



Appropriate Time has Come for Restoration of Statehood : CM Omar Abdullah Hopeful about Restoration Very Soon

Says Downgrading J&K to Union Territory has hit administrative accountability, efficiency

Inaugurates vital Rohmoo Bridge over Romeshi rivulet in Pulwama

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / AGENCIES

PULWAMA, APR 15: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday said that downgrading Jammu and Kashmir from a State to a Union Territory has significantly hit the administrative accountability and efficiency. Addressing a gathering after inaugurating a bridge damaged in 2014 floods at Rohmoo, here in South Kashmir, the Chief Minister, as per the news agency—

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Adjournment motion on Waqf Act 'misplaced action': CM Omar

'NC has moved Supreme Court, let's wait for response'

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 15: Terming the adjournment motion on Waqf Act moved by the J&K legislators as "misplaced action" Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday said that National Conference has now approached the Supreme Court (SC) in this regard. Talking to reporters here, Omar, according to the news agency—said, "The adjournment motion brought by the members was an inappropriate move as the motion is aimed to contest the local government's move. However, if resolution would have been tabled differently, the outcome could have been different."

He said that the Speaker (Abdul Rahim Rather) made everything clear on the last

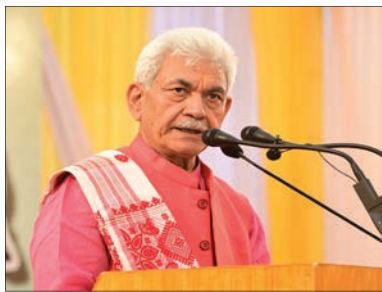
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Lieutenant Governor attends 'Himachal Diwas' celebrations at Raj Bhawan

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, APRIL 15: Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha today attended the celebration of 'Himachal Diwas', hosted by Jammu Kashmir Raj Bhawan at Jammu.

Security personnel, students and the people of Himachal Pradesh living in J&K UT were the special invitees for the evening.



The Lieutenant Governor extended his felicitations and best wishes to the people of Himachal Pradesh on the occasion.

"This Devbhoomi is blessed by nature, rich spiritual and cultural heritage and vibrant traditions. It has also emerged as a major hub for hydro-power, and this sector is

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CS for making joint efforts to cultivate land near IB

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, APR 15: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, while chairing a joint meeting of Civil administration and Security forces, remarked that joint efforts by the Agriculture Production Department, concerned district administrations and security forces should be made to encourage the farmers to cultivate the land patches between the fence and International Border (IB).

The meeting, which was attend-



ed by Principal Secretary, APD; Principal Secretary, Home Department; IG, BSF; Deputy Commissioner, Kathua/Jammu/Samba/Poonch and Rajouri along with

other officers was called to discuss different measures to help the farmers to take-up these lands for cultivation.

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NEWS BRIEF

Over 60 public libraries functional in Kashmir, 9 remain closed

SRINAGAR, APR 15: Amid efforts to promote literacy and equitable access to educational resources, out of more than 70 public libraries across Kashmir valley, approximately 63 libraries are functional, while 9 remain closed — primarily due to non-availability of staff or lack of infrastructure, reveals an official government document. Data accessed by the news agency—suggests the highest concentration of functional libraries found in Srinagar district,

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125 days and Counting; Mystery deepens over 17 unexplained deaths in Rajouri's Budhal

JAMMU, APRIL 15: More than four months (125 days) after the tragic deaths of 17 individuals in Budhal village, Rajouri, investigative agencies across the country remain unable to unravel the mystery. While normalcy has returned to the village, the grief of losing loved ones lingers, and pressing questions about the incident

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LG launches Dr. Suraj Gupte's Pediatric Education Network Portal

JAMMU APR 15: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Tuesday launched the online portal of Pediatric Education Network, a free-to-access digital platform curated and developed by eminent Pediatrician and Academician, Dr Suraj Gupte.

The Lieutenant Governor congratulated Dr Suraj Gupte and everyone associated with the initiative, which aims to enhance Pediatric healthcare education and empower practitioners

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Sajad Lone accuses Omar Abdullah of orchestrating disruption over Waqf Bill Says CM 'scripted' Assembly chaos only to kill Waqf Bill

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 15: Peoples Conference (PC) President and Handwara MLA Sajad Gani Lone on Monday accused Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and National Conference (NC) legislators of deliberately derailing the Assembly's discussion on the

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IGP Kashmir chairs high-level security review meeting

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 15: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir Zone, V. K. Birdi Tuesday chaired a high-level joint security review meeting at Police Control Room, Kashmir, to assess preparedness for upcoming events and to ensure seamless coordination among various security agencies.

The meeting was attended by senior officers from multiple forces, including IG BSF, IG KOS CRPF, IG CRPF Srinagar Sector, DIG CKR, DIG ITBP, DIG CRPF



North, DIG SSB, DIG RPF, DIG BSF, DIG South CRPF, as well as SSPs from Srinagar, Railways, Budgam, APCR, Traffic City, CID CIK, Security, and SDRF Kashmir. Also

present were Col GoS (IS 15 Corps), DC SB, SP Cargo, SP Telecommunication Kashmir, and AD IB Srinagar. DIGs of SKR and NKR, along with all District SSPs of the Kashmir Zone, participated virtually, a spokesman said in a statement issued to the news agency—During the session, IGP Kashmir V K Birdi underscored the need for heightened vigilance in view of potential threats and directed officers to strengthen intelligence networks, secure vulnerable points, and maintain effective area

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Over 6.7 lakh visitors throng Tulip Garden in 20 days Record-breaking footfall boosts tourism, livelihoods, elevates garden's status as premier spring attraction

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, Apr 15: The Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden in Srinagar has witnessed an unprecedented tourist surge this spring, welcoming a record-breaking 6,71,926 visitors in just 20 days since it opened on March 26, 2025. This remarkable number marks the highest-ever footfall in the garden's history, firmly establishing it as one of



India's most sought-after spring attractions.

Located on the foothills of the Zabarwan Range and

overlooking the tranquil Dal Lake, the garden is currently home to a breathtaking 1.7 million tulips in full bloom, transforming the landscape into a vibrant mosaic of red, yellow, pink, purple and white.

According to details obtained by the news agency—, the ongoing Tulip Show has drawn an eclectic crowd this year, including 27,810 locals, 3,91,918 domestic

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Amarnath Yatra 2025: Registration commences, pilgrimage to begin on July 3

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, APR 15: Registrations for the upcoming annual Amarnath Yatra commenced on Tuesday as hundreds of devotees thronged to designated bank branches to get registration forms.

Registrations for the yatra, according to the news agency—can be done at over 540 authorized bank branches across the country including Punjab National Bank (316 branches), Jammu and Kashmir Bank (90 branches), Yes Bank (37 branches), and State Bank of India (97 branches) and designated centers such as



Panchayat Bhawan, Vaishnavi Dham, and Mahajan Hall in Jammu.

The pilgrims can also register online via

the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board website, jksasb.nic.in.

As per Shri Amarnath Shrine Board officials registration is mandatory for all pilgrims, and a Compulsory Health Certificate (CHC), issued by an authorised medical body, is required to confirm fitness for the high-altitude trek. "Only about 15000 yatris will be allowed per day. The registration fee for each pilgrim is Rs 220. A Radio Frequency Identification, or RFID card, is mandatory for all pilgrims," official said, as per KNO.

The Yatra is scheduled to begin on July 3,

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Ruhullah Mehdi Feels Isolated Within NC After Supporting Student Protest Over Reservation Policy

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR: Srinagar MP and National Conference leader Aga Ruhullah Mehdi has revealed growing distance between him and his party following his support for student protests against the new reservation policy in Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking during a Twitter Space interaction, Ruhullah expressed frustration over what he described as a "communication breakdown" with the party leadership. "Earlier, my views were not only welcomed but shaped



party direction. That changed after the Assembly elections," he said.

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'Power sector second highest revenue contributor for JK

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 15: In the past four years, Jammu and Kashmir Power Development Department has become the second highest revenue contributor for the government.

The department in this period has witnessed a 67 percent increase in revenue generation.

According to the official figures available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), since Financial Year 2022, amongst the major revenue contributors, the power development department has become the second highest revenue contributor with 67 percent increase in power

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CM

"said that dedicating this bridge to the people 11 years after getting damaged in floods was just a beginning and many more works are to be done in the five years.

He highlighted the stark contrast between functioning as a Chief Minister of a State and that of a Union Territory.

Reflecting on his tenure as the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir when it was a state, he said, "Back then, if I directed officials to execute a task, they would come up with ten different ways to get it done. But now, under the Union Territory setup, the same officials find ten different excuses to avoid doing that very task."

He said in the first instance, the government brought a resolution to reject the August 5, 2019 decision and also demanded its restoration in the first Assembly Session, adding that in the first cabinet meeting; a resolution was passed and handed over to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi by him personally.

However, he said that some people are unhappy with it by saying that statehood is not our goal. "When have we claimed that statehood is our goal? It is just a way to achieve our goal. We will have to reach our goal by following steps and thus statehood restoration is a big way for it," he added.

The Chief Minister said that they are of the belief that the apt time has come for its restoration as six months have already elapsed since the elections were held in Jammu and Kashmir. "During the recent visit of Union Home Minister Amit Shah to Jammu and Kashmir, I had a detailed discussion with him. I am hopeful that the statehood would be restored soon," he said.

Assuring people of his commitment to local rights, Omar promised that his party would introduce legislation ensuring that jobs are reserved exclusively for the local youth.

The Chief Minister referred to Himachal Pradesh, where a law mandates that 70% of jobs in private industries be reserved for local residents.

He questioned why a similar provision cannot be implemented in Jammu and Kashmir. "If our neighboring state can safeguard employment opportunities for its people, why should Jammu and Kashmir be any different?" he asked.

He also asserted that only the people of Jammu and Kashmir should have ownership and control over their natural resources, including minerals.

Speaking about the promises made during the election campaign, Omar claimed that several of them have already been fulfilled. These include the provision of free electricity and ration for the economically weaker sections and the introduction of free bus travel for women. "People will not have to wait for five years to see our promises materialize. We are determined to fulfill each one of them in a short span," he assured—

WAQFACT

day of the session. "Our party has now approached the Supreme Court in this regard and let's wait for the court's response," he said, as per KNO.

On statehood, Omar said, "Statehood is not our end goal, but it is an essential step to achieve our larger objectives. Without the restoration of statehood, we cannot move forward."

He reiterated his party's stance on the constitutional changes made on August 5, 2019, stating, "We have already passed a resolution declaring those changes as unconstitutional, and we will continue our struggle to reverse them."

CS

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary impressed upon the concerned to encourage the farmers to cultivate all the arable land between the fence and International Border. He maintained that irrespective of the status of such lands these should be put to productive use to add to our local food basket.

