



DEO Srinagar holds
interaction session with
reps of Political parties

P|02



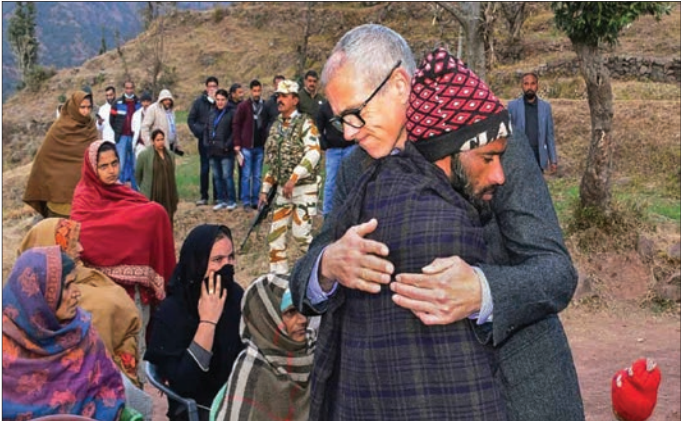
Budhal Mysterious Deaths.....

Demand for CBI probe into 17 mysterious deaths in Rajouri echoes in Assembly

■ HT News Network

Jammu, Mar 19: The demand for a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the 17 mysterious deaths in Badhal village of Rajouri echoed in the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday, with MLAs alleging a larger conspiracy behind these fatalities and even linking them with the recent deaths in Kulgam and Kathua. The Jammu & Kashmir Government informed the House that nearly a half-a-dozen toxins were found from

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Govt rules out communicable disease, says presence of toxins in food led to tragedy

■ HT News Network

Jammu, Mar 19: Ruling out any possibility of communicable

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Defamation Case:

Court Directs Police to Arrest AAP Leader, Present Him on May 14

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, MAR 19, : A Jammu court has issued a non-bailable warrant against Mehraj Malik, the sitting MLA from Doda and a leader of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), in a defamation case filed by former minister

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NIA tightens noose around terror supporters, raids 12 locations in Jammu

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, MAR 19: Intensifying the crackdown against terror supporters in Jammu sleuths of National Investigation Agency (NIA) carried out raids at 12 locations in the region on Wednesday. The raids, according to a



NIA statement issued to the news agency— were held in connection with infiltration of Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorists.

The statement said that the NIA received information regarding infiltration of LeT and JeM terrorists into India

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Sajad Lone Slams Govt Over Ban on Falah-e-Aam Schools, Seeks Justice for Students

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, MAR 19, : Sajad Lone strongly criticized the J&K government's decision to halt academic activities in schools run by the Falah-e-Aam Trust (FAT), calling it discriminatory.

He highlighted that this move affects students' education and future, particularly as some have been barred from appearing in board exams due to their schools' non-registration.

Lone urged the government to reconsider the decision and ensure that students are not penalized for administrative actions beyond their control.

He was speaking at the Legislative Assembly in Jammu today.

Karra flags financial mismanagement in J&K, cites CAG report

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MAR 19: Senior Congress leader and MLA Batamalloo, Tariq Hameed Karra on Wednesday raised concerns over the alleged financial mismanagement in Jammu and Kashmir, citing the findings of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report.

In the ongoing budget session of the J&K Legislative Assembly, Karra, as per the news agency—questioned over understated deficits, mounting liabilities, and misclassification of expenditures, which, he said, raise questions over fiscal transparency in the Union Territory.

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Govt establishes 'CM's public services, outreach office

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MAR 19: The Jammu and Kashmir government has announced the establishment of the 'Chief Minister's Public Services and Outreach Office' within the Chief Minister's Secretariat to strengthen grievance redressal mechanisms across the Union Territory.

The initiative as per the government aims to streamline public grievances and

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Chief Secy led panel to examine regularisation of casual, seasonal workers

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MAR 19: The Jammu and Kashmir Government has constituted a high-level committee to address the long-pending issue of regularizing casual, seasonal, and other temporary workers across the Union Territory.

The move comes as a step toward providing job security to thousands of workers engaged in various government departments.

According to an official order, a copy of which is in possession of the news agency—, states that the committee will be chaired by

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CS asks for creation of GIS based land bank for J&K

JAMMU, MARCH 19: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today chaired a high level meeting to review identification of land parcels for creation of a land bank to support developmental projects besides facilitating compensatory afforestation in lieu of forest land

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Anantnag Police Crack Missing Girl Case, Accused Arrested, Body Recovered

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MAR 19, KNT: Police in South Kashmir's Anantnag have solved the case of a missing girl from Kokernag, leading to the arrest of the accused and the recovery of the victim's body.

The case came to light on March 16, 2025, when Kokernag Police Station received a complaint regarding the disappearance of a girl (identity withheld). Acting swiftly, the police launched an investigation into the matter. During the probe, technical evidence pointed towards a possible abduction, with suspicion falling

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Parra calls for scrapping J&K Media Policy

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, MAR 19, : Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leader and MLA Pulwama, Waheed-ur-Rahman Parra on Wednesday strongly advocated for the scrapping of the media policy in Jammu and Kashmir, calling it a tool to suppress free speech in the erstwhile state. Speaking during the discussion on grants in the Jammu

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No plan to train educated youth as pharmacists at village level: Govt

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MAR 19: The Jammu and Kashmir government has no proposal to train educated youth as pharmacists at the village level, Health and Medical Education Minister Sakina Itoo informed the Assembly on Wednesday. Responding to a question from MLA Balwant Singh Mankotia, Itoo, as per the news agency—, said that 37 medical institutions in Block Chenani, five in Block Basantgarh, and seven in Block Ramnagar are currently providing healthcare services in Chenani Constituency.

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Govt has developed robust mechanism for affordable, accessible healthcare: Minister Itoo

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MAR 19 The Jammu and Kashmir government has developed a robust mechanism to ensure affordable and easy access to healthcare services at doorsteps through various platforms, Health and Medical Education Minister Sakina Itoo informed the Assembly on

Wednesday. Responding to a question from MLA Ajaz Jan, Itoo, as per the news agency—, said the government is committed to strengthening healthcare by improving infrastructure, ensuring manpower availability and upgrading medical equipment. She said the focus remains on maternal and child health, communicable and non-communicable diseases

and preparing for future health challenges in line with IPHS and NMC norms. Highlighting key projects in Poonch Haveli Constituency, Itoo said Critical Care Block (CCB): A CCB is under construction at District Hospital Poonch at a cost of Rs 23.75 crore under the PM-ABHIM scheme. "One DIPHL lab at DH Poonch and Block Public

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Budget Session 2025: Speaker urges responsible conduct among members without resorting to rhetoric

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 19: Speaker, Abdul Rahim Rather today called upon the members of the House to conduct themselves responsibly and refrain from sensationalism, emphasizing their role as public representatives.

His remarks came in response to a tweet by MLA Waheed-ur-Rehman Parra, who alleged on social media platform X that his cut motions against Grants for various departments,



including Law, Tourism, Estates, Culture, and the General Administration Department (GAD), were not admitted by the Assembly Secretariat, which he termed as discriminatory

towards him and the opposition.

Addressing the House, the Speaker clarified that, as per Rule 227 of the Conduct of Business Rules, cut motions must be submitted

at least three days before the scheduled discussion on the grants. This allows time for consolidation, submission to the concerned departments for responses, and preparation of replies for members.

He further informed the House that Parra had submitted his cut motions at 11:37 PM on March 17, while the grants were scheduled to be presented the next morning by the Chief Minister, so it was not plausible to admit the same.

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Srinagar among 9 districts receive average rainfall in March so far

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MAR 19: The week-long wet spell till March 16 in Jammu and Kashmir has ended the large deficit rainfall across 17 districts with Srinagar, the summer capital, among nine stations witnessing average rainfall during the last 19 days, starting from March 01 to March 19.

According to the details available with the news agency—overall Jammu and Kashmir has recorded a deficit of 16 per cent rainfall during the period as against the average rainfall of 95.2mm, the region has recorded 80.2 mm precipitation.

As per the data, nine stations including Srinagar, Anantnag, Budgam, Baramulla, Ganderbal, Ramban, Kishtwar, Kulgam and Kupwara have recorded average rainfall in the last 19 days. Bandipora in north Kashmir has recorded an excess rainfall

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CS

the Chief Secretary and will include senior officials from the Finance, Planning, Law, and General Administration Departments.

"The panel is mandated to examine the humanitarian, legal, and financial aspects of worker regularization and propose a comprehensive framework for implementation," the order states.

"The committee will consist of Chief Secretary, Chairman, Additional Chief Secretary, Member, Administrative Secretary, Finance Department Member, Administrative Secretary, General Administration Department Member, Administrative Secretary, Planning, Development & Monitoring Department Member, Administrative Secretary, Department of Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs Member," it states.

"The General Administration Department (GAD) will provide secretarial support, and the committee is expected to submit its report within six months. It also has the flexibility to co-opt additional members if needed. The issue of casual and seasonal workers' regularization has been a long-standing demand in J&K, with thousands of workers engaged in public works, agriculture, education, and municipal services awaiting a structured employment policy," the order reads—(KNO)

KARRA

Karra, while referring to the CAG report, highlighted that the revenue deficit was understated by Rs 200.29 crore, while the fiscal deficit was misreported by Rs 41.53 crore. He pointed out that such discrepancies indicate a lack of accuracy in financial disclosures.

The congress legislator in his question further added that in addition to these miscalculations, the CAG report has flagged J&K's outstanding liabilities at a staggering Rs 29,335.41 crore.

Moreover, the government has borrowed an additional Rs 2,122.77 crore through JKIDFC (J&K Infrastructure Development Finance Corporation) and Rs 10,321.83 crore through JKPCCL (J&K Power Corporation Limited), further raising concerns about the region's debt burden.

Karra in the question flagged the misclassification of Rs 158.76 crore of revenue expenditure under capital expenditure, which, according to the CAG, distorts budget transparency. By shifting expenses from one category to another, the government may have presented a misleading picture of its financial health, Karra suggested.

In response, the J&K government acknowledged that misclassification of revenue deficit and fiscal deficit occurred but assured that it has been rectified in consultation with the Principal Accountant General (PAG).

The government also defended the borrowing, stating that off-budget loans were used to complete long-pending infrastructure projects and clear power purchase dues, particularly during the COVID-19 period.

The government, in its response further said that CAG Finances Audit Report for Jammu and Kashmir has various positive initiatives and achievements, stating increase in Revenue Receipts Revenue receipts grew by 13 percent in 2021–22 compared to the previous year. Own tax revenue increased by 31.88%, with State GST rising by 32.13% and Excise Revenue by 32.31%. Non-tax revenue also grew by 18.74%, indicating better revenue collection.

"The government maintained a minimum cash balance on 62 days without borrowing. Despite fiscal challenges, the UT was able to manage its finances efficiently, keeping the deficit lower than expected," the government said in its response.

The government stated that the Capital Expenditure (Capex) in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir increased by 5.51% in 2021–22 compared to the previous year. Capital Expenditure in 2020–21 was Rs 10,470.38 crore, Capital Expenditure in 2021–22 Rs 11,047.03 crore, while the percentage increase was 5.51%.

The government response added that capital outlay on public works increased significantly, with a focus on building roads, bridges, and other public infrastructure—(KNO)

BUDHAL

the samples collected from the area and viscera of the deceased.

As Question Hour began, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), NC's Javed Iqbal Choudhary raised the demand for a CBI probe into the deaths after Minister for Health and Medical Education Sakina Ittoo informed the House that half-a-dozen toxins were detected from samples collected in the area as well as from viscera of the deceased.

"Different toxins have been found in the samples. It seems they were poisoned with a substantial amount of toxins," he said.

He said these deaths shouldn't be viewed in isolation from the incidents in Kulgam and Kathua.

"It appears to be an attempt to destabilize peace," he added, urging for a CBI investigation to uncover the cause of these deaths.

MLA Surankote Choudhary Muhammad

Akram supported the demand for a CBI probe.

"Nothing is known about the cause of deaths. Nobody is listening to us. There should be a CBI probe," he said.

CPI(M) MLA Muhammad Yosouf Tarigami demanded that the invisible hands behind these deaths must be unmasked.

"It is ironic that the cause of these deaths remains unknown. What happened there today could happen anywhere tomorrow," he said.

Responding to the demands, Minister in-charge of Health & Medical Education, Sakina Ittoo informed the House that an investigation by the Home Department is ongoing.

"The Home department is not under control so that we can order any further investigation into these deaths," she said.

However, she added that further steps will be taken once the investigation is completed.

In a written response, the minister revealed that clinical reports, lab investigations, and environmental samples indicated that the incidents were not due to a communicable disease of bacterial or viral origin.

The minister disclosed that PGIMER Chandigarh report reveals traces of aluminum and cadmium were detected.

The CSIR-IITR, Lucknow report, according to the minister's reply, detected Aldicarb sulfate, Acetamiprid, Diethylthiocarbamate and Chlorfenapyr.

The Minister said DRDE-DRDO Gwalior found Chlorfenapyr and Abrin from the samples of sattu and maize bread.

She said that NFL, FSSAI Ghaziabad detected Chlorfenapyr and Chlorpyrifos from the food samples.

The Minister also said that the CFSL Chandigarh report detected Chlorfenapyr in the viscera samples of all 17 deceased.

It is worthwhile to mention that the Union Home Ministry had deputed an inter-ministerial team to the village to ascertain the cause of these deaths—(KNO)

GOVT

disease at Budhal village in Rajouri district, where 16 people died due to mysterious illness earlier this year, the government on Wednesday said that toxic substances in food and environmental samples led to these deaths.

Replying to a question raised by Javid Iqbal Choudhary in the Legislative Assembly the government in a written reply, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), stated that clinical and laboratory investigations conducted by several institutions, including the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) Chandigarh, CSIR-Indian Institute of Toxicology Research (IITR) Lucknow, and the Defence Research and Development Establishment (DRDE) Gwalior, identified the presence of harmful chemicals in food and environmental samples. "PGIMER Chandigarh detected Aluminium and Cadmium in the samples. CSIR-IITR Lucknow found Aldicarb sulfate, Acetamiprid, Diethylthiocarbamate, and Chlorphenapyr. DRDE-DRDO Gwalior identified Chlorphenapyr and Abrin in samples of Sattu (a flour-based food) and maize bread. National Fertilizers Limited (NFL) and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) in Ghaziabad confirmed the presence of Chlorphenapyr and Chlorpyrifos in food samples. Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) Chandigarh found Chlorphenapyr in the viscera samples of all 17 deceased individuals," reads the reply, as per KNO.

"These findings revealed that the illness and subsequent deaths were likely caused by the ingestion of contaminated food rather than a bacterial or viral infection," it added.

AAP

G.M. Saroori.

The Special Excise Mobile Magistrate in Janipora, Jammu, directed the police to arrest Malik and present him before the court on May 14, 2025. The case was registered at Gandoh Police Station under Section 499 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which deals with defamation.

Saroori had approached the court, alleging that Malik made false statements aimed at damaging his reputation. [KNT] General Administration Department for grant of relaxation(s) or identification of posts, the government disclosed.

NIA

through the international Border (IB) and Line of Control (LoC). "Terrorists were facilitated by Overground Workers (OGWS) and terror associates living in border areas. Besides providing logistical support, food, shelter and money, the suspects were involved in guiding the terrorists through the difficult terrains of Jammu province to ensure their safe passage," it said, adding, "The terrorists were then believed to have made their way to the hinterland districts of Kathua, Udhampur, Doda, Kishtwar, Reasi, Rajouri, Poonch, and also to the Kashmir Valley."

The NIA statement said multiple locations were searched across Jammu. "NIA teams conducted extensive searches at the homes of over ground workers (OGWs) linked with the newly-formed offshoots and affiliates of

banned terrorist organisations such as the LeT and JeM," it said, adding, "Premises of sympathizers and cadres of these outfits were also searched as part of the action taken by the anti-terror agency in the case RC-04/2024/NIA/JMU."

The statement as per KNO said that the case is linked with the series of attacks carried out by terrorists on security forces and civilians some months ago as part of a larger criminal conspiracy by terror organisations to wage a war against the Government of India.

"A total of 12 locations in Jammu district were searched today as part of the operation, and several incriminatory materials linking the terrorists with OGWs were seized. NIA teams are examining the material to unravel the terror conspiracy," it reads—(KNO)

DIG

at the grassroots level, enhancing community safety, and fostering a positive, collaborative relationship between the police and the public," it said.

The statement said that the significant initiative offered citizens a unique opportunity to engage directly with the top police leadership, voice their concerns, and seek resolutions for their grievances.

