



CM Omar Abdullah moves 13 Demands, 12 Supplementary Demands in Assembly

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 18: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today moved 13 Demands and 12 supplementary Demands in the Legislative Assembly which was subsequently presented before the House for discussion by Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather.

"I move that a sum not exceeding the aggregate amount mentioned in Demand Nos. 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14, 19, 20, 24, 31 and 33 be granted to Government to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending 31st March, 2026

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New buildings, accommodation coming up in New Delhi, Chandigarh for J&K: CM Omar Abdullah

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 18: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today informed the Legislative Assembly that to address the limited accommodation at J&K House, Chanakypuri, the government has acquired

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LG interacts with youth delegation from Ladakh under ABVP's Student Experience in Regional Understanding (SERU) initiative

■ HT News Network



JAMMU, MARCH 18: Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha today interacted with the youth delegation from the UT of Ladakh under ABVP's Rashtriya Ekatmta Yatra - Student Experience in Regional Understanding (SERU) initiative.

During the interaction, the participating youth shared the experience and exposure they gained during their visits to different regions of the country.

The Lieutenant Governor commended the initiative by Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) to provide the youth of Ladakh with an opportunity to understand the country's cultural heritage, democratic values, educate them about educational and governance framework, and recognize their role in realising the vision of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'. He extended his felicitations and best wishes to the youth.

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Compassionate appointments

928 cases pending disposal under SRO-43: J&K Govt

■ HT News Network

Jammu, Mar 18: The Jammu & Kashmir Government on Tuesday said that 928 cases are pending disposal under SRO-43.

According to the news agency—in its reply to the cut motion of BJP MLA Balwant Singh Mankotia, the government disclosed that a total of 928 cases under SRO-43 are currently

pending disposal.

Of which, 624 cases are pending at the level of administrative departments and 304 cases have been referred to the General Administration Department for grant of relaxation(s) or identification of posts, the government disclosed.

The School Education

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Rs 14 crore spent on chartered flights in past 4 years: J&K Govt

Rs 1. 23 crore expenditure on VIP visits in 2024-25

■ HT News Network

Jammu, Mar 18: The Jammu & Kashmir Government on Tuesday said Rs 14. 85 crore expenditure has been incurred on chartered flights over the last four years.

As per the news agency—in its reply to the cut motion of MLA Shopian, Shabir Ahmad Kullay, the government said that an expenditure of Rs 14,85,94,471 has been incurred over the last four years on chartered flights after

observing codal formalities.

"Moreover there was no chartered flight before 2021," the government disclosed.

The government also disclosed that an expenditure of Rs 12312245 has been incurred

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Statehood restoration, J&K's special status NC Govt's top priority: Dy CM Calls for judicial probe into Kulgam deaths

■ HT News Network

KULGAM, MAR 18 (: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary on Tuesday said that the top most priority of the National Conference led government is to restore statehood and special status to Jammu and Kashmir, besides safeguarding land and jobs.

Talking to reporters after paying tribute to former Speaker Wali Mohammad



on his 31st death anniversary at Damhal

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CS emphasises energy audit of PMDP funded power infrastructure

Chairs Distribution Reforms Committee meeting under RDSS

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 18: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today impressed upon the Power Development Department (PDD) to carry out the energy audit of the infrastructure raised under Prime Minister Development Programme (PMDP) to assess the impact of these projects in reforming the energy distribution across J&K. Dulloo was speaking in a



high level Distribution Reforms Committee (DRC) meeting called to seek assessment of the progress on completion of these mega projects

implemented in different areas of the UT.

Those who attended the meeting included Principal

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Discretionary grants

Rs 80 lakh for CM, Rs 5 lakh for each cabinet minister

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, MAR 18: The Jammu & Kashmir Government on Tuesday said that a discretionary grant of Rs 80 lakh has been allocated to the Chief Minister for the fiscal year 2025-26 and Rs five lakh for each cabinet minister for the same period.

As per the news agency—in response to the cut motion submitted by BJP MLA Pawan Kumar Gupta, the Government revealed these allocations. It was further disclosed that during the current financial

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No data available to suggest whether cement factories at Khrew pose cancer threat or not: Govt

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MAR 18: The government on Tuesday said that there is no data available to suggest whether the cement factories in Khrew pose any cancer threat or not.

Replying to a query of MLA (Retired) Justice Hasnain Masoodi, whether the increasing levels of dust pollution and emission from cement factories in



Khrew, Khanmoh area are suspected to

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Govt defends timber policy, cites Supreme Court ruling on extraction

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MAR 18: The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Tuesday stated that the timber extraction in the Union Territory is regulated and carried out only as per the Supreme Court's 1996 ruling.

In response to a question raised by PDP legislator Mir Mohammad Fayaz the Minister in charge of Forest, Ecology & Environment Department, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), informed the Legislative Assembly that the government only permits

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Truth must be uncovered: CM's Advisor on Kulgam deaths

■ HT News Network

KULGAM, MAR 18: Chief Minister's Advisor Nasir Aslam Wani on Tuesday said it is essential to uncover the truth behind the deaths of siblings in Kulgam and determine the reason behind such continuous incidents.

Speaking to reporters



here in South Kashmir

regarding the death of two brothers who first went missing and then their bodies were recovered from Vaishaw Nallah, Wani, according to the news agency—said, "In this moment of grief, we are here to share their sorrow. May Allah give their families the strength to bear this loss. It is not an easy thing

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CAT Stops Salary of Senior JKAS Officer Over Non-Compliance

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MAR 18, : The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) in Jammu has ordered the immediate stoppage of salary for senior JKAS officer Shubhra Sharma over her failure to file a reply in a case related to workplace harassment. Sharma, the former Director of Animal Husbandry, Jammu, and currently Managing Director of JKRLM, was heading the Committee Against Sexual Harassment (CASH) at Workplace.

A bench comprising Member (J) Rajinder Singh Dogra and Member (A) Ram Mohan Johri expressed strong displeasure at Sharma's non-compliance

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New media policy being framed to encompass social media platforms: J&K

Press club building vacated due to dispute among members

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, MAR 18: The Jammu & Kashmir Government on Tuesday said that it is in the process of formulating a new media policy to encompass emerging platforms including social media platforms, news web portals and websites, for empanelment.

In its reply to cut motion of MLA Pulwama Waheed-ur-Rehman Para, the government disclosed that the department is in the process of formulating a new media policy to encompass emerging platforms



including social media platforms, news web portals and websites, for

empanelment. "The formulation of new media policy aims to align with the evolving media landscape and adhere to the standards set by the Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity (DAVP), Government of India," the government said. The government also claimed that the Press Club in Srinagar was vacated due to a dispute among its members. "In contrast, the Srinagar press club was operating from a building provided by the Estates Department in

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J&K High Court Stays Criminal Proceedings Against Former Ganderbal DC

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MAR 18, : The High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh has stayed its earlier directive to initiate criminal proceedings against the former Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Ganderbal over a false statement related to a property dispute. The stay came while hearing a review petition filed by the UT administration. Justice Sanjay Dhar issued notice to the original petitioner, Abdul Majid Sofi, and suspended the specific directive mandating the Principal District Judge, Ganderbal, to consider criminal action against the ex-DC. The rest of the judgment remains unchanged.

The case involves a six-story building in Beehama, Ganderbal, leased to Central University Kashmir for a hostel. The dispute arose after the administration allegedly took over the

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Construction of additional block at SDH Habbak halted by LCMA: Govt

‘Nearly 4,000 trained in Basic Life Support to handle emergencies in

HT News Network

Srinagar, Mar 18: The Jammu and Kashmir government said on Tuesday that the construction of an additional block at Sub-District Hospital (SDH) Habbak in Srinagar has been halted by the Lakes Conservation and Management Authority (LCMA). Responding to a question from MLA Salman Sagar, Health and Medical Education Minister Sakina Itoo, as per the news agency—, said work on the SDH upgradation began after administrative approval was granted under Government Order No. 656-JK (HME) of 2022, dated 15-09-2022, with an estimated cost of Rs. 1899.74 lakh. “The executing agency initiated the tendering process, while the department sought statutory compliance clearance from LCMA, which is still pending,” she said. Itoo said the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, in its order dated 06.09.2022 (PIL No. 159/2002), prohibited new construction within 200 metres of Dal Lake’s periphery, except for repairs and renovations of existing structures. She said the Principal of Government Medical College, Srinagar, filed an application (C.M No. 4159/2024) seeking permission for the SDH extension. On 05.08.2024, the court directed LCMA to consider the



application within three weeks, but no action has been taken so far. The Housing and Urban Development Department also reported that construction was halted as it commenced without the required permission from the competent authority, the minister said. “Since the site falls within the 200-metre buffer zone, fresh construction is not permitted except for repair, renovation, or reconstruction. The matter is currently under review by the Board of Competent Authority (BOCA),” she said. The health minister said that patient influx at SDH Hazratbal has increased in the past three years due to

the availability of services such as 24/7 digital X-ray, high-end ultrasound, an upgraded dental section, and maternal and child health facilities. “Although additional infrastructure is required, construction remains stalled by LCMA. However, the hospital has adequate medical and paramedical staff,” she said. Responding to a question from MLA Sajad Shaheen, Minister Itoo said that Banihal Constituency has 68 functioning healthcare institutions, including 1 Sub-District Hospital (SDH), 1 Community Health Centre (CHC), 7 Primary Health Centres (PHCs), 12 New Type Primary Health Centres (NTPHCs) and 47 Sub-Centres. These facilities provide primary to secondary healthcare, emergency treatment, maternal and child care, immunisation and family planning services, the minister said, adding that they screen for non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, cardiac conditions, diabetes, and renal ailments to reduce the burden on higher healthcare centres. “These institutions are equipped with inpatient (IPD) and outpatient (OPD) services, X-ray and laboratory facilities, and ambulance services. Ultrasound services are available at district and sub-district hospitals. To address staffing shortages, the department recently appointed 365 medical officers, with 17 posted in various health institutions in Ramban District,” she said.

Contractors served notices for repairing of roads in Udhampur West: Javed Dar

HT News Network

Srinagar, March 18: Minister for Rural Development Department, Javed Ahmad Dar, today informed the House that the roads being constructed by PMGSY in Udhampur West constituency are under Defect Liability Period (DLP) for a period of 5 years. If any damage is found after construction or during the maintenance period then it is being rectified by the Contractor, he added. The Minister was replying on behalf of the Deputy Chief Minister to a question raised by Pawan Kumar Gupta in the Legislative Assembly. He said that the roads being executed in Udhampur West Assembly Constituency under NABARD are in good condition and no substandard material has been used in PMGSY/NABARD roads. However, the Minister informed that the blacktopping done on 7 km road from Kainthgali Block Boundary Udhampur to Bariote Upto Moungrri, currently under construction, was removed and Wet Mix Macadam was re-laid when the authorities noticed defect in this entire 7 km road. He said that, as the weather improves, 50 mm thick Bituminous Macadam and 20 mm OGPC will be re-laid and whole rectification would be done by the concerned contractor. The Minister informed the House that various contractors have been served notices for repairing defects and damages of roads during DLP. He said that the roads to be repaired under the Defect Liability Period (DLP) included road projects from Garhi to Gathiyal Morh, LQ23- NH1A Km 63rd to Gandala, Gandala to Narore, Kainthgali Bariote Km 20th to Jesserkote, Moungrri to Ladda, Kainthgali Bariote km 44 to Lali and Mir to Saroffti. The notices have been issued to the Contractor for restoration.

No plan to provide stipend to unemployed youth: J&K government

3.70 lakh jobless youth registered with Employment Department

HT News Network

Jammu, Mar 17: The Jammu & Kashmir Government on Tuesday informed the Legislative Assembly that it has no plans to provide stipend to unemployed youth in the Union Territory. In a written response to a question of MLA Samba Devinder Kumar Manyal, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Minister in-charge Labour & Employment Surinder Choudhary informed the House that there is no plan to provide stipend to unemployed youth in the Union Territory.



“Currently there is no such plan to provide a stipend to the unemployed youth in the UT of J&K,” the minister said. The minister also disclosed that 370811 unemployed youth are regis-

tered with the government. Of them, 2, 13,007 are registered with the Department in Kashmir Valley and 1,57,804 in Jammu, the minister said. Listing out steps to provide employment to unemployed youth, the minister said all the departments refer their vacant posts after fulfillment of codal formalities to Jammu & Kashmir Public Service Commission and Services Selection Board. “The Employment Department is organizing career counselling on a regular basis for unemployed youth that helps them to explore career options in different avenues,” he said—(KNO)

CIK nabs Shalimar man operating radical social media handle on Facebook

Srinagar, Mar 18: Counter Intelligence Kashmir on Tuesday arrested a man operating a radical social media handle on Facebook. In a statement to the news agency—, a police spokesperson said, Showkat Ahmad Dar, son of Ghulam Ahmad Dar of Doodh Mohalla, Shalimar, Srinagar was arrested for operating the social media handle ‘Shaddy Kashmir Dryfruits’. The spokesperson said, “Acting on credible intelligence, and during the course of social media surveillance, a team of CIK successfully identified and apprehended an individual operating a radical social media handle on Facebook, ‘Shaddy Kashmir Dryfruits’, which was being used to disseminate extremist content with an intention to disturb peace.” Upon receiving input about the online activity, a swift investigation was launched, social media handle was resolved leading to the identification of the suspect as the social media abuser Showkat Ahmed Dar was found to be actively engaged in posting and sharing content aimed at glorifying terrorism, terrorist commanders and inciting anti-national sentiments among young minds,” the statement said.

Budget Session 2025 Question Hour in LA

WSSs worth Rs 391.57 cr undertaken under JJM in Samba: Javed Rana

HT News Network

Jammu MARCH 18 Minister for Jal Shakti Department, Javed Ahmad Rana, today informed the House that the government has undertaken 130 Water Supply Schemes (WSSs), worth Rs 391.57 crore in Samba district under the ambitious Jal Jeevan Mission. The Minister was replying to a question raised by Surjeet Singh Salathia in the Legislative Assembly. He informed the House that against Rs. 391.57 crore an expenditure of Rs. 179.10 crore has been incurred, till date. He said that 83 schemes have been completed till date and the remaining are at different stages of progress which shall also be completed within mission timelines subject to release of required funds under CSS by the Government of India and the corresponding UT component. Regarding execution of WSS works in Samba constituency, the Minister said that, presently, there are 76 schemes under execution, of which, 54 are under Jal Jeevan Mission worth Rs. 160.92 crore, against which an expenditure of Rs. 80.69 crore has been incurred till date with completion of 36 schemes and the remaining 18 schemes are at different stages of completion. He said that, similarly, there are 22 schemes taken up under CAPEX/NABARD at an estimated cost of Rs. 21.82 crore, against which Rs. 11.57 crore have been spent with completion of 17 works and the remaining are at different stages of completion. Legislator, Chander Prakash Ganga raised the supplementary to the question

17 WSSs worth Rs 72.27 cr under execution in Wagoora-Kreeri constituency: Javed Rana

HT News Network

Jammu MARCH 18 :Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmad Rana, today informed the House that 17 Water Supply Schemes (WSSs) worth Rs. 72.27 crore have been taken up for execution under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) to provide potable water in Wagoora-Kreeri constituency of Baramulla. The Minister was replying to a question raised by Irfan Hafiz Lone in the Legislative Assembly. He informed the House that against an estimated cost of Rs. 72.27 crore, an amount of Rs. 32.10 crore expenditure has been made, so far. These schemes, on completion, will cover 8483 households supplying them with a portable water supply, he added. He stated that most of the villages had piped water supply through Public Stand Posts (PSPs), which were installed under the erstwhile programs. The Jal Jeevan Mission targets providing Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) to every rural household, except single houses far away from villages/habitations, he added. He said that adequate drinking water supply is being provided in areas where the JJM schemes have been completed, however, there are some areas where JJM schemes have not been completed yet and as such may have low service levels which shall get improved with completion of these schemes. The Minister said that with the recent snowfall and rainfall, all the affected sources have been recharged and all the water supply schemes are running smoothly. However, in case of temporary depletions, whenever occurring due to long dry spells, regulation of supplies is being restored in addition to deployment of tanker services.