He further made out that these farmers should be facilitated by the Agriculture Department besides given assurances by the security forces about their security. He called upon them to give suitable advice to the farmers about the kind of food or fodder to be sown.

He also called for extending all the possible assistance to these farmers so that all such fallow lands come into production from the next sowing season. He further directed the senior officers from Agriculture Department to visit these districts to take cognizance of the issues and resolve them on the spot in consultation with the district administration and the security forces guarding the border there.

In his remarks, Principal Secretary, APD, Shailendra Kumar made out that the Department is ready to provide the necessary hand-holding to the farmers for cultivating these lands. He further advised the Deputy Commissioners to do the prior ground work on the instant issue so that the obstacles are ironed out on the spot on the day of inspection.

On the occasion, a detailed assessment of

land use between the International Border (IB) and the Border Security Fence was given by the IG, BSF. He also flagged some demands of the locals for successful cultivation of these lands besides giving assurance on part of the forces that they would extend full cooperation to the locals for making productive use of these lands here in the UT.

LG

significantly contributing to its local economy. I pray that the aspirations of the people of this state are fulfilled and Himachal keeps strengthening the nation's growth," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasised the need to increase the Cultural exchanges between the States and Union Territories. He said, the cross-cultural engagement programmes can strengthen India by fostering mutual understanding, breaking down barriers, and building social cohesion.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted that when people from different states and regions share traditions, food and art, they reduce the division and bridge the gaps.

"Cultural exchanges between the States and UTs under Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat can also spur economic benefits. The local festivals will attract tourists and cross-state collaborations will help in curating mega festivals and also boost community pride and local economies," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor paid homage to General Zorawar Singh, the great warrior and military strategist. He also recalled the significant contributions of army bravehearts and prominent luminaries from Himachal Pradesh.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor released an Activity Calendar of Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages.

YATRA

2025 from the Pahalgam track in the Anantnag district and the Baltal route in the Ganderbal district, and will conclude on August 9, 2025, spanning 38 days, aligning with the auspicious occasion of Shravan Purnima (Raksha Bandhan).

The dates for the yatra were announced by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on March 5 during the 48th Board meeting of the Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine Board (SASB) at Raj Bhanwan.

The board proposed various measures and interventions to further improve the facilities and services for the devotees.

Considering the likely increased inflow of pilgrims for Amarnath Yatra-2025, the meeting discussed measures for enhancing lodgment capacity at centres in Jammu, Srinagar, and other locations, operationalising Yatri facilitation centres for e-KYC, issuing RFID cards, and on-spot registration of pilgrims at a number of locations, including Nowgam and Katra Railway Stations.

These facilities must also be suitably enhanced at Baltal, Pahalgam, Nunwan, and Pantha Chowk Srinagar, as per the requirements.

Reviewing the progress achieved on various ongoing works undertaken by the line departments, the LG stressed the need to ensure adequate arrangements and requisite amenities at various locations en route to the Yatra.

Key Details
Registration Start Date: April 15, 2025
Yatra Duration: July 3, 2025, to August 9, 2025

Routes: Pilgrims can undertake the journey via two routes:

Pahalgam Route (48 km, Anantnag district, traditional and longer route)

Baltal Route (14 km, Ganderbal district, shorter but steeper)

Daily Pilgrim Limit: Approximately 15,000 pilgrims per day (7,500 per route, including those traveling by helicopter and trekking).

Eligibility:
Pilgrims aged between 13 and 70 years are eligible.

Pregnant women beyond six weeks are not permitted.

Mandatory Requirements:

Compulsory Health Certificate (CHC) issued on or after April 15, 2025, by authorized doctors/institutions. Valid government-issued ID proof (e.g., Aadhaar, Passport, Voter ID).

Enhanced Facilities for 2025

The Jammu and Kashmir administration, in collaboration with SASB, is committed to ensuring a seamless and secure pilgrimage:

Improved Infrastructure: Upgraded accommodation, langar services, medical facilities, and telecom connectivity along both routes.

Digital Payment System: Introduction of a prepaid digital system for hiring ponies, porters, and palkis.

Security Measures: Enhanced security with drone surveillance, mine-proof vehicles, and rigorous checks at base camps.

Free Battery Car Service: Available on the Baltal-Domel stretch for accessibility.

Live Aarti Telecast: Morning and evening aarti from the Holy Cave will be broadcast live for devotees worldwide via the SASB website and app—

SAJAD LONE

Waqf Bill. Lone said the disruption was scripted to prevent the passage of a resolution that would have held political significance for Muslims in India.

In a detailed post on X, Lone, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), referred to the recent remarks made by the Chief Minister, who had said the Assembly members committed a mistake by filing the Waqf Bill discussion under an adjournment motion instead of a government resolution.

"The Speaker may have allowed the discussion on the Waqf Bill, but unfortunately our members committed a mistake by filing it as an adjournment motion," Omar Abdullah had said during a public address in Pulwama.

Responding to this, Lone wrote that he had already pointed out the same procedural error on April 7, the day the National Conference members began their protest in the Assembly. "What CM sahib has said today, I had already tweeted on April 7. And for saying the same, the NC members used all possible political pejoratives against me," he wrote.

Lone accused the ruling party of showing political nonchalance toward the Waqf Bill and called it a "criminal" act. He questioned the conduct of over 50 NC legislators who, he said, disrupted the Assembly proceedings for three consecutive days.

"Are you telling us that collectively the Speaker, the Chief Minister, and all NC legislators and lawyers could not notice for three days that they were making a mistake?" Lone wrote. "Are you telling us that the collective IQ of your legislators is such that a glaring mistake staring at their faces for three days was unnoticeable by them?"

He alleged that the Assembly protest was not a mistake but a deliberate move by the ruling party to block a resolution. "This was your script. The whole song and dance performance was orchestrated by you. You did not want a resolution from the J&K Assembly," he said.

Lone said a resolution from Jammu and Kashmir would have carried weight and sent a strong message, but the government ensured that no such opportunity was allowed. "You were not interested in passing the resolution and did not allow the tiny opposition to even make a statement," he said.

He also questioned the Chief Minister's absence during the days of disruption. "Where were you for three days? I know for some time you were in the Tulip Garden," he wrote.

Lone demanded an apology from the Chief Minister and called for an emergency one-day session of the Assembly—

IGP

domination.

He further emphasized intensified patrolling, enhanced visibility at key locations, and strict adherence to established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

Highlighting the importance of synergy among all security and intelligence wings, IGP Kashmir called for robust inter-agency coordination and comprehensive emergency preparedness.

Concluding the meeting, he reiterated the need for unified and proactive efforts to ensure the safe and smooth conduct of high-profile events across UT—

AGA

The shift, according to him, became evident after he stood in solidarity with students protesting outside Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's residence last December. The demonstration, which was peaceful in nature, opposed changes to the reservation structure that drastically reduced the open merit quota. "I didn't call for that protest," Ruhullah clarified. "It was a gathering of students concerned about their future. I went there to listen and lend my voice, not to lead a rebellion. If that is now considered betrayal, so be it."

He accused some within the party of painting his participation as disruptive, a label he firmly rejects. "It was never about disrupting governance. It was about standing with the youth who felt unheard," he said.

Since then, Ruhullah claims, the party has gradually distanced itself from him. "From being asked to contest parliamentary elections, to having my ideas dismissed altogether — the change has been stark," he noted.

Despite feeling side-lined, Ruhullah said he chose not to openly protest the party's decisions, understanding its need to engage diplomatically with the central government. "I didn't want anyone to say that I spoiled the chance of restoring statehood. That's why I stayed quiet," he explained.

But the silence has come at a personal cost. "I feel consumed by this moral responsibility I carry for my people. I want to speak for them, work for them — within or outside the party. But the space to do that is shrinking."

Ruhullah dismissed claims that his actions were politically motivated. "Some say I am acting out a script. But I am accountable only to my conscience — and to God," he said firmly.

POWER

revenue generation.

The official documents further reveal that till November 2024, transmission and distribution capacity of 32,762.49 MVA with electric line length of 1,66,633.44 Circuit Kilometer (Ckm) has been established by the Government. Transmission and Distribution capacity has increased by more than 35% during the last five years.

"Over the span from 2020-21 to 2023-24, Jammu and Kashmir saw a steady increase in electricity consumption per capita, rising from 1,322 KWHr to 1,532 KWHr," it reads.

It further said that this trend was reflecting a growing demand for power amidst a population increase from 13.41 million to 13.70 million, with units purchased/consumed escalating from 17,721.76 million to 20,985.70 million units over the period.

The documents further reveal that the renewable energy sector in J&K is advancing significantly with a focus on solar and small hydro power projects.

"JaKEDA has allocated 35 Mini Hydel Projects (MHPs) with a capacity of 103.05 MW under Independent Power Producer (IPP) mode, already commissioning projects like 5 MW SHP Bultikulan and 3.75 MW SHP Khari," it reads.

The documents further said that infrastructure development has been a key focus, with significant progress in power generation, connectivity, and urban development. "The doubling of hydel-power generation capacity and on-going road and rail projects are expected to further bolster the region's infrastructure and connectivity."

"4,635 Government buildings and 4,000 households covered under Rooftop solar energy plants with capacity of 19.35 MW. Rooftop Solar Power Plants with a capacity of 8.5 MW have been installed for 300 beneficiaries," it reads—

TULIP

tourists and 2,198 international visitors.

The surge in footfall is historic when compared to previous years. In both 2022 and 2023, the garden saw 3.65 lakh visitors, and in 2024, the number rose to 4.45 lakh. However, this year's figure has already soared past 6.71 lakh, and with several days of the season still remaining, the final tally is expected to climb even higher.

A senior official from the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department, speaking to KNO, described the record turnout as a major success for the region's tourism sector. "The tulip bloom has become one of the leading springtime attractions in the country. This record-breaking response shows the growing confidence of tourists in Kashmir as a safe and scenic destination," he said.

Visitors have been effusive in their praise of the garden's beauty. Sandeep, a tourist from Gujarat, said, "This is my first visit to Kashmir, and I am simply mesmerised. I have never seen such a colourful display of flowers in my life. The experience is beyond words."

A traveller from the United Kingdom said, "The natural beauty of the Tulip Garden, combined with the warm hospitality of Kashmir, makes this a must-visit place for any traveller."

The record visitor turnout has brought economic cheer to the local community.

Ilyas Ahad, who runs an ice cream stall outside the garden, said business has been booming. "This has been the best season in years. On some days, I sold out all my stock before evening. The rush has given us all a new hope," he said.

As the tulip season continues, there is optimism in the air—not just among tourists marvelling at the bloom, but among local businesses and officials who see this as a sign of Kashmir's growing popularity as a peaceful and picturesque tourist destination—

LABRAIES

which boasts at least 13 operational libraries, including prestigious institutions like SPS Central Library, City Central Library, and Gani Memorial Library.