The programme was attended by senior police officers, including IGP Kashmir V K Birdi, DIG Central Kashmir Range, SSP Srinagar, and SSP Security & SSP PCR Kashmir.

"The DGP gave a patient hearing to the concerns of the citizens, assuring them that their grievances would be addressed promptly and fairly. He directed the concerned officers to take swift action on the issues and ensure timely follow-up on cases requiring further investigation," the statement said. "Several applications were addressed and resolved with on-the-spot directions by the DGP."

"The programme further strengthened the public's trust and confidence in the Jammu and Kashmir Police. It reflects the J&K Police's steadfast commitment to transparency, accountability, and the overall safety and well-being of the community," it added—(KNO)

BANK

diverted for infrastructure projects, in compliance with Supreme Court directives.

The Chief Secretary directed both the divisional and district administrations to identify all government owned land parcels within their jurisdictions. He emphasized the need for a comprehensive and systematic approach towards land identification, ensuring that all such lands are properly classified based on their suitability for development purposes and other socio-economic welfare measures.

To ensure accuracy and efficiency in the identification process, the Chief Secretary instructed the Forest Department to carry out GIS mapping of the identified land parcels in coordination with the Revenue Department. He stressed that joint ground-truthing must be conducted to validate the suitability of the land for either development projects or compensatory afforestation.

Highlighting the need for land classification, he suggested that land banks should be categorized into those fit for infrastructure development and those that should be reserved exclusively for afforestation as per Supreme Court guidelines.

Commissioner Secretary, Forests, Ecology & Environment, Sheetal Nanda, informed the meeting that a Committee, led by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF), has been constituted to identify and create a land bank of suitable non-forest land for compensatory afforestation.

She divulged that this initiative aligns with the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980, ensuring that afforestation takes place in lieu of forest land diverted for non-forest purposes. She reiterated that this measure is in compliance with the Supreme Court's directive that no net reduction in forest land should occur without adequate compensatory afforestation.

Providing an update on the progress, PCCF (HoFF), Suresh Kumar Gupta, informed the meeting that 2,576 land parcels covering 553,263 kanal have been identified across J&K for compensatory afforestation. Following joint inspections with the Revenue Department, 82 parcels measuring 14,797 kanal and 154 marla were found free from encumbrances and suitable for inclusion in the land bank for afforestation.

ITOO

Health Units at PHC Loran, PHC Chandak, and PHC Bandchechian are being developed. The construction of SC Kanuyian has been completed under the National Health Mission. and under District Capex, 10 projects are in progress, with six already completed. Under UT Capex, one project is complete, and another is at the finishing stage," she said, adding that an NTPHC building in Galipindi has also been completed.

At present, 61 healthcare institutions are operational in Poonch Haveli. However, no further upgrades or new projects are planned

due to austerity measures imposed by the Finance Department under Government Order No. 10-F of 2025, the minister said.

She said that during 2024-25, Rs 59.52 lakh was allocated for 14 healthcare projects under various schemes, including UT Capex, District Capex and PMAAGY.

The health minister said the region is equipped with 719 medical machines and devices, including 1 CT Scan, 3 Anesthesia Units, 17 Ventilators, 6 Dialysis Machines, 8 X-ray Machines, 3 USG Machines and 4 Dental Units. Any pending equipment requirements will be addressed based on the availability of resources, she added.

The government has also implemented Telemedicine and e-Sanjeevani platforms to enhance healthcare accessibility. Notably, Poonch district, including Poonch Haveli, has achieved 100% family coverage under Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY, with all 35,325 families in the constituency having at least one member holding an Ayushman Bharat Golden Card, Ittoo said.

She said the Operation Theatre at CHC Mandi is currently operational through an internal arrangement, with a consultant surgeon and anaesthetist from DH Poonch deployed twice a week. However, posts for Consultant Anaesthetist, Consultant Surgeon, and Consultant Gynecologist remain vacant at SDH Mandi.

The minister assured that recruitment agencies are in the process of filling these vacancies, and efforts will be made to prioritize them once selections are finalized—(KNO)

PLAN

She added that vacant posts in these institutions are being referred to recruitment agencies to ensure timely appointments and strengthen the healthcare system across J&K.

Ittoo said several health institutions in far-flung areas are operational, including NTPHC Panchound, Sub Centre Parla Chapper, MAC Satyalta, PHC Gharian, Sub Centre Nagulta, Sub Centre Tanghdar, Sub Centre Ladha, NTPHC Madha, Sub Centre Kollasar, MAC Sarar, NTPHC Mantatal, PHC Sudhmahadev, Sub Centre Ghanthal and NTPHC Sewna.

The minister said the establishment or upgrade of health institutions depends on multiple factors, including population density, existing infrastructure, distance from nearby facilities, workload and compliance with IPHS norms.

To enhance emergency care, CHC Chenani and SDH Rammagar have been equipped with emergency rooms, including upgraded medical equipment and trained staff, she said, adding that patients requiring advanced treatment are referred to tertiary healthcare centres.

Responding to a question from MLA Thakur Randhir Singh, Ittoo said that 205 out of 365 sanctioned medical and paramedical posts are filled in Kalakote-Sundarbani Constituency. She said 50 staff members have been deployed under the National Health Mission (NHM).

"A sonologist is available at SDH Sunderbani twice a week, X-ray services are available 24/7 at CHC Kalakote and SDH Sunderbani, a new X-ray machine has been procured for PHC Trayath and will soon be installed at PHC Moughla," she said, adding, "No X-ray technician post is currently sanctioned at PHC Moughla and patients requiring unavailable services are referred to SDH Sunderbani and GMC Rajouri."

The minister assured that the health department is actively working on deploying technical staff to ensure the full functionality of medical equipment in all institutions—(KNO)

PARRA

and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Parra criticized the government for imposing what he termed as "censorship and communication blockade" following the downgrading of the state to a Union Territory.

According to news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) Correspondent, Parra said that the media policy was an attempt to "shoot the messenger and muzzle people's voices."

He highlighted the increased surveillance and control over the press, stating, "There is a police station inside the press colony of Srinagar. This is thought policing. It is time to stand with the independent media of Jammu and Kashmir."

The PDP leader claimed that the press became the "first casualty" after the abrogation of Article 370 and the subsequent reorganization of the state. He called for the immediate revocation of the media policy, arguing that it undermines the fundamental right to freedom of expression.

Parra also raised concerns over the allocation of funds for industrial development in Jammu and Kashmir. He pointed out that out of the 20,000 crore allocated for industrial estates over the past five years, 80% had been given to outsiders, leaving little for local entrepreneurs. "The J&K government has no industrial policy," he said, urging the administration to prioritize the interests of local businesses.

On the issue of land laws, Parra expressed

fear and insecurity among the people of Jammu and Kashmir. He called for a revision of the land laws, stating, "We are not here to justify the actions of the past five years."

The PDP leader further highlighted discrepancies in the implementation of the housing scheme, particularly the allocation of land based on the 2018 survey. He criticized the commodification of water resources and opposed the privatization of electricity, calling for a one-time rehabilitation plan for affected communities. Parra demanded a transfer policy for Kashmiri Pandits appointed under the Prime Minister's Package, ensuring their safety and convenience. He urged the government to expedite compassionate appointments for families of deceased government employees. Furthermore, Parra questioned why J&K police personnel were not receiving hardship allowances similar to those given to central paramilitary forces and demanded the removal of such anomalies—(KNO)

SPEAKER

He further revealed that the Assembly Secretariat had already admitted 105 cut motions from the member which clearly demonstrates that, his allegations sans any substance.

The Speaker questioned whether it was responsible for a member to make public statements lacking logic and reasoning, potentially misleading the press and public. He advised all members, especially Parra, to adhere to decorum and act responsibly in legislative matters, considering his long political career ahead.

Clarifying his stance, MLA Pulwama, Waheed-ur-Rehman Parra, stated that he had submitted all cut motions together as per the rules. However, upon not receiving replies to some specific cut motions, he attempted to resubmit them for admission and seeking of response from the above mentioned Departments.

SRINAGAR

of above 23 per cent during the period. However, three stations in Jammu and Kashmir including Reasi, Samba and Kathua have recorded a large deficit rainfall during the period with the details revealing that the districts saw a deficiency of 69 per cent, 71 per cent and 81 per cent respectively.

Pulwama in South Kashmir is he only station where large excess rainfall was recorded during the period. The station has witnessed a rainfall of 72 per cent rainfall above normal precipitation.

Doda, Jammu, Poonch, Rajouri and Udhampur have recorded a deficit rainfall ranging between 20 to 59 per cent this month so far.

Pertinently, the weatherman here has predicted generally dry weather conditions till March 26th evening.

As per the forecast, the Director Meteorological department, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad has said that there is a possibility of fresh spell of light rain and snow (higher reaches) at scattered places from on March 27 and 28.

He added that generally dry weather is expected from March 29 to March 31st—(KNO)

CMS

improve accessibility to government services.

According to an order, a copy of which lies with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Additional Deputy Commissioners (ADCs) in each district have been designated as Raabita Nodal Officers, serving as single points of contact for grievance redressal coordination.

As per the order, the Administrative departments must promptly acknowledge offline grievances and share progress updates with the Raabita Office. The grievances forwarded through the JK Samadhan/Raabita Portal must not be marked as resolved until fully addressed by the concerned authorities.

The citizens should not be directed to approach subordinate offices independently; instead, departments must internally refer grievances for resolution, the order reads, adding that clear guidelines on grievance redressal processes must be provided.

POLICE

on Altaf Mir, a 31-year-old resident of Lawaypora, Srinagar. An FIR (No. 15/2025) was initially registered under sections 87 and 49 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). As the investigation progressed, the suspect was taken into custody for questioning, where he confessed to the crime. Following his disclosure, police recovered the victim's body from his residence in Lawaypora, Srinagar.

In light of the new findings, additional charges under sections 64 and 103 of the BNS were added to the FIR to reflect the severity of the offense.

"Police have sent the body for postmortem and forensic examination to gather further evidence. Legal proceedings are ongoing, and the police are committed to ensuring a thorough investigation," SSP Anantnag said.

He added that justice will be served, and the accused, along with any other individuals involved, will face the strictest legal action.



DEO Srinagar holds interaction session with reps of Political parties

Seeks cooperation for strengthening the electoral process to make elections more inclusive & participatory

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MARCH 19: In order to further strengthen electoral processes in District within legal framework, the District Election Officer (DEO) Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat today convened a meeting with the District representatives of different Political Parties at Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex, here.

At the outset, the DEO sought cooperation from all the Political Parties in further improvising the electoral process and emphasized the importance of maximizing the registration of newly eligible electors in the electoral roll in the District. He underlined the significance of Electoral literacy for encouraging new voters to be part of democratic setup.

The DEO urged the representatives of Political Parties to provide feedback to concerned Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) for further strengthening the existing electoral processes and to make elec-



tions in future more inclusive and participatory. He highlighted various initiatives being taken by the Election Commission of India to ease baseline



activities for better electoral process and elections in future. The representatives were also informed that registered electorates can very easily verify and apply

for inclusion of their name in electoral rolls and can lodge their claim for any changes/ corrections in their electoral records through online mode as well.

On the occasion, the representatives of the political parties across the party lines raised various issues and gave suggestions for the betterment of the electoral process. The DEO under the existing legal framework addressed the concerns raised by the representatives of political parties and assured them that election machinery is always open to incorporate any valuable suggestions and address issues for the improvement of electoral process. He assured the participants that such interactions will continue to be held in future as well in order to make our democratic process stronger and more inclusive. He further emphasized that the suggestions and issues raised by the political parties will be deliberated upon and would be considered for the advancement of democratic process of elections and electoral participation.

683 teaching, non- teaching posts vacant in Baderwah constituency: Education Minister

HT News Network

Srinagar, March 19: Minister for Education, Sakeena Itoo, today said that there are 683 teaching and non-teaching posts vacant in Baderwah constituency. The Minister was replying to a question raised by Daleep Singh Parihar.

She informed that the posts included Principals, Headmasters, Masters, Teachers and Non Teaching staff.

The Minister said due to freezing of teacher posts, no recruitment of teachers could be made in the department for the past 6 years which has added to the shortage of teaching staff in the schools.

However, the Department of School Education is taking all necessary measures to streamline the teaching and non teaching staff in schools, maintaining the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR), she added. She said that identification of understaffed schools and surplus teaching and non teaching staff is made through a rationalization mechanism and subsequently the staff is deployed wherever required.

Besides, the department is utilizing the Cluster Resource Coordinators as subject specific teachers. She said that the department is filling the vacant posts in various cadres of teaching and non teaching staff through promotions.

She said that most of the schools in Baderwah constituency have the basic infrastructure; however, to further augment the existing infrastructure there, 155 works under District Capex, UT Capex and Samagra Shiksha Scheme are under execution in the constituency.

The Minister further informed that 504 posts have been referred to the board for filling up of vacancies in the department.

VC LCMA conducts comprehensive visit to Dal, Nigeen lakes, Khushalsar & Gilsar

Emphasizes crucial role of the Authority in managing & conserving these sensitive ecosystems

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, MARCH 19: In a continued commitment to preserving ecologically sensitive water bodies, the Vice Chairman, Lake Conservation and Management Authority (LCMA) today conducted a comprehensive visit to Dal Nigeen Lake, including Khushalsar and Gilsar.

The Vice Chairman assessed the current state of Dal Nigeen Lake and its associated water bodies, identifying areas that require immediate attention and conservation efforts.

He emphasized the crucial role of the Authority in managing and conserving these sensitive ecosystems, ensur-



ing the long-term health and sustainability of the lakes.

The visit highlighted the importance of community engagement and participation in conservation efforts, recognizing the need for comprehensive conservation strategies, incorporating scientific research, community involvement, and sustainable practices to ensure the effective management and preservation of Dal Nigeen Lake and its associated water bodies. Directions were issued for time bound preparation of DPRs for conservation, management and cleaning up of lakes.

This visit was part of commitment to ensuring the long-term sustainability of Kashmir's precious water bodies.

Horticulture Department Kashmir unveils 'Management Guide 2025' for fruit crops

SRINAGAR, MARCH 19: The Director of Horticulture today unveiled a Management Guide for Apple Orchards in Kashmir at a formal event held at the Directorate of Horticulture Kashmir. The launch ceremony was attended by the Deputy Director Horticulture Kashmir, Assistant Director Horticulture Kashmir, senior officers of the department and a group of farmers. This comprehensive guide provides vital information for apple growers, including a spray schedule for pesticides used in orchards and fertilizer application schedules essential for improving fruit quality and yield. By following the outlined recommendations, orchardists can adopt scientific and sustainable practices to enhance productivity and disease resistance. Speaking at the event, the Director of Horticulture emphasized the significance of proper orchard management techniques and encouraged growers to utilize the guide effectively. He assured the farming community of the department's continued support through training programs.

Greenlam Industries launches display center for Greenlam, GreenTouch Laminates in Kashmir

Jehangir Malik

SRINAGAR, Mar 19: Greenlam Industries, a leading provider of integrated substrate and surface solutions in over 120 countries, proudly announces the launch of its display center for Greenlam and GreenTouch Laminates. The centre showcases an extensive range of premium laminates and is located opposite D.A.V School, Jawahar Nagar, Jammu & Kashmir.

This showroom is designed to provide influencers, homeowners and industry professionals with immersive experience of Greenlam Laminates (1.0mm collection) and GreenTouch (0.8mm collection). The grand inauguration was officiated by Mohammad Waseem Mir, showroom owner, in the presence of Anuj Sangal, Country Head – Greenlam Laminate & Allied at Greenlam Industries, along with contractors from the region.

The newly opened showroom is designed to offer an immersive experience, showcasing Greenlam's extensive range of premium laminates in full-sheet displays. This setup allows industry professionals &

homeowners to evaluate finishes, designs, and colors in their entirety, making product selection seamless and efficient.

Featuring a diverse collection of durable and aesthetically refined surfacing solutions, the showroom highlights innovations in laminate technology, ensuring both functionality and visual appeal. By bringing its latest offerings to life in an interactive space, Greenlam reaffirms its commitment to quality, innovation, and customer-centric solutions.

Speaking at the launch, Anuj Sangal shared, "At Greenlam, we are committed to redefining interior spaces with exquisite laminates that exemplify unparalleled quality, durability, and design versatility. The launch of Grand Ply Impex in Jammu & Kashmir marks a significant milestone in bringing our premium collections closer to industry professionals, empowering them to craft exceptional interiors with effortless sophistication while ensuring customer satisfaction at every step."

