. Unemployment adds to the stress, making people feel helpless and frustrated about their future.

Emotional isolation and disconnection: Despite being continuously connected by technology, people today feel more alone than ever. Many people feel lonely, lack emotional support, and have difficulties expressing their emotions. This emotional separation makes it more difficult for people to seek help when they are most in need.

Unresolved Trauma and Stress: Many people have experienced personal traumas, such as childhood neglect, grief, or difficult life events, which have had a significant impact on their mental health. Without effective counselling, these traumas might show as anxiety, sadness, rage,

issues, or self-destructive behaviours.

Mental Health Challenges at Different Life Stages: Mental health issues affect a wide range of people. Children, teenagers, adults, and the elderly all experience various types of emotional anguish.

Young students are confronted with academic stress and career confusion.

Adults suffer financial stress, marital issues, and employment pressures.

Elderly folks experience loneliness, decreasing health, and emotional neglect.

Each stage of life has its own set of obstacles, making counselling a crucial tool for dealing with personal difficulties at all stages.

Counselling is not just for those with mental illnesses; it is also a preventive and healing technique that assists people in managing stress, increasing self-awareness, and developing healthy coping skills. Here's why counselling needs to be normalised:

Helps in Managing Stress and Anxiety: A counsellor can help you manage stress and anxiety by teaching you how to cope with stress and keep it from escalating into severe mental health

conditions.

Provides Emotional Support: Many people do not have anybody to talk to about their most difficult issues. Counselling provides a safe, non-judgmental environment in which to express emotions and get assistance.

Improves Relationships and Communication: Relationship disputes, whether with family, friends, or partners, can cause emotional pain. Counselling assists individuals in resolving issues and improving interpersonal relationships.

Helps with Career and Life Decisions: Many young individuals are uncertain about their future. Individuals benefit from career counselling and life coaching because they help them make educated decisions and eliminate ambiguity.

Prevents long-term psychological issues: Seeking therapy early can help prevent sadness, anxiety, trauma, and other psychological problems from deteriorating over time.

To change societal views, we must work together as individuals, families, communities, and organisations. Here's how to normalise mental health counselling:

Educate and raise

awareness: Mental health education should be integrated into schools, businesses, and communities to assist people in realising its relevance.

Encourage Open Conversations: Families and communities should provide safe spaces in which people can discuss mental health without fear of being judged.

Make Counselling More Accessible: Governments and healthcare organisations must provide inexpensive and accessible mental health treatments to all people, particularly those in remote areas.

Media and Influencers Should Promote Mental Health Awareness: Public figures should utilise their platforms to fight misconceptions and encourage mental health debates.

Lead by Example: When someone honestly discusses their experience with therapy, it motivates others to seek assistance without fear. Sharing personal tales can be an effective method of reducing stigma.

“Mental health counselling is a requirement, not a weakness. It represents a stride towards healing, growth, and emotional well-being. As the world gets more hectic and demanding, we must eliminate the stigma and normalise asking for assistance.”

We can build a more welcoming, supportive, and emotionally healthy culture by encouraging open dialogue, educating people, and making mental health treatments more accessible. No one should have to suffer in silence; seeking counselling demonstrates strength, not shame.!

The writer is a PhD scholar at the Department of Social Work, University of Kashmir n.iqra999@gmail.com

JKBOSE Erred Again

Class 11 Mathematics.

Last but not least, the science paper, which was held on March 3, 2025, also had discrepancies. Apart from spelling mistakes, two MCQs were included from the deleted syllabi. Moreover, the paper setters also included two out-of-syllabus questions from the chapter Heredity and one doubtful question from the chapter Life Processes. In the latter case, the element of doubt arises because transportation in plants is not deleted from the textbook, while its sub-section (transportation in human beings or mammals) is deleted. There is more to add to this list; however, it becomes too cluttered or repetitive to read.

Now, the question of importance is how the JKBOSE has loosened its grip and let the future of students dangle like a pendulum! The erring paper setters must have been advised to go through the former as well as the rationalized syllabi in order to protect their reputation. Instead, they have brought endless miseries to the whole community.

This unfortunate saga is the result of many factors. The first is non-seriousness towards education. In our society, education has become a non-serious entity. When hollow sloganeering has become the order of the day, education has taken a backseat. In the rhetoric of petty politics, all energy is consumed in tar-

nishing each other's images in the political arena. When this is the state of affairs, one can easily deduce how education will perform here!

The second is corruption. Corruption has eaten into the vitals of our society, particularly education. Most of the officials at the helm of affairs are corrupt. These officials chase posts and money, and their lives revolve around financial gains. In this way, education is slaughtered mercilessly at the altar of a false mighty.

The third is the lack of accountability. When there is a dearth of accountability, hoping for the redressal of our grievances is a mirage. When officials are unacquainted with the definition of the word transparency, the house of education collapses like a pack of cards, throwing order to the winds. In the absence of accountability, no one believes in the rhetoric of so-called academicians, who are merely champions of lip service.

The fourth and final issue is the corporate nature of education. Now, education has become merely a money-minting process. Children are viewed through the lens of profit. In such a situation, how can a reasonable person expect anything creative and sustainable from the so-called head institutions and affiliated organizations? When almost all educational institutions are hand in glove

with corrupt higher officials, the grand edifice of education is bound to tumble down.

In order to set the house of education in order, accountability and transparency must be given the topmost priority. The erring paper setters must be given exemplary punishment. They must be debarred from framing question papers in the future. Their irresponsible behavior can cost students their futures, and they must be taken to task as early as possible.

Moreover, corrupt officials must be shown the door. Fraudulent officials should be removed from the system. In order to cleanse the system, the big fish must be caught first. They are the ones who slip through the nets. It is they who set the precedent for smaller corrupt elements to follow.

Furthermore, authentic and well-versed individuals must be hired to frame question papers. Those who understand the intricacies of the paper-setting process should be welcomed and asked to create comprehensive question papers that accurately evaluate students' understanding.

Apart from these measures, the government should take a leading role. I request the worthy Education Minister to streamline the system. Her dedication to the cause of educational upliftment is well known. However, the rot runs deep, and it will

take immense effort to bring the derailed system back on track. Her intervention in this regard is the urgent need of the hour. She is in the best position to dispel doubts and accusations. She is the most competent authority to take drastic steps to fuel the growth of education in our Union Territory.

In conclusion, we cannot afford to see our future being destroyed in the name of so-called education. We cannot be so stone-hearted as to watch our innocent generations being spoiled for nothing. The age of rhetoric is over. The need of the hour is to rejuvenate the garden of education in Jammu and Kashmir. Our education system has become the soft target of every kind of upsurge. We are not in a position to bear the brunt of more failures.

Our souls are numb. Our hearts are broken. Depression and anxiety have taken a prominent seat in our lives. Our palpitating hearts need the soft touch of healing. A healing balm is what our wounds are in dire need of.

I am hoping against hope that next time, the JKBOSE will not err in any manner. This time, the issue must be resolved, and the short memory of people will enable them to forget it. However, wounds are wounds—do not let them bleed further.

Hope good sense prevails!
syedwrites1001@gmail.com

Ministry of MSME delivers 17k toolkits to artisans under PM Vishwakarma scheme in J&K

MSME proactively working towards promotion of artisans under traditional trades; organises awareness to encourage participation in the scheme

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MARCH 07: Jammu and Kashmir stands at the top position in the entire country with the highest number of toolkits 17000 (approx) delivered directly to the homes of artisans under the PM Vishwakarma scheme.

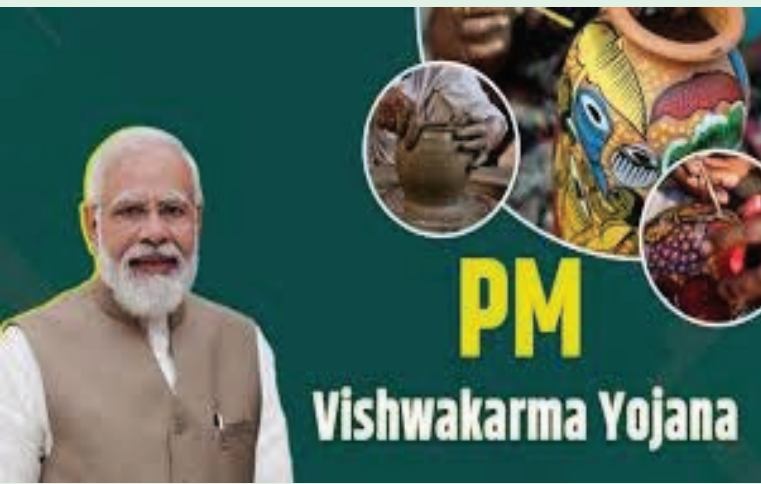
This achievement demonstrates the commitment of the Union Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) in reaching out to the grassroots level and providing tangible benefits to artisans who are traditionally underserved.

The Union Ministry of MSME has been proactively working towards the promotion of artisans under traditional trades such as sculptor,

fisher net maker, hammer and tool-kit maker, boat maker etc under the PM Vishwakarma Scheme. These trades have seen relatively very low participation in the scheme, particularly in regions like Jammu and Kashmir. The Ministry's efforts aim to uplift these trades and ensure that the artisans are equipped with the necessary tools, financial support, and knowledge to continue their craft sustainably.

Assistant Director, MSME, Saheel Alaqband highlighted the efforts undertaken by the Branch MSME DFO Srinagar under Ministry of MSME in Kashmir region in raising awareness and encouraging participation in the scheme.

Speaking about the initiatives, Alaqband mentioned that recently



this office, in collaboration with district administrations in Ganderbal, Baramulla, and Pulwama, con-

ducted awareness programs targeting these low-participation trades. The awareness programs aimed

not only to educate artisans about the PM Vishwakarma Scheme but also provided a platform for on-the-spot registration for artisans involved in the mentioned trades in few programs. These efforts were meticulously carried out in coordination with the district administrations to ensure maximum outreach and impact.

In addition to the awareness programs, the field office organized awareness camps at the workplaces of the artisans, further bridging the gap between government initiatives and artisans' needs.

Recently, a specific awareness program was conducted in Srinagar for sculptors, aiming to familiarize them with the scheme and its benefits. The goal was to ensure that

sculptors were fully informed about the available support and that they could take advantage of the scheme to sustain and expand their businesses. In addition to the awareness programs, the field office organized awareness camps at the workplaces of the artisans, further bridging the gap between government initiatives and artisans' needs.

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J&K Will Give Befitting Reply to Those Who Insult Maharaja Hari Singh: Chugh

■ HT News Network

Jammu, March 07, ANB: Bharatiya Janata Party's National General Secretary and Jammu and Kashmir in-charge, Tarun Chugh, strongly condemned the comments made by the National Conference regarding Maharaja Hari Singh.

According to the Associated News Bureau, he stated that the contribution of the great ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh Ji, is an integral part of the region's culture, history, and identity. Not only did he play a significant role in the progress of the state, but he also made a historic contribution to

its integration with the Indian Republic.