In other districts with a strong functional presence include Baramulla with 12 out of 17 libraries functional, 8 out of 9 libraries functional in Budgam, 5 out of 7 libraries functional in Kupwara, 6 in Anantnag, 5 in Bandipora, 4 in Pulwama, 2 in Kulgam and Ganderbal each and 1 in Shopian.

However, on the flip side, 9 libraries across districts like Baramulla, Kupwara, Budgam and Srinagar are marked "Closed". Baramulla leads with the highest number of closed libraries (5), followed by Kupwara (2), and with closures mostly attributed to staff shortages and accommodation issues.

Those closed include, Tehsil Library Zadibal (Srinagar), border Block Delina, Kunzar, Tujjar Sharief, Pahlipora and Wagoora in Baramulla while Tanghdar, Kandi Karnah in Kupwara and Khansahab in Budgam.

The report further mentions that proposals are underway to upgrade Tehsil Libraries of Shopian, Ganderbal, Kulgam, and Bandipora to District Library status, indicating efforts to decentralize and strengthen library infrastructure.

The government has also initiated a draft-

ing committee for comprehensive library legislation in J&K to address issues such as funding, staffing, networking, infrastructure, and promotion of a reading culture.

Meanwhile, frequent users and locals paint a different picture. "Many of these libraries," they say, are in a state of neglect, lacking basic facilities —specifically a library in Sopore town, visitors complain of poor upkeep, low footfall, and almost no public outreach.

"The library has potential, but the collection is outdated and internet access is unreliable. It doesn't match today's academic needs," said Adil Ahmad, a postgraduate student from Sopore—

RAJOURI

remain unanswered.

As per the news agency— the victims, mostly innocent children, are believed to have been poisoned, but key details—such as the source of the toxin and where the children were brought from—continue to evade authorities. The people of Budhal and the wider state are demanding answers, waiting for clarity on these suspicious deaths.

Health Minister Sakina Itoo informed the Assembly that hundreds of samples from Budhal were sent to reputed laboratories across the country, revealing traces of different pesticides. However, the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) in Chandigarh detected chlorfenapyr, a toxic pesticide, in the viscera of all 17 deceased, confirming poisoning as the cause of death.

Despite this critical finding, the case remains unresolved. The Assembly saw demands for a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe, but the Health Minister argued that some reports were still pending and that the investigation was progressing in the "right direction."

With no concrete results even after four months, frustration is mounting among locals and officials alike. A police officer connected to the case stated, "The investigation is still ongoing," but provided no further updates.

The deaths were reported between Dec 7 last year and Jan 19. Villagers linked the deaths to a wedding feast on Dec 2, last year. Since then, Budhal faced a row of funerals. The deceased belonged to the families of Fazal Hussain, Mohammad Aslam and Mohammad Rafiq.

The government also had to ban social gatherings in the hamlet which is located 57km from main Rajouri town—

PORTAL

, medical professionals, students, and institutions with credible and up-to-date resources.

Pediatric Education Network is a comprehensive, user-friendly portal designed to serve as a centralized hub for the knowledge of child health. It features a wealth of resources including lectures, clinical guidelines, case studies, interactive modules, and expert insights— a 'free to access' feature for all medical professionals, students, and institutions. The portal <https://drsaurajgupte.com/> seeks to bridge geographical and academic gaps in Pediatric education.

The launch ceremony at Raj Bhanwan was attended by several leading healthcare professionals, former Professors, senior Pediatricians and prominent citizens including Dr Sanjeev K Digra; Dr Ashok Gupta, Dr Ghanshyam Saini, Dr Sunil Dutt Sharma, Dr Kewal Samnotra and Dr Gotam Goel; Rakesh Gupta, former President CCI Jammu; and Subhash Gupte, Shamma Bakshi, Rajendra Gupte and Robin Bakshi - members of Pediatric Education Network Foundation—

Shopian residents demand maternity hospital at old fruit mandi site

Shopian, Apr 15 (: The residents of South Kashmir's Shopian district here have urged the government to establish a dedicated maternity hospital at the old fruit mandi site in Arhamah.

Citing a lack of adequate maternal healthcare facilities, the locals told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that hardships are faced by expecting mothers, who often have to be rushed to Srinagar even for minor complications due to the absence of proper infrastructure in the district.

They said that referral on minor issues often raise questions on the credibility of the doctors, who often are forced to refer patients in absence of proper facilities.

The locals said that there is an urgent need for a specialized facility to ensure safe deliveries and comprehensive prenatal and post-natal care. "With the increasing population and rising demand for maternity services, the existing healthcare infrastructure is falling short," said Junaid Ahmad, a local resident.

He said that the now-vacant old fruit mandi site, which was shifted to Aglar two years before, offers ample space for such a facility. "We have already submitted a memorandum to the government. The site is ideal and readily available for immediate development," said Mitha Gato, a local social activist.



Sakeena Itoo reviews traffic regulations across J&K; emphasises enhanced safety of college, school going students

HT News Network

Srinagar, JAMMU, APRIL 15: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, today chaired a meeting at Civil Secretariat to review the existing traffic regulations for enhanced safety and security of school and college going students of Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Education, Shantamanu; Secretary Health and Medical Education, Dr. Syed Abid Rasheed Shah; Secretary Transport department, Niraj Kumar; DIG Traffic Jammu Zone, Special Secretary School Education department, Transport Commissioner, Director Colleges, Director School Education Kashmir/Jammu, RTO Kashmir/Jammu, Chief Education Officers of all districts, ARTOs and other concerned officers, either in person or through video conferencing.

During the meeting, the Minister assessed several aspects of traffic regulations like validity of driving licenses, fitness certificates and documents of college and school buses, curbing overloading and installation of CCTVs and Fire safety tools in college and school buses besides other measures to enhance safety protocols for the students.

Speaking during the meeting, Sakeena Itoo passed on strict directions for installation of CCTVs in all school buses including private buses transporting school children. She emphasized on the need for stricter enforcement of traffic laws, enhanced coordination among schools, transport and police departments for effective implementation of road safety regulations.

"It is our collective responsibility to create a safe and secure environment for the school and college going stu-



dents", Sakeena stated.

Expressing displeasure over rising road accidents, the Minister called upon transport and police departments to launch effective drives against over speeding, drunken driving as well as licence violations with special focus on college and school going students. She further asked them to keep through check on stunt biking and rash driving among youngsters and juveniles and make their parents fully responsible for such incidents.

The Minister also called upon both the departments for strict implementation of 'no helmet no fuel rule'. She asked them to constitute joint checking squads to ascertain its on ground implementation.

While reviewing other safety regulations, Sakeena Itoo emphasized on routine checking of all college and school buses in terms of fitness and other aspects to maintain safety protocols for students.

The Minister also directed the ACS Education to conduct an in-depth departmental enquiry regarding the recent Handwara College Bus accident. She further asked the Director Colleges to conduct fresh driving test of all college bus drivers.

Sakeena Itoo further called upon all the stakeholders like health, education, transport and police departments to work in tandem and orga-

nise regular safety drills and awareness programmes regarding road safety protocols.

Meanwhile, the Minister during the meeting, also assessed the SOPs and protocols for conduct of picnics by schools and colleges. She passed on strict directions to enforce complete ban on picnics by schools and colleges on Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays.

The Minister directed the officers that Higher Secondary schools and High Schools within a district should seek prior permission from the concerned Chief Education Officer, who shall make a proper list as per the applications received and grant permissions accordingly. She added that the Middle Schools and below should seek permission from respective ZEOs who shall inform the CEO so that the schools can be allowed for picnics in hassle free manner.

The Minister further directed the officers that the schools who intend to go for picnics located outside their districts, need to seek prior permission from the concerned Director of School Education, who shall allow them after checking the influx of visitors at these locations.

She also asked the Director colleges to establish a mechanism for granting permission to colleges regarding picnics.

DSEK, SBI distribute bicycles among students Initiative aimed to encourage deserving students to do better in future: DSEK

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APRIL 15: Under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), State Bank of India and Directorate of School Education Kashmir today distributed free bicycles to meritorious students from different districts of Kashmir Division, who have excelled in the academics or sports belonging to economically weaker sections.

The distribution of bicycles was held in a function, held today at Girls Higher Secondary School Kothibagh Srinagar where Director School Education Kashmir (DSEK), Dr. G.N. Itoo was present as the chief guest.



Speaking on the occasion, Director School Education said that the Department will continue its efforts at all levels to provide various facilities to all the students across the

Kashmir division. Director was accompanied by Joint Director Central, Syed Shabir Ahmad and other officers from State Bank of India.

DC Srinagar reviews implementation of AMRUT 2.0 Water Supply projects

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APRIL 15: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Dr Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat Tuesday chaired a meeting at DC Office Complex, here to review the implementation of AMRUT 2.0 water supply projects in the district.

DC held detailed discussions on the progress of various approved schemes under AMRUT 2.0, highlighting key developments and challenges. He also took a detailed project wise and component wise review of all the schemes.

At the outset, DC highlighted the significance of AMRUT 2.0. He said that the scheme is aimed to prioritize ensuring water security for urban areas by promoting water conservation, reuse of treated wastewater, and rejuvenation of water bodies.

Dr Bilal stressed the Officers to redouble the efforts to ensure timely completion of all projects so that people are benefited from the scheme.

On the occasion, Executive Engineer Water Works Division Srinagar through a detailed powerpoint presentation highlighted the progress of different projects under the scheme.

The chair was informed that a total number of 20 projects have been approved for Srinagar City, out of



which 18 projects have been tendered and allotted. He was also informed that a total of 14 Over Head Tanks are under execution for improving the service levels. Besides, two Water Treatment Plants of 4.1 MGD capacity are also being taken up.

It was given out that one Activated Carbon Chamber of 7 MGD Capacity under AMRUT 2.0 is in progress that shall address the issues of odour and color issues in the raw water.

During the meeting, DC also reviewed the project for laying 'Raw Water Conductor from Preng to Rangil' which shall augment the water supply of Srinagar City by 25 MGD.

The DC was further informed that with the execution of AMRUT 2.0 Programme, Srinagar City shall be self-sufficient to address water

demand up to year 2040.

Besides, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiyaz Ul Aziz; Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar and Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar, the meeting was attended by Executive Engineers of Water Works Division, Water Supply Master Plan Division, FA/CAO Srinagar Municipal Corporation and other concerned Officers.

During the meeting, DC also reviewed the project for laying 'Raw Water Conductor from Preng to Rangil' which shall augment the water supply of Srinagar City by 25 MGD.

The DC was further informed that with the execution of AMRUT 2.0 Programme, Srinagar City shall be self-sufficient to address water demand up to year 2040.