Greenlam Industries Limited ranks among the top three laminate manufacturers globally and is a leading integrated substrate and surface solutions pro-



vider. The company offers a wide range of products to customers in over 120 countries, consistently delivering innovation and quality. Its diverse product portfolio includes decorative laminates and compacts, interior and exterior cladding, restroom cubicles and locker solutions, decorative veneers, engineered wood

flooring, doors, plywood and pre-laminated chipboards.

With five state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities located across India—in Behror (Rajasthan), Nalagarh (Himachal Pradesh), Prantij (Gujarat), Tindivanam (Tamil Nadu), and Naidupeta (Andhra Pradesh)—Greenlam is committed to both quality and environmental responsibility. The company ethically sources its raw materials and holds numerous sustainability certifications, including FSC®, PEFC™, ISO 14001, GRIHA, GREENPRO, REACH, ISO 45001, and ISO 50001. Its products are globally certified with CE, UL, NSF, SEFA, Green Label, Greenguard, NEMA (for the US and North America), and BS EN standards. Greenlam is also ISO 9001 certified for Quality Management Systems and holds SEDEX certification for Ethical Trade Initiatives, ensuring its products are both safe and eco-friendly.

Supported by an expansive global sales and distribution network, Greenlam is always prepared to assist in transforming your spaces with seamless expertise. For more information, please visit: <https://www.greenlamindustries.com/>

Budget Session 2025 Question Hour in LA

Nearly, 189 medical staff posted in CHC, PHCs of Bani: Sakeena Itoo

HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 19: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, today informed the house that during the past two years, two specialist doctors and five Medical Officers (MOs) have been posted in CHC Bani and PHCs of Bani.

"One Consultant, six Medical Officers/Dental Surgeons, 84 paramedics are, at present, in Bani besides one Specialist, 10 Ayush Medical Officers and 87 Paramedics under NHM have also been posted in different health institutions of Bani totalling 189", she added.

The Minister was replying to a question raised by Dr. Rameshvar Singh in the Legislative Assembly. The Minister informed the house that the government has recently appointed 365 Medical Officers, who have been posted in various far-flung/underserved areas of J&K, adding that 13 doctors have been appointed to different health institutions in Kathua including one doctor in Bani. She added that the selection process of 181 Medical Officers is currently underway, and a waitlist for 91 selected Medical Officers is under process. These officers will be deployed in underserved areas across Jammu and Kashmir, she added.

The Minister further informed that those doctors who don't join their respective places of posting are being issued show cause notices and appropriate disciplinary proceedings/action is initiated against them as per the rules.

Balwant Singh Mankotia and Mehraj Malik raised the supplementaries to the question.

Wages of NHM employees revised from 15% to 17% with 5% annual increase: Sakeena Itoo

HT News Network

Jammu MARCH 19: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, today informed the house that the wages of all NHM employees in J&K had been revised from 15 percent to 17 percent during the year 2021-22 with a 5 percent increase being given annually.

The Minister was replying to a question raised by Ch. Vikram Randhawa in the Legislative Assembly. The Minister informed the house that the National Health Mission (NHM) in Jammu and Kashmir is being fully funded by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW). "Salary adjustments for NHM employees in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly to bridge the salary gap at par with employees in other states, must align with the policies set by the Central Government. Therefore, such changes require prior approval from the Central Ministry to ensure compliance with the NHM's objectives and budget allocations", she added.

She apprised that the wages were raised from Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 85,000 per month for the Specialists; from Rs 30,000 to Rs 35,000 for Medical Officer (MBBS), along with an additional Rs 15,000 as special performance based incentive; from Rs 25,000 to Rs 35,000 per month for Medical Officer (AYUSH) and the wages were increased from Rs. 23,000 to 35,000 per month for the Dental Surgeons.

While replying to supplementary questions raised by Ranbir Singh Pathania and Dr. Rameshwar Singh, the Minister said that the government would take up the issue of regularisation as well as enhancement of wages with the Government of India.

50 Bedded G&B Hostel at Mahore nearing completion: Tribal Affairs Minister

HT News Network

Jammu MARCH 19: Minister for Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmad Rana, today said that the construction work of Rs. 168.25 lakh 50 bedded ST (G&B) Hostel at Mahore is nearing completion.

The Minister was replying to a question raised by MLA, Khurshied Ahmed in the Legislative Assembly.

The Minister informed the House that the work was started in the year 2009-10 at a cost of Rs. 96.13 lakh which was further revised to Rs. 168.25 lakh in the year 2017-18 and the work continued till 2018-19. He said that the remaining works like construction of boundary wall and other allied works have also been completed during the financial year 2022-23. The Hostel has a capacity of accommodating 50 inmates/students, he added.

However, the Minister said that since the building has remained in possession of security forces for a considerable period, it needs some more repairs and renovation to make it worth for utilization. The Minister said that no compensation has been paid to the land owner, so far, and the acquisition proceedings have already been initiated for determining the compensation amount payable, which is under active consideration of concerned authorities.

EDITORIAL

Unemployed youth
need compassion,
sympathy

It is an established fact that unemployment has assumed alarming proportions in the union territory of Jammu & Kashmir. This has been acknowledged both at the official and unofficial levels. The disturbing figures of unemployment in the union territory have been highlighted by different surveys carried out by different agencies from time to time. In fact the problem of unemployment has shaken the foundation of the society and due to this many other social evils have come to the fore.

Given the fact there is a huge army of unemployed youth in Jammu & Kashmir it is important that the government lends a helping hand and comes to the rescue of these hapless people. The recruitment agencies have to be sympathetic as well towards the youth as well so that they are not pushed to the wall. In the present day context it is highly unfortunate that there is hardly any sympathy for the educated but unemployed youth of Jammu & Kashmir.

Some months back the same was proved yet again when the Jammu & Kashmir Public Service Commission issued the advertisement notice for appointing 575 lecturers in the higher education department. In the advertisement notice it has been written that the candidates falling under the general category will have to pay Rs. 1200 as charges for appearing in the examination while as for the candidates belonging to different categories such charges have been set as Rs. 700. The fee has somewhat dented the confidence of candidates and they believe that the amount is too high.

In an ideal situation the charges should have been in the range of Rs. 150-200 and the same was affordable for one and all. There are many candidates who are all set to drop this chance as they say that they are not in a position to shell out such a huge amount on account of examination fee. The Jammu & Kashmir Public Service Commission is all set to witness a windfall as a huge sum will be added to the kitty on account of fee collected from the aspirants.

It is high time that directions come from top to the higher-ups of Jammu & Kashmir Public Service Commission that the fee is reduced. Once this is done then more and more candidates are expected to submit the form and try their luck for the posts of lecturers. Sooner it is done better it will be for the aspirants and their family members.

Normalization Of Alcohol Culture In Jammu
& Kashmir: A Mask For Structural Distress?

DR AJAZ AFZAL LONE AND DR
ASHWANI KUMAR

As the region grapples with unemployment and political disenfranchisement, experts argue that the state's promotion of alcohol culture may be a tactic to distract from deeper structural issues rather than addressing the socio-economic challenges at hand

Jammu and Kashmir is now undergoing a profound structural transformation marked by economic distress and widespread unemployment. On a global scale, alcohol consumption is among the key risks of death and disability and it is contributing to over two hundred diseases, injuries, and other unhealthy conditions. It appears as though the state chose to focus on attempts to criminalize drug use.

It is often argued that drugs have much more severe impacts on society, but the truth is that drugs negatively hurt the elite while alcohol which is less stigmatized, harms the masses. These two substances are very harmful, drugs kill people who use them, resulting in addiction, mental illness, and social disintegration. Alcohol, on the other hand, may be less stigmatized but it does not confer any less damage to society as it leads to domestic violence, health problems, and social instability.

There seems to be a societal difference in the treatment of the two, with alcohol being normalized and where there is a criminalisation of drugs, it seems more a matter of class than actual societal harm. In the midst of this turmoil, a troubling trend is emerging: the normalization of alcohol consumption. This shift raises serious concerns about the state's approach to managing public dissatisfaction. Rather than addressing the root causes of economic stagnation and political exclusion, the increasing institutional promotion of alcohol culture seems designed to pacify frustrations, particularly among the unemployed and politically marginalized majority.

While States like Bihar and Gujarat have chosen to ban

liquor consumption for social and public welfare reasons, policies in J&K seem to be moving in the opposite direction, masking systemic contradictions rather than resolving them. The region's economic challenges are deeply rooted in a historical dependence on government jobs. As government institutions reduce their role as primary employment generators, the private sector and alternative industries have failed to absorb the growing educated workforce.

Unlike other regions of India, which have successfully built private sectors and industrial bases, Jammu & Kashmir does not diversify as easily as other regions of India because, unlike the other states, J&K does not have developed private sectors and industrial bases. There is almost no growth in the private sector, industrial growth is stagnant, and there are few, if any, sustainable employment opportunities. This has led to a chronic state of underemployment among educated youth who face a plethora of challenges related to their economic growth. Economic stagnation is not the only reason for concern, however, more recently the sociopolitical situation within Jammu & Kashmir has changed dramatically.

An elected government has been absent for over 8 years which has intensified feelings of alienation caused by policies enacted without enough local representation and the fulfillment of local needs. Without political means and agency, the population will inevitably be unhappy, particularly among young people who feel most affected by many local problems. The absence of what should be a vibrant period concentrated on political involvement and economic recovery has now become an era adjusting to socio-economic turmoil and growing discontent. The state has decided to normalize alcohol usage instead of concentrating on laws that can propel economic recovery and create significant jobs.

The explosive expansion of liquor outlets and government-driven initiatives to to boost alcohol sales point to an attempt to distract public anger away from the actual

reasons of structural failures. This policy not only ignores the agitating reality of creating employment opportunities and economic stability but also aggravates social problems by encouraging more. It is often clear that societies experiencing economic crisis indulge in substance abuse, so as to relieve their stress, anxiety or worries.

In Jammu and Kashmir, institutional encouragement of alcohol drinking can lead to normalisation which is problematic in that it can put society in a vegetative condition of passive acceptance of the status quo. Such policies have wide-reaching effects. The state's strategy promotes reliance on an industry that benefits from addiction. Instead of providing children with the tools to develop secure employment and contribute to society, the state's strategy encourages reliance on industry. Reducing alcohol usage and allowing it to be rather socially acceptable could have major negative effects like a rise in family violence, great strain on health, and degradation of community spirit.

Alcohol provides a flimsy cover over poverty and political turmoil; it does not eliminate either. it puts an unjustified mask over them. Here, it's most likely going to be giving rise to a new form of dependency and self-defeating strategies. In a region already burdened by political tensions and socio-economic inequalities, state-sanctioned alcohol consumption could have devastating long-term effects.

Comparative Alcohol Prohibition Policies Across India

The policies of alcohol prohibition in India differ significantly between states and Union Territories. Bihar has a complete ban on alcohol alongside other states such as Gujarat, which has prohibited alcohol since 1960, Mizoram, which reinstated prohibition in 2019, and Nagaland, which implements prohibition but with differing levels of enforcement. Lakshadweep also has a prohibition policy while other Union Territories and partially prohibiting states such as Manipur, Andhra Pradesh (2019), and Tamil Nadu (some alco-

hol-banned districts with strict timing) also do. Prohibition in states like Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, and Tamil Nadu is far less restrictive than full prohibition states such as Gujarat and Bihar which have adopted a more conservative approach to liquor sales, recognizing the long-term harms it poses for civil society. These states more highly value the welfare of the public rather than short-term economic profit, knowing full well that enabling alcohol affectionately increases social degradation.

Considering the socio-political reality of Kashmir, one would assume policymakers to behave similarly, however, rather paradoxically, the auto policy of the state seems to use alcohol as a means to pacify the social discontent instead of solving the economic and political problems, which is profoundly surprising. This raises critical questions: Is the state's intent truly to boost economic benefits, or is it strategically deploying alcohol as a mechanism to suppress emerging contradictions and resistance?

Moreover, the socio-cultural factors of Jammu & Kashmir are extremely complex. The area's population is predominantly Muslim and in Islam, alcohol consumption is strictly prohibited. The government may be viewed as infringing on the religious sentiments of the majority community, which may lead to some internal contradictions and societal tension. This policy might be viewed as an attempt to erase the cultural and religious heritage of the region, which will only add to the already disillusioned community and exacerbate the existing schism.

In Jammu & Kashmir, the growing institutional emphasis on promoting social acceptance of alcohol consumption is not an unusual development. It is a sign of a more widespread economic and sociopolitical catastrophe in which pacifying measures conceal dysfunctional systems. In contrast to the governments of Gujarat and Bihar, which had the foresight to outlaw alcohol, authorities in Jammu and Kashmir appear to be using it to quell unrest rather than address the region's political

disenfranchisement and economic stagnation.

It would be more beneficial to address the underlying causes of distress by promoting economic expansion and political participation. Providing career opportunities for the youth in the region could be achieved by developing industries like tourism, handicrafts, agriculture, and the digital economy. The region's reliance on government employment can be reduced by encouraging small business start-ups through low-interest loans and financial aid. Targeted educational and skill training enhances employability and enables the youth to become economically self-sufficient. In addition, bridging the widening gap between the people and state policies can be aided by fair and inclusive governance that embodies the hopes and dreams of the local people. Rather than promoting alcohol consumption, the government should emphasise launching awareness campaigns on the excessive use of alcohol and its effects on society while encouraging better ways to cope with stress for the well-being of the community.

In the end, the normalization of alcohol consumption by the state is not simply a case about the pervasive use of alcohol; it points towards an ungoverned state of affairs. Rather than providing real avenues to harness growth and development, the government seems to be using alcohol as a tool to contain discontent and maintain the status quo. The people of Jammu & Kashmir deserve policies that empower them to build a better future, not ones that diminish their dignity and agency through addiction and escapism.

Dr Ajaz Afzal Lone, from Baramulla, (Kashmir), is working as an assistant professor at the UIIS at Chandigarh University
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Dr Ajaz Afzal Lone and Dr Ashwani Kumar

A Nation's Wound: Confronting The Crisis Of Sexual Violence In India

SHAHZAD ALI

Sexual violence against women and girls is a serious issue in India. The Indian legal system already makes it difficult for survivors of sexual assault to get justice, and the situation is even worse for members of the most vulnerable groups in the nation. In India, sexual assault continues to be a significant social problem that impacts individuals of all ages, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The nation nevertheless has a high rate of sexual crime, little enforcement, and cultural stigmas that deter survivors from seeking justice, despite strict laws and increased awareness.

This article examines the issues of sexual violence in India, including its causes, the legal system, societal attitudes, and possible remedies.

Statistical Overview

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported 31,677 rape cases in 2021 or an average of 86 per day; of these, approximately 89% were committed by people known to the victims, with 10% involving juveniles. Despite a large number of recorded incidents, conviction rates remain disturbingly low; in 2019, just 27.8% of reported rape cases were convicted. Sexual violence is still a serious and extremely troubling issue in India,

as evidenced by several examples demonstrating its pervasiveness.

Current events:

While stargazing in Karnataka in February 2025, a 27-year-old Israeli tourist and her Indian host were gang-raped. The attack claimed the life of their male acquaintance.

44 men were apprehended by authorities in January 2025 on suspicion of regularly raping a Dalit girl for five years, starting when she was thirteen. The victim claimed that around 60 persons had mistreated her.

Since marital rape is not illegal in India, many women are at risk of sexual abuse in their unions. These figures and incidents demonstrate how urgently India needs significant legal changes, enhanced protection for women and children, and a change in society to not tolerate sexual assault.

What motivates someone to commit acts of sexual violence?

A crime based on dominance and patriarchy, sexual assault involves masculine entitlement. In India, survivors and their families are often silenced because of societal blame. Sexual abuse is especially dangerous for those who are already marginalised in Indian culture. Because this culture of guilt follows survivors into the legal system, police enforcement, and hospitals, it further silences their



voices.

What obstacles stand in the way of justice for Indian victims of sexual abuse?

Inadequate enforcement of rape laws and a number of barriers to justice, especially for survivors from caste, class, and ethnically marginalised areas.

Law enforcement corruption,

police neglect of sexual assault cases, the two-finger test, obstacles to survivors' access to compensation and protection for victims and witnesses, pressure from the community, families, and panchayat members to reach out-of-court settlements, and many other problems.

What does Indian law stipulate?

The fact that marital rape is not illegal is one of the most significant flaws in India's rape laws. Women are treated as their husbands' property under laws that expressly permit marital rape, making them more susceptible to abuse and sexual violence within the marriage.

Both oral sex (without penetration) and any sexual penetration are included in the broad legal definition of rape. Indian law deals with a variety of coercive circumstances. In a number of circumstances, such as rape by an authority figure, custodial rape, rape by a relative, guardian, teacher, someone in a position of trust, or someone in a position of power or dominance over a woman, Indian law presumes the victim's lack of consent. The Act expressly states that the victim's prior sexual experience is not relevant in cases of sexual violence. While demonstrating consent or the quality of such consent, Indian law expressly bars the defence from introducing evidence or asking cross-examination questions about the victim's prior sexual history or general immoral character.