Addressing the media, Chugh reaffirmed the party's commitment to upholding the rich legacy of Maharaja Hari Singh, a leader whose contributions to Jammu and Kashmir remain unparalleled.

Chugh emphasized that Maharaja Hari Singh was not merely a ruler but a visionary leader who spearheaded progressive reforms, modernization, and inclusive governance. His contributions to education, healthcare, and administration played a pivotal role in shaping Jammu and Kashmir's socio-economic landscape.

Chugh added that it is unfortunate that some

individuals, driven by political selfishness and narrow-mindedness, continue to insult Maharaja Hari Singh Ji. He asserted that such attacks are not just an affront to the identity of Jammu and Kashmir but also an attempt to hurt the sentiments of millions who revere the Maharaja as their ideal.

"Maharaja Hari Singh introduced landmark reforms that safeguarded the rights of marginalized communities and promoted social justice. His secular outlook fostered communal harmony in the

region. Any attempt to malign his legacy is unacceptable and must be retracted immediately," Chugh asserted.

Expressing deep disappointment, the BJP urged political leaders to exercise caution and responsibility when commenting on historical figures. Chugh called upon National Conference leader Omar Abdullah and his party to issue a clarification and retract the remarks, stating that such statements only create unnecessary controversy and hurt public sentiments.

PUBLIC NOTICE

My name has been wrongly written as MOHAMMAD ASHRAF CHOPAN S/O MOHAMMAD SULTAN CHOPAN in my adhar card while my correct name is MOHD ASHRAF CHOPAN S/O MOHD SULTAN CHOPAN which needs to be corrected if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of BDO WAGOORA /Tehsil office WAGOORA within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained,

NAME.....MOHD ASHRAF CHOPAN
S/O MOHD SULTAN CHOPAN
BLOCK WAGOORA

PUBLIC NOTICE

My daughter's name has been wrongly written as NIGHAT ALTAF in her adhar card while her correct name is NABIYAT ALTAF which needs to be corrected if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of BDO WAGOORA /Tehsil office WAGOORA within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained.

NAME.....ALTAF HUSSAIN WANI
F/O NABITAY ALTAF
BLOCK WAGOORA

Public Notice

My daughter's parentage has been wrongly written as AZRA JAN D/O MOHAMMAD ASSADULLAH MIR in her school record while her correct parentage is AZRA JAN D/O MOHD ASSADULLAH MIR which needs to be corrected if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office HANFIA MODEL HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL KREERI within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained.

NAME.....MOHD ASSADULLAH MIR
F/O AZRA JAN
R/O Tilagam pattan
ZONE ...WAGOORA

PUBLIC NOTICE

My name has been wrongly written as GHULAM MOHAMMAD THOKAR S/O MOHAMMAD SULTAN THOKAR in my adhar card while my correct name is GHULAM MOHAMAD THOKAR S/O MOHAMAD SULTAN THOKAR which needs to be corrected if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of BDO WAGOORA /Tehsil office WAGOORA within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained.

NAME.....GHULAM MOHAMAD THOKAR
S/O MOHAMAD SULTAN THOKAR
BLOCK WAGOORA

PUBLIC NOTICE

My sons name has been wrongly written as ADNAN TARIQ in his adhar card while his correct name is TALIB AHMAD HAJAM which needs to be corrected if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of BDO WAGOORA /Tehsil office WAGOORA within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained.

NAME.....TALIB AHMAD AHMAD HAJAM.
F/O TARIQ AHMAD HAJAM
BLOCK WAGOORA

Public Notice

I have changed my name from (old name). Bisma Basharat Rather to (New name) Bisma Basharat. In future I will be known as (new name) Bisma Basharat. If any body is having any objection he/she may contact Passport Office, Srinagar with in 7 days. After 7 days no objection will be accepted.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL AND HOSPITALS DIVISION SRINAGAR

(Tele-fax No: 019-2496089, e-mail id: xenmhchdhk@yahoo.in)

Subject:- Repairs and replacement to damaged 7.5hp three phase feed pump-motor assembly and other allied works to the boiler house at JLNH Gousia Hospital, Srinagar
Ref : This office NIT No: M&HDS/TS /2024-25/149/e-tendering Dated: 17.02.2025.

EXTENSION

In view of poor response the Critical dates of above subject work tendered vide above referred e-NIT are extended as follows: -

S. No	Description	Date and Time
1.	Last Date of Bid Submission	10.03.2025 (13:00 hrs)
2.	Date of Bid Opening	10.03.2025 (15:00 hrs)

All other Terms and Conditions of the NIT shall remain the same.

DIPK-12754/24
Date: Mar 7 2025

Sd/-
Executive Engineer,
Mechanical & Hospitals Division,
Srinagar

Muslims Perform Last Rites of Kashmiri Pandit Woman in Pulwama's Pinglana

■ HT News Network

Pulwama, Mar 7, KNT: In a touching display of communal harmony, Muslims in Pulwama's Pinglana village came together to perform the last rites of Rania Ji, a Kashmiri Pandit woman who had chosen to stay in her homeland despite the turbulent times. With no close family around, it was her Muslim neighbors who ensured that she received a dignified farewell.

The villagers not only shouldered her bier but also arranged for all the rituals according to Hindu customs, reaffirming the spirit of Kashmiriyat. "We considered her one of our own. It was our duty to give her a respectful send-off," said a local resident to the news agency Kashmir News Trust.

Rajesh Raina, a relative who had traveled from Jammu, expressed deep gratitude for the villagers' gesture. "We are deeply thankful to the people of Pinglana. In times like these, their love and respect for Rania Ji remind us that humanity and Kashmiriyat are still alive," he said. [KNT]

اطلاع عام

ہر خاص عام کو اطلاع دی جاتی ہے کہ مجھے ہوم سٹے بنام Alpine Glow home stay کی رجسٹریشن محکمہ ٹورازم پہلگام میں کرانی مطلوب ہے کسی کو کوئی عذر ہو تو وہ سات یوم کے اندر اندر اسسٹنڈنٹ ڈیرکٹر ٹورازم پہلگام کے دفتر میں پیش کرے بعد ازاں معاد کو کوئی عذر قبول نہیں ہوگا

نسار احمد ملک ولد عبدل وحید ملک

ساکن بنہ کوٹ پہلگام

اطلاع عام

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المستہر

نسار احمد ملک ولد عبدل حمید ملک

ساکنہ بنہ کوٹ پہلگام پہلگام

نمبر 8491052378

ازد فتر نائب تحصیلدار کریری

عنوان درخواست منجانب رخشاہ بشیر سائمنر جوم ہارلین یعنی سائمنر ٹنڈمر تحصیل کریری ضلع بارہمولہ برادر نسبت

Dependent certificate

اشتہار بمراد آگاہی

ماملہ مندرجہ الصدمیں کاغذات درخواست سائر کورڈر فتر میں زیر سماعت ہیں اس سلسلے میں رپورٹ ہوا دی طالب کیا گیا جس سے عیاں ہوتا ہے کہ درخواست دہندہ عرصہ دراز سے دھم کو میں سکونت رکھتا رہتی ہے سائل کے گمنام کی سالانہ آمدنی مبلغ 6000 سائل دھم کو کو کا منتقل باشندہ ہے

1۔ رخشاہ بشیر زوجہ طارق غنی 43 سال کھربو کام

2۔ صدرہ طاہرین اختر 12 سال زیر تعلیم 3

..... غیاث ملارلین پسر 14 سال

اس نوٹ کیل (3) افراد پر جس ملارلین رپورٹ ہوا دی مندرجہ وارثان جاتو کے علاوہ اوکوئی وارثان جاتو نہیں ہے ڈپنڈنٹ سرٹیفکیٹ زیر بحث اجراء کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص یا شخص کو کوکوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو وہ اپنا عذر یا اعتراض ساتھ دن کے اندر پیش کرے معاد گزرنے کے بعد کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قبول نہیں ہوگا

نائب تحصیلدار کریری

Rahul Sahai, Chairman, ICC Jammu terms Omar Abdullah's Budget as Balanced and Progressive

■ HT News Network

Srinagar:-Rahul Sahai, Chairman of the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Jammu Chapter, has lauded the budget presented by Hon'ble Chief Minister and Finance Minister Jenab Omar Abdullah, calling it a well-balanced and growth-oriented financial plan that will accelerate the prosperity of Jammu & Kashmir. Sahai who attended the hon'ble Cm's budget presentation in J&K Assembly in the gallery in a statement said "The budget reflects a strong commitment to industrial growth, tourism development, youth empowerment, and infrastructure expansion while ensuring inclusive economic progress".

Rahul Sahai appreciated the government's vision in promoting tourism by announcing key projects such as the development of Ranjit Sagar Lake, the construction of a water park at Sidhra, the expansion of Jamboor Zoo, and the establishment of a state-of-the-art Convention Centre at Sidhra. These initiatives will enhance J&K's tourism potential, Specially Jammu's tourism circuit and create employment opportunities for the youth.

Sahai while welcoming a major boost to the MSME sector said that the budget proposes a 50 crore allocation for an incubation centre, price preference for J&K-based MSMEs on the GeM portal, and the expansion of the CGTMSE scheme under the RAMP initiative, which will significantly benefit small businesses. The proposal to develop a PM Unity Mall in Jammu for crafts and handicrafts is a welcome step that will empower local artisans and promote "Brand J&K" on a national and global level.

The budget also takes a strong stance on industrial development, with a 625 crore allocation to support new industries and infrastructure expansion in 64 industrial estates, with 46 more under development. The focus on streamlining SGST reimbursements, turnover incentives, and promoting sectors such as IT, renewable energy, and biotechnology will further strengthen the investment climate in the region. Mr. Sahai particularly welcomed the decision to constitute an Advisory Committee on Industry and Tourism, ensuring continuous dialogue between the government and stakeholders.

Education and skill development have been given due priority, with an ambitious plan to upgrade 40 high schools, establish 100 smart schools, and launch a 5 crore apprenticeship program to bridge the industry-academia gap. The proposal to establish a Skill and Entrepreneurship University is a commendable step toward fostering innovation and self-employment among the youth.

The healthcare sector has received a significant boost, with a doubling of the medical budget, the introduction of a Hi-Tech AI-based SEHAT App for tele-medical services, and an allocation for 100 AI-powered X-ray machines to combat TB. The government's commitment to expedite work on the Homeopathy Medical College in Kathua, expand MBBS seats, and introduce a Healthcare Investment Policy reflects a holistic approach to strengthening healthcare services.

The sports sector has also been given a strong thrust, with the establishment of Khelo India Centres in Jammu and Srinagar, the creation of a National Training Centre for water sports in Basoli, and dedicated efforts to promote football across J&K. The government's focus on upgrading 247 playgrounds and 19 sports buildings will provide world-class sporting facilities for youth development. In a move towards social welfare and inclusivity, the budget has introduced free transport for women in government buses, including e-buses, and increased the girl marriage incentive from 50,000 to 75,000, a commendable step for women empowerment. The announcement of a new hydropower policy to reduce J&K's revenue deficit, the reduction of stamp duty on property transfers within blood relatives is a commendable decision, and an allocation of 100 crore for the leather industry in Kashmir are pragmatic decisions that will spur economic activity and generate employment. Rahul Sahai also welcomed the decision to allocate 625 crore for industrial development and appreciated the government's commitment to sustainable development by declaring 2025 as the "J&K Green Mission Year." He further lauded initiatives such as the PM Rural Home Scheme, a new mining surveillance system, and 10 crore for the construction of new helipads to improve connectivity.