Agriculture Deptt organises 'Buyer-Seller meet' at IIKSTC Dussu Pampore

MLA Pampore, Retd. Justice Hasnain Masoodi inaugurates event

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APRIL 15: Agriculture Department Kashmir today organised a mega Buyer-Seller meet at India International Kashmir Saffron Trading Centre (IIKSTC) Dusso Pampore.

The program was inaugurated by member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Pampore, Retd. Justice Hasnain Masoodi, who was also the chief guest at the event.

Addressing the inaugural session, MLA Pampore reiterated the government's commitment for uplifting the agriculture sector of Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the buyer-seller



meet would be an important step towards boosting local agriculture, economic growth and access to the national and international markets.

Masoodi underlined the importance of collective efforts for the promotion of saffron crop in the area. He emphasized that the Pampore area holds immense potential in the saffron sector, and urged participants to fully capi-

talize on the opportunities in this sector to drive economic development in the region.

He underscored the importance of promoting regional products, expanding market access and contributing to the economic development of J&K.

He said the buyer-seller meet would prove an important step towards boosting local agriculture business in Pampore areas.

Later, the MLA Pampore inspected the stalls established by different sellers.

Earlier, Joint Director Agriculture Extension, Sartaj Ahmad Shah highlighted the different dimensions of today's program.

Later, a series of interactions were held between buyers and sellers.

Director Agriculture Kashmir, M Ilyas Khateeb; General Manager JKTPO Er., Dawood Wani; Chief Agriculture Officer Pulwama, M Iqbal Khan; Information Officer, representatives from APEADA and Spice Board of India graced the occasion by their presence.

A number of buyers from different states also participated in the meet through virtual mode.

UTRC convenes 2nd quarterly meeting to discuss cases of Under Trial Prisoners in Srinagar

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APRIL 15: District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Srinagar, under the aegis of the Jammu & Kashmir Legal Services Authority, convened its 2nd quarterly Under Trial Review Committee (UTRC) meeting on Tuesday at District Court, Srinagar.

The meeting was attended by Sajad Ur Rehman, Sub-Judge/Secretary, DLSA

Srinagar; Mir Imtiyaz-ul-Aziz, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Srinagar; Umer Shah, SP Headquarter Srinagar; DySP Central Jail Srinagar, Sr. Public Prosecutor, District Court Srinagar; Senior Medical Officer, Central Jail Srinagar; Deputy Chief Legal Aid Defense Counsel and Assistant Legal Aid Defense Counsel, Srinagar.

The meeting was chaired by Tasleem Arief, Principal District & Sessions Judge

(Chairman, DLSA) Srinagar, and brought together key stakeholders from the judiciary, police, administration, and medical fraternity to address the significant issue of ensuring fair and expedited trials for under trial prisoners.

This collaborative forum underscores the importance of a collective approach in safeguarding the rights of individuals awaiting trial.

During the meeting, the

committee meticulously reviewed 09 cases involving under trial prisoners. Each case was examined thoroughly through detailed discussions and deliberations, with the objective of understanding the specific circumstances of the individuals concerned.

The committee subsequently formulated the recommendations aimed at expediting the judicial process, thereby upholding the principles.

Waqf Amendment Act: Govt singling out Muslims, says NC's Tanvir Sadiq

'Act part of larger plan started under Mufti Sayeed's tenure; BJP-PDP equally responsible for J&K crisis since 2014'

HT News Network

Srinagar, April 15: National Conference (NC) Chief Spokesperson and MLA Tanvir Sadiq on Monday said the ongoing reforms in Waqf properties are aimed at targeting Muslims and questioned why similar measures are not applied to other communities.

Speaking to the media, Sadiq said the reforms were part of a larger plan that began under the late Mufti Muhammad Sayeed's government and have since been used to bring Waqf properties under government control.

Sadiq alleged that the transformation of the Waqf Board into a government-controlled body began in 2003 during Mufti Sayeed's tenure, which he said, marked the beginning of systematic interference in the religious institutions.

He said that traditionally, local people managed Waqf affairs, but now the government officials can



decide ownership of shrines, mosques and graveyards due to lack of documentation.

He said Waqf is a matter of community trust, created through voluntary contributions, and should be safeguarded from state interference. "Only Muslims can manage it. No government has the right to take away what was given for the welfare of the community," he said.

Sadiq said that his party has taken the matter to the Supreme Court and expects a fair verdict. He also questioned why

reforms are not introduced for Hindu temple properties, claiming that over 8 lakh acres of temple land remain untouched. "In a secular country, reforms should apply equally to all religions," he said.

Responding to BJP leader Sunil Sharma's remarks about the NC, Sadiq dismissed as 'ineffective'. He accused the BJP of failing both in government and opposition, citing their inconsistent stance on the Jal Shakti scam during assembly sessions.

He said BJP's decade-long governance in Jammu and

Kashmir had led to destruction, and this continued after the party aligned with the PDP. "The real damage was done in 2003 and again in 2014 when Mufti Muhammad Sayeed forged an alliance with BJP," he said.

Sadiq also referred to the recent disruption in the assembly, where the NC opposed the Waqf Amendment Bill.

He said the Bill was discriminatory and the party's stance is now part of the assembly's official record.

He said that the party had warned about these developments earlier, adding that the closure of Jamia Masjid for key religious occasions contradicts the administration's claim of "organic normalcy" in Kashmir. "If things are normal, why are Friday and Eid prayers not allowed?" he asked.

"We went to the Supreme Court for this very reason to prevent attempts to take over Muslim properties under flimsy pretexts," he said. (KNO)

EDITORIAL

Fix consultation fee for doctors carrying out private practice

Hundreds of doctors are carrying out private practice at the different clinics in the union territory of Jammu & Kashmir, but it is quite surprising that there is no fixed consultation fee for the same. The doctors charge according to their own wish and they are least bothered about the affordability of a particular patient. At times the patients could be seen pleading with the owner of the clinic over this issue, but at the end of the day they fail to convince the other side.

Some years back the health & medical education department had fixed consultation fees for the different levels of medicos carrying out practice at the private clinics. However, it has been observed that the consultation fee charged by a doctor is according to the wish of that particular doctor. At times the consultation fee of a particular medico is decided by the owner of the clinic and the people are more than willing to pay for the consultation fee fixed by the clinic owner.

It seems that the health & medical education department has limited its mandate in this regard to the mere issuance of the order since no follow-up action was taken. No raid was carried out on any clinic and this inaction from the people at helm emboldened the doctors and the clinic owners to fix consultation fees of their own. At the end of the day it is the common man who suffers and there are very few people who are concerned about the same.

It is very important that the consultation fee of a particular doctor is fixed according to his or her experience in that particular field of medicine. At the same time it is important that strict vigil is carried out on the doctors working in the government sector. Many of such doctors usually leave the hospitals earlier and can be seen rushing towards their clinics in order to earn quick bucks. This is a serious matter and needs immediate action from the concerned authorities.

In places other than Jammu & Kashmir a medico has to choose between a government job and a private one. The union territory of Jammu & Kashmir has its own set of rules in each and every sphere of life and medicine is no exception. There is no harm in earning more but the doctors should remember that medicine is a noble profession and people consider a doctor no less than a God.

Lantern Light And Woven Love: A Journey Through Childhood Memories

MOHD YUNUS BHAT
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Yes, those were hard days. But they were also sacred. In that hardship lay a beauty that wealth could never buy. A richness that did not come from possessions, but from presence. From patience. From quiet, relentless love.

There was a time—not too far in the past—when our world revolved around a single hall in a humble home. That space, worn with use and love, held more stories than the years could count. It was not just a room; it was a sanctuary of struggles and simple joys. Our nights were illuminated not by bulbs or tubes, but by the soft, amber flicker of a kerosene lantern perched on a rusty nail or placed atop an upturned brass bowl. That glow wrapped itself around our little world like a shawl. It flickered on our father's tired eyes, caught the curves of mother's busy hands, and reflected off the worn pages of our schoolbooks, the fountain pens and Nataraj pencils so much popular in those days. The room never truly slept. There was always a rustle—the scratch of pencil on paper, the clicking of a fountain pen, the whispered mumbling of school lessons, or the steady clink of mother's fingers weaving wet grass into wagoos, patiji, and cheongzii (all are different versions of handmade grass mats) on her wicker basket (foue't or kranjou'l). Every sound had rhythm. Every silence, a purpose. The occasional cough echoed into the corners—dry, deep, familiar—like a lullaby born of cold air and lamp smoke. But none of it felt like a burden. It was simply life, and we lived it with a quiet grace.

We siblings were all lured by the ultimate bait—Lipton chai—if only we could keep our eyes open long enough to study late into the night. The promise sounded grand, like a royal reward for academic bravery. But truth be told, we rarely made it to the heroic hour of 11 pm. Despite our best intentions, our eyelids betrayed us. After full days



spent playing cricket with torn tennis balls, chasing imaginary goals, and running from one end of the village to the other in search of absolutely nothing (except maybe a good excuse to stay out longer), our little bodies would surrender to sleep without warning.

We were innocent souls with tender hearts, more loyal to dreams than to textbooks, and before long, we would be snoring softly while our books lay open like unfinished promises. The Lipton chai? Often, it remained unclaimed—still steaming in mother's kettle, a silent witness to yet another night where childhood triumphed over caffeine.

Electricity had not yet found its way to our village. The switchboards remained ornamental, untouched. Communication meant word-of-mouth, neighbour-to-neighbour, or notes passed through time-worn hands. But inside our four walls, something brighter than electricity flickered—we had each other. We had warmth stitched into the layers of patched quilts, into the steaming cups of tea, into the comfort of shared breath on freezing nights. Love did not come in grand declarations. It came through unspoken gestures: a shawl pulled over a child's shoulder, a shared roti between siblings, a father staying awake so a child could read under the lantern just a little longer. Our life was frugal, yes, but it was full—not of things, but of people who never gave up on each other.

My father—tall in silence, steadfast in labour—was a man of incredible patience. His fingers, calloused yet tender, moved with quiet determination as he worked his embroidery frame. Hunched over for hours, he would let the lantern guide

his needle, weaving delicate flowers, borders, and motifs, one thread at a time. His artistry was born not from leisure, but from necessity—and yet, each piece held beauty, quiet protest against poverty. He did not need to speak; his devotion spoke louder than words ever could. He did not chase riches. Each finished shawl, each design completed under that flickering light, was enough to tell us he loved us. That embroidery frame was not just a tool—it was a canvas of sacrifice.

Beside him, my mother was no less an artist. She worked with a different medium—grass—but with equal love. Each morning, she would send one of us to the masjid pokhri (pool) to fetch bundles of damp grass, soaked and softened by cold pond water. By evening, she would sit cross-legged on the floor, fingers moving swiftly, forming tight weaves and braids. The scent of wet grass lingered long into the night, mingling with the kerosene's bite and the soothing aroma of tea. With each strand, she added warmth. With each knot, she wove protection. And when she had extra grass, she would make a cheongzii—a small, round grass mat—for the littlest among us. No words were exchanged, but in those little circles lay all her affection. They were not just mats. They were memories you could sit on, stories woven into shape.