1496 CRCs hired during academic session 2024-25: Javed Dar

HT News Network

Jammu MARCH 18: The honorarium of Cluster Resource Coordinators (CRCs) has been proposed at Rs. 30000 per month with the Union Ministry for School Education and Literacy. Minister for Agriculture Production department, Javed Ahmad Dar, informed this while replying on behalf of Minister for Education to a clubbed question raised by Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami and Balwant Singh Mankotia in the Legislative Assembly. During the reply, the Minister stated that the School Education department had been engaging Contractual Lecturers on academic arrangement basis for the academic sessions, but since 2019 the department has engaged no contractual lecturers. He added that to cope up the staff shortage in High and Higher Secondary Schools, 1496 Cluster Resource Coordinators (CRCs) have been hired on temporary basis during the academic session 2024-25 to teach specific subjects in these schools on a monthly honorarium of Rs. 25000 up to 31.03.2025 only. The Minister further informed that Vocational/Skill education has been introduced in schools of J&K under centrally sponsored scheme Samagra Shiksha. He added that Vocational Education has successfully been implemented in 1350 High and Higher Secondary Schools of J&K under Samagra Shiksha.

J&K Forest Department organises one-day workshop on Ornithology, Plant Taxonomy Skills

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MARCH 18: The Planning and Publicity Division of J&K Forest Department organized a one-day workshop on ornithology and plant taxonomy skills at Sheikhbagh Forest Complex, Srinagar. The workshop aimed to enhance the skills and knowledge of forest officials in the fields of bird identification and plant taxonomy. Irfan Rasool Wani, Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF), Kashmir, was the chief guest at the workshop. Resource persons in the fields of ornithology and plant taxonomy delivered lectures and shared their expertise with the participants. The workshop covered various topics, including bird identification, habitat assessment, and plant taxonomy. The experts provided hands-on training and demonstrations to help participants develop their skills in these areas. Speaking on the occasion, CCF Kashmir Irfan Rasool Wani emphasized the importance of ornithology and plant taxonomy in forest conservation and management.



He encouraged the participants to apply their knowledge and skills in the field to contribute to the conservation of J&K’s rich biodiversity. The workshop was attended by Tawheed Ahmad Deva, Conservator of Forests, Srinagar Circle, Intesar Suhail, Wildlife Warden North, Mudasir Mehmood, DFO Anantnag, besides 42 forest officials participating from various Forest Divisions

across the Kashmir Region gained crucial knowledge and enhanced their capacity. The Planning and Publicity Division of J&K Forest Department organized a one-day workshop on ornithology and plant taxonomy skills at Sheikhbagh Forest Complex, Srinagar. The workshop aimed to enhance the skills and knowledge of forest officials in the fields of bird identification and plant

taxonomy. Irfan Rasool Wani, Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF), Kashmir, was the chief guest at the workshop. Resource persons in the fields of ornithology and plant taxonomy delivered lectures and shared their expertise with the participants. The workshop covered various topics, including bird identification, habitat assessment, and plant taxonomy. The experts provided hands-on training and demonstrations to help participants develop their skills in these areas. Speaking on the occasion, CCF Kashmir Irfan Rasool Wani emphasized the importance of ornithology and plant taxonomy in forest conservation and management. He encouraged the participants to apply their knowledge and skills in the field to contribute to the conservation of J&K’s rich biodiversity. The workshop was attended by Tawheed Ahmad Deva, Conservator of Forests, Srinagar Circle, Intesar Suhail, Wildlife Warden North, Mudasir Mehmood, DFO Anantnag, besides 42 forest officials participating from various Forest Divisions across the Kashmir Region gained crucial knowledge and enhanced their capacity.

EDITORIAL

Reconnection
of street lights
becomes a grave
issue in Srinagar

Srinagar city has been designated as one of the smart cities of the country. The people at helm claim that the facilities being provided to the residents of Srinagar city are the same being provided to residents of the other smart cities of the country. This sounds true in certain aspects but not in all aspects of human life. A glaring civic issue has been troubling the people of Srinagar and the people are upset about the same.

Even though half of the Srinagar city has been covered with smart meters and insulated cables the street lights have not been connected with the same. As a result of this hundreds of street lights have turned defunct and many localities in the city wore a ghost's look in the evening. The Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL) and Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) are at loggerheads over the issue. At the end of the day it is the common man who suffers and at present there is nobody to look into this issue.

The KPDCL officers and officials maintain that the street lights installed in the Srinagar city are not their babies and they have to be looked after by the SMC. On their part the SMC officers and officials said that they are facing infrastructure deficit and as such are not able to reconnect the street lights. The ball is getting tossed from one court to another and the people are running from pillar to post so that this grave issue is resolved.

Some of the National Conference legislators belonging to Srinagar raised this issue during the ongoing budget session of the legislative assembly. These lawmakers said that the Srinagar city gets plunged into pitch darkness as soon as the sun sets. As the street lights are not functioning in most of the areas the dogs are making merry. Due to this reason people fear to venture out early in the morning and in the evening hours.

It is imperative that the union territory government chips in and pulls up the concerned officers as well as officials so that the people heave a sigh of relief. A deadline needs to be set in this regard and it must be ensured that the necessary works are completed within the stipulated time frame. This would ensure that the KPDCL and SMC officials would take pain in settling this issue and the same would be hailed by the common masses.

India's Textile Revolution : The Story
of a Rising Consumer Powerhouse

A Decade of Transformation - The Rise of a Prosperous Bharat



GIRIRAJ SINGH
UNION MINISTER FOR TEXTILES

A decade ago, India's population stood at around 125 crore, and consumer spending was largely driven by necessity rather than desire. Shopping habits were predictable - new clothes for festivals, carefully planned expenses, and a focus on savings over splurging. Luxury brands were admired from a distance, and high-end fashion remained confined to the elite. But today, with a population of 142 crore and a booming middle class, that same family confidently steps into premium stores, shops online with ease, and celebrates life's milestones with grandeur. India is no longer just growing, it is thriving.

This shift is powered by three key pillars - rising purchasing power, an evolving consumer mind-set, and last-mile digital connectivity. The economic transformation has been remarkable, fuelled by rising incomes, government-backed manufacturing initiatives, and a digitally empowered Bharat. The 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' vision, launched in 2020, laid the foundation for self-sufficiency, further strengthened by the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme and PM MITRA textile parks. As manufacturing boomed, job creation followed, and with

it, an increase in disposable incomes that reshaped how Indians spend. Consumption is now the backbone of India's growth story, set to propel the textile sector into a golden era.

An Empowered Bharat - Confident, Bold and Aspirational

For years, aspirations outpaced reality. People worked hard, dreamed big, yet opportunities felt just out of reach. Then, a decade of policy-driven change turned ambition into achievement. Infrastructure expanded, digital India took shape, and economic reforms became tangible growth drivers. The impact? A nation of confident consumers ready to embrace quality, style, and convenience.

Incomes have soared. Per capita income has jumped from ₹72,805 in 2014-15 to ₹1.88 lakh in 2023-24 and is projected to reach ₹3.5 lakh by 2030. Today, six crore Indians earn over ₹8.3 lakh annually - more than double the number in 2015. This rising affluence is fuelling an unprecedented demand for fashion, textiles, and lifestyle products. By 2027, India will be the fourth-largest consumer durable market, driven not just by affordability but by aspirations.

The consumer behaviour shift post-COVID has been a game-changer. Digital access surged, online retail flourished, and UPI transactions skyrocketed - from 220 crore in FY 2013-14 to an astounding 18,592 crore in FY 2023-24. This digital transformation has bridged the urban-rural divide, ensuring that whether in a metro city or a small town, Indians now have seamless

access to global and local fashion trends.

Bharat's Fashion Revolution - Where Tradition Meets Ambition

Once a Western concept, fast fashion is now a way of life for young Indians. What was once exclusive is now within reach, thanks to brands like Zudio, Reliance Trends, and Shein fuelling a \$10 billion industry poised to touch \$50 billion by 2030. But this shift isn't just about affordability - luxury and heritage textiles are thriving alongside fast fashion. As aspirational households cross the 100-million mark by 2027, handcrafted fabrics, silk sarees, and high-end designer wear are witnessing a resurgence.

This revolution is not a coincidence, it is a direct outcome of government-driven initiatives. By cutting out middlemen, digitizing artisan platforms, and enabling direct customer-to-artisan connections, Digital India has transformed how fashion is bought and sold. A Paithani from Maharashtra, a Pashmina from Kashmir - now accessible at the click of a button. This democratization of fashion is empowering artisans, reviving heritage crafts, and bringing India's textile legacy to the forefront of the global stage.

Luxury & Heritage - Now More Accessible Than Ever

Indian weddings have always been grand, but today, they are a multi-billion-dollar economic force. The \$45 billion wedding industry is breathing new life into traditional weaving clusters, with families choosing artistry over

mass production. Luxury is no longer about labels, it's about legacy. Brides and grooms are opting for exclusivity, selecting handwoven Banarasi silks, intricate Kanjeevarams, and bespoke designs that celebrate India's rich textile heritage.

But the transformation isn't limited to attire. As India's economy soars, so does its appetite for elegance. Real estate prices surged by 30% between FY19-23, and with bigger, more refined homes comes a demand for hand-crafted furnishings, designer upholstery, and heritage décor. Modern homes are now show-cases of Indian craftsmanship, driving demand for handmade textiles beyond fashion into interiors and luxury living.

The Dawn of India's Global Fashion Leadership

Bharat's textile industry is no longer just about production - it is about innovation, design, and global influence. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, 'Make in India' has evolved into 'Design in India,' where Indian creativity shapes international fashion. The government's focus on R&D and fostering a thriving start up ecosystem has paved the way for unparalleled economic growth. Working on the Three Ts - Textile, Tourism, and Technology - India is laying the foundation for a Viksit Bharat.

With the recent budget prioritizing textiles, the \$136 billion domestic industry is set to surpass \$250 billion well before 2030, reaffirming India's position as a global leader. Private consumption has surged from 87 lakh crore in 2013 to 183 lakh crore in 2024. The GDP is

projected to touch 635 lakh crore by 2030 and private consumption will account for nearly 60% of GDP. This shift will make India a global consumption powerhouse, surpassing even developed nations like the U.S, China, and Germany.

But India's rise is not just about how much is being consumed - it's about what is being valued. The Indian textile industry, once seen as a production hub, is now setting global fashion trends. The world looks to India not just for its craftsmanship but for its vision, elegance, and ability to blend heritage with modernity.

This is New Bharat - Fearless, Self-made, and Unstoppable

But this is just the beginning. New Bharat doesn't wait for opportunities, it creates them. Fashion is no longer just a passion, it's a career. Young Indians aren't just following trends, they're setting them. They're launching brands, building businesses, and shaping the economy.

To the youth of Bharat - Be job creators, not job seekers. Your style, your ambition, your ideas - this is the future of India's economy.

And it doesn't stop at attire. As India's economy soars, so does its appetite for elegance. With rising incomes, increased digital access, and a booming population, Bharat is not just participating in the global fashion industry - it is leading it. From the bottom of the pyramid to the top, aspirations are growing, choices are expanding, and a New Bharat is being defined not by limitations, but by possibilities.

Naturalize The Human, Not Humanize The Nature: A Call For Ecological Humility

ER AMIR GULAM LONE

In an age where humanity's dominance over the natural world has reached unprecedented heights, it is time to pause and reflect on our relationship with the Earth. The phrase "Naturalize the human, not humanize the nature" is not just a philosophical statement; it is a radical call to action. It challenges us to rethink our place in the cosmos, urging us to move from a stance of exploitation to one of integration, from arrogance to humility, and from separation to belonging. This article is a plea for humanity to rediscover its roots in the natural world and to embrace a future where we are not rulers of nature, but participants in its intricate web of life.

The Crisis of Humanizing Nature

For centuries, humanity has sought to humanize nature—to impose our values, desires, and moral frameworks onto the natural world. We have anthropomorphized rivers, forests, and animals, projecting our emotions and intentions onto them. While this has sometimes fostered empathy and care, it has also led to a dangerous misunderstanding of nature's true essence. By humanizing nature, we have come to see it as a resource to be exploited, a backdrop to our ambitions, or even a reflection of our own desires.

This anthropocentric worldview has brought us to the brink of ecological collapse. Climate change, deforestation, mass extinction, and pollution are not just environmental issues—they are symptoms of a deeper philosophical crisis. We have forgotten that we are part of nature, not separate from it. We have forgotten that the Earth does



not exist to serve us, but that we exist as one thread in its vast, interconnected tapestry.

The Philosophy of Naturalizing the Human

To naturalize the human is to reject the illusion of separation and superiority. It is to recognize that we are not above nature but within it. This philosophy calls for a profound shift in how we see ourselves and our role in the world. It is not about abandoning technology or progress, but about aligning our progress with the principles of nature. It is about living within ecological limits, respecting the autonomy of all life forms, and finding meaning in our connection to the Earth rather than in our domination of it.

Historical Roots: The idea of naturalizing the human is not new. Indigenous cultures around the

world have long understood that humans are part of nature, not its masters. They have lived in harmony with the land, seeing rivers, mountains, and forests as sacred beings deserving of respect. In contrast, the rise of industrialization and Enlightenment thinking elevated human reason and technology, fostering a sense of detachment from nature. It is time to reclaim the wisdom of our ancestors and rediscover our place in the natural order. Ethical Responsibility: Naturalizing the human requires a new ethical framework—one that values all life for its intrinsic worth, not just its utility to humans. This means moving beyond anthropocentrism and embracing biocentrism or ecocentrism. It means recognizing that a tree has value not because it provides us with oxygen or timber, but because it is a living being with its own right to exist.

It means understanding that our moral responsibility extends not just to other humans, but to the entire web of life.

Ecological Harmony: To naturalize the human is to live within the limits of nature. It is to design cities that integrate with ecosystems, to practice agriculture that regenerates the soil, and to create economies that respect ecological boundaries. It is to learn from nature rather than trying to control it. For example, sustainable architecture mimics natural forms, while permaculture mimics natural processes. By observing and emulating nature, we can create a world that is not only sustainable but also regenerative.

Existential Humility: At its core, naturalizing the human is an existential act. It is an acknowledgment of our smallness in the face of the vast, unfathomable complexity

of the universe. It is an acceptance of the wild, untamed aspects of the world and of ourselves. By embracing the unpredictability and impermanence of nature, we can cultivate a deeper sense of humility and wonder. This shift in perspective may help us find meaning beyond human constructs, in the raw, unfiltered reality of the cosmos.