Distt admin Ganderbal holds public outreach program at Tulbagh Sherpathri

■ HT News Network

GANDERBAL, MARCH 07: In a continued effort to enhance public engagement and address local issues at the grassroots level, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore, today convened a public outreach program at Tulbagh Sherpathri.

The program was also attended by the District Development Council (DDC) Vice-Chairperson, Bilal Ahmad, along with other senior officials, to listen to public grievances and ensure effective governance.

During the event, residents of Block Sherpathri actively participated, voicing their concerns and developmental needs,

including proper garbage disposal, construction of a playground in Hatbara, desilting of Qazi Canal, repair of streetlights, installation of distribution transformers, cutting of poplar trees at Middle School Sehpora, establishment of fire service station, bank branch at Shal-labugh, and construction of bridge at Rabitar.

The locals sought the intervention of the Deputy Commissioner for the timely resolution of these issues.

Addressing the gathering, the DC reaffirmed the administration's commitment to reaching out to remote areas and ensuring responsive and inclusive governance. He assured the locals that all genuine concerns raised during the program



would be duly examined, and necessary steps would be taken for their redressal.

Regarding waste management, the Block Development

Officer (BDO) Sherpathri informed that garbage collection has been outsourced, and the contractor has already begun waste collection in Shal-

labugh village.

Additionally, the Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD) was asked to prepare a comprehensive desilting plan

in consultation with the irrigation department for inclusion in the new development plan.

The outreach program was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Gulzar Ahmad; Program Officer ICDS, GM DIC, CPO, ACD, ACP, and other district and sectoral officers. The locals sought the intervention of the Deputy Commissioner for the timely resolution of these issues.

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JKPICCA Delegation Meets Hon'ble LG to Address Key Sectoral Challenges

■ HT News Network

Srinager, March 07 : A delegation from the Jammu and Kashmir Fruits and Vegetables Processing and Integrated Cold Chain Association (JKPICCA), led by its President, Mr. Bashir Ahmad Naikoo, met with the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor to discuss critical issues affecting the fruit and vegetable sector in the region.

The delegation raised concerns over the delay in state subsidies, urging the administration to expedite the disbursement process. They emphasized that timely financial support is crucial for the sustainability of the industry and for ensuring that stakeholders receive their due benefits without unnecessary delays.

A key issue brought to the LG's attention was the halting of fruit-laden trucks from Controlled Atmosphere (CA) storage facilities due to recent one-way traffic restrictions. The delegation stressed the need for



uninterrupted movement of trucks to facilitate the timely delivery of fruits to markets across the country, which is essential for maintaining quality and preventing financial losses for growers and traders.

Additionally, the delegation highlighted concerns over the sale of spurious pesticides and fungicides, urging strict government intervention to curb counterfeit agrochemicals. They warned that unchecked use of such products poses a serious threat to crop health and the livelihoods of

farmers, calling for stringent regulatory measures.

Beyond these immediate concerns, the delegation also discussed other pressing sectoral challenges and sought the LG's intervention in implementing effective policies to support farmers and industry stakeholders.

JKPICCA reaffirmed its commitment to working closely with the government to safeguard the interests of the region's fruit and vegetable sector and ensure its sustainable growth.

DC Ganderbal reviews physical, financial progress under District Capex

■ HT News Network

GANDERBAL, MARCH 07: District Development Commissioner (DDC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore today convened a meeting, here to take stock of the physical and financial achievements made under District Capex 2024-25.

At the outset, the Chief Planning Officer provided a detailed briefing on the developmental works and financial utilization. It was informed that out of 1,697 works, 1,009 have been completed, with an expenditure achievement of 57.6 percent against the available funds as of date.

The DDC conducted a comprehensive review of progress across key departments, including Rural Development, Health, Education, Roads & Buildings



(R&B), Power Development (PDD), Jal Shakti, Agriculture & allied sectors.

While assessing the block-wise status of work allotment and completion, the DDC directed the concerned executing agencies to expedite implementation and ensure timely completion of projects. He stressed the importance of maximizing fund utilization under various schemes

to prevent any lapses or surrender of allocated funds.

Kishore also emphasized the prompt submission of bills in the district treasury for completed works and instructed the District Treasury Officer to ensure timely processing to avoid the financial year-end rush.

Urging all executing agencies to accelerate the pace of ongoing projects,

the DDC reiterated the need for achieving both physical and financial targets within the stipulated timelines.

The meeting was attended by the Chief Planning Officer, Assistant Commissioner Development, ACP, Executing Engineers from R&B, REW, Jal Shakti, & FC, Block Development Officers, and other district and sectoral officers.

7th Jan Aushadhi Diwas Celebrated at District Hospital Bandipora

■ HT News Network

BANDIPORA: District Hospital Bandipora celebrated Jan Aushadhi Diwas with enthusiasm, highlighting the importance of affordable and quality medicines for the public. The event marked the success of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Kendra, which has been providing low-cost medicines to residents. Locals expressed their gratitude to the administration for making the Kendra functional, ensuring access to essential drugs at reduced prices.

Medical Superintendent DH Bandipora, Dr. Masrat Iqbal Wani, emphasized the benefits of the scheme and urged people to take full advantage of the initiative. He reiterated the government's commitment to making quality healthcare accessible to all, particularly those from economically weaker sections.

The Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Yojana aims to promote the use of generic medicines, making healthcare more affordable while maintaining high standards of quality. The initiative has been widely appreciated for reducing the financial burden on patients.

The efforts of the health department to provide affordable healthcare options were welcomed by the residents, who expressed their appreciation for the Kendra's role in improving access to essential medicines.

ARTO Pulwama conducts enforcement drive

■ HT News Network

PULWAMA, MARCH 07: Enforcement Squad of ARTO office Pulwama conducted a rigorous enforcement drive at Litter-Pulwama route specially focusing on overloading of passengers and over charging by passenger vehicles. Strict instructions were issued to the sumo stand presidents to ensure adherence to the prescribed passenger limits and reasonable fare regulations. In addition, more than 80 vehicles were checked for various offences like overloading of vehicles, vehicle fitness and other violations under MV Act and Rules framed thereunder. About 22 Vehicles were e-challaned for different violations and Rs. 50,500 is expected to be recovered from them.

Officials reiterated that such drives will continue, sending a strong message to traffic violators that non-compliance will not be tolerated. Strict instructions were issued to the sumo stand presidents to ensure adherence to the prescribed passenger limits and reasonable fare regulations. In addition, more than 80 vehicles were checked for various offences like overloading of vehicles, vehicle fitness and other violations under MV Act and Rules framed thereunder. About 22 Vehicles were e-challaned for different violations and Rs. 50,500 is expected to be recovered from them.

MLA Nizamuddin Bhat Leads Push for NHW Status for Sumbal-Bandipora-Gurez Road, Appeals to Union Minister Nitin Gadkari

■ HT News Network

BANDIPORA, March 7: Taking a firm stand on connectivity, MLA Bandipora Nizamuddin Bhat has once again reiterated the demand for National Highway status for the Sumbal-Bandipora-Gurez Road (128 km)—a crucial lifeline for thousands in North Kashmir. He has also sought firm commitment from the government on another vital link, Sangrama-Bandipora Road (78 km). During the March 25 Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly session, Bhat pressed the government on the urgent need for improved road infrastructure in Bandipora district. In response, the concerned ministry confirmed that the demand has been officially



communicated to the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways for further consideration.

However, Bhat has gone a step further, directly appealing to Union Minister Nitin Gadkari to expedite the approval process. He emphasized that upgrading this key route to National Highway status is not merely about connectivity but a critical step toward eco-

nommic growth, regional integration and ending the isolation of Bandipora and Gurez. "We have been persistently pushing for this demand because it is a necessity, not a luxury. The highway will unlock economic opportunities, strengthen trade and improve accessibility for our people. I call upon the government to recognize the urgency of this issue and act swiftly. The public must also acknowledge the relentless efforts being made in their interest," Bhat stated. Sumbal-Bandipora-Gurez Road serves as a vital artery for students, traders and daily commuters and its upgradation will play a pivotal role in boosting trade, tourism, and strategic mobility in the region.

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SED launches Mega enrollment drive in Shopian

■ HT News Network

SHOPIAN, MARCH 07: A Mega Enrollment drive has been launched in District Shopian, kicking off from Government Higher Secondary School Narapora and High School Zampathri today.

Joint Director (EE) Kashmir, M Mushtaq, and Chief Education Officer Shopian, Bashir Ahmad, along with Cluster Heads, ZEOs led the initiative, resulting in hundreds of new enrollments in government schools across Narapora and Keller clusters.

During the event, Joint Director praised the Officers for their preparations and emphasized on the availability of qualified staff, infrastructure, and different schemes in government schools.

He also stressed on the need for student retention and attendance in the district's upper belt, and advised the schools heads to take strenuous measures for enhancing enrollment and retention of students in



the Schools. The CEO Shopian highlighted the focus on accessible free quality education, teaching staff accountability, and

achieving academic excellence. He thanked parents and participants, reaffirming the commitment of obtaining

optimal results in government run schools. As a token of appreciation, newly enrolled students received gifts from the officers during the course of the drive.

The enrollment drives will be held at different clusters in coming days in the District Shopian. He also stressed on the need for student retention and attendance in the district's upper belt, and advised the schools heads to take strenuous measures for enhancing enrollment and retention of students in the Schools.

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DC reviews functioning of Cooperative Department in Poonch

■ HT News Network

POONCH, MARCH 7: Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal chaired a crucial meeting today to assess the operations of the Cooperative Department in the district.

The meeting addressed several vital topics, including the establishment of new cooperative societies in underserved areas, the world's largest grain storage initiatives, and the organization of awareness camps and training sessions as part of the International Year of Cooperatives. Additional discussions focused on micro food processing units, Reconciliation PACs, and the status of elections for cooperative societies.

This meeting served as



an essential platform for stakeholders to strategize on the formation and enhancement of new cooperative societies. The emphasis was placed on building a robust network of cooperatives to stimulate

economic growth, promote self-sufficiency, and ensure equitable development within Poonch district.

Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal directed the acceleration of pending construction work on coop-

erative super bazaars to benefit the local community promptly. He further directed the HOD to organize a mega event in Poonch to celebrate the International Year of Cooperatives, highlighting the significance of cooperative development.

In his remarks, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized the need to support farmers' producer organizations to enhance agricultural productivity and improve the welfare of farmers in the region.

The meeting concluded with a commitment to expedite all cooperative development initiatives and ensure effective coordination among departments for the successful implementation of cooperative schemes.