Our nights were filled with studying—not because we were forced to, but because we hoped. We hoped to rise above our means, to make our parents' sacrifices count. We sat shoulder to shoulder, the lantern's glow barely enough for all, yet somehow, we made it work. We took turns holding books closer to the flame, squinting at our notes, copying lessons in the

dimness. Our hands grew ink-stained, our backs ached, and yet we persisted. Sometimes, we nodded off mid-sentence, only to be woken gently by mother's whisper and a hot cup of Lipton chai placed in our palms. That tea—light, sweet, often diluted—tasted like care itself. It was more than a drink. It was a message: I see you trying. Keep going, my child. In that single cup was all her love, hope, and silent prayer that we would escape the hardships she wore like a second skin.

When sleep came, it came collectively. No one had their own bed. We lay side by side, wrapped in old quilts, bodies pressed together for warmth. On cold nights, our breaths turned to mist in the lantern's beam, and we would curl tighter, our dreams overlapping. The morning was a struggle—black phlegm, dry coughs, sore chests. The soot from the lamp and the dampness from the floor took their toll. But no one spoke of it as tragedy. It was simply part of the rhythm of our lives. We accepted it without bitterness because we had far more to hold on to.

There was one portal to the larger world: the old radio kept near father's work mat. Its antenna was often crooked, wrapped with bits of wire, but when it crackled to life, magic spilled out. News, cricket matches, weather forecasts, Kashmiri folk songs—all filtered through its tiny speaker, giving our quiet home a sense of movement. It made us laugh, wonder, argue. It reminded us that we were a part of something beyond our struggles, even if we did not fully understand it.

We did not have much. That truth was as constant as the cold. Money was tight. Needs lined up in a queue that earnings could not meet. Yet somehow, there was joy. When we fetched grass for mother, she would reward us with tahri—simple turmeric rice that smelled like sunshine. On other days, she would brew souttchai (Sattu and Namkeen chai), with an extra spike of milk as a token of love and affection. These were not luxuries, but they

felt like them because they were offered with pride, not pity. Because they carried a mother's love in every grain, every sip.

Time, as it does, moved on. We outgrew that room—our bodies did first, then our dreams. We shifted to the outskirts as the domestic violence broke out as our younger uncle got married and the female folk had nothing to do other than backbiting and quirky fracas and deadly fights so on the day of Eid Ul Fitr Arafah we had to shift with soul not willing to. The hall and the whole house were dismantled in episodes but, its walls had absorbed our laughter, our tears, and our whispered ambitions. Even now, it lives in our memories, unchanged.

Looking back, I understand that the richness of that life was never in what we had—it was in how we had it. My father's embroidery was a lesson in discipline and quiet pride. My mother's grass mats were symbols of patience and purpose. The shared tea, the faint light, the crowded quilts—these were the pillars of our upbringing. They taught us to share. To sacrifice. To love without needing to say it.

Now we live under soft beam lights, far from that old hall. But when I close my eyes, I return to those nights. I see father bent over his frame, lantern light dancing on his needle. I see mother twisting grass strands with tired but tender fingers. I hear the crackle of the radio. I feel the worn blanket on my back and the warmth of my siblings breathing beside me.

Yes, those were hard days. But they were also sacred. In that hardship lay a beauty that wealth could never buy. A richness that did not come from possessions, but from presence. From patience. From quiet, relentless love.

I carry those memories like a treasured cheongzii—soft, circular, woven with care. A symbol of where I come from, and the love that shaped me.

The writer is a research scholar at the Department of Earth Sciences, Pondicherry University

The Silent Epidemic: Sexual Abuse Behind Closed Doors



IRFAN ATTARI KASHMIRI

In the quiet walls of family homes, beyond the reach of schoolyards, streets, and playgrounds, a nameless terror unfolds for untold numbers of children. Family sexual abuse is an invisible plague a plague hidden behind the mantle of social decency, family reputation, and long-established denial. For the victims who are children, the family home, originally a sanctuary of concern and confidence, is a place of disorientation, fear, and violation.

While the world wishes to talk of threats in the public arena or on the web, most children experience their worst blows inside their own homes. Such is usually inflicted by mem-

bers of the household — fathers, brothers, cousins, uncles, and sometimes even female members. Such trauma is worse when the victim knows that asking for assistance will destroy the family, bring shame, or result in more brutality.

In the households where the abuser is the loved one or the person in authority, the child is forced to suffer in silence, caught in the web of love and fear. Sexual abuse is not just a physical attack; it shatters the mental and emotional pillars of the child. The injuries are left untreated and reach the stage of chronic diseases such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicidal tendencies. The unseen scars influence the survivors to trust others, form relationships, and view the world around them.

It is impossible not to see how virtual exposure has also blurred the lines of childhood innocence. With smartphones and unfettered access to the internet, graphic content is

typically presented before young, curious minds years before the time they would be emotionally mature enough to deal with it. In recent incidents in most cases, children engaged in abusive behaviors admitted to imitating what they had seen on the internet, usually unaware of the gravity of what they were doing. Experts have repeatedly emphasized the role of digital literacy and parental oversight in safeguarding children's mental and moral growth.

Another crucial element is the vulnerability that is created in stepfamilies and blended families. For most, the absence of healthy emotional bonds, unresolved power struggles, and lack of monitoring create fertile ground where abuse can silently take hold. Children in these families will have a hard time identifying stable adults to whom they can turn for trust, especially when silence is an expected family value. That silence allows the cycle of abuse to continue, allowing the

abuser to function unchallenged as the victim slowly retreats into psychological isolation.

Stigma and fear of social ostracism usually silence the survivors. Socialization in cultures discourages open talk about sex, especially involving members of their families. Victims, and particularly little girls, are instructed that family honor is at stake if they speak up. This misplaced sense of responsibility keeps them in emotional cages, and they are left to fend for themselves. The very few who manage to muster enough courage to tell are sometimes greeted with suspicion, victim-blaming, or intimidation by their perpetrators.

The consequences of concealed abuse do not end when the victim is a child. Statistics reveal a grim reality: many survivors end up with problems in intimate relationships, experience self-loathing, become drug or alcohol addicts, and in some instances, become abusers themselves. Some,

not being able to cope, end up as victims of human trafficking, as traffickers exploit their willingness to escape the violent relationship. In some instances, unresolved trauma and prolonged silence accumulate into atrocities like murder, where the victim or the abuser is driven over the edge.

India's justice system, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO) Act, was intended to bring quick justice to victims and swift punishment to perpetrators. But the strength of any law lies in its enforcement, and the enforcement of this one is arbitrary. Few cases reach court because families would prefer to "take care of things in-house" instead of humiliating their child with a public trial. Others fall apart because of insufficient evidence, normally because the victim was too scared to report the abuse when it first started.

Breaking this silence is the sole true path to healing and justice. Education

at schools, social awareness campaigns at communities, and community-based systems of support must cooperate to give children the words and confidence to report. Parents must create a shame- and judgment-free society in which children feel free to report uncomfortable occurrences without fear of repercussions. Survivors must be able to have easy access to mental health facilities in order to deal with and overcome their experience.

The community has a crucial part to play. Neighbors, doctors, teachers, and even distant relatives have to be aware of the telltale signs—withdrawal, changes in behavior, fear, and anxiety—and report these without hesitation. Turning a blind eye or hiding it in the interest of family honor only extends the cycle of abuse, intergenerational transfer of trauma, and so forth.

This silent epidemic is not a personal tragedy. It is a public emergency that charts the emotional and mental landscape of future

generations. All children are entitled to a home that is abuse-free, free from manipulation, and free from fear. To construct a society where children can grow up safely and live with dignity, the silence walls must be broken. The reckoning time is now for families, schools, policymakers, and the legal system to place children's rights and protection above cultural pride or social expectation. The future of any nation is built on the security and resilience of its children. Without solving this silent epidemic, we are at risk of condemning too many young hearts to a lifetime of trauma, silence, and fear. Change begins with listening to the unheard and believing the unspoken.

Irfan Attari Kashmiri is an International Youth Advocate, Human Rights Defender, and President of Foundation For Youth Web. A Master's student in Social Work and Counseling, dedicated to child protection, victim support, and youth empowerment worldwide.

Tral-Khrew Road to Pahalgam Spurs Regional Growth and Economic Opportunity



ER ISHFAQ KHALIQUE

The proposed Srinagar-Pahalgam road via Khrew and Tral is a significant infrastructure initiative aimed at enhancing connectivity and boosting tourism in Jammu and Kashmir. While the project has garnered support for its potential benefits, it also faces environmental concerns and awaits necessary approval Project Segments

1. Wahab Sahib Khrew to Pastuna - Estimated cost: Rs 27 crore.
2. Bathnoor Karmula to Lehndajan Pahalgam - Estimated cost: Rs 44.10 crore .

Project Overview

Route & Distance: The planned 70 km road will connect Srinagar to Pahalgam through Khrew, Wahab Sahib, Syeda bad (Pastuna), Karmula Tral, and Lehndajan. This new route is expected to reduce the travel distance by approximately 30 kilometers compared to the existing path via Anantnag and Bijbehara

Current Status

Detailed Project Report (DPR): The DPRs for both segments have been prepared. Pending Approvals: The project's advancement is contingent upon environmental clearances and the availability of funds. Specifically, the construction requires the acquisition of 108 Kanals (approximately 13.5 acres) of forest land and the felling of 845 trees



Official Statements: The Minister for Roads and Buildings confirmed that while the DPRs are ready, the project awaits necessary environmental approvals and funding allocations

Environmental Concerns and their remedies

Ecological Impact: Environmental groups, notably the Environmental Policy Group (EPG), have raised alarms about the potential ecological damage. Concerns include deforestation, disruption of wildlife habitats, and risks associated with

constructing roads in seismically active zones but when it comes to the connectivity of regions and development of a region various forests have been destroyed in the world for the construction purposes we it is a concern there were the trees are endangered species but in Kashmir we have growing vegetative soil were if 800 trees are destroyed we can plant 10000 trees and possibility is they will be all in good stage in coming years so such factors hardly matter when government is serious about countries developments and progresses

•Local Opposition: Residents of Khrew and surrounding areas, already affected by pollution from cement factories, fear that the new road could exacerbate environmental degradation and impact local agriculture, including saffron cultivation it is true they are in fear that it can exploit their environment and resources as they are in dilemma by previous projects of cement factories and other such allied industries but this time it is the construction of road from their localities the tourism will be boosted by the road connectivity there

is no harm from the construction of roads through a locality it has always come with fortunes for the people living there they can install small stalls where they can earn their livelihood easily for the day they can open up hotels, restaurants, sports hubs amusement hubs to facilitate the tourists and people crossing the road from their areas While the Srinagar-Pahalgam road via Khrew and Tral promises improved connectivity and economic benefits, it is currently in the proposal stage, awaiting environmental clearances and funding.