What is stated by international law?

Goal 5 of the UN Sustainable Development Agenda calls for gender equality and lists several objectives, such as:

* End all forms of discrimination

against girls and women globally.

* Ending "all forms of violence against all women and girls, including sexual violence, in both public and private spheres"

* Putting into practice and strengthening "good policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels."

How is this being addressed by equality now?

Equality now makes sure that all of our work is grounded in factual information and evidence, and that the needs, experiences, and voices of women and children survivors of sexual violence inform our advocacy and communications as we seek to assist survivors in India in identifying the primary obstacles to obtaining justice.

Respect the gender who gave you birth

Don't hide, speak out
Rape is not something that occurs by itself. Let's ask ourselves how we, our society, we as people, create and sustain the mindset that leads to rape, how we make our men so violent, how we insult our women so regularly: Urvashi Butalia

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Transforming Lives: Two Decades of Hope by Sharika Foundation

ANKITA KOUL

For over 5,000 years, the Kashmiri Pandits have safeguarded a rich cultural and spiritual heritage. However, in 1990, their peaceful existence was shattered. On January 19th, terrorism forced them to flee their ancestral homeland, severing a centuries-old bond. Thousands were displaced overnight, living in tents before being confined to cramped 10×12-foot rooms with a single window and door. The elderly, the sick, and young girls bore the brunt of these harsh conditions, enduring neglect, hardship, and an uncertain future.

Amidst this despair, the SHARIKA GROWTH CENTRE was born—a humble initiative that sparked hope and resilience. Today, known as the SHARIKA FOUNDATION - Sharing Joy, this movement began in a 4×4-foot room in the old migrant camp at Muthi. Thanks to the generous contributions of Dr. M.K. Razdan and Mrs. Jaya Razdan, the foundation now boasts its own complex—a testament to the strength, belief, and support behind its mission. What began as a small effort to support children in exile has grown into a lifeline for thousands, championing education, women's empowerment, and cultural preservation.

Our Impact: Twenty Years of Transforming Lives

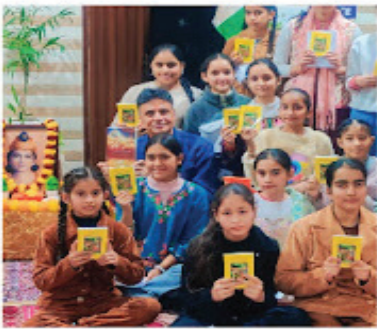
For over two decades, SHARIKA FOUNDATION has been a catalyst for change, uplifting the displaced Kashmiri Pandit community and beyond. Key milestones include:

Educational Empowerment

Supporting over 1,500 students annually across India, including orphans, children of single mothers, and those still residing in the conflict-ridden Kashmir Valley. Offering scholarships for students pursuing professional courses in medicine, engineering, management, law, and more. In the 2024-2025 academic year alone, 80-100 students graduated in diverse fields such as forensic science, finance, and humanities.

Career Development

Career counselling programs,



in collaboration with the Kashmiri Overseas Association (KOA) and IDC, guide students from Class 8 to 10 toward discovering their passions. These children mostly come from migrant camps such as Muthi, Buta-Nagar, Purkhoo, and Jagti. Internship opportunities at reputed institutions provide practical experience and enhance future career prospects.

Preserving Heritage & Cultural Values

Kashmiri Pandits boast a rich, Pre-Vedic cultural legacy. However, the forced exodus led to a significant challenge: Preserving our traditions. Sharika Foundation's initiative: - To bridge this gap, lectures and workshops on main cultural and religious rituals are organised including: Mahashivratri, Navreh, Guru-Purnima, Sharika Mata's Birthday. Engaging the younger generation hundreds of children enthusiastically participate in these celebrations, ensuring the continu-

ation of our cherished traditions. Empowering Our Community: - Through these initiatives, Sharika Foundation aims to: Preserve our cultural heritage. Educate the younger generation. Foster Community bonding

Community Initiatives

Marathon for Motherhood & the Girl Child (2009): A pioneering movement to protect maternal health and promote gender equality, breaking social barriers and

raising awareness.

Art Carnivals for Conflict-Affected Children: Using art as a therapeutic platform for healing and confidence building, providing children a creative outlet to express their emotions, heal, and rebuild their self-esteem.

Walkathons Against Drug Abuse: In response to the rising menace of drug addiction in migrant camps, the foundation organizes awareness campaigns and walkathons to inspire youth to choose a drug-free

life.

Sharika Foundation provided conflict-affected children with creative platforms to express their emotions, heal, and rebuild confidence.

Empowering Women & Strengthening Communities

Skill Development: Offering vocational training and providing sewing machines to displaced women, fostering financial independence.

Marriage Support: Assisting underprivileged girls with financial and social support for their weddings, ensuring complete confidentiality.

Promoting Health & Well-Being Conducting daily meditation sessions for children in migrant camps to enhance concentration and mental clarity. Organising yoga and wellness activities to combat the deteriorating mental health conditions in conflict-hit areas.

Building for Partnerships Greater Impact

Collaborating with reputable organizations such as: KOA (Kashmiri Overseas Association), USA. Parmahansa Yogananda Charitable Trust, Gujarat. Kashmiri Sewak Samaj, Faridabad. Rup Krishan Mirza Educational Scholarships, Bangalore.

Join Our Mission of Hope

For over two decades, SHARIKA FOUNDATION has been a beacon of hope and empowerment for the displaced Kashmiri Pandit community. With your support, we can continue to educate children, uplift women, preserve heritage, and extend aid to those in need.

Be the reason someone smiles today

Donate Now: Bank Name: Union Bank of India. Branch: Rail Head Complex, Jammu. Account Name: Sharika Foundation Charitable Trust. Account Type: Savings. Account No.: 520141001387746. IFSC Code: UBIN0906441. (The Author is Volunteer at Sharika Foundation)

Sufism & Waqf



SYED NASERUDDIN CHISHTY

Sufism, the spiritual dimension of Islam, is a path that emphasizes love, compassion, service to humanity, and inner purification. The great Sufi saints of India such as Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (Rz), Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya (R.A.) and many others dedicated their lives to spreading the universal message of peace (Aman), tolerance, and unity among all communities. Their teachings transcended caste, creed, and religion, fostering a culture of insaniyat (humanity) and spiritual enlightenment.

The Khanqahs and Dargahs established by these Awliya-e-Kiram became centers of spiritual guidance, charity, education, and social welfare—places where the hungry were fed, the sick were healed, and the hearts of seekers were illuminated.

Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam, has played a crucial role in shaping India's religious, social, and cultural landscape. Over centuries, Sufi saints and their spiritual teachings have attracted large followings, transcending religious and caste boundaries. Alongside their spiritual influence, Sufis also contributed to the development of institutions like waqf, a form of charitable endowment under Islamic law.

Waqf has been instrumental in sustaining the infrastructure of Sufi shrines, known as dargahs, which serve as significant centers of spirituality, social welfare, and cultural heritage.

Sufism and waqf are two sides of a coin. On the one side, Sufis dedicate themselves to the service of Allah and on the other side they dedicate their entire possessions including their properties in the interest and social well-being of people irrespective of religion, caste, and creed.

I wish to share a brief reflection on the remarkable legacy of Waqf, which has played a pivotal role in the upliftment of society since the time of our Prophet Hazrat Mohammed Mustafa (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), an institution deeply rooted in Islamic history and spirituality. One of the earliest and most profound examples of Waqf was established by Hazrat Usman e Ghani (Razi Allahu Ta'ala Anhu) in Madina Munawwara. During a time of water scarcity, he purchased the Bir-e-Ruma well and dedicated it as Waqf, making its water freely available to the people of Madina. His selfless act of generosity marked one of the first Waqf contributions in Islam.

What is even more inspiring is that the Waqf of Hazrat Usman e Ghani (Rz) is still active today, more than fourteen centuries later. The land surrounding Bir-e-Ruma was declared as Waqf, and it generates income through modern means, including date farms. The revenue from this Waqf continues to be used for charitable causes in Madina, including support for orphans, widows, and pilgrims. It stands as a living example of Sadaqah

Jariyah (ongoing charity), benefiting generations long after the initial waqf.

Following this divine example, the Sufi saints of India dedicated vast lands and properties as Waqf, intending to serve humanity and uplift society. These Waqf endowments were instrumental in establishing Khanqahs and Dargahs, offering spiritual guidance and hospitality, running Langars (community kitchens) to feed the poor, regardless of religion or background, founding educational institutions to provide free education to the underprivileged, setting up hospitals and dispensaries, offering medical treatment to the sick and needy, and providing support for orphans, widows, and scholarships for students. These initiatives reflect the core values of Sufism—service, generosity, and compassion—and helped create a harmonious and inclusive society throughout Indian history.

Unfortunately, in the present time, many Waqf properties in India are not being utilized according to the Mansha-e-Waqif (the original intent of the donor). Widespread mismanagement, corruption, and lack of accountability within many State Waqf Boards have resulted in the neglect, misuse, and illegal occupation of valuable Waqf lands and institutions. This has deprived countless people of the services and support these waqf properties were meant to provide.

Despite their vast contributions, waqf properties and dargahs face several challenges in modern India. Many waqf lands have been illegally occupied or misused due to poor govern-

nance and corruption within waqf boards. There have been allegations of financial mismanagement in waqf administration, leading to loss of revenue. Many people are unaware of the significance of waqf and its potential role in community welfare, leading to underutilization of waqf resources. Several waqf properties are entangled in legal disputes over ownership, delaying their effective use for public benefit.

To strengthen waqf institutions and enhance their role in community welfare, certain measures can be considered. Implementing digital records for waqf properties to prevent encroachments and ensure transparency, establishing independent regulatory bodies to oversee waqf administration and prevent financial mismanagement, encouraging collaboration between waqf institutions and private entities for better management of educational and healthcare services, raising awareness about waqf contributions and involving local communities in decision-making processes, and speeding up legal processes to resolve waqf-related disputes efficiently are some of the steps that could be taken.

It is our collective responsibility to honour the legacy of Waqf and the teachings of Sufism, ensuring that these sacred trusts continue to benefit society and uphold the values of peace, love, and service to humanity.

Author: Syed Naseruddin Chishty, Successor of Hereditary Sajjadanashin of Dargah Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Hasan Chishty (R.A.) & Chairman of AISSC

Justice Goes Digital: Understanding the e-FIR System

OWAIS AMIN LONE

With over 70 e-FIR registered so far, Jammu and Kashmir has become part of the national push for digital criminal justice. e-FIR is a new addition of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS) to criminal justice system that allows informants or victim to register complaint online without visiting a police station. Such FIRs can be filed for cognizable offences through electronic means. It promotes access to justice. To raise awareness among the general public, some key questions related to e-FIR are answered below:

What is e-FIR?

It is an electronic form of First Information Report. It is different from the traditional form of FIR in the sense that the informant/victim need not to go to police station for the reporting of crime. It can be reported to police through any written, verbal, pictorial information or video content transferred or transmitted through electronic mode by means of an electronic device.

In which cases the e-FIR can be filed?

e-FIR can be filed only in cognizable offences. Cognizable offences are those offences in which the police have the authority to arrest the accused without a warrant. Such offences include rape, assault or use of force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty, sexual harassment, stalking, dowry death, kidnapping, murder, attempt to murder, organised crime, grievous hurt, offences against state, theft, snatching, extortion, robbery, criminal breach of trust, criminal trespass, house trespass, and abduction. This list is not exhaustive.

How can you register e-FIR?

e-FIR can be registered through any electronic medium, such as registered SMS services including WhatsApp, registered email, Citizen Service Centre. For SMS including WhatsApp and email, one can communicate the information on registered phone numbers and email ids of the concerned police station. For Citizen Service Centre, one need to visit <https://www.jkpoliceeservices.gov.in/login.aspx> and sign up by giving some personal details. Thereafter, s/he can sign in and file

the complaint by giving the information related to cognizable offence.

What will you have to do after registering e-FIR?

The informant will get the acknowledgement receipt of such information. Further, s/he is required to visit to the police station to sign the information within three days. Thereafter, e-FIR will be converted to FIR.

Is it mandatory to visit police station after registering e-FIR?

It is mandatory for the informant or victim to visit the concerned police station within three days. However, as per the SOP issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, in situations where the informant or victim cannot identify themselves or visit the police station within three days due to their vulnerable circumstances or any other valid reason, the police should follow the special procedure given by Police Headquarters.

Women are likely to benefit the most from this process, as offences like rape, harassment, and domestic violence often involves deep emotional, psychological, and physical distress for the victim, which otherwise makes it a difficult for them to report the crime at a police station.

With the introduction of e-FIR, anyone can report a cognizable offence from anywhere without the need to visit a police station, ensuring greater accessibility, privacy, and convenience for victims. However, it is recommended that the mandatory requirement to visit the police station within three days should be relaxed for offences related women. If a female victim is unable to visit the police station within three days to sign the e-FIR, a female police officer should visit or contact her and obtain her signature at a place and time convenient to her.

The implementation of e-FIR under the BNSS, and its rollout in Jammu & Kashmir, is not just a technical reform—it is a democratic leap forward, ensuring that justice is not a privilege, but a right available at a click.

(The author is an LL.M student at Indian Law Institute, New Delhi and can be reached at owaisaminlone@gmail.com)



Fertilizers, pesticides allowed to Valley only after proper standard testing: Javed Dar

3010 samples of pesticides, 1065 of fertilizers collected for testing during 2024-25

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 19: "Minister for Agriculture Production, Javed Ahmad Dar, today informed the House that the consignments of fertilizers are allowed to move to Valley only after the samples test as standard.

The Minister was replying to a question raised by Hilal Akbar Lone in the Legislative Assembly.

He informed the House that there is an established mechanism for sampling of the products batch-wise in respect of Fertilizers at Udhampur

Rack, being tested from the quality Control Lab at Jammu and the consignments are allowed to move to Valley only after the samples test as standard. He said that there is one check point at Lower Munda where the documents of consignments are checked and the source is verified. He added that the sale is allowed only after the samples test as standard.

In addition, the samples are being taken at random from stocks of the wholesalers and retailers, which too are tested and in case the samples test as below standard, prosecution is launched against the wholesalers/



dealers/retailers, he added.

The Minister said that a similar procedure is being adopted in respect of the pesticides for proper testing before its sale to the farmers. He said that the Agriculture Production Department has an Enforcement Directorate at UT level and Law Enforcement Agencies at District level, which are vigilant to any complaints regarding substandard pesticides and fertilizers.

Sharing the details, the Minister said that 3010 and 1065 samples of pesticides and fertilizers respectively have been collected for testing during 2024-25 accordingly.

Bashir Ahmad Veeri raised the supplementary to the question. The Minister said that a similar procedure is being adopted in respect of the pesticides for proper testing before its sale to the farmers. He said that the Agriculture Production Department has an Enforcement Directorate at UT level and Law Enforcement Agencies at District level, which are vigilant to any complaints regarding substandard pesticides and fertilizers. Sharing the details, the Minister said that 3010 and 1065 samples of pesticides and fertilizers respectively have been collected for testing during 2024-25 accordingly.

Govt committed towards upliftment of underprivileged: Sakeena Itoo

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 19: Minister for Social Welfare, Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo, informed the House that the government is committed towards upliftment of the underprivileged population of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister was replying to a question raised by Nizamuddin Bhat.

She informed the House that the Social Welfare Department is committed for upliftment and welfare of the poor, disabled, old aged and sick population across the UT of J&K including Bandipora district through comprehensive schemes and initiatives.

She said that the benefits of the schemes being implemented by Social



Welfare department for welfare of the underprivileged included Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme, Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme, Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme, Old Age Pension Scheme, Widow/Divorce Pension Scheme,

Disability Pension Scheme, Transgender Pension Scheme, State Marriage Assistance Scheme, Ladli Bet, PMMVY and other different welfare and flagship initiatives.

The Minister urged the legislators to raise awareness among the people regarding eligibility, criteria and online application process for maximum coverage of the end beneficiaries.

For the convenience of the beneficiaries in far-flung areas like Gurez, the Minister assured that a team of doctors, constituted as Medical Board, shall conduct a camp on specific days in these areas to facilitate eligibility coverage to them, required for different pension schemes.

Nazir Ahmad Khan raised the supplementary.

Chief Secretary reviews functioning of Music & Fine Arts Institute

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 19: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, today visited the Institute of Music & Fine Arts, Jammu University, Talab Tillo, to inspect its functioning besides reviewing the academic operations there.