DC reviews implementation of Swachh Bharat Mission in Kishtwar District

■ HT News Network

KISHTWAR, MARCH 07: In a bid to review the ongoing progress of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) under Swachh Survekshan 2024, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rajesh Kumar Shavan convened a multi-departmental meeting.

During the meeting, the DC issued a series of directives aimed at improving sanitation services and ensuring better implementation across the district.

He instructed the EO Municipality to ensure the proper functionality of toilets, enhance sanitation awareness, and implement night shifts for sanitation workers.

The DC emphasized the importance of providing



necessary equipment to sanitary workers and raising awareness among shopkeepers and sanitation staff in the town. Furthermore, the DC stressed the importance of solid waste management in collaboration with the Rural Development Department (RDD).

He also directed the Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD) and Block Development Officers

(BDOs) to ensure the functionality of toilets in all blocks of the district.

The DC also stressed on maintenance of the Community Sanitary Complexes (CSCs) in all blocks, ensuring these facilities are fully operational with all essential amenities.

The meeting was attended by ACD Phulail Singh, EO Municipality Mirza Mumtaz Iqbal, BDO Sanjeev Kot-

wal and other senior officers and staff members. During the meeting, the DC issued a series of directives aimed at improving sanitation services and ensuring better implementation across the district.

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DDC chairperson discusses proposed PMGSY phase-IV Projects for Udhampur

■ HT News Network

UDHAMPUR, MARCH 07: A meeting to discuss newly proposed projects under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana Phase-IV was held today under the chairmanship of District Development Council Chairperson Udhampur, Lal Chand, in his office chamber. The meeting was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner, Rajinder Singh, DDC members, Executive Engineers PMGSY and PWD, along with other concerned officers.

Threadbare discussions were held on various aspects of the proposed projects, including their approval process and the comprehensive upgradation and consolidation plan



for uncovered habitations identified in the 2011 census under PMGSY Phase-IV.

The DDC Chairperson emphasized the council's commitment to prioritizing projects that address local needs and aspirations. He expressed confidence that extending road connectivity to unconnected habitations would pave the way for sustainable growth and equitable development across the district.

Stressing the need for effective collaboration among all stakeholders, he urged departments to work in coordination to accelerate the implementation of these projects and ensure visible progress.

He further directed the concerned departments to expedite the preparation of DPRs at the earliest so that the identified unconnected habitations could be covered under the scheme without delay.

Samba Administration celebrates Int'l Women's Day with great enthusiasm

■ HT News Network

SAMBA, MARCH 7: The District Administration Samba, in collaboration with the Social Welfare Department, hosted a vibrant celebration to commemorate International Women's Day. The event featured an impressive lineup of activities highlighting women's achievements and entrepreneurship in the region.

Chairperson of JKSSB Indu Kanwal Chib, graced the occasion as the chief guest. Deputy Commissioner Samba, Rajesh Sharma, led the administration in putting together this meaningful celebration. The program included a special performance by musician Sonali Dogra and captivating cultural performances by college students that showcased the rich heritage of the region. A highlight of the



event was an interactive session with special invitees including the Chief Guest Indu Kanwal Chib, Principal GDC Ramgarh Dr. Geetanjali Andotra, Munsif Samba Himani Parihar, S.I Deepika Jalotra and Entrepreneur Preeti Kashyap. The event also featured a diverse exhibit featuring stalls set up by women entrepreneurs, displaying their

crafts, products and business ventures. "This celebration reflects our commitment to women's empowerment and recognition of their invaluable contributions to our society and economy," said DC Rajesh Sharma during the event.

The International Women's Day celebration served as a platform to recognize women's achieve-

ments and promote gender equality in the district.

The celebrations were attended by ADDC Samba Ms. Champa Devi Thakur, SSP Virender Singh Manhas, ADC Samba Jagdish Singh and the entire district administration. The program included a special performance by musician Sonali Dogra and captivating cultural performances by college students that showcased the rich heritage of the region.

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YOUTH TALENT SEARCH CELEBRATES WOMEN'S DAY

■ HT News Network

Jammu, Mar 7, Youth Talent Search, a Forum of prestigious Schools of Jammu celebrated Women's Day and Award Ceremony with great pomp and show at Polytechnic college, Bikram Chowk here today. The programme commenced with the somber tradition of lighting the Lamp to evoke the blessings of the Goddess Saraswati. Ms. Prabha Jain, chairperson of New Era Environment High School in her Welcome Note extended a warm welcome to all the esteemed guests who graced the occasion. Ms. Indu Kanwal Chib, (Chairperson, JKSSB) was the Chief Guest on the Occasion. Keeping up the traditions Mrs Vasudha (MD Elite public high



school Mrs Mala Sharma (Chairperson Elite public high school) Mrs Anku Charak (Vice Principal Humanity Public School) Mrs Anita Ambardar (Principal Play way House School) Mrs Usha Jamwal (Principal BHMP) welcomed the guests with flower bouquets. The event was also graced by the eminent personal-

ity Ms Shagun Manchanda (District Mission Coordinator, Mission Shakti Social Welfare Department) as the guest of honour.

Principals, teachers and students from the reputed schools like JK Montessori School, New Era Environmental high School, Alexander memorial school, Bikram memorial school, S.D Tarapur school, Elite Public high School, Humanity

Public School, Playway House, BHMP school, Lawrence public school participated in the function. The participating teachers from the schools showcased their talent and put up scintillating dance performances, folk songs & skits. The multitalented teachers enthralled the audience and kept them spell-bound throughout the function. The Annual Report of YTS was read out by Mrs. Esther William, Principal Alexander Memorial School. The honorable Chief Guest Mrs Indu Chib appreciated the YTS for providing a platform to the budding young minds to display their hidden talent. She expressed her satisfaction with the measures adopted by the skilled teachers for guiding the young children and equipping them to face the challenges of life.

BOSE rebuts news regarding poor supply of text books in schools Board achieves 72% target in books distribution

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 7: The JKBOSE has strongly countered a news reported in a section of media regarding shortage of prescribed text books in government schools, which have opened today after a long winter break.

In a statement issued here today in this regard, the Board has clarified that nearly 72% books have already been received and distributed among the zonal education heads across the Kashmir Valley.

Despite inclement weather over the last week, the Board has succeeded in distribution of 13.46 lakh books while the remaining 5.50 lakh books are in the transit, which will take another 4 to 5 days

to reach the end-destination in Kashmir valley and winter zones of Jammu division.

The Board has expressed concern over factually wrong news report, advising the publisher to clarify the factual position before flashing misleading information among the public. In a statement issued here today in this regard, the Board has clarified that nearly 72% books have already been received and distributed among the zonal education heads across the Kashmir Valley.

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Govt trains over 75,000 under PMKVY 4.0 in 2 years

11,932 J&K artisans sanctioned with loans under PM Vishwakarma scheme; 1.18 lakh trained so far

■ HT News Network

Jammu, Mar 07 (KNO): The Jammu and Kashmir government on Friday said it made a significant progress in skill development and employment generation under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) 4.0 and the PM Vishwakarma Scheme, benefiting thousands of youth, women, and artisans across the Union Territory.

In a written reply to a query raised by MLA Irshad Rasool Kar, the government, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), states that under PMKVY 4.0, a flagship skill development initiative aimed at enhancing employability, a total of 14,466 beneficiaries were trained

and certified through National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) Centres in the financial year 2023-24.

Around 8,775 (60%) were women, 4% belonged to the Scheduled Caste (SC) community, 4% were from the Other Backward Classes (OBC), and 1.3% were from the Scheduled Tribe (ST) community.

Similarly, in the ongoing financial year 2024-25, the government has already trained 60,768 beneficiaries under PMKVY 4.0, marking a significant increase in participation, of which, 42,721 (70%) women beneficiaries, 2.7% SC, 2.2% OBC, and 1.3% ST were benefited.

Under PM Vishwakarma Scheme—boost for traditional artisans and craftsmen, launched in September 2023 for a period of five years, the



government said, that since its launch, a total of 1,18,296 artisans and craftsmen across 20 trades have received skill training in Jammu & Kashmir.

The MSME Ministry also distributed 14,691 toolkits to eligible beneficiaries, enabling them to improve the quality of their products and

enhance market competitiveness.

Additionally, 11,932 loans have been sanctioned under the scheme to help artisans establish or expand their business units, ensuring their financial stability and long-term growth—Additionally, a total of 3,600 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have been provided with a revolving fund to support their financial needs and strengthen their operations, government said in a reply to MLA Irshad Rasool Kar, adding, that government also trained 10,690 urban youth, equipping them with vocational skills necessary for self-employment and job opportunities.

Similarly, under the PM Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PMSVANidhi) scheme, the government said they have issued certificates of vend-

ing to 23,697 street vendors, making them eligible for affordable micro-loans with a 7% interest subsidy.

Notably, the PMSVANidhi scheme, launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, is designed to provide collateral-free loans to street vendors, helping them recover from financial hardships and expand their businesses—Under the Self-Employment Programme (SEP) component of National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM), the government has facilitated 17,874 beneficiaries in starting their own businesses and entrepreneurial ventures across urban areas of Jammu & Kashmir, it said. The Jammu and Kashmir government on Friday said that over 17,874 beneficiaries gain self-employment and 10,690 receive skill training.

DG Rural Sanitation inspects Swachh Bharat Mission- Gramin assets

■

HT News Network

JAMMU MARCH 07: Director General Rural Sanitation Jammu & Kashmir Anoo Malhotra conducted a field visit to inspect the progress and functionality of key assets created under the Swachh Bharat Mission- Gramin (SBM-G). The visit was supported by officials from the Directorate of Rural Sanitation, Block Development Officers (BDOs), the Swahaa team, and the Project Management Unit (PMU).

The visit began with a review of sanitation initiatives, on-ground implementation and impact of the SBM-G. Later she inspected the GOBARdhan Plant and the Plastic Waste Management Unit at Phallian Mandal and Suchetgarh. Malhotra underscored several crucial aspects for ensuring the effectiveness of these programs. She directed that a designated person be assigned for the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) of both the GOBARdhan



plant and the Plastic Waste Management Unit. She further stressed the need for greater community involvement in the GOBARdhan initiative to ensure its long-term success and sustainability.

In addition, Malhotra placed significant emphasis on enhancing the overall waste management systems in rural areas. She urged the implementation of door-to-door

waste collection, the proper use of segregation sheds, and the establishment of community soakage and compost pits to facilitate better waste processing. Moreover, she highlighted the importance of Community Sanitary Complexes to provide rural populations with accessible sanitation facilities.

Regarding the Plastic Waste Manage-

ment Unit, Malhotra expressed her concerns about its current status and directed officials to ensure its functionality at the earliest. She also emphasized the need to generate revenue from the unit to ensure its operational sustainability and contribute to the local economy.

Speaking on the occasion, Malhotra said, "The Swachh Bharat Mission- Gramin is a cornerstone of our efforts to improve rural sanitation. To achieve long-lasting change, it is essential that we focus on both effective waste management and community participation. We need to ensure that these projects are well-maintained, functional, and beneficial for the communities they serve."