The project has sparked a debate between development objectives and environmental preservation, highlighting the need for a balanced approach that considers both infrastructural growth and ecological sustainability. 1.Enhanced Accessibility and Reduced Travel Time Improved roads make remote or previously hard-to-reach destinations more accessible, encouraging more visitors and facilitating easier travel for locals. For instance, the proposed Srinagar-Pahalgam road via Khrew and Tral is expected to reduce travel

distance by approximately 30 kilometers, making the journey more convenient for tourists and pilgrims alike.

2. Economic Growth and Employment Opportunities

Infrastructure development often leads to economic stimulation in the region. The construction and maintenance of roads create jobs, while increased tourist influx boosts local businesses such as hotels, restaurants, and shops. This economic activity can lead to improved living standards for residents.

3. Promotion of Local Culture and Heritage

Easier access to new areas allows tourists to explore and appreciate local cultures, traditions, and heritage sites. This exposure can foster cultural preservation and pride among local communities, as well as provide educational experiences for visitors.

4. Improved Infrastructure and Services

The development of roads often brings about improvements in other infrastructure and services, such as better healthcare access, education facilities, and utilities. These enhancements benefit both tourists and local residents, contributing to overall regional development.

5. Environmental and Sustainable Tourism Opportunities

With careful planning, road development can support sustainable tourism by providing controlled access to natural areas, thereby minimizing environmental impact. It also allows for the implementation of eco-friendly practices and infrastructure, promoting responsible tourism.

While the benefits are substantial, it's crucial to balance development with environmental conservation and community interests to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth.

Changing seasons, broken women, Dry fields, empty kitchens, and tired women



PRIYANKA SAURABH

When we talk about climate change, the discussion often confines itself to melting glaciers, rising sea levels, and changing weather cycles. But its human face—particularly that of rural Indian women—is often forgotten. The Beijing India Report 2025 once again makes it clear that the climate crisis is not a “gender neutral” disaster. Its impacts are deep, unequal, and misogynistic. Millions of rural women in India are already burdened by resource scarcity, social limitations, and unpaid domestic responsibilities. Climate change makes this burden even heavier—sometimes in the form of droughts, sometimes in the form of floods, and sometimes in the form of a slow, toxic combination of malnutrition and exhaustion. The Beijing Report shows that the climate crisis is not only degrading the quality of women's lives but also depriving them of their biological, social, and economic dignity. Health facilities for rural women are already limited, but the nutrition crisis and heat stress caused by climate change severely impact their reproductive and mater-

nal health. According to the report, persistent dehydration and anemia have led to a rise in the incidence of premature hysterectomies among women. This is not just a medical procedure but an assault on their bodily autonomy and dignity. Infertility, complicated childbirth, and difficulties in conceiving are now becoming common problems—and climate insecurity is clearly behind them.

Most of India's rural women either work in the fields or engage in small agricultural work, but they do not own the land. When rains are unseasonal, when crops dry up, or when soils turn barren, these women are the first and the worst hit. In regions like Bundelkhand, persistent droughts have not only led to a drop in production but also increased seasonal unemployment among women. Being cut off from the field means an empty kitchen, girls leaving school, and another round of debt. Women who were engaged in handicrafts, food processing, or small-scale businesses other than agriculture are also not spared by extreme weather. The Beijing report shows that women's incomes in the non-agricultural sector fell by an average of 33% during extreme climate events in 2023-24. This is not just an economic loss but also a blow to self-reliance and confidence. Climate-induced displacement, falling family incomes, and traditional thinking—all three are hampering the education of adolescent girls. When families

have limited resources, girls' education is one of the first to be cut short. They are pulled out of school and put into domestic work or prepared for early marriage. This broken chain of education limits their lifelong opportunities. Adivasi and Dalit women in particular—who are already socially marginalized—are most vulnerable during climate disasters. During the 2020 cyclone Amphan, Dalit women in the Sundarbans region reported being excluded from relief centers and had no say in shelter decisions. Social discrimination becomes even more acute during a climate crisis.

The Beijing India Report not only highlights this crisis but also suggests clear ways to address it—most importantly, putting gender sensitivity at the center of climate strategy. State-level climate plans must incorporate women's specific needs. States like Odisha have begun incorporating gender indicators into their climate strategies, but this initiative needs to be replicated in every state. Gender-based data collection by village, caste, and economic status is essential for policies to be effective at the ground level. Creating a climate vulnerability index with a gender component at the panchayat level can be an effective step. Self-help groups and women's cooperatives can be strengthened by providing skills in areas of climate-resilient agriculture, green jobs, renewable energy, and agro-processing.

Better resourcing of primary health

centers, especially for reproductive and maternal care, is imperative—especially in areas affected by the climate crisis. Women-run Jal Samitis in Gujarat have proven that when women are part of policymaking and resource management, solutions are more sustainable and responsive. Women's participation should be made mandatory in local disaster management, forest rights committees, and water management. Missions under the National Climate Action Plan—such as Ujala Yojana, PMUY, etc.—should be redefined with a women-centric approach. Expansion of these schemes in climate-sensitive areas will not only strengthen health and livelihoods but will also promote gender justice.

Rural women are not just victims of climate change—they can also be agents of change. But this requires us to see them as partners, not just ‘objects for help.’ This is the message of the Beijing report—that if we are to tackle climate change effectively, gender and climate must be understood together, not separately. When a woman scrapes drinking water for her child from the mud of a drying pond, she becomes not just motherhood but the most tragic image of the climate crisis. It is time for policy, science, and society to listen to her voice seriously.

Author is a Research Scholar in Political Science, Poet, freelance journalist, and columnist.

An Open Letter to CM Omar Abdullah

Sir

The Information Deptt was established by the erstwhile State Government to propagate Policies and Programmes of the government through Print and Electronic Media to keep general Public abreast about them. This necessitated cordial relations between the Information Deptt and the Media Houses in J& K, but now the level of Relationship is at its lowest ebb. The former has chosen to please a few Media Houses and ignored Majority of them for unknown reasons. This has created rancour and resentment, thereby developed an unbridgeable gap between the two.

It is further stated that as per the Policy of Government of India, Small Scale Newspapers are treated as an Industry to receive Subsidies and other Benefits as these provide Employment to thousands of Skilled and Unskilled Youth of the Country.

This Establishes beyond any shadow of doubt that this Category and Class of newspapers need encouragement at all levels and not discrimination as prevailing at present.

However, it is gratifying to take notice of the statement made by the Chief Minister on the Floor of the Assembly that there will not be Pick an Choose Policy in the Distribution of Advertisements but shall be rationalised in a dispassionate manner, thereby ending lop-sided Distribution of Advertisements by the Information Deptt. But nothing substantial has emerged hitherto, so the CM is requested to fulfill his commitment, thereby Putting injustice to end without any further procrastination. Pertinent to mention that Justice Delayed is Justice Denied, so Time Demands to Smoothen the Rough Contours to make Future Journey Frictionless.

All Aggrieved Printers, Publishers & Editors of Newspapers

Orchardists advised to spray fungicide before rains to prevent scab

Fungicide application safe even during bloom stage, say horticulture scientists

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, Apr 15: With weather forecasts predicting rainfall across Kashmir from April 18, horticulture experts have strongly advised orchardists to spray fungicides ahead of the rains to prevent scab and other fungal infections that threaten apple crops during wet conditions. Speaking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), experts said rainfall plays a key role in the spread of foliar diseases. “Moisture from rain wets leaf surfaces and creates an ideal environment for fungal infections to thrive. Rain also

helps spores travel from one part of the tree to another and from plant to plant,” they said. To minimise this risk, applying fungicides before rain can significantly reduce the chances of infection, they said, adding that if the plant is already coated with fungicide, it forms a protective barrier, reducing the likelihood of disease development. Dr Tariq Rasool, a senior scientist at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST), said, “Had there been no further rains forecast, there would be little need to spray fungicides at this stage. Since the weather department has predicted more rains from



Friday, it is crucial for growers to act quickly and spray fungicide before the showers begin.” He said that in areas where there is

currently full bloom, people need to go for a mist spray, adding that there is nothing wrong with spraying during bloom if they had sprayed 10 days

earlier. Dr Tariq said that only recommended fungicides must be sprayed. “However, if they (farmers) had sprayed just five or six days ago, then they don’t need to spray again as of now,” he added. He said that last year a few farmers complained about some fungicide; in that case, they can avoid that particular one and use any other recommended fungicide. Any fungicide can create problems in some areas due to location and other issues, he said. Dr Majid, another horticulture expert, said that orchardists who last sprayed their apple trees in the first week of April—and whose trees are

now in full bloom—can safely go ahead with another round of fungicide spraying, but they must spray mistily. “New research confirms that applying fungicides during bloom does not adversely affect the fruit. The notion that scab won’t strike during flowering is a myth—scab can attack at any time. So, if it’s been over 10 days since your last spray, you should definitely spray before the rain begins,” he advised. Dr Majid recommended using mist sprays rather than forceful sprays to protect delicate flower petals and young fruits. “Avoid the practice of soaking or ‘bathing’ the entire tree.

SKUAST-K Holds 56th and 57th REAC Meetings, Reinforces Farmer-Focused Innovation in J&K

■ DR.AB QAYOOM

Srinagar, Apr. 15: Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K) today convened its 56th and 57th Research and Extension Advisory Committee (REAC) meetings at its main campus, reinforcing its commitment to aligning research and extension with the evolving needs of the farming community in Jammu and Kashmir. The meetings were held under the chairmanship of Vice Chancellor Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai. In his opening remarks, Prof. Ganai emphasized the university’s pivotal role in transforming traditional farming systems into modern, sustainable, and economically viable models. He underlined the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration, value chain development, and promotion of youth-driven agri-startups, reiterating SKUAST-K’s vision to make Jammu and Kashmir a model bio-economy. A key highlight of the event was the announcement of progress on the 500-kanal land in Sallar, Anantnag, where preliminary



work has begun for a new Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) and Research Station. This upcoming center is expected to become a hub for agricultural innovation, demonstration, and farmer training in South Kashmir. Prof. Ganai also lauded the contribution of the university’s floriculture breeding units for their leadership in the field. Marking a new phase in leadership, Prof. Raihana Habib Kanth, the new Director Extension/SAMETI, steered

the proceedings with a focus on strengthening the feedback loop between field realities and research agendas. She highlighted the Directorate’s achievements in expanding outreach, promoting climate-resilient practices, and addressing on-ground challenges in seed quality, pest and disease control, and nutritional security. On the occasion, a new booklet on Integrated Farming Systems tailored to the region’s agro-climatic diversity was

released, providing updated models for sustainable agriculture. The technical sessions featured discussions with field officers and scientists. Key concerns included indiscriminate pesticide use in horticulture, addressed by Director Horticulture Mr. Zahoor, and the urgent need for improving Post-Entry Quarantine (PEQ) facilities. Dr. M.K. Verma, Director CITH, emphasized developing a comprehensive technological inventory to serve both scientists and farmers as a go-to resource. The committee also reviewed results from minikit trials across various districts, proposing the release of new wheat, maize, and vegetable varieties. Strategies for upscaling successful interventions and enhancing coordination with line departments were also deliberated upon. Officials from Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, Sericulture, and allied departments contributed vital insights. The meetings concluded with a renewed resolve to bolster research-extension linkages and a vote of thanks acknowledging the active participation of all stakeholders.