He was accompanied by Additional Chief Secretary, Education, Shantmanu.

During the visit, the Chief Secretary was apprised of the institute's curriculum, which offers training in nine arts disciplines including four visual arts and five music-related streams. While assessing the institute's operations, he emphasised the need for enhanced maintenance and infrastructural



improvements.

In a meeting with the officers, the Chief Secretary underscored the necessity of providing the institute with additional land and resources for its optimal functioning. He directed the district administration to transfer a sizeable por-

tion of land, approximately 8-10 kanal, including the area where the current institute building stands. He also reviewed other pressing issues including recruitment rules, building requirements and the need for modern equipment.

Atal Dulloo highlighted

the importance of creating new infrastructure to establish studios, enhance storage facilities for educational implements and ensure effective implementation of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 at the institute.

The meeting was attended by Divisional Commissioner, Ramesh Kumar; Deputy Commissioner Jammu, Sachin Kumar Vaishya; Dean Academics, Professor Anju Bhasin; Dean Social Sciences, Suman Jamwal; Registrar Jammu University, Dr. Neeraj Sharma; HoD Fine Arts, Rakesh Sharma; HoD Painting, Dr. Milan Sharma; Instructor Vocal Dr. Deepali Watal and other senior officers.

Extension of University Professors solely on merit, eligibility: Sakeena Itoo

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, March 19 - Minister for Higher Education, Sakeena Itoo, today informed the House that the age of superannuation in respect of University Professors is being extended by a Review Committee under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary.

The Minister was replying to a question raised by Dr. Narinder Singh Raina in the Legislative Assembly.

She informed that the Committee also comprises Vice-Chancellor of the concerned University and Administrative Secretary,

Higher Education Department, J&K. The Committee may co-opt a member from the Finance/Law Department and Special Secretary/Additional Secretary from the Higher Education Department, she added.

The Minister said that the Review Committee has decided to approve the extension of the eligible superannuating Professors for 03 years from 62 to 65 years. However, on completion of each year the concerned Vice Chancellor shall review the performance in each case subject to the minimum benchmark relating to Research

Publications, Classroom Teaching, Academic Contribution and overall work and conduct of the concerned in the preceding year. She said that continuation of such Professors shall be subject to attaining such minimum benchmark. The Minister said that the method has been meticulously structured to prevent any favoritism or a pick and choose approach, thereby, holding the principles of fairness and institutional

integrity. She said that it is rule based and each case is scrutinized in light of the laid down parameters including general conduct and behaviour in terms of integrity, thereby reinforcing the credibility of the mechanism, leaving no scope for arbitrary decision-making. The Minister said that enhancement of superannuation age of University Professors is structured, meticulously designed to ensure.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is for information of general public that the (Electric bill) power connection is registered on the name Mohammad Munwar wani S/O ABDUL AHAD WANI R/O Kavosa Narbal ..Now this Connection bearing Consumer ID NO 0206050003483 wants to be registered on my name ABDUL AHAD WANI S/O Mohammad Munwar wani R/O Kavosa Narbal .If anybody have any objection in this regard He/ She may file his/her objection in the concerned PDD office within seven days from the date of publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained

Name...ABDUL AHAD WANI
S/o Mohammad Munwar wani
R/O Kavosa Narbal

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is being notified that my name in my Aadhar Card having Aadhar card number this 225422676930 has been wrongly mentioned as MISBA JAN my real name is misbah Gulzar DOB 25/05/2005

C/o Gulzar Ahmad Sheikh
Address: magraypora, achabal anantanag, j&k 192201

GOVERNMENT OF (U.T.) JAMMU & KASHMIR
Office Of The Executive Engineer Jal Shakti (PHE) Deptt.
Ground Water Division Srinagar
Baghi-Ali-Mardan, Nowshara Srinagar.

E-mail:-phgwd@yahoo.com, Tel./Fax No:-0194-2411285

Extension Notice 2nd.

Subject: Providing/ Fitting of Tools and instruments for use in Ground Water Division Srinagar.
Reference: This office e-NIT No. 70/JS-PHE/GWDS/Mech. of 2024-25, issued vide endorsement

No: JS-PHE/GWDS/24-25/Corrs./ 13235-42, dated: 04-03-2025. Bearing Tender ID No. 2025_PHE_273615_1.

Due to "NO Response" for the above mentioned works advertised vide e-NIT No. and Tender ID No's under reference. Which was scheduled to be downloaded till 19-03-2025 Up-to 11:00 AM are extended as per the details given below: -

S.No.	Item	Fresh Date
1.	Period of submission of bids	24-03-2025 Up-to 11:00 AM
2.	Date of opening of tenders	25-03-2025 11.00 AM

NOTE:

All other terms and conditions shall remain same as laid down in the aforesaid e-NIT issued vide above referred endstf: nos.

DIPK-13222/24
Dated: 19-03-2025

Sd/= Executive Engineer
Jal Shakti (PHE) Deptt.
Ground Water Division Srinagar.

اطلاع عام

هر خاص و عام کو اطلاع دی جاتی ہے کہ منسلب کمیٹی اننت مین میرے بیٹے کانام تاریخ پیدائش سرنفکت مین Mohammad Aurhan اندر جہا ہے جب کہ میرے بیٹے کا اصل نام Mohammad Toha Khanday ہے اب اس کی دستگی کرانی مطلوب ہے کسی کو کوئی عذر ہو تو وہ سا یوم کے اندر اندر دفتر ہذا مین پیش کرے بعد از معاد کوئی عذر قبول نہن ہوگا

المستہر

Mudasir Ahmad Khanday
Mohammad Toha Khanday
Momal Pahlagam

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 ALTAZ 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

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is information of general public that I mohd Afzal dar S/o Ali mohd dar R/o zadi mohalla that my son namely Hadi Hussain S/o mohd Afzal dar R/o zadi mohalla Rakhi duslipora is born on 13-07-2018. If any body have any objection regarding issuance of D-O-B certificate .he/she contact the BDO office singpora within period of seven days

Mohd Afzal dar
S/o Ali mohd dar
R/o zadi mohalla Rakhi duslipora

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform that an offline birth certificate of my son was issued by Block Development Office Pattan under registration number 12/15-A/BP/2022 dated 05.12.2022 and I have now applied for my Childs birth in the Civil Registration System (CRS) Portal and requesting the issuance of a new digital birth certificate to the BDO's office Pattan. If anyone has any objections, they may file them with the BDO Pattan within seven days from the date of this notice.

Oumair Nissar Dar
F/O Musaib Bin Umair
Resident of Sariwarpora Pattan, Baramulla (J & K)
9419413311/9797188177

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for the information of general public that Owais Bashir S/o Bashir Ahmad Sheikh R/o Kawarigam anantnag I have applied for Pesticides License under the name and style M/S Sheikh Agro Chemicals. If anybody having any kind of objection in this regard He/she may object his objection in Plant Protection Officer Lal Mandi Sringar, within Seven days from the date of issuance of this notice. After that no objection will entertained.

Owais Bashir
S/o Bashir Ahmad Sheikh
R/o Kawarigam anantnag

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



CS champions bold water conservation reforms amid growing water crisis

■ **Farooq Rather**

JAMMU, MARCH 19: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today chaired a meeting of Jal Shakti Department to review progress on water conservation initiatives under the Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) across various districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting besides the Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Jal Shakti Department was attended by Principal Secretary, APD; Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD; Commissioner Secretary, Social Welfare Department; Commissioner Secretary, Forests; Secretary, RDD; Secretary, Y&S& MD, Jal Jeevan Mission besides other concerned officers of JSD. Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir/Jammu and Deputy Commissioners participated online.

The meeting focused on accelerating efforts to mitigate water scarcity and ensure sustainable water resource management through a multi-pronged strategy.

The Chief Secretary directed the Deputy Commissioners (DCs) to lay special emphasis on framing district water conservation plans in convergence with schemes like MGNREGA, CAMPA, Capex and other relevant government programs. He also stressed the need for GIS mapping of these plans to ensure systematic execution of these plans for effective conservation of water.

Recognizing the growing water crisis, Dulloo urged the officials to geo-tag all water supply sources and implement measures to recharge five groundwater structures in every village. He called for saturation of government schools and Anganwadi



centres with rainwater harvesting structures under the JSA-Catch the Rain initiative. He emphasised that all newly constructed buildings must incorporate rainwater harvesting mechanisms to promote sustainability.

To enhance public awareness and participation, the Chief Secretary instructed the officials to organize 'Jal Shapath' (Water Pledge) ceremonies in every Panchayat on March 22,

commemorating World Water Day. He also directed the officers to launch a special cleanliness drive for water bodies from May 1-7, aligning with JSA objectives.

Dulloo further sought details on water conservation activities carried out over the past years besides a concept note outlining the goals for 2025 and a roadmap for their completion

including financial planning through convergence mode. He further reviewed the progress on JSA-Catch the Rain 2024 and assessed district-wise implementation strategies being adopted by respective district administrations there.

Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Jal Shakti Department, Shaleen Kabra, gave detailed insights on the significant achievements under JSA-Catch the Rain in J&K, which included Water Conservation & Rainwater Harvesting under which 16,002 projects stands completed, with Kupwara (2,201), Rajouri (1,516) and Poonch (1,011) recording the highest numbers.

Kabra also apprised that about 6,622 water bodies were restored under Renovation of Water Bodies with major contributions from Shopian (530) and Pulwama (278). Similarly 9,369 groundwater recharge

structures were developed across the districts improving water levels in the water bodies.

Additionally, under Watershed Development 54,446 projects were executed to prevent soil erosion and enhance water retention. Notably, in Kupwara (5,551), Rajouri (4,977) and Poonch (4,675) works were accomplished under this area of water conservation.

As far as afforestation efforts are concerned, 37,362 afforestation activities had been conducted to improve green cover, particularly in Rajouri (2,743) and Ramban (1,609).

Moreover, it was informed that the key focus areas for JSA-CTR2024 and 2025 included water conservation and rainwater harvesting, Geo-tagging and inventory of all water bodies, desilting and cleaning of water bodies, rejuvenation of small rivers.

DC Budgam distributes Kisan Credit Smart Cards to farmers

Awareness Camp on PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana also organised for farmers

■ **HT News Network**

BUDGAM, MARCH 19: In a special joint camp, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Akshay Labroo today distributed Kisan Credit Smart Cards to eligible farmers, enabling them to access financial support for their agricultural needs by means of a smart easy to use card issued by the bank.

He said in a joint effort by district administration, Department of Agriculture and Banks, more than 6,000 KCC Smart Cards have been sanctioned demonstrating commitment to empowering farmers of Budgam. In this camp, joint awareness programme on the



Smart Kisan Credit Card (KCC) and PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana was also organised at the Sheikh ul Alam Centre.

The programme brought together farmers, key stakeholders, beneficiaries to educate them about the benefits and application procedure of these schemes.

The programme was pres-

sided over by DC Budgam, besides GM DIC Budgam Waseem Raja, CPO Budgam, Chief Agriculture Officer Budgam, Executive Engineer KPDC and Lead District Manager Budgam, eminent citizens, farmers and other stakeholders of Budgam participated in the programme.

Speaking on the 'Smart Kisan Credit Card', the DC

briefed its role in providing financial assistance to farmers, helping them access easy credit for agricultural activities.

He highlighted that the scheme enables farmers to meet their input costs, purchase equipment, and manage unforeseen expenses without financial stress.

Labroo urged eligible farmers to enroll and take full advantage of this initiative for the growth of the agriculture sector in Budgam. He stressed on awareness of this fruitful scheme across district.

On the occasion, the DC also discussed PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana. He stated that the scheme is a major step towards promoting renewable.

Mega Enrollment Drive Held at BHS Baderher, Handwara

■ **DR.AB QAYOOM**

Handwara, Mar, 19: A Mega Enrollment Drive was successfully organized at Government Boys High School Baderher under the jurisdiction of Education Zone Handwara. The initiative aimed to boost student enrollment in government schools while sensitizing parents about the importance of quality education. The event was presided over by District Education Planning Officer (DEPO) Mohammad Iqbal Shah along with Zonal Education Officer (ZEO) Handwara Shamus Din Samoon, Principal BHSS Handwara, Principal BHSS Waisa Rafiq Ahmad Mir, and ZEPO Handwara Satish Garov. Their collective efforts played a crucial role in fos-



tering a positive environment for the drive, strengthening the bond between schools and the local community. Several dignitaries, including officials from the ZEO office, BHS Baderher staff, ZNO Handwara, and Heads of Institutions (HOIs) from Cluster Bandey Mohalla, actively participated in the drive. Syed Javed, HOI BHS Baderher, addressed the gathering, highlighting the

critical role of parents and society in shaping children's education. Teachers from various cluster schools, parents, and School Management Committee (SMC) members also marked their presence.

During the program, teachers and officials shared valuable insights with parents, emphasizing the benefits of government schooling. Speaking to the media, ZEO Handwara

reassured parents of the department's commitment to providing quality education at their doorsteps, ensuring every child receives the necessary support to thrive. Meanwhile, DEPO Kupwara urged parents to place their trust in government schools, advocating for a strong focus on moral education alongside academics. To mark the occasion, newly enrolled students were warmly welcomed with garlands, notebooks, and toffees, making the event memorable for both children and parents. The Mega Enrollment Drive in Handwara stands as a testament to the government's ongoing efforts to strengthen the education system and encourage greater participation from the community.

Aryans Pharmacy Students Explore Cutting-Edge Research at NIPER Mohali

■ **HT News Network**



Srinagar, 19th March Forty-two students from Aryans College of Pharmacy, led by Pardeep Kaur, Dr. Jagpreet, and Diwanishi, visited National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education & Research (NIPER Mohali) for an educational tour. Students explored the Central Instrumentation Lab (CIL) with Dr. Vikas Grover, the Pharmaceutics Block, the Natural Products Lab, and the Pharmaceutical Heritage Centre. They also gained hands-on experience with advanced analytical instruments like NMR, HPLC, GC, XRD, and MS, enhancing their knowledge of pharmaceutical research. The visit provided valuable industry exposure, bridging theory with real-world applications and inspiring future pharmaceutical professionals.

Secretary DLSA conducts review meeting with PLVs of DLSA Ganderbal

■ **HT News Network**

GANDERBAL, MARCH 19: As part of the calendar of activities, Secretary District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Ganderbal conducted a review meeting with functionaries and Adhikaar Mitras (PLVs) of DLSA Ganderbal, TLSC Ganderbal, and TLSC Kangan.

The meeting aimed to assess the implementation of current legal services programs in District Ganderbal. The meeting was held under the Chairmanship of Abdul Nasir, Chairman (DLSA), Ganderbal and under the guidance of Secretary (DLSA), Ganderbal. Secretary DLSA Ganderbal has been actively assessing the implementation of current legal services programs in the district. The Secretary DLSA, Ganderbal, pinpointed the obstacles hindering the effective delivery of legal aid services in District Ganderbal. He optimized the legal aid process to ensure efficient and effective service delivery and collected insights from stakeholders and identify best practices to enhance legal aid services, ultimately generating maximum public awareness.

DC Kulgam chairs Distt Skill Committee meet

Reviews progress, future action plan; discusses Training modules

■ **Farooq Rather**

KULGAM, MARCH 19: A meeting of District Skill Committee (DSC) was held on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan at the mini-secretariat Kulgam.

The meeting focused on reviewing the progress of the District Skill Development Plan (DSDP) of the current financial year and discussing the action plan for DSDP 2025-26.

During the meeting, the progress of skill development courses being undertaken in the district was reviewed. The status of enrollment and quality of training at Govt Polytechnic College Kulgam, ITI Kulgam, ITI Khuribatpora, ITI Kund and private institutions was reviewed.



The Chairman directed the member secretary to ensure all the students in these institutions are also thoroughly trained about the available government schemes including PMEGP, Mission Yuva, HADP, PMFME, AIF etc and their registration is done at the end of the course with the relevant schemes so that their livelihoods are secured through self employment and entrepre-

neurship ventures.

The different departments were directed to send resource persons to these technical institutions for the same.

Among others, the meeting was attended by the General Manager, DIC, Principal Polytechnic Kulgam, CEO, Assistant Director Handicrafts/Handloom Kulgam; Superintendent ITI, Kulgam, Kund, Kuribatpora.

Sakeena Itoo reviews identification of new construction site for GMC Handwara



■ **HT News Network**

JAMMU, MARCH 19: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, today chaired a meeting to assess the possibilities for identification of new site for construction of Government Medical College, Handwara. The meeting was attended by Advisor to Chief Minister, Nasir Aslam Wani; MLA Trehgam, Mir Saifullah; MLA Handwara, Sajad Gani Lone; MLA Kupwara, Mir Mohammad Fayaz; MLA Karnah, Javid Ahmad Mirchal; MLA Lolab, Kaiser Jamsheed Lone; MLA Langate, Sheikh Khurshed and Secretary Health and Medical Education, Dr. Syed Abid Rasheed Shah.