The visit highlights the government's commitment to ensuring the success and sustainability of the Swachh Bharat Mission- Gramin in Jammu & Kashmir, with a focus on community-driven solutions and improved waste management practices.

Special healthcare services coming up for elderly persons at DH Kishtwar

■

HT News Network

KISHTWAR, MARCH 07: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rajesh Kumar Shavan today visited the District Hospital (DH) Kishtwar to evaluate the efforts being made to improve healthcare services for the elderly persons.

The DC reviewed the progress of the renovation of the Facility with advanced care and support for the elderly. The DC directed for the fast-tracking of the renovation of the designated building. The DC also assessed the overall functioning of the District Hospital and got a briefing from the Medical Superintendent.

The DC directed EO Municipality to enhance sanitation in and around the District Hospital premises, as well as around the welfare facility for the elderly. He also instructed ExEn PHE to address the issue of the leaking of pipes and ensure they are properly maintained underground for safety and operational efficiency. ACD Phulail Singh, DSWO Zubair Ahmed, EO Municipality Mirza Mumtaz Iqbal, ExEn PWD, CMO Dr. Rajinder Kumar, MS DH Dr. Yudhvir Singh Kotwal, and other senior officers and officials were present during the visit. He also instructed ExEn PHE to address the issue of the leaking of pipes and ensure they are properly maintained underground for safety and operational efficiency. ACD Phulail Singh, DSWO Zubair Ahmed, EO Municipality Mirza Mumtaz Iqbal, ExEn PWD, CMO Dr. Rajinder Kumar, MS DH Dr. Yudhvir Singh Kotwal, and other senior officers and officials were present during the visit.

DC reviews implementation of District Environment Plan in Poonch

■

HT News Network

POONCH, MARCH 07: Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal on Friday chaired a meeting of the District Environment Committee to review the implementation of the District Environment Plan for 2024-25. The meeting focused on assessing progress, identifying challenges, and outlining future action plans for environmental conservation and improvement.

A comprehensive discussion was held on the environmental management, including: Air Pollution Control, Solid Waste Management Plan, Biomedical Waste Management, Plastic Waste Management, Collection, Segregation, and Treatment Plans, Control of Polluted Water Bod-



ies, Domestic Sewerage Management, Mining Activity Management, Hazardous Waste and E-Waste Management, Water Quality Management.

While reviewing the solid waste management plan, the DC directed municipal authorities to ensure that waste disposal is conducted in a scientific and regulated manner. He also instructed the municipality to propose mechanical road sweeping for

Poonch town and to identify suitable sites for the disposal of construction waste.

Discussing air and water pollution control, he urged the Pollution Control Authority to install additional air quality monitoring systems in urban areas and to conduct weekly water sampling near the town.

Regarding plastic waste management, the departments were tasked with

prohibiting single-use polythene bags and issuing challans to violators. Officers were also asked to compile a list of single-use plastics and promote awareness among the public about the importance of reducing plastic waste.

"The environment protection plan is a vital step for the future generations," said DC Vikas Kundal. "We must all seize the opportunity to contribute to a healthier and more sustainable future. It is our responsibility to save our environment and enhance the biodiversity around us."

The meeting was attended by key stakeholders, including the Additional Deputy Commissioner Poonch, GM DIC, ACD, DFO, CMO, CEO, ACP, District Minerals Officer, EO Municipality, and other concerned officials.

Motor Vehicles Department Ramban intensifies action against traffic Violators

■

HT News Network

RAMBAN, MARCH 7: The Motor Vehicles Department (MVD) Ramban has intensified the enforcement drive to rein in traffic violators and maintain safe driving on the roads.

In adherence with the directives of Deputy Commissioner Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, and as per the guidelines of Transport Commissioner Vishesh Paul Mahajan, the Assistant Regional Transport Officer (ARTO Kuldeep Singh has issued show cause notices to habitual violators and offenders for the suspension of their route permits and driving licenses.

Over the past 15 days, the department has issued show cause notices to seven drivers for suspension of their driving licenses and six vehicle owners holding route permits for Banihal-Chamwal, for indulging in overcharging, overloading, and refusal to ply their vehicles as per the fare rates notified by the Transport Department.

During this extensive enforcement drive, the MVD team seized 20 vehicles and challaned 120 vehicles for operating without valid permits, fitness certificates, or for being unfit for public transportation.

Alongside the enforcement actions, the ARTO Ramban and his team of Motor Vehicle Inspectors (MVIs) held meetings with transport operators and drivers to create awareness about road safety. During these interactions, drivers were counseled on ensuring vehicle fitness, timely renew-



al of documents, and adhering to speed limits. Strict warnings were issued against overcharging, overloading, and over speeding, and transporters were directed to operate their vehicles as per the prescribed time schedule.

ARTO Kuldeep Singh assured transport operators that their genuine grievances, if any, will be addressed on priority. However, he reiterated that such drives will continue across the district and no violations of traffic rules will be tolerated to ensure passenger safety across the district. In adherence with the directives of Deputy Commissioner Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, and as per the guidelines of Transport Commissioner Vishesh Paul Mahajan, the Assistant Regional Transport Officer (ARTO Kuldeep Singh has issued show cause notices to habitual violators and offenders for the suspension of their route permits and driving licenses. Over the past 15 days, the department has

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Ayush Directorate hosts awareness program on Rule 170 of Drugs & Cosmetics Act

■

HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 7: The Directorate of Ayush J&K successfully organized an Awareness Program cum Interactive Session on Rule 170 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1945 here today, focusing on misleading advertisements and false claims related to Ayush medicines.

The session, held in the Meeting Hall of the Directorate of Ayush, Indra Chowk, was chaired by Director Ayush Dr. Nuzhat Bashir Shah. The program aimed to sensitize stakeholders about the legal provisions governing Ayush drug advertisements, ensuring compliance with regulation and to prevent misleading claims that may misguide the public and impact the credibility of the Ayush sector.

Dr Nuzhat Bashir Shah advised the nominated Ayush Medical Officers to act as per Rule 170 and work in close coordination with the Assistant Drug Controllers of their respective districts to enhance regulatory oversight and compliance.

State Drug Controller Lotika Khajuria provided in-depth insights into Rule 170 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, elaborating on the legal framework and enforcement mechanisms to curb false claims in Ayush drug promotion. She emphasized the need for strict adherence to the Act and urged stakeholders to ensure that advertisements align with the prescribed regulations. Assistant Director Directorate Ayush Dr Rakesh Kumar Raina provided insights about the role of nominated Ayush Medical Officers under Sub Rule 14 of Rule 170 of Drugs and Cosmetic Rules.

The event was attended by Dr Suresh Sharma Deputy Director Ayush, Jammu, District Ayush Officers, Nominated Ayush Medical Officers representatives from Ayush drug manufacturing units, and other stakeholders, both in person and virtually. The interactive session provided clarity on compliance requirements and best practices for responsible drug promotion in the Ayush sector. The Directorate of Ayush, J&K, reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring the credibility and authenticity of Ayush medicines by strengthening the regulatory framework and fostering greater awareness among stakeholders. The event was attended by Dr Suresh Sharma Deputy Director Ayush, Jammu, District Ayush Officers, Nominated Ayush Medical Officers representatives from Ayush drug manufacturing units, and other stakeholders, both in person and virtually. The interactive session provided clarity on compliance requirements and best practices for responsible drug promotion in the Ayush sector.

Women's Day celebrated by NABARD, JKRLM at Banihal

■

HT News Network

RAMBAN, MARCH 7: The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), in collaboration with the Jammu & Kashmir Rural Livelihoods Mission (JKRLM), celebrated International Women's Day here today under the aegis of the District Administration Ramban.

The event witnessed the participation of District Manager NABARD, Aarshi Sharma, NRLM BPM Banihal, Irahad, SBI Branch Manager, Vinayak, and JKB Manager Ishrat.

During the program, women Self-Help Group (SHG) members were briefed on various government-sponsored subsidy schemes aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs and strengthening rural livelihoods. As a mark of recognition and encouragement, ten women achievers were felicitated at the event with prizes for their outstanding contributions in various fields.

Additionally, an interactive session was held, where queries from SHG members were addressed, ensuring better access to financial and entrepreneurial opportunities for women in the region. The celebration highlighted the efforts of NABARD and JKRLM in fostering women's empowerment through financial literacy and self-reliance, paving the way for sustainable development in Ramban.

GDC Ramgarh, FICCI FLO JKL

ink MoU to launch Young Women Affinity Group, Digital Literacy Program

■

HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 7: Government Degree College (GDC) Ramgarh today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with FICCI FLO Jammu Kashmir & Ladakh Chapter to empower young women through education and skill development.

The MoU was signed by the College Principal Dr. Geetanjali Andotra, and Chairperson FICCI FLO JKL Ruchika Gupta. As part of this collaboration, Young Women Affinity Group (YWAG) has been established at GDC Ramgarh, providing a dedicated platform for women students pursuing higher education. This initiative will offer students various opportunities, including participation in knowledge-building sessions, skill-enhancement workshops, industry-oriented training programs, and networking events organized by FICCI FLO JKL.

In addition, the Digital Literacy Program in Financial Awareness, launched in partnership with NIIT Foundation, was introduced during the event. Addressing the students, Ruchika Gupta emphasized the importance of financial literacy in today's digital world and how this program will empower students with essential financial management skills as they step into their professional journeys. She highlighted the significance of the certification they will receive upon course completion and encouraged students to make the most of this learning opportunity. Gupta also extended her gratitude to Dr. Geetanjali Andotra for her unwavering support in launching this initiative.

Rattan Lal Gupta lauds CM Omar Abdullah's Visionary, Historical people friendly and Balanced Budget

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HT News Network

Jammu, March 7: Advocate Rattan Lal Gupta, Provincial President of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC), today praised the Rs 1.12 lakh-crore budget presented by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, describing it as a visionary and historical financial plan that aligns with the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"This budget is a testament to our government's commitment to fulfilling the promises outlined in our party's manifesto," said Gupta. "It comprehensively addresses the needs of various segments of society, including farmers, industrialists, women, youth, traders, and the common man."

In a press release issued here today, the senior NC leader said that the budget allocates 815 crore to promote a two-crop pattern, expand horticulture, enhance wool processing, and develop the leather tanning industry, initiatives expected to generate approximately 2.88 lakh jobs, significantly boosting the agricultural sector. Additionally, 390.20 crore is dedicated to enhancing tourism infrastructure, including increasing home stays, promoting water sports, developing Sonmarg as a winter sports destination, constructing a new water park in Sidhra, and positioning Besholi as an adventure tourism hub. The Provincial President also welcomed the decision of Omar Govt for providing 200 units of free electricity and increase 10 Kg ration per person per month from 5 Kg for AAY families in Jammu and Kashmir, aiming to reducing the financial burden on AAY families and ensuring access to essential services. Enhancement of financial assistance from Rs 50,000 to Rs 75,000 for the marriage of daughter of a poor family.