The Path Forward: Practical Steps To operationalize this philosophical shift, we must take concrete steps to naturalize the human:

Education: Teach ecological literacy from an early age, helping people understand natural systems and humanity's place within them.

Urban Design: Create green cities that prioritize biodiversity and integrate natural elements into urban landscapes.

Policy Making: Enforce laws that protect ecosystems and promote

sustainable development, ensuring that human activities align with ecological principles.

Cultural Shifts: Encourage art, literature, and spiritual practices that celebrate nature without anthropomorphizing it. Draw inspiration from indigenous traditions that view nature as sacred.

Conclusion: A New Paradigm for Humanity

The statement "Naturalize the human, not humanize the nature" is more than a philosophical idea—it is a roadmap for survival. It challenges us to rethink our relationship with the Earth, urging us to move from exploitation to integration, from dominance to humility, and from separation to belonging. By naturalizing the human, we can create a future where humanity thrives not by conquering nature, but by living in harmony with it.

This is not just an environmental imperative; it is a moral and existential one. The Earth does not need us to save it—it will endure long after we are gone. But we need the Earth to save ourselves. By naturalizing humans, we may not only ensure the survival of our species but also rediscover a profound sense of belonging in the vast, interconnected web of life.

Let this article be a wake-up call to the world. Let it shock you, enlighten you, and inspire you to see the world in a new light. The time has come to naturalize the human—to embrace our role as humble participants in the grand symphony of life. The future of humanity, and the future of the Earth, depends on it.

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India’s Caste System: A hindrance to social progress and justice

SHAHID AHMED HAKLA POONCHHI

India, a land of diverse cultures and traditions, has also been historically divided by an entrenched caste system that has dictated social hierarchy for centuries. Although the Indian Constitution guarantees equality and prohibits caste-based discrimination, its impact is still evident in various spheres of life. From social exclusion and economic disparities to political manipulation and violent atrocities, the caste system remains a deep-rooted challenge. This article delves into the historical background of caste, notable incidents of caste-based discrimination, challenges in eradicating this social evil, and how constitutional measures can help create a more equitable society.

Historical Background

The caste system originated from the ancient varna system, which classified society into four broad categories: Brahmins (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (merchants and traders), and Shudras (laborers and service providers). Over time, this evolved into a rigid hierarchical structure, leading to social inequalities and untouchability. The hierarchical system further divided into thousands of sub-castes, creating a deeply entrenched and discriminatory social order.

Incidents

Despite numerous legal reforms, caste-based atrocities continue to occur in various forms across India. Some of the most infamous incidents include: Khairlanji Massacre (2006) - A Dalit family in Maharashtra was brutally murdered by an upper-caste mob. The attack was sparked by caste-based resentment and a long-standing history of discrimination. The victims were not only murdered but

also tortured, highlighting the extreme levels of caste hatred that still exist in rural India.

Dalit Groom’s Baraat Secured by Police : On 22 January 2025, a Dalit groom’s wedding procession in Rajasthan’s Ajmer district took place under heavy police protection after the bride’s family feared opposition from upper castes. Around 200 police personnel ensured the ceremony was incident-free as Vijay Regar rode a mare to Aruna Khorwal’s village. The family, determined to proceed despite concerns, sought support from activists and authorities, leading to police deployment.

Rohith Vemula Suicide (2016) - A Ph.D. scholar from Hyderabad Central University, Rohith Vemula, died by suicide due to alleged caste-based discrimination in academia. His death sparked nationwide protests, bringing attention to the subtle but deeply rooted caste prejudices that persist in educational institutions, affecting the mental well-being and career prospects of Dalit and lower-caste students.

Manisha Valmiki Case (2020) - A Dalit woman was brutally raped and murdered in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh. The response of the authorities, including the late-night cremation of the victim’s body without the family’s consent, exposed systemic bias in law enforcement and the justice system, further fueling the debate on caste and gender-based violence.

Discrimination Against Gujjars in Jammu & Kashmir - Prominent figures who happen to be elite Kashmiris, have faced such abuses like Gujjars and Gaddars on social media. The troubling extent of this stereotyping is evident in the saying, “If you encounter a Gujjar and a bear in the jungle, kill the Gujjar first.” This phrase, though seemingly

innocuous to some, reveals the depth of discrimination faced by the Gujjar community. The use of the term “Gujjar Khaslat” (Gujjar character) further highlights how stereotypes are used to belittle individuals and undermine their credibility.

Challenges in Eradicating Caste-Based Discrimination

Social Mindset and Prejudices - Caste-based discrimination is deeply ingrained in Indian society, especially in rural areas where traditions dictate social behavior. Many people continue to believe in caste superiority, which leads to practices like untouchability, caste-based segregation, and exclusion of lower-caste individuals from temples, social gatherings, and even public spaces.

Economic Disparities - The caste system has historically denied lower-caste individuals access to wealth, land ownership, and lucrative job opportunities. As a result, economic backwardness remains a significant challenge. Many lower-caste individuals work in menial jobs with little scope for upward mobility, making it difficult for them to break the cycle of poverty.

Political Exploitation - Politicians frequently exploit caste divisions for electoral gains. Instead of working towards social unity, caste-based vote banks are created, deepening societal divisions. Caste-based reservations, while necessary for affirmative action, have also been used as political tools rather than genuine measures of social upliftment.

Honor Killings and Social Ostracization - Inter-caste marriages, particularly those involving upper-caste and lower-caste individuals, are often met with extreme violence, including honor killings. Families and communities see such unions as threats to traditional caste hierar-

chies and go to extreme lengths to maintain so-called ‘purity.’

Limited Representation in Higher Positions - Despite reservation policies, lower-caste individuals still face systemic barriers in securing leadership positions in politics, academia, corporate sectors, and the judiciary. Even when they achieve higher positions, they often encounter biases, resistance, and a lack of equal opportunities compared to their upper-caste counterparts.

Constitutional Provisions and Legal Remedies

The Indian Constitution provides several safeguards to eliminate caste discrimination:

Article 15 - Prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. It ensures that no citizen faces discrimination in access to public places, education, and employment opportunities.

Article 17 - Abolishes untouchability and forbids its practice in any form. It mandates strict legal action against those who enforce untouchability in any setting, whether social, religious, or economic.

Article 46 - Directs the state to promote the educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It emphasizes the need for government support in uplifting historically marginalized communities through education, employment, and financial aid.

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 - This act is specifically designed to prevent caste-based crimes and provide stringent punishments for offenses against lower-caste individuals, including violence, social boycotts, and denial of basic rights.

Reservations in Education and Employment - The government provides affirmative action in

education and public sector jobs to uplift historically disadvantaged groups. Reservation policies ensure that lower-caste individuals have access to opportunities that were historically denied to them.

Legal Support and Fast-Track Courts - Special courts have been set up to ensure speedy justice in caste-related crimes. These courts help in reducing delays and ensuring that victims of caste-based atrocities receive timely justice.

Solutions to Caste-Based Discrimination

1.Strengthening Education and Awareness - Education is key to breaking caste barriers. Schools and colleges should include caste sensitization programs to challenge discriminatory mindsets. Workshops, awareness campaigns, and media discussions should be promoted to educate people on the harmful effects of casteism and the need for social harmony.

Economic Empowerment and Skill Development - Creating job opportunities and providing financial support for marginalized communities can help bridge economic gaps. Vocational training programs should be expanded to help lower-caste individuals gain skills and secure stable employment. Microfinance initiatives and government grants should be encouraged to promote entrepreneurship among lower-caste communities.

Strict Law Enforcement and Justice Reforms - Caste-based crimes should be dealt with strictly under the law. Fast-track courts should be set up to handle cases of caste discrimination swiftly. Law enforcement agencies should be trained to act impartially and ensure that victims of caste-based violence receive justice without delays or biases.

Encouraging Inter-Caste Marriages - Inter-caste marriages should be encouraged to promote social integration. The government should provide incentives, such as financial support and security measures, to couples who opt for inter-caste marriages. Social campaigns should challenge stereotypes and highlight the benefits of an inclusive society.

Political and Social Mobilization - Civil society organizations, NGOs, and grassroots movements should continue advocating for caste equality. Public protests, awareness drives, and community outreach programs can play a crucial role in changing societal attitudes and pushing for policy changes.

Responsible Media Representation - The media should actively report cases of caste-based discrimination while promoting positive stories of social inclusion. Awareness campaigns through television, social media, and print journalism can help change perceptions and challenge stereotypes associated with caste.

Conclusion

The caste system continues to be a significant barrier to India’s progress as an inclusive and egalitarian society. While the Indian Constitution and legal framework provide robust mechanisms to counter caste discrimination, real change can only be achieved through collective societal efforts. Education, economic empowerment, legal enforcement, and social reforms are essential in dismantling the caste hierarchy and ensuring equal rights for all citizens. It is the moral and constitutional duty of every Indian to challenge caste-based prejudices and work towards a more just and equitable society.

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Controversy over the Rupee (₹) symbol: Respect for language or political gimmick?



DR. SATYAWAN SAURABHI

Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam has also been vocal in opposing the imposition of Hindi and protecting the identity of the Tamil language. Now Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam has raised objections regarding the rupee symbol (₹). The party says that this symbol does not give proper place to Indian culture and especially South Indian identity. Is the objection of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and some other regional parties regarding the symbol of Indian currency (₹) really a language-related dispute, or is it just a political strategy? There are many aspects to this question. Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and some other South Indian parties argue that the rupee symbol is inspired by the Devanagari letter "₹," which gives priority to Hindi and ignores other Indian languages. However, Uday Kumar Dharani (IIT Guwahati), who designed this symbol, said that its design is inspired by both Devanagari "₹" and Roman "R," so that a mixture of Indian and global identity can be shown. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam has long been against the imposition of Hindi. In 1965, there were big movements in Tamil Nadu against the proposal to make Hindi the national language. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam has previously opposed the NEET exam, the new education policy, and Hindi preference in government jobs. Now the controversy over the rupee symbol is an extension of the same agenda of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam.

Hindi influence in the rupee symbol—Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam believes that the ₹ symbol is inspired by the Devanagari script letter "₹" (₹), giving priority to Hindi while neglecting other Indian languages. Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and some other organizations in Tamil Nadu argue that the rupee symbol is inspired by the Devanagari script letter "₹" (₹), giving priority to Hindi and neglecting other Indian languages, especially

the Dravidian languages (Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam). They believe that the currency symbol should represent all Indian languages equally. There is already a strong sentiment in the South Indian states against the imposition of Hindi, and this controversy can be seen as an extension of that. The party argues that the Indian currency symbol should represent all languages and cultures equally. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and other Tamil organizations believe that South Indian languages, including Tamil, do not get the recognition they deserve at the central level.

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and other Tamil Nadu parties have been protesting against the imposition of Hindi several times. The party has consistently advocated that the central government should give equal importance to all Indian languages rather than promoting any one language (especially Hindi). The politics of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam has revolved around Tamil identity and opposition to the "Hindi dominance" of the Centre. The issue began with anti-Hindi movements in the 1960s and continues to this day. The debate also arose when the ₹ symbol was adopted in 2010. The revival of the issue by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam may be a political strategy to strengthen its position on Tamil identity and mobilize the public against the language policies of the central government.

Although some of the objections of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam may be justified, it would not be right to consider it entirely a language issue. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam raises such issues to strengthen its position against the policies of the Center and to sharpen its regional politics. This controversy may also be a way to maintain the hold of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu politics and to oppose the "Hindi-Hindu" agenda of the BJP. This opposition of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam is mainly a part of its Tamil identity politics. The party keeps raising such issues to strengthen regional identity in Tamil Nadu and to criticize the policies of the central government. The ₹ symbol is not a symbol of any one language, but it has been designed keeping in mind Indian culture and international standards. This symbol has already been accepted all over the country, so there is no practical need to

change it now. Raising this issue seems more like a well-planned political strategy than a real problem.

For the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and other regional parties, this controversy is a political opportunity to capitalize on Tamil identity and anti-Hindi sentiments. By raising this issue, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam is accusing the central government, especially the BJP, of imposing Hindi supremacy. This raises the issue of South India versus North India, which gives more support to the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu. It also gives the opposition alliance another weapon against the BJP. In states like Tamil Nadu, the issue of regional identity and language has a great impact on elections. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam can capitalize on this as a major issue for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and the 2026 assembly elections. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam wants to send a message to its core vote base that it is protecting Tamil identity and rights. Through this controversy, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam can try to increase its identity and influence in other states of South India (Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana), because in these states too there is opposition to the imposition of Hindi. There is no need to change the symbol of the rupee because it is already internationally recognized and reflects the diversity of India. This issue actually seems to be more a part of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's anti-Centre politics and strategy to strengthen its hold in Tamil Nadu.

If we look at it purely from a design point of view, the ₹ symbol is actually a mixture of the Devanagari "₹" and the Roman "R." It is an attempt to combine both English and Indian identity. It would not be right to say that it has been made only for Hindi. The word "rupee" exists in many Indian languages, and the design of ₹ matches all of them. Do you think this opposition to the ₹ symbol is justified, or is it just a political strategy? The controversy over the ₹ symbol seems to be more a part of political strategy than language. This symbol of the Indian currency is not limited to any one language, but it has become a good opportunity for regional parties to capitalize on anti-Centre sentiments.

Author is an Poet, freelance journalist and columnist, radio and TV panelist



PRIYANKA SAURABHI

Public officials responsible for law enforcement, industry regulation, and election oversight are increasingly facing threats, harassment, and various forms of abuse. This trend is worrying because it can prevent public servants from performing their roles effectively and undermine trust in democratic institutions. Officials, particularly those involved in elections, the judiciary, and regulatory bodies, often face intimidation aimed at influencing their decisions. Additionally, false allegations and smear campaigns can tarnish their reputation and undermine their authority. Although some countries have laws to protect public servants, enforcement of these laws can be inconsistent or weak. The stress and fear generated by such abuse can result in burnout, resignations, and challenges in attracting qualified candidates.

Misbehavior with public officials is a growing concern as they attempt to discharge their responsibilities impartially. The growing incidence of misbehavior and hostility towards these officials has become a significant challenge to administrative ethics and the rule of law. Such incidents not only demoralize public servants but also undermine public confidence in governance, necessitating a strong ethical framework to help officials cope with these difficulties. Government officials—including election workers, judges, regulators, and law enforcement personnel—are facing increasing intimidation, harassment, and even physical threats. This is fueled by a variety of factors such as political divisions, misinformation, and the influence of social media, which amplifies aggressive rhetoric. In some cases, officials have been doxxed, having their personal information released online and being the target of organized harassment campaigns or physical attacks.

Creating clear and open channels for complaints can help reduce hostility. The “Centralized Public Grievance Redressal and Monitoring System” portal is an effective tool for managing citizen complaints

online. Providing training to officers in conflict resolution and public relations improves their ability to deal with hostility. The Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration training framework includes components focused on crisis management. Protection of officers who expose corruption is important in discouraging unethical practices. The Whistleblower Protection Act of 2014 provides protection for public servants who report wrongdoings. Actively engaging with citizens builds trust and reduces hostility. The Jan Sunwai (public hearing) initiative in Rajasthan has promoted accountability and built confidence within the community. Senior officers should model ethical behavior to inspire their junior colleagues. Former Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan set a strong example by enforcing strict electoral standards. By adopting honesty, flexibility, and transparency, civil servants can effectively deal with hostility as well as increase public confidence.