During the meeting, Sakeena Itoo emphasised on the importance of this prestigious institution for the far flung areas of Kupwara district. She advised the MLAs of district Kupwara to identify a patch of land which will be accessible and feasible to all areas of Kupwara district. During the meeting, the MLAs gave their suggestions regarding establishment of GMC Handwara at an alternate site.

The meeting unanimously decided that the Deputy Commissioner Kupwara shall take immediate steps to identify the land and transfer it in favour of Health and Medical Education department on top priority, keeping in view the urgency of this issue of high public importance.

Farmers in Distress: High-Density Horticulture Scheme Turns into a Nightmare in Pulwama

■ **MUSHTAQ ULISLAM**

Pulwama : Jammu & Kashmir's horticulture sector has now become a source of misery for farmers. The High-Density Horticulture Scheme, introduced to boost fruit production and uplift small and marginal farmers, is now marred by allegations of corruption, exploitation, and official apathy.

Farmers who invested their hard-earned money, took loans, and even sold land to participate in the government-backed initiative are now struggling. Instead of benefiting from the scheme, they are facing overpricing, substandard materials, and withheld subsidies. Private empaneled entrepreneurs (PEs), tasked with implementing the scheme, are

accused of exploiting the very people the initiative was meant to support.

Social activist Tariq Aziz Dar, a resident of Pulwama and a victim of the alleged scam, has raised serious concerns about the role of these private players. According to him, PEs have manipulated the scheme's norms, drastically reducing the number of plants per kanal, inflating prices, and unjustly withholding subsidies. Many farmers have also complained that PEs are refusing to issue the necessary No Objection Certificates (NOCs), leaving them in financial distress.

"We see reports of farmers' suffering in newspapers and on TV every day, yet no one is taking strict action. If the government does not intervene immediately, the situation will worsen, and farmers will be pushed into deeper financial



crises," says Dar. Despite repeated complaints to the Director of Horticulture, Chief Horticulture Officer, and other authorities, no concrete

action has been taken to address the growing concerns.

The affected farmers and activists are now calling for immediate government intervention and have listed the following demands. A thorough investigation into the alleged corruption in the High-Density Horticulture Scheme. Strict action against private entrepreneurs found guilty of overcharging and providing substandard materials. Timely release of subsidies that are currently stuck due to unjustified delays in issuing NOCs. Greater accountability and transparency in the implementation of the scheme to prevent further exploitation.

Tariq Aziz Dar has appealed to @Waheed Para, @Omar Abdullah, and the Hon'ble Horticulture Minister to take immediate action to safeguard farmers' interests.





Div. Commissioner reviews road construction status, traffic movement on NH in Ramban

HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 18: Additional Chief Jammu, MARCH 19: Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar today reviewed the status of road construction and the traffic movement on the National Highway stretch in Ramban. The meeting attended by DIG Traffic, Deputy Commissioner Ramban, Project Director NHAI Ramban, SSP Ramban, SSP NHW Ramban held threaded discussion on the identified issues for smooth traffic movement on the under construction stretches of National Highway 44 in Ramban. The Divisional Commissioner sought the details of points that suffer traffic congestion as the construction works are ongoing at some points and due to difficult terrain in the hilly district. The Div Com asked the PD NHAI to ensure meticulous planning while also increasing the men and machinery for early construction of the National Highway. He further directed him to repair the potholes



that occur due to rain on such part of the National Highway for ensuring unhindered movement of vehicles. The Project Director apprised the Divisional Commissioner that smooth riding surface will be ensured by the first week of April at Nashri-Dalwas stretch. He

further assured the damaged road of NH stretch in Mehara will be repaired. Stressing the significance of keeping the National Highway through with double lane traffic, the Div Com directed the traffic department and NHAI Ramban to keep their men and machinery activated

for reporting the congestion and resolving issues at the earliest. The Divisional Commissioner sought the details of points that suffer traffic congestion as the construction works are ongoing at some points and due to difficult terrain in the hilly district. The Div Com asked the PD NHAI to ensure meticulous planning while also increasing the men and machinery for early construction of the National Highway. He further directed him to repair the potholes that occur due to rain on such part of the National Highway for ensuring unhindered movement of vehicles. The Project Director apprised the Divisional Commissioner that smooth riding surface will be ensured by the first week of April at Nashri-Dalwas stretch. He further assured the damaged road of NH stretch in Mehara will be repaired. Stressing the significance of keeping the National Highway through with double lane traffic, the Div Com directed the traffic department and NHAI Ramban to keep their men and machinery activated.

JKLFC organizes Loan Mela cum Awareness Camp on NMD-FC Loan Schemes in Kishtwar

HT News Network

KISHTWAR, MARCH 19: To promote empowerment of minorities and stimulate economic growth, the Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh Finance Corporation (JKLFC) in collaboration with National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC) organized a Mega Loan Mela cum Awareness Camp focused on the Minority Loan Scheme. The event held today was graced by the esteemed presence of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kishtwar, Rajesh Kumar Shavan, as the Chief Guest.

A significant number of over 100 participants, including local youth, general public and entrepreneurs attended the event.

District Manager, JKLFC (Doda/Udhampur), Ahzaz Ahmed Shah welcomed the participants and provided an overview of the various loan schemes offered by the Corporation.

District Coordinator JKLFC, Vinod Chouhan elaborated on the eligibility criteria for availing the loan facilities, ensuring that all participants were well-informed of the procedures and benefits of these schemes.

The DC emphasized the importance of such schemes in driving economic growth, especially for start-ups and supporting sustainable development within the community. He underscored the vital role these loan schemes play in empowering the minority sections of society, providing them with the opportunity to secure a livelihood through low-interest loans.

DC briefs media on upcoming Kathua Waterfront Project to transform Cityscape

HT News Network

KATHUA, MARCH 19: Deputy Commissioner Kathua, Dr. Rakesh Minhas, today convened a press briefing to unveil details about the much-anticipated Kathua Waterfront Project, a transformative initiative designed to enhance the city's landscape and provide vibrant recreational spaces for residents and visitors. Located along the picturesque Kathua Canal, the project is envisioned as a dynamic public space that blends leisure, fitness and social engagement.

During the briefing, Dr. Minhas highlighted the project's key features, which include dedicated tracks for cycling, jogging and leisurely walks, catering to fitness enthusiasts and families alike. Besides, a designated skating area



will be established to promote active lifestyles.

To enhance social and cultural engagement, the project will also feature a bustling food street and a vibrant night market, offering a mix of dining, entertainment and shopping experiences.

"The waterfront is envisioned as a multi-purpose destination that reflects the aspirations of our people," said Dr. Minhas. "It will

not only provide recreational opportunities but also showcase Kathua's potential as a thriving, modern district. We are committed to delivering a space that everyone can enjoy, from children to senior citizens."

In a step towards sustainable development, Dr. Minhas informed that over 500 new plants will be planted across the park area to enhance its green

cover and offset the removal of 15 trees during the landscaping process.

The Deputy Commissioner also announced that the allocation of vending spaces in the designated vending zone near the waterfront has been finalized. Out of 80 applications, 15 vendors have been selected, with 5 vendors placed on a waiting list. This move is expected to offer quality food options to visitors while boosting local entrepreneurship.

Besides, Dr. Minhas informed that a bridge will be constructed to connect both sides of the waterfront, ensuring seamless access and enhanced mobility within the area. Located along the picturesque Kathua Canal, the project is envisioned as a dynamic public space that blends leisure, fitness and social engagement.

DEO Reasi chairs meeting with representatives of political parties

HT News Network

REASI, MARCH 19: District Election Officer (DEO) Nidhi Malik today convened a meeting with political representatives to discuss various aspects of the electoral process and address their concerns.

During the meeting, representatives raised several issues, including voter list revisions, additions, deletions and corrections. The discussion also covered the rationalization of polling stations and measures to strengthen the electoral process for free and fair elections.

The DEO assured the representatives that all grievances would be addressed in accordance with the guidelines of the Election Commission of India (ECI). She emphasized the commitment of the administration to ensuring a smooth and transparent electoral process in the district.

The meeting was attended by Dy. DEO Rakesh Kumar and ERO 57- Reasi Anshumali Sharma besides other concerned.

Didi Ki Rasoi Canteen inaugurated at SDH Ramnagar

HT News Network

UDHAMPUR, MARCH 19: The "Didi Ki Rasoi" canteen was formally inaugurated by Project Officer District Urban Development Agencies for Udhampur, Reasi and Kathua Jaffar Abass Batt at Sub District Hospital Ramnagar.

The canteen was inaugurated in the presence of Block Medical Officer Ramnagar Dr. Harvinder Singh, hospital staff, self-help group members and locals.

This canteen offers a diverse range of home-cooked meals at affordable prices, managed by women Self-Help Groups constituted under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana National Urban Livelihoods Mission. The canteen serves as a platform for SHG members to showcase their culinary skills and entrepreneurial spirit, providing a sustainable income stream that empowers women to take charge of their financial lives.

Jaffar Abass Bhatt stated that this marks the sixth installment of Didi Ki Rasoi Canteen initiative launched under DAY-NULM. Previously, canteens were established at DC Office Complex Udhampur, Government College for Women Udhampur and Government Degree College Boys Udhampur.

Govt. PG College Rajouri hosts Viksit Bharat Youth Parliament 2025

HT News Network

RAJOURI, MARCH 19: Government PG College Rajouri commenced the much-anticipated Viksit Bharat Youth Parliament 2025 today, a two-day intellectual conclave on the theme "One Nation, One Election: Paving the Way for Viksit Bharat."

The event was organized under the aegis of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and aims to foster meaningful discourse on electoral reforms among the youth.

The inaugural session was presided over by Principal of the College, Prof. Zamir Ahmed Mirza, who emphasized the critical role of synchronized elections in enhancing governance efficiency and accelerating national development. He underscored how electoral streamlining could align governance priorities with the Viksit Bharat agenda, ensuring sustainable growth and participatory democracy.

A ceremonial presentation was held to honor the esteemed jury panel, which included Prof. Abdul Rashid Choudhary (Renowned Academician & Retd. Principal), Dr. Shakeel Ahmed Raina (Renowned Academician & Retd. Principal), Abdul Rahim (District Social Welfare Officer), Vikrant Sharma (Social Activist) and Prof. Murtaza Ahmed (Assistant Professor, Political Science). Their diverse expertise added depth to the adjudication process, enriching the deliberations. With over 60 students from higher education institutions across the Rajouri-Poonch region participating, the Youth Parliament became a platform for civic engagement, policy critique, and structured debate. The event was coordinated by Prof. Khaleeq Qazi, Nodal Officer for Youth Parliament initiatives, followed by a structured format of parliamentary debate, plenary discussions, and policy analysis. Coordinator, Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), Dr. Riaz Mirza highlighted the pedagogical significance of the initiative, stressing its role in developing rhetorical proficiency, evidence-based argumentation, and constitutional literacy among students.

DC Udhampur conducts public outreach camp at Pattangarh

HT News Network

UDHAMPUR, MARCH 19: Deputy Commissioner Udhampur, Saloni Rai, conducted an extensive tour of the far-flung area of Block Latti-Marothi and presided over a public outreach camp at Panchayat Pattangarh. The camp provided a platform for residents to voice their concerns and grievances directly to the district administration.

The event witnessed the participation of ADDC Rajinder Singh, DDC member Pinky Devi, SDM Duda Dr. Manmeet Kumar, ACD Dr. Ranjeet Singh Kotwal, former Sarpanches, Panches and a large number of residents from various adjoining



panchayats of Block Latti-Marothi.

During the outreach camp, the locals projected several pressing demands, including construction of Latti to Pattangarh road via Sillar, allotment of 5 marlas land under PM Awas Yojana, establishment of ration depot at Pattangarh, dispensary for healthcare services, upgradation of Government High School Pattangarh to Higher Secondary School, staff

shortages in local educational institutions, forest clearance issues, coverage of left-out beneficiaries under the Jal Jeevan Mission, repair of street lights at Pattangarh Bus Stand, construction of a foot-over bridge, Development of playground, recruitment of Village Defence Committee members etc. While interacting with the public, the DC emphasized that the primary objective of the Block Diwas initiative

was to obtain a first-hand appraisal of grassroots issues and ensure prompt administrative action. She reiterated that such platforms help the district administration to understand and address the multifaceted challenges faced by the public. Several grievances were redressed on the spot through immediate interventions and directives to the concerned departments. The DC directed officers to work with commitment and dedication to ensure the timely resolution of public issues. She urged officers to raise awareness among the people regarding various government schemes such as the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, JK Samadhan Portal and other.

DC interacts with patients registered with Addiction Treatment Facility (ATF) Kishtwar

HT News Network

KISHTWAR, MARCH 19: In a continued effort to support the rehabilitation of recovering drug-addicted patients and to curb the menace of Drugs from the District, the Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar Rajesh Kumar Shavan held an interactive session with Recovering Patients registered at the Addiction Treatment Facility (ATF) Kishtwar under Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan Initiative.

The session, aimed at reintegrating these patients into the mainstream, was attended by over 250 Recovering Patients currently receiving care at the ATF.

During the session, the DC emphasized the district administration's commitment to using all available resources and strategies to combat the drug menace and support the rehabilitation of patients in the district.

The initiative is part of ongoing efforts to provide comprehensive rehabilitation services to Recovering Patients struggling with addiction and help them lead healthier, productive lives.

The session was attended by Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP), Pawan Sharma, District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO), Zubair Ahmed, Medical Officer ATF, Dr. Harris Masood, senior officers and staff. The initiative is part of ongoing efforts to provide comprehensive rehabilitation services to Recovering Patients struggling with addiction and help them lead healthier, productive lives. The session was attended by Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP), Pawan Sharma, District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO), Zubair Ahmed, Medical Officer ATF, Dr. Harris Masood, senior officers and staff.

DC Doda distributes Nutrition Kits to TB Patients

HT News Network

DODA, MARCH 19: Deputy Commissioner Doda, Harvinder Singh, today distributed nutrition kits to seven Tuberculosis (TB) patients, utilizing funds from the District Red Cross. The initiative, held at the DC Office Complex, aimed to provide

essential nutritional support to TB patients, reinforcing the role of a balanced diet in strengthening immunity and accelerating recovery.

The event was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ACR), Sunil Bhutyal, Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Om Kumar, and officials from the health department. During the interaction with the patients, the DC

emphasized the importance of consuming hygienic and nutritious food to aid in their recovery. He also highlighted the significance of early detection, regular medication, and preventive measures in controlling TB. Stressing the need for widespread awareness, the DC called for collective efforts to eliminate TB from Doda district under the National Tubercu-



losis Elimination Program (NTEP). He commended the district's progress in TB elimination and urged continued vigilance and proactive measures to ensure a TB-free community.

Furthermore, the DC directed the health department and field officers to intensify their outreach efforts, ensuring that all TB patients receive timely medical assistance, proper

nutrition, and social support. He also urged community members to play an active role in identifying symptoms and encouraging early diagnosis to prevent the spread of the disease. The initiative aligns with the broader national mission to eradicate tuberculosis, reinforcing Doda's commitment to public health and disease control.





"Welcome back, Crew 9, The Earth missed you" PM Modi hails return of Sunita Williams

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, MAR 19

Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the NASA astronaut Sunita Williams and members of Crew 9 for returning to Earth after nine months in space station, saying "they have once again shown us what perseverance truly means".

The Prime Minister said NASA's Crew-9 mission has been a test of grit, courage and the boundless human spirit.

"Welcome back, #Crew9! The Earth missed you.

Theirs has been a test of grit, courage and the boundless human spirit. Sunita Williams and the #Crew9 astronauts have once again shown us what perseverance truly means" he wrote on X.

He further added that their unwavering deter-



mination in the face of the vast unknown will forever inspire millions.

"Space exploration is about pushing the limits of human potential, daring to dream, and having the courage to turn those dreams into reality. Sunita Williams, a trailblazer and an icon, has exemplified this spirit throughout her career" PM Modi said.

Congratulating the NASA team who are working for their return, PM Modi said, "We are incredibly proud of all those who worked tirelessly to ensure

their safe return. They have demonstrated what happens when precision meets passion and technology meets tenacity".

Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore returned to Earth after spending over nine months at the International Space Station (ISS) due to unexpected delays.

Their spacecraft, SpaceX's Dragon Freedom capsule, successfully splashed down off the Florida coast near Tallahassee, on Wednesday at (3:27) AM.