He also welcomed the move of Omar Govt to empower women by announcing free travel for women on government-operated public transport, including e-buses, starting April 1, 2025, aiming to promote women's mobility and empowerment across the region. Infrastructure development is also a priority, with plans to construct 500 new Panchayat Ghars to strengthen local governance.



SC grants interim bail to UP MLA Abbas Ansari with stringent conditions

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, MAR 7 (UNI)

The Supreme Court on Friday granted interim bail to Uttar Pradesh MLA Abbas Ansari in a case registered under the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act, 1986.

The Court imposed stringent conditions on his movement and public statements.

A Bench comprising Justice Surya Kant and Justice N Kotiswar Singh noted that while Ansari is facing multiple cases, he has secured bail in all except the present one.

Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal, representing Ansari, argued that the allegations in this case mirrored those of an earlier FIR, which had been quashed for lack of application of mind. He contended that the police had already gathered all necessary evidence, questioning the need for further incarceration. "I have been in jail for seven months due to one case or another. The allegations in the previous FIR were identical and were quashed. The same accusations are being used to keep me inside," Sibal argued.

Opposing the bail plea, Additional Solicitor Gen-

eral (ASG) K.M. Nataraj, appearing for the Uttar Pradesh government, cited Ansari's criminal history and influence, asserting that he threatened witnesses. "He is an influential person who can threaten witnesses. We need to examine key witnesses before granting bail," the ASG submitted.

However, the Bench observed that the pending witnesses were police officials rather than private individuals and questioned the prosecution on the prolonged detention.

The Court granted interim bail subject to the following conditions that Ansari must remain at his official accommodation in Lucknow. He can visit his constituency only with prior permission from the district police administration and district court.

The Apex Court said that Ansari cannot leave Uttar Pradesh without the special trial court's approval. He must refrain from making public statements on sub judice matters. He must furnish a bail bond to the satisfaction of the Sessions Court, Chitrakoot. He must appear before the trial court in this or any other case and notify authorities one day in advance.

Modi govt committed to promote all regional languages, including Tamil : Amit Shah

AGENCIES

CHENNAI, MAR 7 (UNI)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said the BJP-led Government at the Centre headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was strongly committed to promote all the regional languages, including Tamil. He was addressing the 56th Raising Day event of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) Regional Training Centre, which he renamed it after Rajaditya Cholan Regional Training Centre (RTC) in memory of the Chola prince, who died in a battle there centuries ago, at Thakkolam in Ranipet district of Tamil Nadu. Stressing on the importance of preserving the rich cultural heritage of Tamil Nadu, he highlighted the efforts of the Prime Minister to honour the state's linguistic and cultural legacy.

In an apparent counter to the ruling dmk's oft-repeated charge that the Government headed by Mr Modi had done nothing for promoting Tamil language and development and that enough funds were not



allocated, Mr Amit Shah said Tamil Nadu's heritage significantly contributes to the broader Indian cultural fabric and the rich culture of the State has greatly bolstered India's diverse heritage.

The central government values and promotes every state's language," Mr Amit Shah said, adding "the Prime Minister has prioritised Tamil and its heritage, taking concrete steps to incorporate state languages into educational and professional spheres."

Pointing out that the government has introduced several initiatives like inclusion of regional languages, such as Tamil, in critical examinations for the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), the Union Home Minister said prior to Mr Modi's tenure, candi-

dates could not take CAPF exams in their mother tongue, be it Tamil, Bengali or Kannada.

"Now, under the guidance and leadership of Mr Modi, candidates can write the CAPF exams and other exams in their regional languages, ensuring that no candidate is disadvantaged by language barriers," he asserted.

In this context, Mr Amit Shah urged Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin to introduce medicine and engineering courses in Tamil, a point which he had made it earlier, while attending a function in Chennai.

Offering these programs in the Tamil language will greatly benefit local students and make higher education more accessible, he noted.

"I have been advocating for the introduction of medicine and engineering courses in Tamil for the past two years, but no action has been taken so far", Mr Amit Shah said.

"I urge the Chief Minister to take necessary steps at least now and introduce medical and engineering courses in Tamil", he added.

To drive home his point, Mr Amit Shah said similar initiatives have already been implemented nationwide, allowing students to pursue courses in fields like medicine and engineering in their native languages, which helps in bridging educational gaps while ensuring greater inclusivity for students across India. Reiterating the ambitious goals set by Mr Modi, including transforming India into the world's third-largest economy by 2027 and establishing it as a fully developed nation by 2047, the Union Home Minister congratulated the CISF's pivotal role in safeguarding the national interests, which directly contributes to the realisation of these objectives.

Delimitation row : Stalin writes to present, former CMs of various States to join JAC

AGENCIES

CHENNAI, MAR 7 (UNI)

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K.Stalin on Friday wrote to various State Chief Ministers and former CMs regarding the proposed delimitation exercise by the Union Government based on population and sought their formal consent and to nominate one senior representative from their party to the Joint Action Committee (JAC) to be formed to carry forward the battle and to create an awareness among the people. In a Demi-Official letter to them, Mr Stalin said in line with the resolution adopted at an All Party Meeting on March 5 chaired by him to discuss the issue resolving to for the JAC, he requested their formal consent to join the JAC comprising of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka in the South to West Bengal and Odisha in the East, Punjab in the North and second nomination of one senior representative from your party who can serve on the JAC and help coordinate our unified strategy".



Mr Stalin said As an initial step towards unified action, he proposed to convene an inaugural meeting in Chennai on March 22, to chart the collective course forward.

"This moment demands leadership and collaboration, rising above political differences and standing up for our collective good", he added. "What is at stake is not any abstract principle - it is our States' ability to secure rightful resources for development, to influence crucial policies on education and healthcare and to ensure our economic priorities receive due attention in the national agenda", the Chief Minister said.

Karnataka Budget 2025-26: Total Borrowings rise to Rs 1.16 lakh crore

AGENCIES

BENGALURU, MAR 7 (UNI)

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday presented the state budget for 2025-26, announcing that total borrowings for the fiscal year stand at Rs 1.16 lakh crore—Rs 11,000 crore higher than the previous year.

The fiscal deficit for 2025-26 is pegged at Rs 90,428 crore, making up 2.95 percent of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). Meanwhile, the revenue deficit is estimated at Rs 19,262 crore, or 0.63 percent of GSDP. By the end of the financial year, Karnataka's total liabilities are projected to reach Rs 7,64,655 crore, constituting 24.91 percent of GSDP.

"By keeping fiscal deficit and total outstanding liabilities within the limits mandated under the Karnataka Fiscal Responsibility Act, we have maintained fiscal discipline in the financial year 2025-26," the CM noted.

The budget estimates total receipts at Rs 4,08,647 crore, with revenue receipts amounting to Rs 2,92,477 crore. This includes the state's own tax revenue of Rs 2,08,100 crore, non-tax revenue of Rs 16,500 crore, and receipts from the Government of India totalling Rs 67,877 crore.

Additionally, gross borrowings of Rs 1,16,000 crore and non-debt capital receipts of Rs 170 crore



have been factored into the financial outlook. The total estimated expenditure for 2025-26 stands at Rs 4,09,549 crore, comprising revenue expenditure of Rs 3,11,739 crore, capital expenditure of Rs 71,336 crore, and loan repayment of Rs 26,474 crore. Karnataka, which ranks second in GST revenue collection nationwide, has set a revenue target of Rs 1,20,000 crore for the Commercial Tax Department in FY26. The state expects to generate Rs 40,000 crore from State Excise, up from Rs 36,500 crore in 2024-25. Additionally, the government aims to collect Rs 28,000 crore in property registration tax, marking an increase from Rs 24,000 crore last year. The Motor Vehicle Tax revenue target for FY26 has been set at Rs 15,000 crore, up from Rs 12,500 crore in the previous year.

Royalty collections for 2025-26 are estimated at Rs 9,000 crore, while revenue from the Mines and Geology Department is projected at Rs 7,250 crore for 2024-25.

Despite the surge in borrowings, infrastructure development in the state has been minimal, raising concerns about fund utilisation. Experts note that while the fiscal deficit remains within manageable limits, the absence of substantial capital expenditure could hamper long-term economic growth. Critics argue that unless infrastructure investment is prioritised, the increasing debt burden may fail to yield tangible benefits for Karnataka's economy.

While presenting the budget to the house, Siddaramaiah quoted 12th-century reformer Basavanna on social equity. He emphasised that the budget focuses on sustainable economic growth while ensuring financial consolidation.

"By prioritising key sectors such as infrastructure, irrigation, and social welfare, we are laying the foundation for long-term prosperity. As we move forward, this budget will not only foster growth but also secure a strong fiscal health of the state," the CM said.

India slams UK govt over 'license accorded' to Khalistani elements after EAM's security breach

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, MAR 7 (UNI)

India today slammed the UK government for its inaction on Khalistani elements who heckled External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during his London visit, and said it "brings out the license accorded" to the separatists.

In a stern statement, the Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at the weekly media briefing:

"We have conveyed our deep concern to the UK authorities about the breach of security arrangements by UK-based separatist and extremist elements during EAM's visit.

"There is a larger context to the incident. It brings out both the license accorded to such forces, as well as indifference to their intimidation, threats, and other actions aimed at impeding our legitimate diplomatic activities in the UK.



"While we have noted the statement issued by the UK Foreign Office on the matter, our view of its sincerity would depend on the action taken against culprits on this and previous occasions," he said.

India's strong statement comes a day after it issued a condemnation of the breach of security during EAM's London visit when a group of Khalistani separatists heckled him and tried to block his car.

On Wednesday evening, EAM Jaishankar was heckled by a group of Khalistani supporters who were shouting anti-

India slogans when the minister was going for a programme in London.

As the External Affairs Minister left the venue, one among the pro-Khalistani elements dashed in front of his car and tore the national flag of India, according to visuals on social media.

The issue was raised in the British parliament yesterday by Conservative MP Bob Blackman who lambasted the government of UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer over the lack of security provided to the EAM.

"This is an affront to

democracy, it's an affront to our friends and allies in India; and we need to make sure that it doesn't happen again," Blackman said.

Earlier, in January this year, India had protested the disruption of the screening of Kangana Ranaut's film 'Emergency' in several halls in the UK by Khalistani elements. The film is based on the Emergency imposed by the former PM in 1975.

The MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal had said then that "Freedom of speech and expression cannot be applied selectively, and those obstructing it must be held accountable."

He expressed hope that the UK side would take appropriate action against those responsible.

In March 2023, relations between the two sides had deteriorated over the UK government's inaction on the Khalistani issue.

India had summoned

the senior-most UK diplomat in New Delhi then to convey its strong protest after some Khalistani elements removed the Indian flag from outside the Indian High Commission in London and attempted to replace it with a Khalistani flag.

India had then also demanded an explanation for the complete absence of British security that allowed the Khalistani elements to enter the Indian High Commission premises.

India had demanded that the perpetrators be arrested and prosecuted and stringent measures be put in place to prevent recurrence of such incidents.