It is essential to uphold constitutional principles and implement proactive measures to maintain ethical governance in difficult situations. When government officials face misbehavior for discharging their duties impartially, it can erode public confidence in institutions and the justice system. This trend can hinder effective governance, as officials may hesitate to act in a just and fair manner for fear of retribution, resulting in corruption and injustice. When facing such hostile behavior, it is important to analyze the ethical standards that guide civil servants and examine ways to maintain accountability and public trust. Strong accountability systems are important to ensure that government officials are accountable for their actions and that those who abuse their authority face appropriate consequences. Promoting transparency and monitoring of government activities can help prevent misconduct and increase public trust. It is important to build public confidence in the integrity of government institutions, which can be achieved by adhering to ethical standards and ensuring that officials are accountable for their actions.

Harassment of public officials attempting to carry out their duties impartially is a significant threat to democracy and effective governance. Without strong protections, legal accountability, and social resistance to harassment, the integrity of public institutions is at risk. It is essential for governments, law enforcement, social media platforms, and citizens to work together to ensure that officials can fulfill their responsibilities without fear of retaliation.

Author is an Research Scholar in Political Science.



Around 550 posts of MOs vacant across J&K: Javed Dar

57 health institutes functional in Sheeri, Kreeri blocks in Baramulla

HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 18: "Around 550 posts of Medical Officers (MOs) are vacant in Jammu and Kashmir with selection of 181 MOs in process", stated Minister for Agriculture Production Department, Javed Ahmad Dar, while replying on behalf of Minister for Health and Medical Education to a clubbed question raised by Dr. Sajad Shafi and Javed Hassan Beig in the Legislative Assembly.

The Minister informed that 57 health institutes are functional in Sheeri and Kreeri blocks of Baramulla district. The sanctioned staff including Medical Officers and paramedics in block Kreeri is 157, 121 are in place while 36 are vacant. Similarly, the sanctioned staff in block

Sheeri is 330, 223 are in position and 107 are vacant. These posts included regular category and NHM, he added

The Minister said that the land acquisition in respect of CHC Chandooa is under process and the matter has been taken up with the concerned revenue authorities for identification of state land. He added that an amount of Rs. 8 lakh has been released for land compensation of NTPHC Laridora during the year 2021-2022 which has been kept at the disposal of District Development Commissioner, Baramulla. The said amount could not be paid to the landowner due to closure of the financial year and the funds were lapsed. However, construction of NTPHC on aforementioned land has been completed and presently



NTPHC Laridora has been function-

ing from this newly constructed

building since September 2024.

The Minister informed the House that the department is making sustained efforts to address the ongoing issue of vacancies of Medical Officers, which presently stands at approximately around 550 posts. He added that the selection process for 181 Medical Officer posts is still underway with JKPSC and once the selection is completed, they will be posted to health institutions experiencing severe staff shortages.

The Minister further informed the House that the department is also in the process of operating a waitlist for 91 selected Medical Officers, who will be deployed to under-served areas across Jammu and Kashmir to strengthen the healthcare delivery.

Regarding vacancies of MOs in Baramulla district, the Minister

informed the House that, out of a sanctioned strength of 275 MOs, 219 are in position and 56 are vacant across different Medical Blocks of the district. He also stated that, out of 365 recently appointed Medical Officers, 39 have been posted to district Baramulla to address the staff shortages and enhance healthcare services.

The Minister further informed that additional 11 staff members from NHM and 71 from Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK), including doctors and paramedics, have been deployed in Baramulla which significantly improved the healthcare services, particularly in underserved areas of the district.

Legislators; Mubarak Gul and Mir Saifullah raised the supplementaries to the question.

Surankote Stadium completed at cost of Rs 24341 lakh: Satish Sharma

HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 17: Minister for Youth Services and Sports, Satish Sharma, today informed the House that the Stadium at Surankote has been completed with a cost of Rs 243.41 lakh.

The Minister was replying to a question raised by Choudhary Mohammad Akram in the Legislative Assembly.

The Minister informed the House that the Surankote Stadium comprises facilities like pavilion, change room, gender based toilets for boys and girls, synthetic volleyball, basketball and badminton courts, concrete practice pitch and bore well for drinking water facilities for the sports lovers.



He said that besides the Stadium the department has also constructed one playfield at Charallan Fazalabad in Surankote Constituency with facilities including modern pavilion with inbuilt sound system worth Rs

31.22 lakh, filling of RBM/construction of gate at Rs 13.75 lakh, Chainlink fencing and leveling of playfield costing Rs 20.47 lakh.

The Minister further said that the volleyball court in Sports stadium Surankote has been completed during the current financial year 2024-25 and the coaching facility will be provided to the players by the department besides establishment of Kabaddi Centre subject to availability of resources.

The Minister informed that no project has been sanctioned under Khelo India scheme at Draba/Mas-tandara near BDO Office, Buiiaz. The department has no intimation from the Revenue authorities regarding acquisition of land for construction of a stadium or playfield, he added.

از دفتر نائب تحصیلدار کیری

عنوان درخواست منجانب مہمان شایبہ زوہ منظور احمد پچھانہ ساکنہ باڈی بالا تحصیل کیری ضلع بابہاولہ، براہوول ST سرٹیفیکٹ تحت SRO 294 بجٹ عباس بن منظور مصطفیٰ بن منظور و عثمان بن منظور پسران منظور احمد پچھانہ

اشتہار ہمارا آگاہی

ماہنامہ مندرجہ الصدم میں کاغذات درخواست سامرکز کو رقبہ حرا میں زیر سماعت ہیں اس سلسلے میں رپورٹ پٹواری غالب بنیا عباس سے عیال ہوتا ہے کہ درخواست دہندہ محمد داز سے دھمکو کو میں سکوت رکھتا/حق ہے سائل کے گنہگار کی سالانہ آمدنی مبلغ 786000 سالانہ دھمکو کو رکھتا منتقل باشندہ ہے سائل کو بڑبڑ سے تعلق رکھتا ہے سائل کا گنہگار باڈی از دراز ہے۔

1. منظور احمد پچھانہ ولد غلام رسول پچھانہ 39 سال

2. مسما شایبہ بیگم زوہ منظور احمد 37 سال بھریلوکام

3. عباس بن منظور پسر 11 سال زیر تعلیم

4. مصطفیٰ بن منظور پسر 6 سال

5. عثمان بن منظور پسر 4 سال

6. بی بی زینتہ بیگم والدہ 66 سال بھریلوکام

اس نوکر نیک (6) افراد پر مشتمل ہے۔ ST سرٹیفیکٹ زیر بحث اہلکار نے مہی اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہو وہ یا تاخیر یا اعتراض ساتھ دن کے اندر پیش کرے معاد گزرنے کے بعد کو کوئی عذر یا اعتراض قبول نہیں ہوگا

نائب تحصیلدار کیری

PUBLIC NOTICE

I want to change the name of my minor Daughter from old name. AISHA To new name AISHA IRFAN RANGREZ in future he will be known as AISHA IRFAN RANGREZ if any body have any objection kindly report to passport office Srinagar within 7 working days after that no objection will be accepted.

Name IRFAN Ahmad Rangrez

F/o AISHA IRFAN RANGREZ

PUBLIC NOTICE

My name and parentage has been wrongly written as MOHAMMAD ASHRAF KHAN S/O MOHAMMAD MAQBOOL KHAN while my correct name & parentage is MOHD ASHRAF KHAN S/O MOHD MAQBOOL KHAN which needs to be corrected if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of concerned Adhaar Authorities within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained.

Name.....MOHD ASHRAF KHAN

S/O MOHD MAQBOOL KHAN

R/O PARRAY MAHALLA KREERI

DISTBARAMULLA

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE TEHSILDAR KREERI

(Executive Magistrate 1st Class)

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

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Registrar Births and Deaths (Block Development Officer Wagoora)/ chokedar has submitted case file pertaining to Birth of MOHAMMAD DHAYAAN DAR S/O SHABIR AHMAD DAR R/O DOULATPORA Tehsil KREERI Distt. Baramulla having verified the date of Birth as 02/12/2021 and event has been shown to be occurred at SDH KREERI for issuance of delay order. In this connection . if anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of Birth certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained.

Executive Magistrate

1st Class KREERI

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE TEHSILDAR KREERI

(Executive Magistrate 1st Class)

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

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Registrar Births and Deaths (Block Development Officer Wagoora)/ chokedar has submitted case file pertaining to Birth of MOHAMMAD MAVIYA S/O MOHAMMAD ALTAIF BANDAY R/O WAGOORA Tehsil WAGOORA Distt. Baramulla having verified the date of Birth as 24/05/2021 and event has been shown to be occurred at SDH KREERI for issuance of delay order. In this connection . if anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of Birth certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained

Executive Magistrate

1st Class KREERI

اطلاع عام

ہر خاص و عام اطلاع دی جاتی ہے کہ بنک اکوانٹ زیر نمبر 0122040100013260 میرا نام اوسان اختر avsan akther انراج ہوا ہے جب کہ میرا اصل نام مطابق ادھار کاڈ avsan Fayaz ہے اب اسکی دستگی کرانی مطلوب ہے کسی کو کوئی عذر ہو تو وہ سات یوم کے اندر اندر جے کے بنک پہلگام مین پیش کرے بعد از معاد کوئی عذر قبول نہں ہوگا

المستہر

Avsan Fayaz

D/O Fayaz Ahmad Khanday

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is being notified that my name in my Aadhar Card having Aadhar card number this 956371137390 has been wrongly mentioned as Numan ishaq my real name is Lone Numan Ishaq

DOB 11/11/2021

C/o Mohd ishaq lone

Adress : wangam, shangus

anantanag, j&k

PUBLIC NOTICE

Subject: Request for Permission to Play Cricket from Maloora Side

Respected All,

I, Hilal Ahmad Bhat, S/o Bashir Ahmed Bhat, R/o Ghalib Abad, Shaltang, was originally a resident of Maloora, Shaltang. During my time in Maloora, I actively played cricket representing the village team. However, after shifting to Ghalib Abad, my Aadhaar card details were also updated to reflect my new residence. Despite my best efforts to retain Maloora as my official address for cricket representation, I was unable to do so.

I have always been deeply connected to Maloora and have played cricket for the village for a long time. I sincerely request everyone to allow me to continue representing Maloora in village-level cricket, as I remain committed to my Village Maloora with the team and the cricketing spirit of the area.

I appreciate your understanding and support.

Regards,

Hilal Ahmad Bhat

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE TEHSILDAR KREERI

(Executive Magistrate 1st Class)

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

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Registrar Births and Deaths (Block Development Officer Wagoora)/ chokedar has submitted case file pertaining to Birth of MOHAMMAD IMAAD AHANGER S/O R/O MALPORA Tehsil NARVAW Distt. Baramulla having verified the date of Birth as 06/05/2021 and event has been shown to be occurred at Home for issuance of delay order. In this connection . if anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of Birth certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained

Executive Magistrate

1st Class KREERI

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE TEHSILDAR KREERI

(Executive Magistrate 1st Class)

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

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Registrar Births and Deaths (Block Development Officer Wagoora)/ chokedar has submitted case file pertaining to Birth of LIYAKAT SHABIR S/O SHABIR AHMAD WANI R/O PUTHKAH MUQAM Tehsil KHOIE Distt. Baramulla having verified the date of Birth as 09/01/2020 and event has been shown to be occurred at SDH KREERI for issuance of delay order. In this connection . if anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of Birth certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained

Executive Magistrate

1st Class KREERI

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

OFFICE OF THE ZONAL EDUCATION OFFICER BEERWAH (BUDGAM)

Subject: Auction Notice of unsafe building (ACR) at MS Pethkoot
Reference: Chief Education Officer Budgam's letter No: CEOB/Plg/2025/50517 -19 Dated: 13.02.2025.

NOTICE

1. Public Auction of old building (ACR) of MS Pethkoot shall be conducted in the premises of Middle School Pethkoot on 26.03.2025 (Wednesday)
2. The prospective bidders shall have to make security deposit of Rs. 7000 (Rupees: Seven thousand only) in case with Zonal Education Officer Beerwah (Chairman Auction Committee) or can also deposit in cash on the spot as well for participating in the auction, which shall be refundable after the conclusion of auction.
3. The successful bidder has to lift the auctioned material within 05 days positively at his own cost after which the department shall not be responsible for the watch and ward of the auctioned material.
4. The Chairman of the Auction committee reserves the right to accept or reject any bid without assigning any reasons and his decision shall be final and binding in all matters relating to the auction.
5. All the bidders shall have to deposit a copy of their proof of identity (Aadhar card, PAN card, passport etc) with Zonal Education Officer Beerwah before the process is initiated.
6. Other conditions, if any will be announced before conducting the auction by the Chairman of the Auction committee on the spot as well.

DIPK-13183/24

Date: 18, March, 2025

Sd/
ZONAL EDUCATION OFFICER
BEERWAH (BUDGAM)





Dy CM, Health Minister, Advisor to CM visit D H Pora, Kulgam Pay rich tributes to former JKLA Speaker on his 31st death anniversary

■ **Farooq Rather**

KULGAM, MARCH 18: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Kumar Choudhary, today reaffirmed the government's commitment towards fulfilling all its promises, emphasizing that development projects and welfare initiatives remain a top priority of the present dispensation.

The Deputy Chief Minister stated this while addressing a function held at D H Pora Kulgam to commemorate the 31st death anniversary of former Speaker of Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly (JKLA), Wali Mohd Itoo.

Addressing the gathering, the

Deputy Chief Minister stated that the government is working tirelessly to ensure progress in key sectors like infrastructure, employment, health-care and education and other sectors. He assured the public that every effort is being made to accelerate ongoing projects and implement schemes and programmes aimed at improving the quality of life of citizens.

"The trust of the people is our biggest responsibility, we are fully committed towards delivering on our promises and ensuring that every citizen benefits from government initiatives," he stated.

The Deputy Chief Minister also interacted with the locals, listened



to their concerns and assured them of swift action on pressing issues.

"The government remains focused on inclusive growth and will continue to engage with the public to address their needs effectively," he said.

He also directed the concerned officers to frame DPR for construction of a Rest house at D H Pora.

Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, also paid rich tributes to former Speaker and her father

Wali Mohammad Itoo, acknowledging his remarkable contributions towards welfare and development of people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Remembering him as a visionary leader, she emphasized his relentless efforts in improving governance, strengthening democratic values and working for the upliftment of society. She reiterated that the Omar Abdullah-led government remains steadfast in its commitment to the welfare of the people. "We are taking every necessary step to ensure inclusive development and progress. Our government is dedicated towards addressing the needs of the people and fulfilling their aspirations," she

added.

Advisor to the Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani, in his address, paid rich tributes to former Speaker, Wali Mohammad Itoo, acknowledging his remarkable contributions towards welfare and development of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He highlighted the late leader's tireless efforts in uplifting the region, particularly his work in strengthening democratic values and improving public infrastructure. "Shaheed Wali Mohammad Itoo dedicated his life to the service of the people. His vision for progress and his contributions to governance will always be remembered," he said.