Modi is 'Modern Bhagiratha': Jagdambika Pal

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, MAR 19

The Lok Sabha treasury benches on Wednesday praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the "Modern Bhagiratha" during the discussion on the demands for grants of the Jal Shakti Ministry, while the Opposition claimed the government was no more interested in supplying tap water to rural areas.

BJP's Jagdambika Pal, while initiating the discussion, said that the statement given by Prime Minister Modi on Maha Kumbh is a message for the world. Around 66 crore people attended the Maha Kumbh, this is an unimaginable event for the world.

Jagdambika Pal stated: "Just as Ganga was brought by Bhagiratha, today, with the arrival of tap water in every home, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be remembered as the



Modern-day Bhagiratha."

He stated that water is essential for both life and development, emphasising the need for people to have access to safe drinking water. He highlighted that every state faces a water crisis, with Mithila experiencing six months of drought followed by six months of flooding. A similar situation exists in northeastern Uttar Pradesh. Additionally, many regions in Gujarat and Rajasthan have long struggled with water scarcity, forcing people to migrate during the summer months.

He stated that India has only four percent of the world's water resources to support 18 percent of the global population. The Saurashtra Jal Avataran project has transformed water-scarce regions in Gujarat. As the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Modi led a water revolution in the state by implementing the Sardar Sarovar projects, he added.

He stated that while numerous water projects were in progress, there was a lack of coordination among them. PM Modi unified these by establishing the Jal Shakti Ministry,

Cabinet approves revised NPDD

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, MAR 19

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday approved the Revised National Program for Dairy Development (NPDD).

The revised NPDD, a Central Sector Scheme, has been enhanced with an additional Rs 1,000 crore, bringing the total budget to Rs 2,790 crore for the period of the 15th Finance Commission cycle (2021-22 to 2025-26). This initiative focuses on modernizing and expanding dairy infrastructure, ensuring the sector's sustained growth and productivity.

The revised NPDD will give an impetus to the dairy sector by creating infrastructure for milk procurement, processing capacity, and ensuring better quality control. It is intended to help farmers gain better access to markets, to ensuring better pricing through value addition, and improve the efficiency of the supply chain, leading to higher incomes and greater rural development.

The scheme is dedicated to improving essential dairy infrastructure, such as milk chilling plants, advanced milk testing laboratories, and certification systems. It also supports the formation of new vil-



lage dairy cooperative societies and strengthens milk procurement and processing in the North Eastern Region (NER), hilly regions, and Union Territories (UTs), especially in remote and backward areas, as well as the formation of two Milk Producer Companies (MPCs) with dedicated grant support.

The second component "Dairying through Cooperatives (DTC)" will continue to foster dairy development through cooperation with the Government of Japan and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as per agreements signed.

This component focuses on the sustainable development of dairy cooperatives, improving production, processing, and marketing infrastructure in the nine States (Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal).

The Revised NPDD

is expected to establish 10,000 new dairy cooperative societies, processing in the North Eastern Region (NER), as well as the formation of two Milk Producer Companies (MPCs) with dedicated grant support in addition to the ongoing projects of NPDD, to generate an additional 3.2 lakh direct and indirect employment opportunities, particularly benefiting women, which constitute 70 percent of the dairy workforce.

The Revised National Programme for Dairy Development will transform India's modern infrastructure, in sync with White Revolution 2.0 and will further support the newly formed cooperatives by providing new technology, and quality testing labs. This program will help improve rural livelihoods, generate jobs, and build a stronger, more resilient dairy industry that benefits millions of farmers and stakeholders across the country.

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, MAR 19

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday said that today, India is maintaining a balance between its hard power and soft power amidst the prevailing uncertainties in a multipolar world.

Addressing the fifth edition of Major Bob Khathing Memorial Event, jointly organised by the Indian Army, Assam Rifles and United Services Institution of India (USI) here, Rajnath said, "It is a matter of great pride that India has strengthened its global position".

He said, "A new, strong and organised India has emerged before the world. There was a time when India was not taken seriously on international forums. But today, when we speak, the world listens. This is inspired by the ideals of Major Khathing", a Defence Ministry statement said.

The Minister expressed satisfaction over the fact that India is touching greater heights due to



the organisational skills imbibed from personalities like Major Khathing, an extraordinary figure who made invaluable contributions to the North-East region and national security.

He also stressed on the need to remain organised for India to transform into Viksit Bharat by 2047.

He called upon the people to always put nation first, remain united, discharge duties with honesty, and move fearlessly towards achieving their goals, which were the core principles of Major Bob Khathing.

Paying tributes to Major Bob Khathing, Rajnath Singh asserted that India has been fortunate that it

is home to such prominent personalities for whom security, integrity and sovereignty of the nation is paramount.

He termed Major Khathing as a great son of India, who left an indelible mark in the history of the country through his bravery in the battlefield and skill in the field of diplomacy. Adding that, it is the responsibility of the people to adopt the ideals and principles of such great personalities.

While commending Major Khathing's role in integrating, developing and rebuilding not only Tawang but the entire North-East region, Rajnath said, "Major Bob Khathing made a significant contribution in strengthening

national unity. The work he carried out for the North-East is similar to what Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel did at the national level".

He added that Major Bob Khathing efficiently carried out the integration of Tawang into India without firing a single bullet, and the Government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, follows the principles of such revolutionaries.

"We completely merged Jammu and Kashmir into India by removing the biggest hurdle - Article 370 - without firing a single bullet. The work was carried out peacefully with full security, keeping all the stakeholders in mind," he said.

Singh highlighted the administrative proficiency of Major Khathing, especially his contribution in the formation of Sashastra Seema Bal and Nagaland Armed Police and other such reforms.

It may be mentioned that the Defence Minister had, in October 2024, virtually inaugurated Major Ralengnao 'Bob' Khath-

ing 'Museum of Valour' in Tawang.

Rajnath Singh acknowledged the role of the North East in India's development journey and voiced the Government's commitment towards increasing the region's contribution and its progress.

During the event, Rajnath Singh visited a specially curated photo gallery showcasing Major Bob Khathing's remarkable achievements and enduring legacy.

The event was attended by Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu, Alfred Kanngam Arthur, Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal AP Singh, Director General Assam Rifles Lt Gen Vikas Lakhera and DG, USI Maj Gen BK Sharma (Retd) among others.

Moreover, John Khathing, son of Major Bob Khathing, shared heartfelt reminiscences about his father's remarkable life and legacy, adding a personal dimension to the commemoration.

It is the prerogative of countries to make their decisions: EAM on US tariffs

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, MAR 19

Amid US President Donald Trump's tariffs threats on India, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said today that it is the prerogative of countries to make their decisions and India has to factor them in while making its calculations.

Speaking at a session 'Commisars and Capitalists: Politics, Business, and New World Order' at the Raisina Dialogue, EAM Jaishankar said while elaborating on the issue of tariffs, sanctions and export control:

"Whether we like it or not they are a reality. countries use them. If we see the last decade we see a much greater weaponisation of pretty much any kind of capability, any kind of economic activity, it could be financial flows, or energy supplies, it could be technology. This is a reality of the world.



"So we have to negotiate our way through that and see how best we can do for our own country....

"I think today the lines dividing different domains have eroded, and overall if you see in international relations I think it's a less restrained culture today than it was a decade ago, and that's something we need to factor in.

"I won't say it bothers me as I have seen its evolution, I just accept it as part of the playing conditions, so it's part of the assumptions, part of the challenge and I would deal with it,

and ideally also leverage it where I can."

To a direct question on the US tariffs, he said:

"Different countries will make decisions, that is their prerogative; we have to factor it in while making our calculations. I can't tell some other country that don't do this because it is not convenient to me; that's their call not mine."

On the subject of weaponisation of things meant for social good, like Swift, social media, telecom, he said:

"There are different ways of dealing with the

weaponisation, and one has to stay on the right side of the weapon, so you don't get hit, others do," he said with a smile.

"The reality today is that the world today makes business decisions factoring in national security, in a manner in which it did not do so before.

"Especially in the digital era it's not just about cost it is about comfort, it is about trust. So if you are today looking, at the strategic level, at a business conversation you keep hearing resilience, reliability, trust, transparency. So, you want to do business more and more with those with whom you are secure."

"And you would rather take the risks with those with whom your interests are not contradictory, and the risks are not that great, rather than with those with whom your interests could clash or do clash," he added.

Urban Cooperative Banks must maintain high standards of customer service: RBI Governor

AGENCIES

MUMBAI, MAR 19

The Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday met the Chiefs of Urban Cooperative Banks and asked them to maintain high standards of customer services and ensure resilience against IT and cyber frauds.

The Governor, RBI held a meeting with the Chairmen, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officers of select Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs) across all Tiers operating in different parts of the country.

The representatives from industry bodies viz., National Urban Cooperative Finance

and Development Corporation Limited (NUCFDC) and National Federation of Urban Cooperative Banks & Credit Societies Limited (NAFCUB) also participated in the meeting.

The meeting was a part of the Reserve Bank's series of engagement with its Regulated Entities, the RBI said in a statement.

While acknowledging the important role of Urban Cooperative Banks in serving the people at the grassroots level and deepening financial inclusion, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra stated that Reserve Bank will continue to support the sector in its

growth ambitions but emphasised that UCBs also need to be mindful of their responsibilities, particularly in view of the trust reposed on them by the depositors.

He stressed the importance of maintaining high standards of customer service to build and retain trust. UCBs were also advised to ensure that they remain operationally resilient including against IT and cyber-related risks.

The meeting was also attended by Deputy Governors, M. Rajeshwar Rao and Swaminathan J., along with Executive Directors-in-Charge of Regulation and Supervision.

LIC agents meet Rahul, protest at Ramlila Maidan

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, MAR 19



Representatives of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) agents on Wednesday met Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and staged a massive protest at the Ramlila Maidan here demanding the government withdraw the recent changes made in the life insurance sector.

A delegation of leaders of four all India unions representing LIC agents met Gandhi in Parliament House and said the government is not doing justice to the agents and instead clamping down on them due to which they are suffering.

He urged Gandhi to put pressure on the government so that the new rules are withdrawn.

Haircare Tips To Bloom In Spring



SHAHNAZ HUSAIN

Spring has sprung, and it's time for you to step outside and embrace it.

With the days getting longer since the spring Equinox and temperatures rising slowly, the new spring season is right around the corner. There's no better time than to give your scalp and haircare routine the spring cleaning treatment. Seasonal changes call for a fresh renewal of your haircare routine, and an understanding of transitional haircare.

As we transition from winter to spring, our hair undergoes its own transformation.

It is critical to prepare and protect your hair from the warm weather. As

we move from the chilly winter to the warmth of spring, our hair undergoes its own seasonal shedding, transitioning from the dry, brittle conditions of winter to the vibrant, lively days ahead. The sunlight, while uplifting for our mood, can be harsh on our hair, potentially leading to cuticle damage, dryness, and color fade.

Increased warmth as well as more time spent outdoors can significantly impact hair health, affecting moisture levels, texture, and overall hair vitality.

For men, adapting to the changing weather is essential to maintain a healthy scalp and hair. Increased humidity, exposure to pollen, and fluctuating temperatures can impact hair health.

This seasonal shift calls for a spring haircare adjustment to tackle the challenges and seize the advantages of the new season.

1-Start Spring With A Trim

An increase in humidity

in the spring season can cause repetitive swelling, dehydration and shrink hair strands.

It can lead to dry hair, hair breakage and hair fall. Trimming them off is the first step to healthy, spring hair. A fresh trim will also help your hair look and feel lighter for the spring season. Spring is the perfect time to try a new hair-style.

Hair trims help natural hair growth, retain its strength and keep it looking fresh.

Trimming your hair prevents split ends and keeps it looking fresh.

Adjusting your hair washing frequency to 2-3 times per week can help tackle sweat, pollutants, and buildup, ensuring your scalp stays healthy. Moisturise your hair with natural hair oils, organic shampoos, and aloe vera-enriched conditioners.

Book an appointment with expert hairdresser to learn about scalp and hair treatments.

2---Protect hair from



Chlorine: Pool days are inevitable during spring. The feeling of gliding through the water can feel serene but chlorine can strip your hair of its natural oils and lead to dry, brittle locks.

Although chlorine is great for wiping out harmful bacteria and keeping

the pool water clean, it's also harsh on your hair. Regular exposure to chlorine can make your hair highly porous. and also change the colour of your hair. If your skin is sensitive to chlorine, it can result in an itchy and irritated scalp. It is advised to cover your hair with

swimming cap to keep your hair completely dry. You can help protect your hair even more by plaiting or twisting hair up before putting the cap on.

Shower before going into the pool. to remove any dirt and oils from your hair. This will guarantee that less water's chlorine is

absorbed by your hair. In a similar vein, immediately rinse your hair with fresh water after swimming to get rid of the chlorine.

3---Protect hairs from UV Rays -----

In Spring, the amount of UV radiation increases at once, along with the temperature rise.

Spring is also the season when pollen fills the air and causes damage by clinging to our hair & scalp without us knowing.

To protect your hair from UV rays during the spring season, consider wearing a wide-brimmed hat or scarf, using UV-protectant hair products, and maintaining a healthy, hydrated hair care routine.

To protect your strands from the sun, use a leave-in conditioner or UV protectant spray with SPF before heading outdoors. Additionally, wearing a wide-brimmed hat or scarf can provide extra shade and minimize sun exposure to your hair and scalp.

Hair sunscreen should always be applied if you

are going to be exposed to the sun for an extended period during peak UV time.

4----Shield Your Strands from Wind:----- Spring often brings blustery days that can leave your hair tangled and unruly.

Strong winds can tangle and twist your hair, causing physical damage like split ends and knots. Frequent exposure to windy conditions can also increase the likelihood of breakage, especially if your hair is already dry or brittle. Windy days can be aggravating when you have a lot of hair--especially if you like to spend time perfecting your coif. To combat the wind, consider styling your hair in a protective hairstyle such as a bun, braid, or ponytail. These styles keep your hair secure and minimize exposure to the elements, reducing the risk of breakage and tangling.

The author is an international fame beauty expert and is called the herbal queen of India

From Covid to probiotics, researchers reveal changes in gut microbiota

AGENCIES

NEW YORK

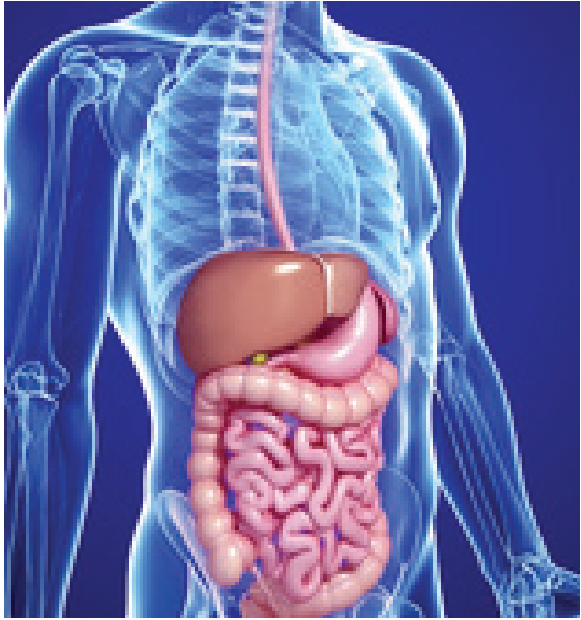
The '13th Gut Microbiota for Health World Summit' in Washington, DC, over the weekend revealed how cutting-edge research on gut microbiome science is being applied to clinical practice.

The summit showcased the latest microbiome research on coronavirus, plant and dairy-based protein, as well as probiotics.

A novel study found that the gut microbiome in children is altered post-COVID-19 infection, much like it is in adults.

Researchers found a significant decrease in beneficial bacteria, like Lactica-seibacillus and Bifidobacterium, in children who had COVID-19 compared to those who didn't.

These bacteria help reduce inflammation and support gut health. Children with lingering symptoms also showed different types of bacteria, in addition



tion to elevated markers of inflammation and decreased barrier function in the gut. Future research will examine immune responses and potential microbiome-targeted therapies for persistent post-COVID-19 symptoms.

In another study, researchers analysed 35

plant-based and 23 dairy-based foods and found that nearly 50% of tested plants and milk and dairy products contain SIOOB, a helpful protein that binds calcium.

The study suggested that SIOOB may interact with gut bacteria to promote a healthy microbi-

ome, potentially influencing inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). The findings open the door for future dietary applications, such as using SIOOB in supplements and nutraceuticals.

A meta-analysis of 10 studies, including 2,345 patients, showed that probiotics significantly reduced abdominal pain, bloating, and vomiting after a colonoscopy.