IEC Campaign Against Drug Abuse Launched Across Kupwara Schools

■ DR.AB QAYOOM



Kupwara, April 15: In a significant move to curb drug abuse among the youth, the District Administration Kupwara launched the first phase of the Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaign across various schools in the district. The campaign was formally inaugurated by the Nodal Officer of the IEC Campaign at Government Boys Higher Secondary School, Handwara. Focused on raising awareness about the ill effects of drug abuse, the initiative witnessed active participation from more than 1500 students, as well as members of civil society, school faculty, and local stakeholders. Resource persons from multiple departments conducted interactive sessions and awareness talks, shedding light on the physical, psychological, and social impact of substance abuse. Students engaged in open discussions, reflecting the campaign’s success in fostering dialogue on the issue. This initiative is part of the district administration’s broader efforts to promote a drug-free environment and encourage healthy lifestyle choices among the younger generation. Subsequent phases of the campaign are planned and will be rolled out as per the schedule.

VC IUST engages Student Council to Strengthen Dialogue on Campus Development

■ HT News Network

Awantipora, April 15: Prof. Shakil Ahmad Romshoo, Vice Chancellor Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), today met with the elected representatives of the Student Council emphasizing open dialogue, mutual respect, and the importance of student engagement in institutional development. The Vice Chancellor commended the Student Council for their active involvement in campus life and reaffirmed the administration’s commitment to addressing student concerns. Discussions centered on academic facilities, student welfare,

CUKashmir’s deptt of Physical education holds workshop

■ HT News Network

Ganderbal, Apr 15: Department of Physical Education, Central University of Kashmir (CUKashmir) organised a one-day workshop “Mental Health for University Students.” In his message, Vice-Chancellor, Prof. A. Ravinder Nath, highlighted the importance of conducting workshops focused on mental health. In his address, Dean, School of Education, Prof. Syed Z.A. Geelani, emphasized the need to address mental health issues in academic settings. Dr. Kaukab Azeem, HoD, provided an overview of the workshop, outlining its objectives and structure. Keynote speaker, Dr. Varghese C. Anthony, High Performance Director at the National Centre of Excellence, Sports Authority of India, CRC, Bhopal, shared valuable insights on mental resilience and performance. The second speaker, Dr. Zornitza Mladenova, Co-founder and CEO of Global Diplomatic Magazine in



Bulgaria, delivered an online lecture on global perspectives regarding mental health support systems. Dr. Kovatcheva, Research Policy Director at the University of Library Studies and Information Technologies in Bulgaria, discussed research-based strategies for mental well-being. In his address, Prof. Shahid Rasool, Dean Academic Affairs, provided context to the mental health discourse specific to the university and highlighted the importance.

Self-taught Kashmiri techie completes 500 freelance projects while pursuing education

■ HT News Network

Srinagar, Apr 15: Sajid Ahmad, a self-taught tech talent from Srinagar, has emerged as a promising face in the digital freelancing world with his expertise in video editing, graphic design, web development and digital marketing. What started as a childhood curiosity with electronic gadgets grew into a full-fledged passion for technology. “I was always curious about how things worked,” Sajid Ahmad said. He spoke of opening devices like DVD players, emergency lights, and gaming consoles just to see what was inside. “My journey took a serious turn in 6th grade when a computer entered my life. I immersed myself in learning everything I could about computer hardware and software. That computer changed everything for me—it made me realise I could build and fix things on my own,” he said. By 8th standard, he had become known as a tech-savvy troubleshooter in his



locality—helping friends and neighbours fix their devices, whether hardware or software-related. His deep interest in tech naturally progressed toward freelancing, which he discovered during 11th grade. “With no mentor and limited internet access, I started working locally, fixing computer issues while learning digital

skills through YouTube tutorials and self-study,” Sajid said. “I started learning coding languages for web and application development. In addition to that, I taught myself to use Photoshop, Premiere Pro, After Effects, and other creative software on my own. I had no professional course or teacher, but was determined to learn,” he added.

Sajid said his ability to communicate in English and the quality of his work helped him attract his first client within a week of starting online freelancing. “The moment gave me confidence that I could do this from Kashmir and reach people globally,” he said. Over the years, Sajid launched his own digital agency, Sajid-Studios—where he offers a complete suite of services including Digital Strategy, UI/UX Design, Content Writing, Content Creation (YouTube videos, Facebook ads, etc.), Digital Marketing, Branding, Web Development and Social Media Management. He went on to pursue a diploma and B.Tech in Computer Science Engineering. “Balancing academics and freelancing, I completed over 1000+ freelance projects in web development, content creation, branding and social media marketing,” he said. “Freelancing not only helped me grow professionally but also funded my further education, made me financially independent and eventually helped me become an entrepreneur.

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HT - KASHMIR

07



Jammu and Kashmir Teachers Forum Holds a Significant Meeting in Srinagar

■ Aashiq Hussain

Srinagar, 14 April (HT) An important and highly productive meeting of the Jammu and Kashmir Teachers Forum was convened today at Srinagar, under the esteemed chairmanship of Mr. Mohammad Shafi Rather. The proceedings were gracefully conducted by the dynamic Provincial President, Mr. Javaid Ahmad Bhat. The meeting brought together a vibrant representation from across the Union Territory, with stakeholders from the UT, Provincial, and District levels participating with enthusiasm and commitment. A range of vital organizational matters were deliberated upon, focusing on the strengthening and streamlining of the Forum's over all vision and functioning. Participants expressed unanimous satisfaction with the overall performance of the organisation, applauding its role as a strong and unified voice for the teaching community. Every member present contributed valuable insights and perspectives, which were met with warmth and appreciation—highlighting the democratic spirit and collective wisdom of the Forum. Beyond internal matters, the meeting also engaged in thoughtful dialogue around key issues and challenges facing the education sector in Jammu and Kashmir. The Forum welcomed recent positive initiatives by the authorities, particularly the promotion of Headmasters, viewing them as steps in the right direction towards educational upliftment.

Importantly, the Forum also shone a light on the unwavering dedication, discipline, and work ethic of the teaching fraternity—the true torchbearers of knowledge and nation-building. It strongly advocated for a robust and well-supported ecosystem to nurture the dreams and potential of the region's budding learners.

The Forum reiterated its unwavering support for all progressive, teacher as well as student-centered policies and actions of the Government that aim to empower the youth and elevate the standards of our education sector.

The esteemed members who were part of today's meeting were as: Chairman Mohammad Shafi Rather, Chief Organiser Farooq Ahmad Sofi, Vice Chairmen Javid Ahmad Malik, Shabir Ahmad Bhat, Patron Ghulam Mohammad Bhat, UT-Level Office Bearers Muneer Ahmad Khan – UT Vice President, Peer Sharief Din – UT Joint Secretary, Ghulam Nabi Kralpore – Senior UT Advisor, Shally Vohra – UT Vice President (Women's Wing).

Mohammad Hanief Kherka – UT Executive, Shabir Ahmad Bhat – Finance Secretary, Abdul Qayoom Mir – UT Executive, Mohammad Ashraf Ahangar – UT Executive, Dr. Abdullah – Chief Advisor, Provincial-Level Office Bearers Javid Ahmad Bhat – Provincial President, Javid Ahmad Khan – Provincial Vice President, Nazir Shahid – Provincial Vice President, Gulzar Nahami – Provincial Executive, Syeed Shafi Shaheen – Provincial Executive, Zahoor Ahmad Bhat – Provincial Media Coordinator, Ghulam Hassan War – Provincial Organiser, Nisar Ahmad Sheikh – Provincial Executive, Sajad Ahmad Para – Provincial Executive, Fayaz Ahmad Mir – Provincial Coordinator, District Presidents (DP) Fayaz Ahmad Malik – DP Bandipora, Ghulam Hassan Mir – DP Pulwama, Syeed Naseer – DP Budgam, Sahil Bashir – DP Kupwara, Shabir Ahmad Shah – DP Baramulla, Bashir Ahmad Shah – DP Anantnag.

Other Notables: Mohammad Hussain, Shabir Ahmad Lone. The meeting ended on a positive note with all the members showing resounding unity, dedication and commitment towards the strengthening of our beloved organization and betterment of our education sector.



JKEDI commences week long Management Development Programs in 15 districts of J&K

■ HT News Network

JAMMU/SRINAGAR, APRIL 15: The Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) today commenced Management Development Programs (MDP) in 15 districts of Jammu and Kashmir, under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) scheme, an initiative launched by the Union Ministry of MSME. The Management Development Programmes (MDPs) were inaugurated in the districts including Kathua, Kishtwar, Ramban, Reasi, Samba, Udhampur, Anantnag, Bandipora, Baramulla, Budgam, Ganderbal, Kulgam, Kupwara, Pulwama and Shopian, wherein 310 candidates are undergoing 30 hour long training program for six days. At District Kishtwar, Samba and Bandipora, the MDPs were inaugurated by Rajesh Kumar Shavan, Deputy Commissioner, Kishtwar and Rajesh Sharma, Deputy Commissioner, Samba, and Manzoor Ahmad Qadri, District Develop-



ment Commissioner, Bandipora respectively. The MDPs at Kulgam, Shopian and Udhampur were inaugurated by Altaf Ahmad Khan, ADDC Kulgam, Dr. Nasir Ahmad Lone, ADDC Shopian and Rajinder Singh, ADDC Udhampur respectively. At Pulwama, Noushad Ahmad Rather, Joint Director, Planning /CPO Pulwama inau-

gurated the programme. At Ganderbal, the MDP was inaugurated by Gulzar Ahmad Khan, ADC Ganderbal. At Kupwara, the MDP was inaugurated by Mumtaz Ahmad, ACR Kupwara while Mohammad Naseeb, SDM, Banihal, inaugurated the MDP at Ramban. At Anantnag, Dilshada Akhtar, GM, DIC,

New Bus Stand at Thandi Khui nearing completion DC Samba inspects pace of remaining work

■ HT News Network

SAMBA, APRIL 15: Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Sharma today conducted an on-site inspection of the new bus stand at Thandi Khui today. The inspection revealed that construction work is progressing rapidly and nearing completion.