DC Budgam reviews functioning of Tehsil Office, Budgam

Also inspects infra upgradation works of Tehsil, DSEO Complex

■ **HT News Network**

BUDGAM, MARCH 18: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Akshay Labroo, today reviewed the functioning of Tehsil Office, Budgam and took an overview of the various revenue services being provided by the Office of the Tehsildar, Budgam. DC also inspected the revenue record room, and emphasised its further streamlining and convert it into a model record room. Labroo also conducted an on site inspection of two major infrastructure upgradation projects in the district – the Tehsil Office Budgam and the Office complex of the District



Statistics & Evaluation Office (DSEO), Budgam. During the inspection of Tehsil office Budgam, the DC emphasised timely execution and maintenance of quality standards of work. He directed the concerned departments to closely monitor progress and ensure the projects are completed within the stipulated timeframes. Later, the DC also took

stock of upgradation work on Office complex of the District Statistics & Evaluation Office, Budgam where he directed the officials and executing agency to adhere strictly to the set deadlines. On the occasion, the DC stated that both the projects are important for enhancing administrative efficiency and delivering better services to the local population of Budgam.

He said, district administration is committed towards improving public infrastructure and ensuring better service delivery in Budgam. Labroo also conducted an on site inspection of two major infrastructure upgradation projects in the district – the Tehsil Office Budgam and the Office complex of the District Statistics & Evaluation Office (DSEO), Budgam.

During the inspection of Tehsil office Budgam, the DC emphasised timely execution and maintenance of quality standards of work. He directed the concerned departments to closely monitor progress and ensure the projects are completed within the stipulated timeframes.

Kishtwar Adm, AYUSH Department organize District Level Seminar at Kishtwar

■ **HT News Network**

KISHTWAR, MARCH 18: Department of AYUSH in collaboration with the District Administration Kishtwar and JK State Medicinal Plants Board successfully organized a District Level Seminar today. The event was held under the directions of the Director AYUSH, J&K Dr. Nuzhat Bashir and in close Supervision of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kishtwar Rajesh Kumar Shavan.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar, Pawan Kotwal graced the event as the Chief Guest.

The event was organised to promote conservation, cultivation of medicinal plants and developing entrepreneurship in the Medicinal Plants Sector.

The seminar featured key resource persons from



AYUSH Department including Dr. Shabir and Dr. Muzaffar Mintoo, who provided detailed information on the cultivation and marketing of medicinal plants such as Ashwagandha, Kutki, Kuth, Pooshkarmool and others, emphasizing their potential as alternative sources of income for farmers.

Dr. Opendar Surmal, Lecturer in Ethnobotany at

Government Degree College Kishtwar, also shared valuable insights into the medicinal plants found in the region and their uses in traditional medicine.

In addition, progressive farmers like Dr. Shah Nawaz Ahmed and Jabbar Singh, who have successfully ventured into the cultivation and marketing of medicinal plants, shared their success stories and experi-

ences in setting up businesses in the sector.

The seminar aimed at increasing awareness about the significance of conserving and cultivating medicinal plants, which play a crucial role in both traditional healthcare systems and the modern pharmaceutical industry.

The event also highlighted the immense potential for entrepreneurship in the medicinal plant sector and discussed the growing opportunities within the industry. The seminar was attended by Senior Officers including DIO Kishtwar Dr. Kuldeep Kumar, DFO Marwah Vishal Choudhary, CMO Kishtwar Dr. Rajinder Kumar, CAO Kishtwar Amjad Hussain Malik, CHO Kishtwar Sajid Mustafa, Chief Scientist of KVK Narinder Pal, staff of AYUSH and other concerned departments.

IUST and J&K Police Awantipora Organize Seminar on New Criminal Laws

■ **HT News Network**

AWANTIPORA, March 18: The Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), in collaboration with J&K Police Awantipora organized a One-Day Awareness Seminar on the Three New Criminal Laws. The event coordinated by the Council of Students under the ambit of the Dean of Students, aimed to familiarize students with the recent legal reforms and their implications.

During the seminar, Prof. Abdul Wahid Makhdoomi, Registrar IUST, and SSP Awantipora, interacted with the students. Addl. SP Awantipora, Sr. PO DPO Awantipora, SDPO Awantipora, and Prosecuting Officers, were also present who highlighted the collaborative effort to promote legal literacy. During the seminar, speakers delivered comprehensive presentations on the key changes introduced in the new Criminal Laws, and shed light on the legal reforms, helping participants develop a clearer understanding of the evolving legal landscape. An interactive question-answer session followed the presentations, where students actively engaged with the experts. Their queries were addressed in detail, making the session both informative and impactful.

IUST to host national seminar on Sustainable Growth

■ **HT News Network**

AWANTIPORA, March 18: The Habba Khatoon Centre for Kashmiri Language and Literature (HKCKL&L), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), is organising a one-day seminar on 'Sustainable Growth: Balancing Tradition and Modernity in Kashmiri Art, and Culture' on Thursday, March 20, 2025. The seminar is being sponsored by Indian Council for Social Science and Research (ICSSR), North Western Regional Centre, Chandigarh. The event that will witness participation from different places of the country aims to preserve the invaluable art forms for future generations. "Preserving Kashmiri art is not only about safeguarding cultural heritage, but also about maintaining the region's unique history and identity," said Dr. Afshana, Coordinator, HKCKL&L. "Through a multi-faceted approach involving research, education, community engagement and technology, we aim to ensure that these invaluable art forms continue to inspire, and enrich future generations," she added. This seminar seeks to address these challenges, showcase the profound beauty and significance of these art forms, and discuss practical strategies for their preservation," she said, adding that the seminar will explore strategies to maintain this balance and ensure the flourishing of Kashmiri art for the generations to come.

SBI RSETI Ramban, NRLM-Umeed launch Soft Toys Maker & Seller Training Program

■ **HT News Network**

RAMBAN, MARCH 18: The SBI Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI) Ramban, in collaboration with the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) – Umeed, inaugurated the Soft Toys Maker and Seller Training Program today at Seri, Ramban.

In line with the priorities of Deputy Commissioner Ramban, Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, this initiative aims to empower women by equipping them with skills to manufacture and market soft toys, opening new avenues for self-employment.

Branch Manager, State Bank of India, Ramban, Sachin Kumar Mahajan was the Chief Guest for the event.

Addressing the trainees, Sachin Kumar Mahajan high-



lighted various government schemes and special initiatives aimed at empowering women entrepreneurs. He encouraged participants to take full advantage of the training and utilize available financial support mechanisms to establish their own ventures.

Director SBI RSETI, provided insights into RSETI's role in promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship. He apprised the Chief Guest and

trainees of the various skill development programs conducted by RSETI for the benefit of rural youth, particularly women. Director SBI RSETI, provided insights into RSETI's role in promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship. He apprised the Chief Guest and trainees of the various skill development programs conducted by RSETI for the benefit of rural youth, particularly women.

TEACHERS FORUM SEEKS RELEASE OF SALARY BUDGET AHEAD OF EID-UL-FITR

■ **HT News Network**

JAMMU KASHMIR Teachers Forum has appealed authorities to release the salary budget for the month of March-25 ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr. In a statement released this morning the forum Chairman Mr Mohammadhafi Rather said that the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr falls at the fag end of this month and administration should release the salary budget for the month of March in such a way that the salary gets credited before Eid or more ideally before Shab-e-qadr. Mr Rather said that besides donating for certain

generous causes the employees have to shop for essential commodities ahead of the all important festival. It is pertinent to mention here that the night of decree/power, falls in the last week of the month and many employees have to make charitable donations. The Salary for the month of Febru-



ary also involved income tax deduction owing to which the employees could draw only a portion of their salary.

The Chairman appealed Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor Mr Manoj Sinha & Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, to release the budget for the salary of the month of March 2025 promptly so that the salary gets disbursed before the ensuing festival. The Chairman also appealed the authorities to release the pending GP Fund and gratuity dues of employees so that these employees heave a sigh of relief.

KVK-Anantnag, SKUAST-K hosts interactive session Fruit Plants Under TDGNICRA Project distributed among farmers

■ **HT News Network**

ANANTNAG, MARCH 18: In order to promote diversified farming practices to enhance livelihoods, income generation, and climate resilience, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK)-Anantnag, SKUAST-Kashmir, under the TDC-NICRA project, organized an interactive session, here. As part of the annual action plan of the TDC-NICRA project, the event focused on empowering farmers through the adoption of scientific orchard management techniques and advanced nursery development practices.

High-quality planting materials, developed at KVK-Anantnag, were distributed among progressive farmers and budding agri-entrepreneurs, covering an area of over one hectare across two adopted



villages. The selected fruit plants were chosen for their potential to enhance farm income and build resilience against climate change.

During the interactive session, Dr. Ishitiyaq A. Khan and other scientists from

KVK-Anantnag provided hands-on training on modern horticultural techniques. The session emphasized best practices for orchard management, nursery development, and climate-resilient agriculture. Addressing the farmers, Dr. Khan

highlighted the importance of agricultural diversification in tackling climate change challenges.

He underscored how integrating modern horticultural advancements with traditional knowledge could create new opportunities for entrepreneurship and contribute to sustainable rural development. The event witnessed an overwhelming response from the farming community, with participants appreciating KVK-Anantnag's efforts in enhancing agricultural sustainability through scientific interventions and capacity-building initiatives. The event witnessed an overwhelming response from the farming community, with participants appreciating KVK-Anantnag's efforts in enhancing agricultural sustainability through scientific interventions and capacity-building initiatives.





DC Rajouri chairs NCORD meeting, reviews measures to combat drug menace

■ HT News Network

RAJOURI, MARCH 18: Deputy Commissioner Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma, today chaired a crucial meeting of the District NCORD Committee at the VC Room, DC Office, to assess the ongoing efforts against drug abuse and trafficking in the district.

During the meeting, the DC reviewed key aspects, including bails and acquittals in NDPS cases, seizures of drugs in commercial quantities, and the adherence to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in handling such cases. He emphasized the need for a multi-pronged approach focusing on enforcement, treatment, and awareness to effectively tackle the drug menace.

In a major enforcement action, the license of a pharmacy in Thanamandi was canceled, while another unlicensed shop was identified. The DC has initiated an inquiry into the purchase and sale of medicines at the unlicensed outlet.

Further strengthening surveillance, CCTV cameras have now been installed in all 797 pharmacy shops across the district, while 735 shops have started computerized billing, enhancing transparency and monitoring of drug sales.



The meeting also reviewed preparations for an Intensive IEC campaign under the Nasha Mukt Abhiyan, including the training of resource persons who will spearhead awareness drives. The DC directed ADCs and SDMs to ensure proper training and awareness programs in their respective jurisdictions to sensitize the public on the

harmful effects of drug abuse.

The Deputy Commissioner reiterated the administration's commitment to zero tolerance against drug abuse and called for sustained efforts from all stakeholders to create a drug-free Rajouri.

The meeting was attended by ADC Rajouri Rajiv Khajuria, PO ICDS Fareed

Kohli, ACD Vijay Kumar Verma, Additional SP Bikram Kumar, CMO Manohar Rana, CEO, DSWO Abdul Raheem, and HOD Psychiatry GMC Rajouri, Dr. Parvaiz Alam, among others. Further strengthening surveillance, CCTV cameras have now been installed in all 797 pharmacy shops across the district, while 735 shops have started computerized billing, enhancing transparency and monitoring of drug sales.

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The meeting was attended by ADC Rajouri Rajiv Khajuria, PO ICDS Fareed Kohli, ACD Vijay Kumar Verma, Additional SP Bikram Kumar, CMO Manohar Rana, CEO, DSWO Abdul Raheem, and HOD Psychiatry GMC Rajouri, Dr. Parvaiz.

NCD Screening drive conducted at AHWC Khurampora Shopian

■ HT News Network

SHOPIAN, MARCH 18: Under the guidance of Director Ayush, Dr. Nuzhat Bashir Shah, a Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) screening drive was conducted today at AHWC Khurampora, Shopian.

The event, organized by the Medical Officer, Khurampora aimed to raise awareness and encourage early detection of non-communicable diseases within the local community.

The screening drive saw enthusiastic participation from the residents, highlighting the importance of such initiatives in promoting preventive healthcare and enabling timely interventions for various health conditions.

During the drive, 90 individuals were screened for hypertension. Additionally, 60 people underwent diabetes screening. The newly diagnosed individuals will undergo a follow-up screening after one week.

Awareness program on CUET (UG)-2025 organized at AAAM Degree College, Bemina

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MARCH 18: An awareness program on Common University Entrance Test (CUET)-2025 was organized today at Abdul Ahad Azad Memorial (AAAM) Government Degree college Bemina.

The program witnessed enthusiastic participation from a significant number of students representing various Higher Secondary Schools across Kashmir.

The session aimed to provide the students, who have passed or appeared in the 12th examination, with comprehensive guidance on the CUET (UG) 2025 admission process, eligibility criteria, and preparation strategies.

Prof. Irfan Ali, Assistant Professor of Education and Co-Convenor Admissions, delivered an insightful presentation on the CUET UG pattern, eligibility requirements, and form submission process. His detailed explanation provided valuable clarity to the participants.

Following this, Prof. Feroz Ahmad, Assistant Professor of Zoology and Convenor Admissions, presented a comprehensive overview of the CUET examination pattern and effective preparation strategies to help students excel in the test. The session concluded with an engaging question-and-answer segment, where numerous queries from students related to CUET UG were addressed.

Seminar on 'Conservation, Cultivation, Processing & Entrepreneurship Dev. in Medicinal Plants' held at Ganderbal

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MARCH 18: In a significant step towards promoting Medicinal Plant Sector in J&K by conservation and cultivation of Medicinal Plants, Regional Cum Facilitation Centre (RCFC) NR-II of NMPB, Ministry of AYUSH, Gol organised a one-day seminar on 'Conservation, Cultivation, Processing and Entrepreneurship Development in Medicinal Plants' in collaboration with Department of Pharmacology, Govt. Unani Medical College Ganderbal. The Seminar was attended by faculty, students and other staff members of Govt. Unani Medical College Ganderbal. The inaugural session of the Seminar was attended by Prof. Sheikh Bilal Ahmed, (Regional Director, RCFC); Nodal Officer, Administrative Officer, Accounts Officer and Dr. Aasiy-ul-Erum, In-Charge Department of Pharmacology. Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Sheikh Bilal described J&K as a treasure house of Medicinal herbs and stressed on conservation and cultivation of Medicinal Plants to develop more and more entrepreneurship avenues. He emphasized that the demand for medicinal plants is growing with every passing year and the world is looking forward towards Himalayan region to fulfill the increasing demand.

DC Reasi chairs DLCC meeting on NTPC programme

■ HT News Network

REASI, MARCH 18: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Reasi Nidhi Malik today chaired a meeting of the District Level Coordination Committee (DLCC) under the National Tobacco Control Programme (NTPC) to review the implementation of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) in the district. The meeting threadbare discussed effective measures to strengthen tobacco control initiatives in the district.

During the meeting, Deputy Commissioner emphasized the importance of enforcing COTPA regulations to ensure a tobacco-free environment. Deputy Commissioner gave Key directives included regular inspections by enforcement teams near educational institutions,



especially within a 100-meter radius, and ensuring that all public offices display 'No Smoking' signage and remain smoke-free.

The DC also outlined plans for weekly drives in public spaces to promote awareness and prevent tobacco consumption. Awareness campaigns will be conducted during school assemblies to inform students about the harmful effects of tobacco and the provisions of COTPA.

The meeting concluded with a commitment from all stakeholders to collaborate and intensify efforts towards creating a healthier, tobacco-free Reasi. The District Administration aims to continue monitoring and ensuring strict adherence to tobacco control laws for the well-being of the community. ADC Rakesh Kumar, ACD Pardeep Kumar, CMO, ALC, DIO, Senior Doctors and other concerned officials attended the meeting.