Later that year, India "disengaged" from the FTA trade talks over UK's failure to condemn pro-Khalistani activists who vandalised the Indian High Commission.

India and the UK last week re-launched the

IAF's Jaguar aircraft crashes in Ambala; pilot ejects safely

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, MAR 7 (UNI)

A Jaguar aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) on Friday crashed at Ambala

during a routine training sortie after encountering a system malfunction, the IAF said.

The pilot, however, manoeuvred the aircraft

away from habitation on the ground before ejecting safely. The IAF has ordered an inquiry to ascertain the cause of the accident, it said.

Israel's Population and Immigration Authority announced that the 10 Indian workers were rescued on Wednesday night.

The workers had been lured to the al-Zaayem town with promises of work.

However, upon their arrival, their passports were stolen. The thieves sought to use the stolen passports to enter Israel. And without their passports, the workers could



not return to Israel, an Israeli website reported.

The workers were trapped for about a month before their rescue.

The IDF had previously identified the fraudulent use of the stolen passports and returned them to their rightful owners.

Following the rescue, the workers were moved to a safe location.

The Indian Embassy said on X that the matter is under investigation.

"Israeli authorities traced 10 missing Indian construction workers to West Bank & have brought

them back to Israel.

"While the matter is still under investigation, the Embassy is in touch with the Israeli authorities & have requested to ensure their safety & well-being."

Earlier this month, a 47-year-old man from Kerala was shot dead at the Israel-Jordan border while attempting to enter Israel illegally on February 10. He had come to Jordan on a three-month tourist visa.

The Indian national, identified as Ani Thomas Gabriel, was from Thiruvananthapuram's Thumba. He died of a bullet wound to the head, according to reports.

Another person from Kerala, Edison, a relative of Gabriel, was shot in his

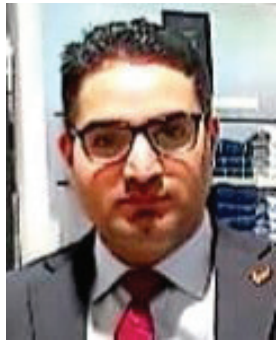
leg, and was sent back to India after getting treatment at a Jordanian hospital.

According to reports, Gabriel and Edison were part of a four-member group attempting to cross the border from Jordan into Israel with the help of an agent. All four had arrived in Jordan on a three-month visit visa.

The group was intercepted by the Jordanian army at the border, but as they attempted to escape, the army opened fire at them.

In November 2023, Israel's construction sector had asked the government to allow companies to hire up to 100,000 workers from India to replace 90,000 Palestinians who

Kashmiri medico wins 2025 Indian Achiever's Award



Kashmir-based medico cum noted columnist Dr Tasaduk Hussain Itoo has won the prestigious Indian Achievers Award 2025 for his exceptional contributions to healthcare, medical education, and public health awareness.

The award is presented by the Indian Achievers Forum, a registered society under the Society Act, 1860, and recognized by the Government of India. The award aims to promote achievements that



inspire others and contribute to the socio-economic welfare of India.

The award is a testament for Dr. Itoo's extensive academic achievements, including medical writing, research and academic leadership, men-

torship, patient care and guidance and affiliations at leading organizations such as the American College of Physicians, the International Diabetes Federation, and Royal College of Physicians.

Dr. Itoo's achievement

is a shining example of his dedication to excellence and his passion for making a positive impact in the society.

The Indian Achievers Award is a coveted awards program by Indian Achievers Forum - that recognizes individuals who have demonstrated excellence, innovation, and leadership in their respective fields.

Pertinently, Dr Itoo is a Fellow of the International Diabetes Federation (IDF Fellow, Belgium) and doctor at Narayana Health. His dedication, hard work, and commitment to excellence serve as an inspiration to others.

The Indian Achievers Forum has paid their good wishes to Dr Itoo on this prestigious achievement and wished him continued success in his future endeavours.

SE Asia sees decline in maternal mortality ratio, on track to achieve SDG target by 2030: WHO

Maternal mortality ratio (MMR) -- deaths due to complications from childbirth or pregnancy per 1 lakh live births -- has declined significantly in South-East Asia, including India, said World Health Organization (WHO) on Friday, ahead of the International Women's Day.

International Women's Day is marked annually on March 8 to raise awareness of the issues impacting women all over the world. MMR includes any maternal death that happens immediately or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, whether through childbirth, abortion, or miscarriage.

"MMR has declined significantly -- between 2010 to 2020, a 41 per cent decline in the region versus a 12 per cent decline globally," said



Saima Wazed, Regional Director for WHO South-East Asia.

"In fact, our region is on track to achieve the SDG target on MMR by 2030," she added.

Notably, India has reduced MMR by an impressive 70 per cent between 2000 and 2020. The country's MMR fell precipitously by 82.5 per cent between 1990 and 2020. The MMR under the UN-mandated Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for 2030 is 70.

Further, Wazed also noted improvements in women's labour force participation.

"In our South-East Asia region, the gender gap in women's labour force participation has narrowed in most countries," she said. In the past decades, the total fertility rate has decreased for most of the countries in the region.

However, Wazed also raised concerns over gender inequality and sexual violence against women in the SE Asia

region.

"In our region, all countries rank high on the global Gender Inequality Index. Nearly 40 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime," said Wazed.

"This aggravates the risks of communicable diseases like HIV and STI, along with mental health challenges," the Regional Director said.

The theme of Women's day this year is "For all women and girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment".

"It calls for actions to unlock equal rights, power, and opportunities for all women and girls, for a future where no one is left behind," said Wazed, noting that "empowering youth, particularly young women and adolescent girls is central to this vision".

Lack of proper sleep may raise hypertension risk in teenagers

Teenagers who do not get the right amount of sleep may be at an increased risk for high blood pressure or hypertension -- a common risk factor for cardiovascular diseases --, warned research on Friday.

Researchers from Pennsylvania State University in the US defined insomnia as reporting difficulty falling and/or staying asleep and defined objective short sleep duration as less than 7.7 hours, based on the median total time asleep in a lab-based sleep study.

The study on more than 400 teenagers in the US showed that teenagers who reported insomnia and slept less than 7.7 hours were five times more likely to have clinical hypertension than "good sleepers" (those who did not report insomnia and obtained sufficient sleep defined as 7.7 hours or more).



Teenagers who slept less than 7.7 hours but did not report insomnia had nearly three times the risk of elevated blood pressure compared to good sleepers. Those who self-reported insomnia but obtained sufficient sleep did not appear to be at higher risk for elevated blood pressure or stage 2 hypertension.

Teenagers need 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night,

according to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, yet the average high school student is estimated to sleep only 6.5 hours per weeknight.

The findings suggest the combination of insomnia and inadequate hours of sleep likely contributes to more severe conditions than lack of sleep alone, the researchers noted.

Julio Fernandez-Mendoza, Professor of Psychiatry

at the varsity noted that while poor sleep was a risk factor for high blood pressure in adults, its associations in adolescents were unknown.

"While we need to explore this association in larger studies on teenagers, it is safe to say that sleep health matters for heart health, and we should not wait until adulthood to address it," Fernandez-Mendoza said.

"Not all teenagers who complain of insomnia symptoms are at risk for cardiovascular issues. However, monitoring their sleep duration objectively can help us identify those who have a more severe form of insomnia and are at risk for heart problems."

The study was presented at the American Heart Association's Epidemiology, Prevention, Lifestyle and Cardiometabolic Health Scientific Sessions 2025, being held in New Orleans.

Six-year-old's Growing Pains Diagnosed As Blood Cancer; Know The Symptoms of Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma

A six-year-old's limp, initially dismissed by doctors as "growing pains," was shockingly diagnosed as blood cancer. For Dorset resident Meredith, who lives with her mom, dad, and elder brother, she was termed a "tenacious" and "joyful" child. However, when she began limping, her parents thought it could be due to some injury, and in the hospital, doctors said she could be experiencing "growing pains in her knee". Meredith was sent to a physiotherapy session, but they could not find a cause of her pain, so her symptoms were left undiagnosed.

In the next two months, Meredith developed a lump on her forehead, which started to grow "exponentially." She then underwent an MRI scan, which found cancer was



"everywhere"--from" her skull and neck to her stomach and leg.

Meredith was then diagnosed with blood cancer or non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. She took extensive chemotherapy treatment on what was supposed to be her first week of school, but she is responding well, and Kate said she's remaining positive and "playful" despite her situation. "Growing pains shouldn't be taken lightly in children; it shouldn't be dismissed and overlooked,"

her mother Kate told The Sun. Kate added the cancer was also present in Meredith's sinuses, skull, stomach, and the lymph nodes in her neck, saying it was "everywhere".

What is non-Hodgkin's lymphoma?

Non-Hodgkin lymphoma, or NHL, is a group of blood cancers that develop in your lymphatic system. It is one of two types of lymphoma--cancers that start in white blood cells called lymphocytes, which are important immune

system cells that help fight off infections.

With non-Hodgkin lymphoma, genes inside B lymphocytes or T lymphocytes begin to mutate, or change, at some point in your lifetime. The abnormal lymphoma cells usually form in your lymph nodes and then form tumours. According to experts, without treatment, non-Hodgkin lymphoma can spread. People with non-Hodgkin lymphoma are living longer than ever, thanks to new treatments. In some cases, treatments even cure the condition.

Signs and symptoms of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma

Doctors say the most common symptom of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma is painless swelling in your neck, armpits, or groin--a sign of swollen lymph nodes in those areas.

Beware! Never Take these 5 Expired Medicines; Can Pose Serious Health Risks

Always check your labels and take them seriously!

Taking expired medications does not always feel like a big deal, but according to experts, some can do serious damage to your health. It is a common practice to keep antibiotics, painkillers, energy pills, and even digestion medication in your medicine drawer, and without regularly discarding or checking most people pop them.

Plenty of people have also time and again popped a Combiflam or Ibuprofen past the use-by date on the label without any negative side effects. According to doctors, even a few antihistamines are relatively safe to consume after their expiration dates. While there is no risk of toxicity in these for s there is loss of potency, so they won't be as effective.

However, there are serious implications of taking a few other medicines way past their expiration dates.

Antibiotics
According to doctors, antibiotics should never be

taken without a prescription. Also, make sure to always check their expiry dates before popping a pill, because a few of them degrade to the point that they can cause irreversible kidney damage.

Also, if the antibiotics become obsolete, losing their effectiveness, they may not wipe out the bacteria in your body, leading to a worse infection. Doctors say the case is especially with liquid antibiotics, which become contaminated once the expiration date has passed.

So, never keep a huge stash of antibiotics at home, and buy only when recommended by a registered health professional, according to your diagnosis of a disease.

Insulin medicines
Insulin is a life-saving drug for those with high blood sugar levels and diabetes.