While there was no significant reduction in nausea, constipation, gas, or diarrhoea, these findings suggest probiotics could improve patient recovery and encourage more individuals to undergo the crucial procedure.

The event - organised by the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA) and the European Society of Neurogastroenterology and Motility (ESNM) - brought together clinicians, researchers, nutritionists, and dieticians from around the world.

Scientists report powerful virtual reality treatment for speech anxiety

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI

A team of researchers has revealed powerful virtual reality (VR) treatment for speech anxiety, that is becoming increasingly more common over time globally.

Published in the journal Frontiers, the study reported work by Dr Chris Macdonald from University of Cambridge in the UK who created an online platform where users transform into skilled and confident public speakers. On the platform, tailored course material develops key skills and life-like virtual reality training environments build confidence.

"In physical reality, a user might be practising a presentation alone in their bedroom but on the new virtual reality platform, they can experience the sensation of presenting to a wide range of increas-



ingly challenging photo-realistic audiences," said Dr Macdonald.

By developing a method that converts smartphones into VR headsets, Dr Macdonald has made sure that the platform is accessible to all.

The platform has been clinically proven to significantly increase levels of confidence for most users after a single 30-minute session.

In the most recent trial with students from Cambridge and University College London (UCL), it was found that a week of self-guided use was beneficial to 100 per cent of participants.

The platform helped all users in one or more of the following ways: to feel more prepared, more adaptable, more resilient, more confident, to be better able to manage nerves, and to feel less anxious.

A user-centric iterative process ensured that the platform would work 'in the wild'.

In between each rebuild thus far, the platform has hosted over 50,000 practice presentations from remote beta users. To further stress test the software and hardware, in-person events were organised, one of which involved over 1,000 mem-

bers of the public using the platform in suboptimal conditions in a demo room in Cambridge.

To further expand and deepen the participant pool, the lab went on tour. This included stops at the largest science and technology events such as New Scientist Live as well as less formal settings such as a local market, library, community centre, church, and even someone's living room.

Speech anxiety and the fear of public speaking impact most people, and it is becoming increasingly more common over time.

The platform has immense potential to empower individuals to overcome their fear of public speaking, ultimately enhancing not only their quality of life but also their capacity to become a driving force of positive change in the world," said the authors.

AI could predict true biological age from 5 drops of blood

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI

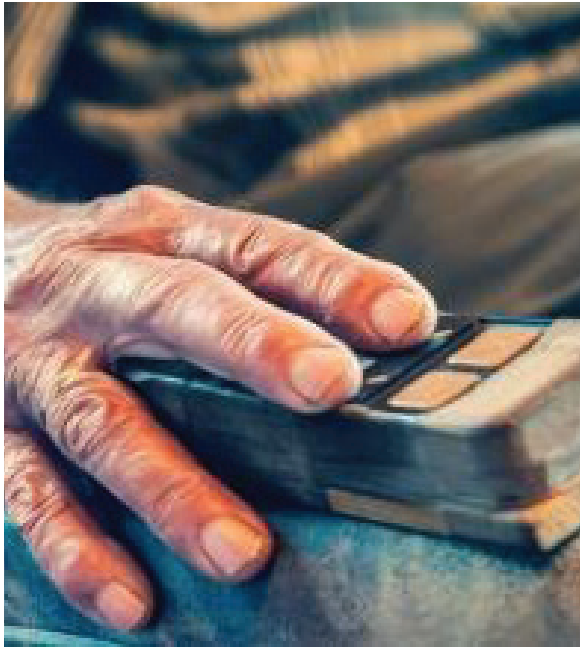
Scientists at Osaka University in Japan have devised a new AI model to estimate a person's biological age - a measure of how well their body has aged, rather than just counting the years since birth.

Using just five drops of blood, this new method analyses 22 key steroids and their interactions to provide a more precise health assessment.

The team's breakthrough study, published in Science Advances, offers a potential step forward in personalised health management, allowing for earlier detection of age-related health risks and tailored interventions.

"Our bodies rely on hormones to maintain homeostasis, so we thought, why not use these as key indicators of aging?" said Dr Qiuyi Wang, co-first author of the study.

To test this idea, the



research team focused on steroid hormones, which play a crucial role in metabolism, immune function, and stress response.

The team developed a deep neural network (DNN) model that incorporates steroid metabolism

pathways, making it the first AI model to explicitly account for the interactions between different steroid molecules.

One of the study's most striking findings involves cortisol, a steroid hormone commonly associated with stress. The researchers

found that when cortisol levels doubled, biological age increased by approximately 1.5 times.

This suggests that chronic stress could accelerate aging at a biochemical level, reinforcing the importance of stress management in maintaining long-term health.

"Stress is often discussed in general terms, but our findings provide concrete evidence that it has a measurable impact on biological aging," said Professor Toshifumi Takao, a corresponding author and an expert in analytical chemistry and mass spectrometry.

The researchers believe this AI-powered biological age model could pave the way for more personalised health monitoring.

Future applications may include early disease detection, customised wellness programmes, and even lifestyle recommendations tailored to slow down aging.

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI

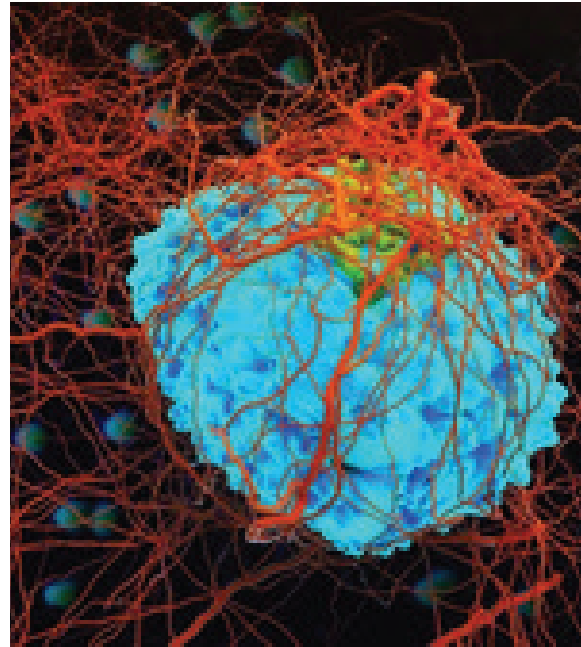
A team of researchers has developed a new gene-based technology that offers rapid, highly sensitive detection of multi-drug-resistant bacteria and other pathogens at low concentrations.

This research was featured in an article in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS).

Researchers designed a CRISPR-based test that rapidly detects low levels of pathogen genetic material in blood. This is done without the need for nucleic acid amplification.

Bioengineering professor Rashid Bashir from University of Illinois Grainger College of Engineering, led a team of researchers for the project.

In CRISPR/Cas-based diagnostic tests, guide RNAs bind pathogen DNA or RNA, triggering



Cas enzymes to become active and cleave the reporter nucleic acids that fluoresce when cleaved. However, the single CRISPR-based technique does not detect pathogens at low levels without a pre-amplification step.

Bashir's team created

a CRISPR-based diagnostic test that bypasses that amplification step by combining two CRISPR/Cas units in a complex called CRISPR-Cascade.

One unit contains a guide RNA specific for a pathogen nucleic acid of choice and a Cas protein.

When the Cas cleaves specially engineered nucleic acids that are added to the system, parts of the nucleic acids are free to bind and activate a second CRISPR/Cas, triggering a positive feedback loop that results in a high signal-to-noise ratio.

The test demonstrated unprecedented sensitivity. It also detected multi-drug-resistant Staphylococcus aureus DNA without prior amplification at concentrations that were orders of magnitude lower than the limit of a test using a single Cas.

The test provided a simple "yes/no" result for the presence of any one pathogen in samples spiked with four common bloodstream pathogens.

The researchers said these results could be used toward developing highly sensitive CRISPR-based diagnostic tests that can detect pathogens in minutes without nucleic acid amplification.



Lucky to have three captains to put their arm around my shoulder: Hardik

UNI

MUMBAI, MAR 19

From the maidans to the streets, the DNA of every cricket game is to Play Like Mumbai. That entertaining brand of cricket, the fight, the grit, the refusal to throw in the towel, is something we've seen in abundance over the last seventeen seasons of the IPL, and was on full display as the Mumbai Indians stormed to win their second WPL title.

"I told the girls they set a very nice example which the men's team now has to follow," said Hardik Pandya at the pre-season press conference ahead of IPL 2025 in Mumbai.

Mahela Jayawardene, Mumbai Indians' Head Coach, spoke about creating that mentality within the team. "Creating a winning mentality is important. That toughness (is important)," he said.

"Last season threw us some challenges. But it's been a big auction. There have been a lot of changes. With that we've got a fresh canvas to start and paint our own destiny. We have the core group with



us who have the experience and know what the culture is, how we need to play and win," Jayawardene said.

"With the new group of guys, which includes some old faces coming back like Trent (Boult), which was a big part in our success in 2020. For us, it is about putting this puzzle together, making sure we gel well as a group, understanding our strengths and having a good start. I was reminded few days ago that we haven't won our first game since 2012. Both of us, including Surya, who's going to lead us in the first game, have a big challenge ahead of us to try and overcome that," he said.

It's the year after a mega auction, Mumbai Indians have retained their core

of players, and showed a pretty clear sign of going after experience in the Auction. Jayawardene threw light on the strategy.

"We pride on our core group. That's been the reason for our success for many years. It's not easy to win an IPL trophy. Mumbai Indians has been successful in delivering that. Each year, the challenge is for us to set ourselves up for that. We have added more experience this year to the core group. That was something planned that we wanted to achieve. We have seven guys in our main squad who've won IPL trophies with different franchises as well. As a coach, I am trying to get that structure in place and get the best out of them," he said.

What's unique about the Mumbai Indians is the presence of four Indian skippers in Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav and Jasprit Bumrah apart from Hardik, on the field.

Hardik knows he'll always have multiple brains to pick from and multiple shoulders to lean on through a game.

"I am lucky that I have

three captains playing with me. It adds more and more experience for me. I know when I require help, there are three different minds who have led India in different formats and with so many years of experience who are always there to put their arm around my shoulder and be there for me," he said.

Mumbai Indians play two games on the road, against Chennai Super Kings and Gujarat Giants, before coming home to the Wankhede Stadium to play their first home game, against the Kolkata Knight Riders. Hardik has a message for the loyal Mumbai Indians army, the Paltan.

"Iss baar koi aur colour nahi dikhna chahiye (No other colour should be seen this year). Just make noise. When I come out to bat, bowl, at the toss, just make noise."

Be assured, the decibels are set to go off the roof at the Wankhede. The eighteenth season of the Indian Premier League begins on March 22 in Kolkata, and the Mumbai Indians are set to play their first game on March 23, in Chennai.

Sports Budget: Comm Secy deliberates on budget announcements to enhance sports culture in J&K

UNI

JAMMU, MAR 19

To deliberate on the budget announcements and review the activities and achievements of the department, Commissioner Secretary Youth Services and Sports, Sarma Hafeez on Wednesday discussed the future roadmap and strategic implementation in order to make Jammu and Kashmir ready to produce international stuff and making it a sporting hub.

Chairing a meeting of officers here at the Civil Secretariat, the officer discussed that a Water Sports Festival will jointly be organised by J&K Sports Council in the month of April in collaboration with the Department of Youth Services and Sports.

Notably, the Government has kept higher allocation towards sports in Budget 2025 and had underlined its commitment to make J&K an elite sporting State/UT through the 2025 budget, where sports received its highest-ever allocation.

The enhancement in honorarium and refreshment charges of the players was also discussed in the meeting.

The budget announcements included engaging 75 lakh youth in sports activities across J&K; establishment of National



Centres of Excellence for Water Sports at Dal Lake in Srinagar and Basohli in Jammu; setting up of Gymnastics Academy at Gindun Rajbagh and Khel Gaon Nagrota; establishment of four state-of-the-art Cricket Academies with budgetary funding of Rs 8 crore; construction of two new Youth Hostels, one each in Jammu and Kashmir divisions for which amount of Rs 10 crore has been kept in the budget; high performance training centres are being developed in all districts in phased manner to enhance athletes training and performance; hosting of national/international sports events to boost tourism and infrastructure including the 9th Aerobic

Asian Championship in 2025 and the Rafting World Cup in Kashmir for which a separate provision of Rs 4.5 Crore has been kept; Football exchange programme to be conducted; focus on empowering coaches by organising specialised capacity building programmes like the football development programme and world coach programme; development of 247 playfields, stadiums and sports courts for enhanced facilities; construction and upgradations of 19 sports buildings across the region; procurements of sports equipments and generators for stadiums; provision of Rs 150 crores for sports infrastructure; commissioning

of two swimming pools in both the capital cities, creation of sports facilities for migrants; focus on involvement of rural/tribal population in games and establishment of 100 khelo India Centres.

Prominent among others who attended the meeting were Rajinder Singh Tara, Director General Youth Services and Sports; Jyoti Rani Slathia, Special Secretary YSS; Ashok Kumar Khajuria, Director Finance YSS; Nuzhat Gul, Secretary J&K Sports Council; Ashiq Bhat, Joint Director Planning; Ravi Kumar, Deputy Director Planning YSS; Jitender Mishra, Deputy Director Central and Nitin Hangloo, representative of NYK.

Rankings boost for New Zealand following strong start to Pakistan series

UNI

DUBAI, MAR 19

New Zealand's strong start to their ongoing white-ball series against Pakistan has seen a trio of their players make large gains on the latest ICC Men's T20I Player Rankings.

The Black Caps have already opened up a 2-0 lead over Pakistan in the five-match T20I series, with their new-look opening combination doing plenty of damage during the Powerplay on both occasions.

Tim Seifert and Finn Allen have both made strong contributions with the bat and the pair have been rewarded on the latest rankings update.

Seifert rises 20 spots to jump to equal 13th overall for T20I batters after scores of 44 and 45, while Allen rises eight spots to 18th on the same list fol-



lowing innings of 29 not out and 38.

Australia's Travis Head remains at the top of the T20I rankings for batters, ahead of Abhishek Sharma of India and Phil Salt from England.

It's a similar case on the latest rankings for T20I bowlers, with Jacob Duffy obtaining a new career-high rating as he jumps up 23 places to 12th overall following six wickets from the opening two matches of that series, according to

an ICC media statement.

Pakistan pacer Haris Rauf picked up two wickets during the most recent contest against the Kiwis in Dunedin and gains four places to 26th as a result, with West Indies spinner Akeal Hosein still out in front in this category.

There was also some changes in the latest ODI rankings following a host of recent matches in the ongoing ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2 in Windhoek.

Young Netherlands spinner Aryan Dutt gains two places to move to equal 33rd on the list for ODI bowlers on the back of a pair of three-wicket hauls against Namibia, while teammate Paul van Meekeren improves six spots to jump to equal 61st on the same list after a three-wicket spell of his own against the same opposition in their most recent contest.

There is also some joy for Namibia following the recent run of League 2 games, with skipper Gerhard Erasmus back inside the top for ODI all-rounders on the back of figures of 4/24 against Canada.

Erasmus also scored a half-century against the Netherlands last week and gains two places to move to equal 10th on the ODI all-rounder list that is headed by Afghanistan star Azmatullah Omarzai.

Australia bracing for full strength T20 World Cup champions New Zealand

UNI

SYDNEY, MAR 19

Australia and New Zealand are set to lock horns in a three-match T20I series starting on March 21.

Featuring the last two winners of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup, the series offers an opportunity to iron out their teams in the shortest format with one eye on the next edition of the tournament in 2026.

"I think they (fixtures) are really important. We're coming off the back of a successful series but

we want to finish off the season really well," Australia head coach Shelley Nitschke said.

"There are only nine T20Is between now and the next T20 World Cup. So when you start to break it up like that, every opportunity you get to play in that format is going to be really valuable for us," Nitschke said.

Nitschke said that the White Ferns will offer a stern challenge with the return of Sophie Devine, Melie Kerr and Lea Tahuhu in the T20I squad, an ICC

report said.

"They're gonna be coming at us pretty hard. They're the T20 World Cup champions... they're back to full strength. Sophie (Devine) comes back in. So it should be a really exciting contest," she said.

While Australia are coming into the series on the back of an Ashes series sweep against England at home, New Zealand played a 1-1 stalemate against Sri Lanka in the recent three-match T20I series.

For Australia, Beth Mooney is approach-

ing a major milestone - her 200th international appearance for the national team.

Gushing praise of the wicketkeeper-batter, Nitschke added, "Moons has been really amazing with her consistency. That amount of time - 200 games - is such a fantastic feat.

"I think just the way the game has changed and Moons just keeps churning out the runs in all formats as well. She's just topped up a ton in Test match as well.

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