DC Poonch reviews progress of NABARD-RIDF projects

■ HT News Network

POONCH, MARCH 18: Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Vikas Kundal, today chaired a meeting to assess the progress of projects initiated under the NABARD Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) in the district.

The meeting saw participation from key officials, including SDM Mendhar, SDM Surankote, Tehsildar Balakote, Tehsildar Mendhar, Executive Engineer PWD Surankote and Executive Engineer PWD Mendhar, who joined virtually to provide updates on their respective areas.

During the discussions, the Deputy Commissioner inquired about the scheme-wise progress of ongoing road projects across all three subdivisions of Poonch District.

The Executive Engineer presented a detailed update on the construction status and highlighted various challenges affecting developmental works.

The DC emphasized the importance of addressing these issues promptly, urging concerned officials, including executive engineers and SDMs, to take immediate action. He also stressed the need for expedited forest and revenue clearance processes to streamline development efforts.



The DC directed executing agencies to enhance inter-departmental coordination to eliminate developmental bottlenecks and conducted a comprehensive review of road projects across the district's subdivisions.

To facilitate timely infrastructure development for the community, the DC asked the executing agencies to complete the targeted work for this financial year by the end of March.

The meeting was attended by SE PWD (R&B), CPO Poonch, Tehsildar Haveli, Executive Jal Shakti Division Poonch along with other key officials. The meeting was attended by SE PWD (R&B), CPO Poonch, Tehsildar Haveli, Executive Jal Shakti Division Poonch along with other key officials.

JKSCST Corporation organizes awareness camp on Self-Employment schemes

Event highlights income-generating opportunities for backward classes; officials stress low-interest loans and self-reliance

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MARCH 18: JK Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes & Backward Classes Development Corporation Ltd., Srinagar, organized an Awareness

Camp at Chattabal, Srinagar, on Tuesday in collaboration with the National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation, New Delhi.

The event focused on informing the general public, particularly individuals belonging to back-

ward classes, about self-employment schemes undertaken by the corporation. The event drew a large gathering of people.

Speaking on the occasion, Mehmood-ul-Haq Gundroo, Deputy General Manager (Kashmir), provided a brief introduction

to various income-generating schemes, with special emphasis on the scheme dedicated to backward classes. He urged people to come forward to avail benefits offered by the corporation. Attention was drawn to the low-interest rates on loans.

The Deputy General Manager (Kashmir) reiterated the corporation's commitment to supporting individuals in creating opportunities for themselves and others. The corporation remains steadfast in its mission to empower individuals and drive progress.

YHAI Women's Wing & Srinagar Unit 2nd Organize Felicitation Ceremony for Mr. Shaunak Ray and Mr. Showkat Ashai Youth Interstate Cultural Exchange Program Announced

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, March 2025 — The Youth Hostels Association of India (YHAI) Women's Wing Adhoc Unit and YHAI Srinagar Unit 2nd jointly organized a special felicitation ceremony at the YHAI office in Srinagar to honor eminent personalities and discuss future collaborative initiatives for youth development.

Mr. Shaunak Ray, Municipal Youth Officer, Department of Youth Services & Sports, Government of West Bengal, In-Charge of Asansol Youth Hostel, and Life Member of YHAI, was felicitated by YHAI Women's Wing Adhoc

Unit and YHAI Srinagar Unit 2nd for his commendable contribution to the promotion of youth welfare and hostel activities. The program was conducted under the Chairmanship of Mr. Showkat Ashai, State Convenor, YHAI Jammu & Kashmir, who was also felicitated on behalf of YHAI West Bengal State Branch by Mr. Shaunak Ray, acknowledging his pivotal role in strengthening YHAI's mission in the region. A significant highlight of the meeting was the joint decision by YHAI West Bengal and YHAI Jammu & Kashmir to organize a Youth Interstate Cultural Exchange Program, aimed at fostering cultural integration, mutual understanding,



and national unity among youth. Through this initiative, young

members from both states will get opportunities to visit each

other's regions, experience diverse cultures, and participate in collaborative youth engagement activities.

During the address, Mr. Shaunak Ray emphasized the importance of such exchange programs in nation-building and youth empowerment, while Mr. Showkat Ashai highlighted the role of YHAI in bridging cultures and creating opportunities for young people through adventure, travel, and cultural initiatives.

The meeting witnessed the active participation of esteemed members and office bearers of YHAI Women's Wing Adhoc Unit and YHAI Srinagar Unit 2nd, who pledged their full support to the

new initiative. The members present included:

1. Mr. Showkat Ashai — Chairman
 2. Mr. Shabir Ahmad
 3. Dr. Nighat Ara
 4. Mrs. Shahnaz Ara
 5. Mr. Ajaz Khan
 6. Dr. Asmat
 7. Dr. Yasmeen
 8. Mrs. Sabiya Mahajan
 9. Mr. Rafiq Ahmed
- The event concluded with a collective commitment to strengthen inter-state cooperation and enhance YHAI's role in youth development at the national level.
- Secretary,
YHAI SRINAGAR UNIT IIND





ACS Education launches Jaadui Pitara at SCERT divisional office

HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 18: Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Education, Shantmanu, today launched Jaadui Pitara at the SCERT Divisional Office, Jammu.

Professor Sindhu Kapoor, Joint Director SCERT Jammu and H R Pakhroo, Joint Director Central SCERT, J&K, were present on the occasion. Aligned with the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Jaadui Pitara is an innovative learning toolkit designed to make foundational education more engaging, interactive and joyful. It includes play based and activity based resources such as story-books, flashcards, puzzles and puppets, aimed at enhancing holistic development in early childhood education. By integrating experiential and multi-sensory learning, it fosters foundational literacy, numeracy, and cognitive growth among young learners. On the occasion, ACS also



launched the Suno Kahani initiative, a storytelling program aimed at enriching children's language skills and imagination. He congratulated the SCERT Jammu for conceptualising and implementing this creative educational initiative and high-

lighted the role of storytelling in fostering creativity, critical thinking and emotional intelligence among young learners. Earlier, Professor Sindhu Kapoor welcomed the ACS and apprised him of functioning of various units and departments

of SCERT. She also gave a detailed presentation on numerous educational initiatives undertaken by SCERT Jammu to enhance the quality of learning across the region. During his visit, the ACS interacted with all staff members, encouraging them to continue their hard work and dedication. He also discussed various issues and concerns faced by SCERT Jammu and assured support in addressing them. Speaking at the event, the ACS commended the SCERT Jammu for its efforts in strengthening foundational learning and promoting innovative education. He reaffirmed his support for enhancing the educational landscape in the region. Joint Director Central SCERT, J&K, presented vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to Shantmanu for his insights and support for SCERT's initiatives. He also appreciated the dedication of the SCERT Jammu team and assured continued commitment towards improving the learning outcomes.

DC reviews status of arms and ammunition dealers in Udhampur district

HT News Network



UDHAMPUR, MARCH 18: Deputy Commissioner Udhampur, Saloni Rai, today chaired a meeting to review the status of arms and ammunition dealers operating in the district without valid licenses under the Arms Rules, 2016. The meeting was attended by Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Amod Ashok Nagpure, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Prem Singh, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Navneet Singh, Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR) Dr. Umesh Shan, Tehsildar, and other concerned officers. During the meeting, the DC took stock of the existing arms dealerships and emphasized strict enforcement of legal provisions to curb unauthorized operations. She directed all Tehsildars to immediately issue notices to the concerned dealers, seeking details regarding the validity of their licenses. The DC instructed the officers to ensure that no arms and ammunition transactions take place without proper authorization.

Ladakh students, representatives of SERU program visits High Court of J&K, Ladakh

HT News Network

JAMMU MARCH 18: In a move to foster national integration and cultural exchange, 30 students and representatives of the Students Experience in Regional Understanding (SERU) program from Ladakh region visited Jammu Wing of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

The students were taken around various courts by Mayank Gupta, Joint Registrar Judicial, to expose the students to the actual working of Courts in the High Court.

Later, the students interacted with Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Tashi Rabstan, who also hails from Ladakh, and shared their experience of the tour



including their visit to the High Court. The initiative was aimed to provide students an opportunity to explore diverse cultures and educational avenues beyond their homeland.

The visiting delegation was comprised of 20 students from various parts of Ladakh including Nubra, Kargil, Leh, Lamayuru, Shang, Nyoma and Zaskar, who are currently on an exposure tour named "Rashtriya Ekamata Yatra." The program takes students beyond their native

regions to interact with their counterparts across the country, promoting regional understanding and national unity. The students, many of whom were travelling outside Ladakh for the first time, expressed enthusiasm about their experiences in Delhi and other States. Their itinerary included visits to educational institutions, historical landmarks and cultural centers in Delhi, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu.

Ladakh holds immense

strategic and cultural significance for India. Initiatives like SERU contribute towards strengthening national bonds and preparing young minds for a bright future. Exposure to different regions and academic institutions will help these students develop a broader perspective and enhance their aspirations.

The Chief Justice, during his interaction with the students, encouraged them to work hard and impressed upon them to explore opportunities in their region. He urged the students to take proactive steps in utilizing different schemes launched by the Government for their welfare. He also encouraged the youth to spread awareness about these programs within their communities so that more people could benefit.

DC Reasi chairs District Advisory Committee meeting on PCPNDT Act

HT News Network

REASI, MARCH 18: Deputy Commissioner Reasi, Ms. Nidhi Malik today chaired the District Advisory Committee (DAC) meeting on the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act at the Video Conference Hall of the DC Office Complex.

The meeting reviewed the implementation of the Act across the district, with detailed discussions on the registration of ultrasound centres, offences, penalties, and the overall monitoring mechanism. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Reasi provided an update on the district's seven ultrasound clinics, comprising five private centres and two government-run facilities. He also presented the latest Child Sex Ratio data and detailed the inspection process being followed.

The DC emphasized the vital role of the Act in promoting a



healthy girl child sex ratio and directed strict enforcement through random inspections of ultrasound clinics. She stressed the need for innovative measures to improve the Child Sex Ratio, aligning it with the national average.

The DC further called for the effective implementation of the Act to curb illegal sex determina-

tion practices.

The PCPNDT Act, passed by Parliament in 1994, aims to prevent female foeticide and halt the declining sex ratio by banning prenatal sex determination.

The meeting was attended by CMO Reasi, DIO (Info), Medical Superintendent, Senior Gynecologist, Senior Pediatrician, and other concerned officials.

DC chairs District Level Task Force Cell meeting to curb illegal mining

HT News Network



UDHAMPUR, MARCH 18: Deputy Commissioner Udhampur, Saloni Rai, today chaired a meeting of the District Level Task Force Cell to review and strategize measures to curb illegal mining in the district. The meeting was attended by Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Amod Ashok Nagpure, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Prem Singh, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Navneet Singh, Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR) Dr. Umesh Shan, District Mineral Officer, and other concerned officials. During the meeting, the DC reviewed the status of operational mining blocks, identified illegal stone crushers, and marked hotspots of illegal mining. She called for stringent enforcement measures and emphasized the need for enhanced inter-departmental coordination to gather intelligence and take prompt action against violators. The DC directed the concerned officers to ensure that challans are issued at the source in cases involving the seizure of illegal dumpers or any other unauthorized mining activities. She further instructed the authorities to conduct awareness programs to sensitize the public about verifying proper documentation before procuring mining minerals, ensuring the materials are legally sourced.

Digitization of Jamabandi for Balhama completed, Lasjan under review: CM Omar Abdullah

HT News Network

JAMMU MARCH 18: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah informed the Legislative Assembly that the digitization of Jamabandi for Balhama has been completed and is currently undergoing authentication. Responding to a question by Sheikh Ahsan Ahmad Padesi, the Chief Minister, who also holds charge of the Revenue Department, stated that the digitization of Jamabandi for Lasjan has also been completed. However, any errors identified during the process are being rectified on a case-to-case basis.

NC committed to addressing youth issues: Tejinder Pal Singh

Youth from Damsal joined National Conference

HT News Network

Damsal March 18th : In a major boost to the National Conference (NC), a several number of youth from the Damsal area joined the party in a function organized today. The event was coordinated by Junaid and Mohinder Kumar Rana Joint Secretary Central Zone, where the enthusiastic youth, impressed by the policies and vision of the party, pledged their support in the presence of Tejinder Pal Singh Aman, Provincial President of the Youth National Conference (YNC).

Speaking on the occasion, the youth apprised Tejinder Pal Singh Aman about the pressing issues they face due to a lack of basic facilities. They highlighted the dire need for improved public transport, stating that the absence of regular bus services on the Damsal- Kishanpur route severely affects students commuting to schools and colleges. At present, only one bus operates in the morning and one in the evening, making it extremely difficult for students to manage their studies efficiently.

The youth also raised concerns over the absence of a well-equipped Public Health Centre (PHC) in the area, which has forced residents to travel long distances for medical treatment. They emphasized that despite repeated pleas, the previous regime has failed to address these critical issues, leaving the people in distress.

Addressing the gathering, Tejinder Pal Singh Aman lauded the youth for their enthusiasm and assured them that their concerns would be taken up with the party's high command. He emphasized that the National Conference, under the leadership of Young and dynamic Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, has always prioritized the welfare of youth and is committed to resolving their grievances.

The Provincial President YNC urged the newly joined members to actively participate in strengthening the party at the grassroots level and assured them that the NC will continue to fight for their rights. "The National Conference has a strong legacy of working for the people, and we will ensure that the youth of J&K are provided with the necessary infrastructure and opportunities for a better future," he asserted.

JKBOSE organizes Essay Writing Competition on Adolescence Education, School Health and Wellness Programme

HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 18: The Jammu & Kashmir Board of School Education organized Essay Writing Competition on various themes of Adolescence Education Program (AEP) and School Health and Wellness Program (SHWP) under Ayushman Bharat Scheme of Government of India in J&K.

In the essay writing competition, the students from class 6th to 12th of government as well as private schools (affiliated to JKBOSE) participated in two categories i.e. Middle Stage (6th to 8th) and Secondary Stage (9th to 12th) through digital mode.

The detailed guidelines along with the different themes were shared with both the Directorates of School Education, Jammu & Kashmir, Chief Education Officers of all 20 Districts and Hols of concerned schools and were made available to the students through different online modes for the maximum participation of the students. The Essay Writing Competition provided platform to the students and gave them opportunity to win prizes and consolation prizes under these two categories. A large number of entries i.e. 399 shared by Govt. as well as Private Schools (affiliated to JKBOSE) were received by JKAEP Cell, JKBOSE which were evaluated by the panel of experts.

District Administration Doda conducts training session for Hajj Pilgrims

HT News Network

DODA, MARCH 18: The District Administration Doda today organized a training session for the selected Hajj pilgrims at Astan Masjid Sharif Doda to familiarize them with Manasik-e-Haj (Hajj rituals).

Over 82 pilgrims participated in the program, where they received

detailed practical training on Hajj rituals and essential logistical procedures. The trainers provided guidance on boarding, lodging, accommodation, currency exchange, and other key aspects related to the sacred journey. The pilgrims were also briefed about the necessary documents and luggage requirements.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Doda, Harvinder Singh, while interacting



with the pilgrims, informed that 82 individuals, including women, from District Doda will be embarking on the pilgrimage this year. He assured the pilgrims of the administration's full support in ensuring a smooth and hassle-free experience.