Manufacturers always print the insulation printing dates clearly on the product. This is the date that the insulin pen or vial, so long as it is kept refrigerated within the approved



temperatures, is assured by the manufacturer to be usable. Also, there is the amount of time from which the pen or vial is first opened for use. Typically, insulin is effective for

28 days after opening, with a few types lasting up to 40 days. Using it after that can be downright dangerous, as it may lead to hyperglycemia or dangerously high blood sugar levels.

EpiPens

An EpiPen is an auto-injector used to treat life-threatening, allergic emergencies in those who are at risk for or have a history of serious allergic emergen-

cies.

According to experts, it is extremely important to always check the expiration dates of an EpiPen, particularly ones for treating an emergency. While

most retain at least 90 per cent of epinephrine up to 24 months after the expiration date, always check for discoloration or particles in the solution.

Doctors say since epinephrine is not chemically stable, it is not known whether an expired EpiPen can stop anaphylaxis, hence, it is not advisable to use the drug past its expiration date.

In some cases, if an EpiPen is past its expiration date, it may show signs of decay, which include:

Discoloration, such as pinkish or yellowish hues
Cloudiness

The presence of particles

Inhalers
An albuterol sulfate or salbutamol inhaler relieves asthma symptoms and attacks. Most people do not use reliever inhalers every day, as they are mostly used for emergency situations.

And so, it is important to know that while it is safe to use inhalers, not all medications are safe or effective after their expira-

tion dates pass. The main risk of using an expired inhaler is that it may not control asthma symptoms as effectively as a new inhaler, as the active ingredients break down over time.

Doctors say as the medication's effectiveness reduces over time, it may lead to additional health risks, especially involving your lungs.

Anticoagulants and antiplatelets

Taking expired anticoagulants is highly risky as they become less effective or even harmful, potentially leading to increased bleeding risk or even the formation of blood clots.

According to experts, it is crucial to always check the expiration date and discard expired medications. Among the possible harm they cause, expired anticoagulants increase the chances of excessive bleeding, degrade into toxic compounds, and may even cause blood clot formation--leading to stroke, heart attack, or other life-threatening complications.



Omar announces specialised training for coaches to enhance capabilities, allocates Rs 152.69 cr for sports sector

AGENCIES

JAMMU, MAR 7 (UND)

Announcing specialised training for coaches to enhance their capabilities, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday allocated a capital expenditure allocation of Rs 152.69 crore for 2025-26, an increase of Rs 36.91 crore from the revised allocation of 2024-25.

"Jammu and Kashmir is poised to become a leading sports hub with ongoing investments in infrastructure and facilities. The establishment of 100 Khelo India Centres, development of sports complexes, and synthetic turfs in key stadia set the foundation for a vibrant sports ecosystem," Abdullah said while presenting his first budget in the UT Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

To nurture talent, the government will continue its efforts to train youth at Khelo India Centres, with an emphasis on increasing women's participation, he said adding, "Additionally, J&K will enhance its standing as the winter sports capital by hosting more winter games in Gulmarg and promot-



ing water sports through dedicated academies. With continued focus on infrastructure and athlete development, Jammu and Kashmir is set to shape a thriving sports ecosystem for future generations."

Abdullah said, "Our government is committed to transforming Jammu and Kashmir into a hub of sporting excellence by creating world-class infrastructure and opportunities for athletes," adding, "our Government will be establishing National Centres of Excellence for Water Sports at Dal Lake in Srinagar and Basohli in Jammu, providing state-of-the-art training facilities for water sports enthusi-

asts."

"A Gymnastics Academy will be set up at GindunRajbagh and Khel Gaon, Nagrota, ensuring specialized coaching for budding gymnasts. To nurture young cricketing talent, four state-of-the-art Cricket Academies will be established with a budgetary allocation of Rs 8 crore. Additionally, two new Youth Hostels—one each in Jammu and Kashmir divisions—will be constructed with a provision of Rs 10 crore," he said adding that high-Performance Training Centers will be developed in all districts in a phased manner to enhance athlete training and performance

at the grassroots level.

To promote mass participation, we aim to engage 75 lakh youth in sports activities across Jammu and Kashmir, fostering a culture of fitness and excellence, said Abdullah.

"To further promote sports and tourism, we will host important national and international sporting events in Jammu and Kashmir. Football exchange programs will be conducted to provide local players with exposure to global best practices. Special focus will be given to empowering coaches through capacity-building initiatives such as the Football Development Program and World Coach Programs," he added.

"In our endeavor to make quality sports infrastructure accessible, we are developing 247 playfields, stadiums, and sports courts across the region, along with the construction and upgradation of 19 sports buildings," adding he said, "to equip our stadiums with modern amenities, we are also procuring advanced sports equipment and generators."

"To further support our sportspersons, we will

ensure that travel costs, accommodation, and training opportunities are addressed, enabling athletes to compete at national and international levels without financial constraints," he said adding that coaches will receive specialized training to enhance their capabilities, and financial support for athletes will be increased to ensure equal opportunities for all.

"Our vision is to make sports an integral part of community development, ensuring participation from all sections of society. Two new swimming pools will be commissioned in both capital cities, further expanding training facilities. Additionally, dedicated sports facilities will be created for migrant populations to ensure inclusivity. Special emphasis will be placed on involving the rural and tribal population in games, fostering a culture of sports at the grassroots level," adding he said, "through these comprehensive initiatives, we aim to nurture talent, promote fitness, and position Jammu and Kashmir as a premier sporting destination in the country."

New Zealand pacer Matt Henry faces a race against time to be fit for Champions Trophy final



AGENCIES

DUBAI, MAR 7 (UND)

New Zealand's front-line pacer, Matt Henry, faces a challenge to be fit for the Champions Trophy final due to a shoulder injury sustained during the semi-final against South Africa in Lahore.

Henry, who is currently the tournament's leading wicket-taker, injured his shoulder while taking a catch to dismiss Heinrich Klaasen at the boundary.

Despite the injury, he returned to bowl two overs later in the match after treatment and was also seen diving in the field after his comeback, sparking optimism on the extent of the injury.

However, concerns over his fitness have emerged as the final approaches.

While skipper Mitchell Santner remained confident about Henry's availability immediately following the match on Wednesday, New Zealand head coach Gary Stead provided a more cautious update, revealing that Henry's fitness was still uncertain with less than 48 hours remaining before the final, an ICC report said.

"The positive is that he (Henry) managed to get back out there and bowl," Stead said.

"We've had some scans done, and we'll give him every chance to play in the final. However, at this stage, it's still a bit unclear," he said.

"He's obviously quite sore from landing on the point of his shoulder. Hopefully, he will be okay," Stead said.

With 10 wickets at an average of 16.70 across 4 innings in the tournament, Henry has embraced his role as a front-line pacer for New Zealand, including a five-wicket haul in the group-stage match against India in Dubai.

Should Henry be ruled out of the final, New Zealand have a ready replacement in right-arm seamer Jacob Duffy, who is part of the squad. Though Duffy has not featured in any of New Zealand's four matches so far in the tournament, he did play in the pre-tournament tri-series against Pakistan, where he claimed 1/48 in his seven overs.

New Zealand will face India in the Champions Trophy final in Dubai on March 9, their first CT final since 2009.

ICC reveals player of month nominees for Feb

AGENCIES

DUBAI, MAR 7 (UND)

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Friday announced shortlists for the ICC Men's and Women's Player of the Month awards for February, casting a spotlight on the top performers from a breathless month of international cricket.

Carrying outstanding form into the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025, three stars of the tournament form the nominees for the ICC Men's Player of the Month.

Shubman Gill grabbed the headlines with a stellar showing in India's decisive series victory over England pre-tournament and regained top spot in the ODI Batter Rankings ahead of their opening victory over Bangladesh.

New Zealand's Glenn Phillips enjoyed an unbeaten stretch at the crease in the Tri-Nation series in Pakistan and began his Champions Trophy with a half-century on opening day.

Completing the lineup is Australia skipper Steve Smith, who recorded back-to-back centuries as Australia dominated their World Test Championship series in Sri Lanka.

Elsewhere, two heroes of Australia's victory in the standalone Women's Ashes Test comprise the shortlist alongside a prolific young Thai bowler.

Spin maestro Alana King earns her first nomination in the Player of the Month awards following a supreme display in the conclusion of the Women's Ashes series in Melbourne along with Annabel Sutherland, who shone with a mammoth score in the innings victory.

The final nominee is



20-year-old Thai bowling sensation Thipatcha Putthawong, who was among the wickets in her side's winning campaign at the Nepal Women's Tri-Nation Series.

ICC Men's Player of the Month Nominees for February:

With 406 runs at an average of over 100, India's talismanic batter Shubman Gill was restored to the summit of the ICC Men's ODI Batter Rankings during February. Three contests against England saw him make sizable contributions of 87 and 60 before a sublime 112 in Ahmedabad sealed a commanding series sweep.

With confidence high, the 25-year-old then began his Champions Trophy campaign with a stylish 101 not out against Bangladesh to help chase down a challenging 229 target under the lights in Dubai.

The Blackcaps all-rounder Glenn Phillips geared up for the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 in style, providing valuable runs in the middle order to seal the Tri-Nation Series in Pakistan earlier in February.

Unbeaten scores of 28 and 20 followed a brilliant 106 from 74 balls in Lahore which featured seven maximums. Then, as the tournament commenced, Phillips enjoyed a bright

start, hitting an equally brisk 61 in 39 balls and taking a remarkable catch to remove Pakistan skipper Mohammad Rizwan, ensuring the Blackcaps protected their target in a 60-run victory in Karachi.

While Steve Smith's form was more subdued in the Champions Trophy, he once again took centre stage as stand-in skipper in Australia's dominant 2-0 World Test Championship series sweep over Sri Lanka in Galle.

The opening Test heralded a formidable 141 alongside Usman Khawaja, before he followed up with more of the same in the second Test, striking 131 in the first innings of a nine-wicket victory that sealed him the Player of the Series accolade and a spot back among the top five Test batters in the ICC Player Rankings.

ICC Women's Player of the Month Nominees for February:

Australia's premier legspinner Alana King enjoyed a fine Women's Ashes series, and played a starring role as they sealed the standalone Test in Melbourne to confirm a landmark series sweep. Key wickets of Sciver-Brunt, Dunkley and Wyatt-Hodge in the middle order came as King took four for 45 in the first innings, before she etched her name on

the honours board with a career-best return in the longest format with five for 53 in the second innings.

A previous winner back in May 2023, Thailand left-arm Thipatcha Putthawong was again the driving force behind their surge to success in February, topping the wicket-taking charts as her side sealed the Nepal Women's Tri-Nation Series.

In the space of six days at the start of the month, Putthawong took 14 wickets which included four successive hauls of three wickets or more. Not only impressing with the ball, Putthawong hit a vital unbeaten 25 before taking four for 10 in Thailand's thrilling five-run win over the hosts on 4 February.

Despite not winning the individual accolades Annabel Sutherland was nominated for in the recently announced ICC Awards 2024 (ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year and ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year), Sutherland picked up where she left off at the back end of the year with a sparkling 163 in the Ashes Test victory over England, becoming the first woman to score a Test century at the ground in her emphatic Player of the Match performance.

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