The DC extended his best wishes to the pilgrims and urged them to pray for the district's progress, the nation's development, and for com-

munal harmony. He also highlighted the vaccination initiatives undertaken by the administration to safeguard the health of the pilgrims during their journey.

The pilgrims expressed gratitude to the District Administration, especially DC Doda, for their cooperation and well-coordinated efforts in facilitating seamless arrangements for the pilgrimage.





Mahakumbh symbol of unity in diversity: PM Modi

UNI
NEW DELHI, MAR 18

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday hailed the successful completion of Mahakumbh, saying, "Unity in diversity is India's specialty, and we witnessed this on a grand scale in Prayagraj."

Addressing the Lok Sabha, the prime minister said, "Today, when the entire world is going through challenging times, the grand show of this unity is our great strength."

He further added, "We have always said that unity in diversity is India's speciality, and we witnessed this on a grand scale in Prayagraj. Our responsibility is to continue enriching this speciality of unity in diversity."

He lauded the massive



preparations and seamless execution of the grand religious congregation, which witnessed participation from millions of devotees, saints, and tourists from across the globe.

"I bow to crores of people of the country who contributed to the success of Mahakumbh in Prayagraj," PM Narendra Modi said, adding that Prayagraj Mahakumbh reflects the spirit of rising India.

The prime minister, who himself took a holy dip in the Sangam, said people set aside their egos and, with the spirit of selflessness embracing the philosophy of "not me, but we", gathered in Prayagraj.

"They became a part of the sacred Triveni. There was no distinction between big and small," Modi said.

Speaking about other initiatives at the Maha Kumbh, PM Modi said,

"Mahakumbh has given a lot of inspiration. We have many big or large rivers, some of which are endangered. Inspired by the Kumbh, we should expand 'Nadi Utsav'. This will teach the importance of water conservation to the new generation."

Thanking people on the successful completion of Maha Kumbh, the prime minister said, "I bow down to crores of countrymen, due to whom the Maha Kumbh was organised successfully."

"Many people have contributed to the success of the Maha Kumbh. I congratulate all the Karmayogis of the government and the society. I thank the devotees from all over the country, the people of UP, especially the people of Prayagraj," he said.

We have to support one-another on sensitive Manipur issue: FM in Rajya Sabha

UNI
NEW DELHI, MAR 18

Noting that instances of violence in strife-torn Manipur have been declining and everyone needs to support one another on the sensitive issue, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said that a contingency fund of Rs 500 crore has been created for the state.

Replying to the discussion on The Appropriation Bill, 2025, the Appropriation (No. 2) Bill, 2025, the Manipur Appropriation (Vote on Account) Bill, 2025



and the Manipur Appropriation Bill, 2025 in Rajya Sabha, the Minister said that the fund created for the state would help meet emergent situations.

Sitharaman said that

major infrastructure projects in the state of Manipur are being given priority by the government.

She said that the government is doing everything to restore normalcy in the

state and also stated that "we have to support one another" on the sensitive Manipur issue.

Following the Minister's reply, the Rajya Sabha returned the Appropriation Bill, 2025 & the Appropriation (No. 2) Bill, 2025, the Manipur Appropriation (Vote on Account) Bill, 2025 and the Manipur Appropriation Bill, 2025.

During her reply, the Finance minister stated that India's household debt-to-GDP ratio is relatively low compared to emerging market economies and some advanced nations.

Opposition should have been given chance to speak on Mahakumbh: Priyanka

UNI
NEW DELHI, MAR 18

Congress general secretary and Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday expressed disappointment over the Opposition not being given an opportunity to speak on the Mahakumbh in the Lok Sabha.

Speaking to the media at the Parliament premises, Priyanka said, "The Prime Minister spoke about the Mahakumbh in a positive manner. But the Opposition also has sentiments for the



Mahakumbh. They (Treasury Benches) should not have had any issues with listening to the Opposition."

"I think the Opposition should have been given at least two minutes to speak on the Mahakumbh," she

said.

Notably, while speaking in the Lower House, Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the successful completion of Mahakumbh, saying, "Unity in diversity is India's speciality, and we witnessed this on a grand scale in Prayagraj."

He lauded the massive preparations and seamless execution of the grand religious congregation, which witnessed participation from millions of devotees, saints, and tourists from across the globe.

Sharp exchanges over Budget estimates between Chief Minister and former CM

UNI
SHIMLA, MAR 18

The budget discussion for the 2025-26 financial year witnessed sharp exchange of words between Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu and Leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur. The primary issue revolved around the significant reduction in the budget outlay for capital works, with both leaders blaming each other for the cuts.

During the debate, Chief Minister Sukhu defended the government's decision to increase the overall budget allocation by Rs 71 crore compared to previous years. He emphasized that despite this increase, a significant reduction in the Revenue Deficit Grant, expected to fall to Rs 3,257 crore in the next year, had affected the state's financial capacity.

Sukhu pointed out that the reduction in grants, along with other financial



constraints, had impacted the state's ability to increase capital expenditure. He noted that during the previous government's tenure, they benefited from the 14th and 15th Finance Commissions, which allowed for larger budgets and greater spending capacity for capital projects. Under the 14th Finance Commission (2012-2017), the state received Rs 40,000 crore, and under the 15th Commission (2016-2025), Rs 38,000 crore. However, Sukhu highlighted that the previous government left only Rs 6,200 crore from the 15th Finance Commission.

Sukhu also criticized the former government for misusing GST compensation funds, which were intended for vital financial commitments like paying off loans and the 6th Finance Commission installment. Instead, he argued, the funds were spent on populist schemes like distributing freebies. He further mentioned that the former government had taken advantage of increased borrowing limits during the COVID-19 period, a practice he argued was not sustainable.

On the other hand, Jai Ram Thakur raised concerns over the sharp reduc-

tion in capital expenditure, particularly for infrastructure projects like the IPH scheme. He accused the state government of failing to spend on essential development works, including road construction and tourism projects, while claiming credit for central schemes. Thakur argued that the state's coffers were empty, and there was no mention of central assistance in the budget, which he described as a serious oversight.

Thakur also criticized the Congress for failing to fulfill the promises made to the people during the election. He pointed out that, under the current government, loans had soared to Rs 27,000 crore in just two years, compared to Rs 28,744 crore over five years under his leadership. He claimed the countdown had begun for the Congress government, with many of their promises yet to be realized.

Iran to suffer dire consequences for further Houthi attacks: Trump

UNI
WASHINGTON, MAR 18

U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday warned that Iran will suffer dire consequences for further attacks by the Houthis based in Yemen.

"Every shot fired by the Houthis will be looked upon, from this point forward, as being a shot fired from the weapons



and leadership of IRAN," Trump wrote on Truth Social. "IRAN will be held

responsible and suffer the consequences, and those consequences will be dire!" he wrote.

Trump also accused Iran of providing the Houthis with weapons, money and intelligence.

Earlier on Monday, Alexis Grynkeiwich, the head of operations at the Joint Staff, said at a Pentagon press briefing that the United States struck 30

Houthi targets at multiple locations on Saturday.

More strikes were conducted on Sunday and Monday, and the operation "will continue in the coming days until we achieve the President's objectives," he said.

The Houthi Health Ministry said on Sunday that the U.S. strikes had killed 53 people and injured 98 others since Saturday.

6 killed in aircraft crash off Honduran island of Roatan

UNI
MEXICO CITY, MAR 18

At least six people were killed after a small plane lost control and crashed on Monday evening upon taking off from Roatan Island in northern Honduras, said Octavio Pineda, minister of Infrastructure and Transportation of Honduras.

The plane carried 18 people, including 15 passengers and three crew members, said the offi-



cial.

The aircraft lost power upon takeoff and fell into the sea some 1 km from the side of the airstrip, Miroslava Cerpas, the presidential commissioner of the National 911 Emergency System of Honduras, told Xinhua.

The aircraft of the Lanhsa company was carrying out a local flight from the Juan Manuel Galvez International Airport in Roatan to the city of La Ceiba.

TN: Sri Lankan Navy arrests 3 Indian fishermen, impounds 1 boat

UNI
RAMESWARAM (TAMIL NADU)
MAR 18

The Sri Lankan Navy on Tuesday apprehended three Indian fishermen and seized their mechanised fishing trawler, allegedly for violating the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) and indulging in illegal fishing activities in its territorial waters.

Fisheries department officials said here that the fishermen, hailing from Rameswaram, were arrested by the Sri Lankan navy during a special operation when they were fishing on the high seas close to the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL).

The Sri Lankan Navy claimed that it continues to conduct regular patrols and operations to curb illegal fishing practices of



foreign fishing boats trespassing into the island nation's waters, taking into account the impact of those unlawful practices on the livelihood of local fishermen.

As an extension of these operations, the Sri Lankan Navy spotted a group of Indian fishing boats engaging in illegal fishing in the northern sea area off Delft Island, Jaffna, and in response the Northern Naval Command deployed its craft to drive

away those Indian fishing boats from island waters.

The compliant boarding made by Lankan naval personnel resulted in the apprehension of three Indian fishermen and seizure of one Indian boat, which continued to engage in illegal fishing.

The apprehended fishermen and their boat were taken to the Kankesanthurai Harbour, where they will be handed over to the Fisheries Inspector of Mailadi, Jaffna, for

onwards legal proceedings.

With this, the Sri Lankan maritime forces arrested 145 Indian fishermen and seized 19 Indian fishing trawlers so far this year. It may be recalled that the mechanised boat fishermen of Rameswaram had observed a nine-day strike, besides a sit-in protest, after the Sri Lankan Navy arrested 32 fishermen from Rameswaram on April 23.

A fishermen's delegation from Rameswaram, led by Tamil Nadu BJP president K. Annamalai, met External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on March 13 in New Delhi and sought a permanent solution to the recurring arrest of Indian fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy and heavy fines imposed on them by the Lankan government.

Ultra-processed vegan meat, soy milk may help lose weight: Study

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Trying to lose weight? A new study claims replacing animal products with plant-based foods like soy milk and vegan meat that are ultra-processed, can lead to significant weight loss.

The research by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine looked at the role of plant-based processed foods in weight loss.

High-processed foods -- rich in sugar, salt, and fat -- are known to be unhealthy and contribute to weight gain, obesity, and a host of diseases.

“Our research shows that choosing a bagel instead of bacon for breakfast or a veggie burger instead of a hamburger for dinner is the best option if you are looking to lose weight,” said Hana Kahleova, director of clinical research for the



Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine.

“Filling your plate with plant-based foods -- even if they are considered ultra-processed like soy milk and vegan meat and yogurt alternatives -- instead of animal products can have a positive impact on your weight and overall

health,” Kahleova added.

The findings, published in the journal Nutrition & Metabolism, showed that participants in the vegan group decreased consumption of animal products and increased plant-based foods. This led to an average weight loss of 5.9 kilograms, compared to an

insignificant change in the control group.

The top three predictors of weight loss were reduced consumption of processed animal foods (such as smoked fish), unprocessed or minimally processed animal foods (such as milk, beef, and eggs), and ultra-processed animal foods (such as cheese, fried chicken, and sausage).

This appears to have resulted from reduced calorie and fat intake and increased fiber intake, as well as calorie burn from increased after-meal metabolism, said the researchers.

“Our new study is an important reminder that plant-based foods that are considered processed, like canned beans, cereal, and veggie burgers, are actually part of a healthy diet that can help fight diet-related chronic disease epidemics,” Kahleova said.

US researchers decode origins of ovarian cancer

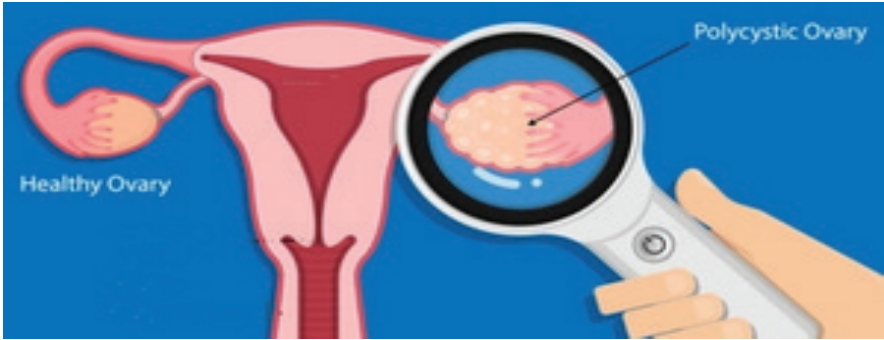
AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

A team of US researchers has identified high-risk cells in fallopian tubes that may trigger a deadly form of ovarian cancer.

The discovery of the high-risk cells -- a subset of progenitor cells that reside in fallopian tube supportive tissue, or stroma -- may pave the way for better approaches to prevent and detect high-grade serous ovarian cancer (HGSOC), said the team from the University of Pittsburgh.

HGSOC is a type of ovarian cancer that starts in the fallopian tubes and spreads to the ovaries. It is the most common form of ovarian cancer.

“Ovarian cancer is a leading cause of death from gynecologic cancer, but we currently have no way to detect it early and no prevention strategies apart from surgical castration, which is only indicated in high-risk women,”



said Lan Coffman, Associate Professor of malignant hematology and medical oncology in the Pitt School of Medicine.

“Understanding the underlying biology of how ovarian cancer forms is critical to improving outcomes for our patients,” Coffman said, in the paper, published in the journal Cancer Discovery.

HGSOC begins in the fallopian tubes when healthy epithelial cells transform into precursor lesions known as serous tubal intraepithelial carcinoma (STIC). These STIC lesions often develop into

HGSOC tumours.

To find out, Coffman and her team turned to the stroma -- the non-cancerous connective tissue that helps cancer grow. In the stroma of ovarian cancer, a type of progenitor cell normally involved in the growth and repair of healthy tissue (mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) becomes reprogrammed by tumour cells to support cancer growth.

Further probe revealed that cells that looked like cancer-associated MSCs in the fallopian tubes of healthy women, had higher risk of ovarian

cancer. The risks include older age or with mutations in the BRCA gene -- suggesting that they play a role in cancer initiation.

When the researchers introduced these high-risk MSCs into organoids, or mini-organs, derived from patient fallopian tube tissue, healthy epithelial cells transformed into cancerous cells.

“High-risk MSCs promote DNA damage in epithelial cells and then help those mutated cells survive,” explained Coffman. “It’s the perfect storm for cancer initiation.”

New AI-based tool to spot cognitive impairment, prevent Alzheimer’s: Study

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

A team of US researchers have developed an artificial intelligence (AI) based system that may help assess cognitive impairments and curb the risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease or dementia in older adults.

Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) can be an early indicator of Alzheimer’s disease or dementia, so identifying people with cognitive issues early could lead to interventions and better outcomes.

However, diagnosing MCI can be a long and difficult process, especially in rural areas where access to licensed neuropsychologists is limited.

Researchers from the University of Missouri created a portable system that comes with a depth camera, a force plate, and an interface board. The study showed it can efficiently measure multiple



aspects of motor function. The team examined older adults, some of whom had MCI, and asked them to complete three activities: standing still, walking, and standing up from a bench.

Participants had to complete these activities while counting backward in intervals of seven at the same time.

Based on their perfor-

mance, which was captured by the new portable system, the data was fed into a machine learning model -- a type of artificial intelligence -- that accurately identified 83 per cent of those in the study with MCI.

“The areas of the brain involved in cognitive impairment overlap with areas of the brain involved in motor function, so

when one is diminished, the other is impacted as well,” said Trent Guess, an associate professor in the College of Health Sciences, at the varsity.

“These can be very subtle differences in motor function related to balance and walking that our new device is able to detect but would go unnoticed through observation,” Guess added.

With the number of people globally with Alzheimer’s disease expected to surge, the portable device has the potential to help millions of older adults given that MCI is one of the precursors to Alzheimer’s and dementia.

“This portable system has many other applications, too, including looking at those with concussions, sports rehabilitation, ALS and Parkinson’s disease, knee replacements and hip replacements,” Guess said.

India's innovations transforming global health and agriculture, says Bill Gates

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Microsoft co-founder and philanthropist Bill Gates has praised India’s significant role in global health and agriculture, highlighting the country’s growing influence in these fields.

Gates, who will be visiting India for the third time in three years, acknowledged the nation’s advancements and its potential to address some of the world’s most pressing challenges.

In a LinkedIn post, Gates reflected on the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s longstanding partnership with India.

“Over the past two decades, the foundation has worked alongside the Indian government, researchers, and entrepreneurs to drive progress in healthcare, agriculture, and digital transformation,” he said.

He lauded India’s suc-



cess in public health, particularly in eradicating polio, recalling his visit in 2011 when India marked its last polio case.

Gates also highlighted India’s leadership in the fight against tuberculosis (TB), noting the country’s investments in new diagnostic tools, AI-powered detection, and innovative treatment strategies.

“A breakthrough saliva-based TB test, costing under \$2, is one example of how India is advancing

global health,” he mentioned.

In agriculture, Gates emphasised India’s role in transforming farming through AI tools that help predict weather patterns, select crops, and reduce risks.

He praised India’s innovations, which not only benefit its citizens but also contribute to global progress.

Additionally, Gates praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s efforts during India’s G20 Presidency to share the country’s innovations with the world.

Beyond healthcare and agriculture, Gates also highlighted India’s success in digital technology, particularly the development of digital public infrastructure like Aadhaar and digital payments.

“These innovations have improved access to essential services such as banking, healthcare, and

government services,” he continued.

Microsoft co-founder added: “AI-powered tools now support rural health workers in disease detection, pregnancy care, and patient data management.”

Gates’ visit also marks a historic milestone for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, as its Board of Trustees will meet in the Global South for the first time, with India chosen as the location.

“This visit will also be significant because -- as we mark our 25th anniversary -- the Gates Foundation’s Board of Trustees is meeting in the Global South for the first time,” Gates said.

During his visit, Gates plans to meet with government officials, scientists, and philanthropists shaping the future of India and the world.

“India is the right place for this milestone,” he concluded.

S. Korea reports additional foot-and-mouth disease case, total at 5

AGENCIES
SEOUL

South Korea on Sunday confirmed an additional foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) case at a local farm, raising the number of cases this year to five, the agriculture ministry said.

The latest case was found at a beef cattle farm in the county of Muan, about 290 kilometers south of Seoul, where three cows were confirmed to have been infected, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, reports Yonhap news agency.

The country on Friday reported the first FMD outbreak at a local farm since May 2023 and found three additional cases in the county of Yeongam, South Jeolla Province, the following day.

All of the cattle at the affected farm were to be culled in a preventive step, the ministry said, adding it



will take other necessary quarantine measures.

The government raised the crisis level for Muan and several other adjacent regions to “serious,” the highest level of its four-tier system, and has begun a nationwide FMD vaccination program, initially planned for next month.

As a severe and highly transmissible viral disease, FMD causes illness in cows, pigs, goats and other cloven-hoofed animals. It

does not affect humans.

Acting President Choi Sang-mok has directed relevant ministries to implement thorough preventive measures to contain the outbreak at an early stage.

“The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs must closely cooperate with relevant agencies to swiftly carry out emergency actions, including rapid culling, entry controls, testing and disinfection, in accor-

dance with the emergency response guidelines,” Choi said.

Earlier in January, South Korea placed an import ban on German pork following an outbreak of the highly contagious FMD disease in the European nation, Yonhap reported.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs said the decision was made after Germany reported its first FMD case since 1988.

Scientists reveal key mechanism behind heavy-ion cancer therapy

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

A recent study has made significant progress in uncovering the microscopic mechanism behind heavy-ion cancer therapy, which is expected to optimise cancer treatment strategies and promote the development of new radiotherapy technologies.

The findings, led by researchers from the Institute of Modern Physics (IMP) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and their collaborators, were recently published as a highlighted paper in the journal Physical Review X, Xinhua news agency reported.

Heavy-ion therapy, a cutting-edge radiotherapy technique, uses heavy-ion beams to destroy cancer cells.

Since the concept was proposed in 1946, over 50,000 patients worldwide have undergone heavy-ion treatment.



“Under the same radiation dose, heavy ions exhibit two to three times greater cancer-cell-killing efficiency than traditional X-ray radiotherapy,” said Xu Shenye, a researcher with the IMP.

Heavy ions can more efficiently cause DNA double-strand breaks in tumour cells, resulting in stronger biological effects.

But the specific microscopic mechanism underlying these effects had long been unclear, Shenye added.

Researchers conducted

experiments at the heavy-ion research facilities in Lanzhou, northwest China’s Gansu Province, to address this question.

For the first time, they observed an intermolecular energy and proton transfer cascade mechanism triggered by heavy-ion irradiation in biomolecular clusters.

“The observed mechanism sheds light on the molecular mechanisms of radiation damage, and may play an essential role in optimising radiotherapy techniques in the future,”

said Ma Xinwen, another researcher with the IMP.

The study was conducted by scientists from the IMP, in collaboration with researchers from Russia’s Irkutsk State University, Germany’s Heidelberg University, the University of Science and Technology of China, Xi’an Jiaotong University and Lanzhou University.

Meanwhile, a recent report said that the scientists are working on a new type of antibody that could help fight treatment-resistant breast and ovarian cancers.

The antibody, known as IgE, has shown the ability to stimulate the immune system and slow down tumour growth.

Currently, IgG antibodies are commonly used in immunotherapy to activate the body’s immune system against cancer.

This treatment is often preferred over chemotherapy and radiation because it specifically targets cancer cells.



FIFA Women Football Benchmarking Report expanded to offer detailed global insights & recommendations

UNI
ZURICH (SWITZERLAND), MAR 18

FIFA has published the fourth edition of Setting the Pace - its informative benchmarking report that provides insights into the factors that drive success in women's football clubs and leagues.

Following the delivery of the first three editions that focused on the top 30 to 34 women's football leagues in the world, the fourth edition marks a significant evolution as it expands beyond only the elite sector of the game to encompass three "tiers" of women's football leagues.

In total, the report directly monitors 86 leagues and 669 clubs, painting an increasingly accurate picture of the global women's club football landscape.

The fourth edition of the report was open to each of FIFA's 211 Member Associations to participate on the basis that a top-flight women's football league is operational in their nation. This move was made by FIFA to ensure that enhanced information and data



could be collected globally across six key areas: sporting, governance, financial landscape, fan engagement, data and digital, and player-related matters.

The expansion of the dataset and its subsequent release is intended to help clubs, leagues and stakeholders worldwide to gain a better understanding of the best practices and trends prevalent in the most successful women's football leagues in the world, and to provide tools and recommendations to support leagues at all stages of the professionalisation pipeline, according to a FIFA media statement.

"This month FIFA announced the timelines and formats for two new, landmark, global FIFA women's club competitions," said FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

"As we embark on the development of these

tournaments, it is equally important that we offer insights and resources to women's football stakeholders so that together we can build on the solid foundations already in place. FIFA will utilise the findings to build tailor-made programmes that will support Member Associations to continue to professionalise women's football - this is critical as we embark on a new era for women's club football on the global stage," he said.

In light of the expansive findings detailed in the report, edition four of Setting the Pace offers 15 recommendations for the consideration of leagues and clubs. These recommendations cover all six topic areas, and include insights into season lengths, player and coach pathways, safeguarding, strategy development, contracts, maternity regulations, broadcast and social media, and more.

FIFA Chief Football Officer Jill Ellis added: "One of the key findings in the report is that, across 86 leagues and 669 clubs, only 22 per cent of head

coaches are women. While we cannot improve this figure overnight, by unearthing and analysing the data we can understand where we need to continue to invest, implement and perhaps even evolve our women's coach development programmes to unlock more opportunities for women and empower everyone working in women's football - on and off the pitch."

In December last year, FIFA announced Global Benchmarking of Women's Leagues as a new programme within its Women's Development Programme structure through to 2027 - the year of the next FIFA Women's World Cup in Brazil. By committing to conduct regular, in-depth research into women's club football and to provide additional insights to Member Associations via a dedicated digital dashboard, FIFA underscored its commitment to helping enhance the overall quality and competitiveness of women's leagues worldwide through intentional and insightful research and analysis.

IOC executive board approves inclusion of boxing at LA 2028 Olympics

UNI
COSTA NAVARINO (GREECE), MAR 18

The executive board of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has green-lit the inclusion of boxing in the sports program of the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

Outgoing IOC president Thomas Bach confirmed the news at a press briefing on Monday following an IOC executive board meeting in the Romanos Resort in Costa Navarino.

Bach, who is set to step



down as the IOC chief in June, said that it still needs an approval from the full IOC session later this week but has confidence in boxing's return to the Olympics.

"I am very confident that

the session will approve it so that all the boxers of the world then have certainty that they can participate in the Olympic Games L.A. 2028 if their national federation is recognized by World Boxing," Bach said.

Boxing has been an Olympic sport since 1904, but due to issues related to governance, officiating and financial management, the IOC suspended its recognition of the International Boxing Association in 2019.

With no new governing body recognized for boxing, the boxing competitions at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and the Paris Olympics last year were run directly by the IOC.

Last month, the IOC recognized a new governing body, World Boxing.

Players from Sri Lanka & New Zealand make rankings gains

UNI
DUBAI, MAR 18

A host of players from Sri Lanka and New Zealand have been the big winners on the latest ICC Women's T20I Player Rankings.

While rain saw no result possible between the two sides in the series decider in Dunedin on Tuesday, performances across the remainder of the series meant a large group of players made giant strides on the updated player rankings.

Veteran Sri Lanka captain Chamari Athapaththu was adjudged Player

of the Series for her 87 runs and the 35-year-old was rewarded on the rankings as she made one spot to move to sixth overall on the latest list for T20I batters.

Australia opener Beth Mooney remains out in front in this category, with Athapaththu's less experienced teammate Nilakshika de Silva (up three places to equal 52nd) also making some ground on the back of her 32 runs across the first two games of the series against the White Ferns.

Brooke Halliday is the big mover on the T20I

batter rankings from a New Zealand perspective, with the left-hander gaining 17 places to improve to 67th following her impressive innings of 46 not out in the second match of the series in Christchurch.

England spinner Sophie Ecclestone maintains her place at the top of the T20I bowler rankings, but a quartet of Sri Lankan players have made some ground.

Inoshi Priyadharshani (up two places to 19th), Sugandika Kumari (up seven spots to 22nd) and Kavisha Dilhari (up three

runs to 34th) all make eye-catching gains inside the top 50, while experienced teammate and right-arm seamer Achini Kulasuriya improves four runs to equal

56th following her tidy spell of 1/11 in Christchurch. New Zealand pacer Jess Kerr improves three spots to move to 42nd. West Indies superstar Hayley Matthews retains her place as the No.1 ranked all-rounder in T20I cricket, with New Zealand veteran Suzie Bates gaining 13 places this week to move to equal 35th.

Scotland unveil strong squad for ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier

UNI
EDINBURGH, MAR 18

Scotland have named their 15-player squad for next month's ICC Women's Cricket World Cup Qualifier event in Pakistan.

The European side have included 12 players that featured at last year's ICC Women's T20 World Cup, with experienced all-rounder Kathryn Bryce to once again lead the team as captain as they attempt to qualify for their first 50-over World Cup.

Australian-born all-rounder Saskia Horley is the big name missing from the Scotland squad, with the talented 25-year-old taking a break from international cricket. Spinner Olivia Bell is also sidelined due to a shoulder injury.

It means there is room in

the Scotland squad for teenager Pippa Sproul, after the 17-year-old finished as the side's leading run-scorer during the ICC Women's Under 19 World Cup earlier this year.

Scotland coach Craig Wallace believes Sproul is capable of performing well on the big stage at the qualifier, an ICC report said.

"Pippa (Sproul) has received her first call-up, and I'm really excited for her, it's always an amazing experience coming on tour for the first time, and I'm looking forward to having her as part of the group," Wallace said.

"Hopefully she can bring the excellent skills that she showed in the Under 19 World Cup in January, she's got a really good temperament and knows her game really well, so it will be excit-

ing to see what she can do with more opportunities."

Two places at this year's 50-over World Cup in India are available via next month's qualifier tournament, with Scotland chasing a top-two finish along with West Indies, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ireland and Thailand.

Wallace knows competition will be tough in Pakistan, but is confident his side can prove more than competitive against their five opponents.

"The qualifier's an amazing opportunity, it's going to be great to have the group back together, playing against some excellent teams and really challenging ourselves," Wallace added.

"We've learnt a lot over the last year, with the qualifying campaign for the last

World Cup and then playing in that event, and we have that belief and knowledge that we can get through these qualifiers.

"Qualifiers are always quite brutal events, there's never much margin for error, and especially at this event, it does feel like everyone can beat each other.

"We just have to focus on ourselves, and use what we've learnt over the past twelve months to play our brand of cricket at the highest level we can."

"It will be a new experience playing in Pakistan, but I've spoken to people I know who've played out there, and some of the squad have been there before, so we'll be leaning on them, getting an understanding of the conditions and how we can best adapt to them.

China announces roster for ITTF World Cup

UNI
BEIJING, MAR 18

China's table tennis team announced its roster for next month's ITTF Men's and Women's World Cup on Tuesday, with the 10-player list featuring prominent names like Wang Chuqin and Sun Yingsha.

The ITTF Men's and Women's World Cup will be held in Macao, China, from April 14 to 20. The Chinese men's representatives include Lin Shidong, Wang Chuqin, Liang Jingkun, Lin Gaoyuan, and Huang Youzheng, while the women's team will feature Sun Yingsha, Wang Manyu, Wang Yidi, Chen Xingtong, and Kuai Man.

The qualification pathway for the World Cup,



released by the ITTF in February, includes automatic qualification for current world champions, U19 world champions, and players qualifying through Continental Cups and world rankings.

As a result, reigning Olympic champion Fan Zhendong, who withdrew from the world rankings at the end of 2024, was also invited to participate.

However, he decided not to compete due to personal considerations.

Wang Hao, head coach of the Chinese men's team, hopes his players can give their all in the tournament.

"As none of these players has ever won the Singles World Cup, they are eager for the championship. Hopefully, they can showcase their level with

the best mentality and form, and one of them can make a breakthrough," he noted.

Since the start of 2025, the Chinese women's team has displayed remarkable consistency, sweeping semifinal spots at the World Table Tennis (WTT) Singapore Smash, Asian Cup, and WTT Champions Chongqing.

"The performances of these five players are the most consistent, and they have achieved favorable results against players from other teams," said Ma Lin, the team's head coach.

"We need to keep this momentum going, embrace the World Cup with better form, and strive for the best result," he added.

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