The strategically located bus stand is designed to accommodate a large volume of passengers and will significantly enhance connectivity and ease of movement in the region. During the inspection, the DC was accompanied by Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Vijaypur, Sandeep Dubey and Tehsildar Sudesh among other officers.



"This new facility represents an important infrastructure development for our district," said DC Sharma. "Once operational, it will improve transportation services for residents and visitors alike, while supporting our broader goals for regional development."

The officials thoroughly reviewed the ongoing construction activities and

expressed satisfaction with the progress made thus far. The bus stand is expected to be fully operational in the coming months.

The Thandi Khui Bus Stand project is part of the district administration's efforts to modernize transportation infrastructure and improve public services. The facility will feature amenities designed to enhance passenger comfort and safety.

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"This new facility represents an important infrastructure development for our district," said DC.

Under Trial Review Committee meeting held at Kupwara

■ HT News Network

KUPWARA, APRIL 15: District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Kupwara, under the aegis of the Jammu & Kashmir Legal Services Authority, convened its 2nd Quarterly Under Trial Review Committee (UTRC) meeting today in the office chamber of the Secretary/Sub-judge Kupwara. The meeting, chaired by Mansoor Ahmad, Additional District & Session Judge (I/C Chairman UTRC Committee) Handwara, brought together relevant stakeholders from the Judiciary, Police, Administration, and Medical Fraternity to address the crucial issue of ensuring fair and speedy justice for under trial prisoners and measures to expedite the legal proceedings. The committee reviewed the shortlisted 06 cases of UTPs falling within different categories as specified in NALSA's,

Standing Operating Procedure for UTRCs. The meeting was attended by Moneer Ahmad, Sub-Judge/Secretary DLSA Kupwara; Chief Medical Officer, Kupwara Dr. Mir Ramzan; Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Kupwara, Mumtaz Ahmad; Executive Magistrate 1st Class, Handwara, Additional Superintendent Of Police, Kupwara, Public Prosecutor Kupwara, Superintendent of district Jail Kupwara and Deputy Chief LADC Kupwara. The UTRC will continue to monitor the situation of under-trials and make recommendations of the inmates who fall within the categories laid down by the Supreme Court in the modified NALSA's SOPs of UTRC. The committee will also work closely with the relevant stakeholders including the judiciary, the bar, and the civil society organization to implement effective solutions.

Quality Seedlings distributed among beneficiaries at Shopian

■ HT News Network

SHOPIAN, APRIL 15: In a proactive step towards boosting agricultural productivity and supporting the local farming community, the Department of Agriculture Shopian today distributed high-quality vegetable and fruit seedlings at Mini-Secretariat Shopian. The initiative is part of the department's ongoing efforts under various centrally sponsored schemes to promote sustainable agriculture and ensure timely availability of inputs to the farmers.

A wide variety of seedlings including knol khol, tomato, cucumber, squash and other exotic varieties of vegetables were made available to the beneficiaries.

The department staff also provided on-the-spot technical guidance on nursery

management, transplanting techniques and organic cultivation methods to help farmers get the best yield.

The officials of the Agriculture Department highlighted the government's commitment to doubling farmers' income and encouraged the use of high-quality varieties for better output.

The farmers expressed gratitude for the timely support and quality of the seedlings provided to them on the occasion.

Senior officials from the Agriculture Department, field officers and technical staff were present. The farmers expressed gratitude for the timely support and quality of the seedlings provided to them on the occasion.

Senior officials from the Agriculture Department, field officers and technical staff were present.

SKUAST-Jammu organises Farmer-Centric Outreach Programme under Tribal Sub-Plan in Reasi

■ HT News Network

REASI, APRIL 15: A farmer-centric outreach programme was today organized here at Village Sungri, Panchayat Channa B, Block Chassana.

The event was held under the Government of India's Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) initiative and conducted by SKUAST-Jammu through its ICAR – All India Coordinated Research Programme (AICRP) on Rice, Chatha Centre, in collaboration with the Agriculture Production & Farmers Welfare Department. The programme, under the visionary leadership of Prof. B.N. Tripathi, Vice Chancellor, aimed at promoting sustainable rice cultivation, input support, and livelihood enhancement among Scheduled Tribe (ST) rice farmers of the Mahore region. Member Legislative Assembly Gulabgarh



Er Khurshied Ahmed graced the occasion and appreciated SKUAST-Jammu's dedicated efforts for tribal farmer welfare. He also highlighted the agricultural potential of the region and stressed the importance of diversification in farming practices.

The event witnessed active support from the Reasi District Administration, including Deputy Commissioner Nidhi Malik, ADDC Sukhdev Singh Samyal and Chief Agriculture Officer Harbans Singh. Their efforts ensured smooth coordination

and farmer-friendly arrangements. A total of 200 Agricultural Input Kits, including a Knapsack Sprayer, a Rake, and 12 kg of Giza Variety Rice Seed, were distributed among the ST rice farmers. The distribution was facilitated by the Agriculture Department team led by SDAO Dharmari Naresh Gupta and supported by AEOs and field staff from the concerned areas in collaboration with SKUAST-Jammu scientists.

Technical sessions led by Dr. Anuradha Saha, Chief Scientist & Incharge, AICRP on Rice, provided farmers with expert guidance on scientific rice cultivation, pest and disease management, and soil health. She was joined by Dr. R.S. Sudan, Dr. Rajan Salalia and Dr. Parveen Singh, who emphasized the importance of adopting natural and organic farming methods for cost-effectiveness, sustainability and better soil conservation.



Sakeena Itoo engages daily with scores of public delegations, individuals at Civil Secretariat

Initiative reflects Omar govt's proactive administration, people-first policies

HT News Network

JAMMU, APRIL 15: In her continued efforts towards ensuring transparent governance and prompt grievance redressal of public centric issues, Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo, is engaging with scores of public delegations, individuals on daily basis at Civil Secretariat. The initiative has drawn widespread appreciation from public as scores of delegations, civil society members and individuals from various districts of Jammu and Kashmir call on the Minister to share their pressing concerns, development needs and welfare issues. The Minister, who is holding crucial portfolios of Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare, School Education and Higher Education departments, during these interactions issues on the spot



directions to the concerned departments for necessary action on the grievances raised. While engaging with these public delegations and individuals, Sakeena Itoo reaffirmed the commitment of government

to grassroots governance. "Public Darbars are a bridge between the administration and the people. It is our duty to ensure every voice is heard and genuine concerns are addressed promptly", she said. She highlighted that this daily outreach

program is a model of proactive administration and people-first governance, which is core idea of Omar Abdullah led government. The Minister further said that all the departmental heads have been directed to maintain responsiveness towards public issues and ensure timely follow-ups on the matters raised during these sessions. The initiative has drawn widespread appreciation from public as scores of delegations, civil society members and individuals from various districts of Jammu and Kashmir call on the Minister to share their pressing concerns, development needs and welfare issues. The Minister, who is holding crucial portfolios of Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare, School Education and Higher Education departments, during these interactions issues on the spot directions to the concerned departments for necessary action on the grievances.

Assessment camp for Specially Abled Persons held at Surankote

HT News Network

POONCH, APRIL 15: The District Social Welfare Department, in collaboration with the Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO), on Tuesday organized an Assessment Camp for Persons with Disabilities here at Dak Banglow Surankote. The camp was held under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal and supervised by District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO) Wakeel Ahmed Batt. The initiative was part of the flagship ADIP (Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances) Scheme, aimed at identifying eligible beneficiaries and assessing their needs for assistive devices and prosthetic aids. The focus was on empowering individuals from remote and underserved areas. A dedicated team of medical professionals and technical experts conducted thorough assessments to ensure that each individual receive customized and appropriate support devices. The camp witnessed significant community participation, with local residents, beneficiaries, and community leaders expressing appreciation for the initiative. They highlighted its impact on enhancing mobility, independence, and dignity among differently-abled and elderly populations. These outreach initiatives are vital in fostering inclusive growth, enhancing accessibility, and upholding the commitment to leaving no one behind in the journey of social and economic development.

Panchayat Level anti-drug IEC Campaign witnesses widespread participation across district Kishtwar

HT News Network

KISHTWAR, APRIL 15: In continuation of its efforts to combat the menace of substance abuse, the District Administration Kishtwar under the Supervision of Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Kumar Shavan, on Tuesday conducted the Panchayat-Village level Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaign activities across the District. The initiative, launched across all 13 blocks of the district, witnessed enthusiastic participation from diverse sections of society, including local residents, youth, students, educators, and community leaders. The campaign aims to sensitize the masses about the devastating consequences of drug addiction and to galvanize collective action towards building a "Nasha Mukta" (Drug-Free) society. As part of this ongoing initiative, awareness programs are being conducted every Monday in various panchayats by resource persons designated by the District Administration. These included resource persons from eight key departments, including Health, Police, Education, Rural Development Department (RDD) and others. These sessions are designed to ensure sustained engagement and knowledge dissemination at the grassroots level. The main focus of today's event was the selection of educational institutions as venues for the events. Today's events were marked by impactful IEC activities organized by the designated nodal officers and Nodal agencies across multiple locations. The programs focused on instilling awareness, fostering community dialogue, and encouraging proactive involvement of youth in preventive efforts. The campaign emphasizes the importance of consistent and coordinated action to eliminate drug abuse, while also highlighting the Administration's unwavering commitment to public health and societal well-being. These events are being carried out under the guidance of District Social Welfare Officer Zubair Ahmed.



6-day Management Development Programme for MSME units begins at Kishtwar

HT News Network

KISHTWAR, APRIL 15: The Jammu & Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) today started a 6-day Management Development Programme (MDP) under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) scheme here at ITI campus. The programme was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kishtwar Rajesh Kumar Shavan. Supported by the World Bank, the RAMP scheme is a flagship initiative aimed at strengthening the capabilities and performance of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) across the Union Territory. The scheme focuses on enhancing market access, technology adoption, financial inclusion, and capacity building, while promoting greater synergy between central and UT-level institutions for the development of the MSME sector. The training programme, organized by the JKEDI District Centre, witnessed the participation of 18 local MSME units. The initiative will provide entrepreneurs with practical insights into business management, operational efficiency, and institutional support mechanisms. Participants will also benefit from interactive sessions with domain experts and officials from relevant departments. Officials and faculty from JKEDI and ITI Kishtwar were also present at the inauguration. The MDP under the RAMP scheme is a strategic step towards building a self-reliant MSME ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir, aligning with JKEDI's mission to bridge the development gap between UT-based enterprises and their national counterparts. The MDP under the RAMP scheme is a strategic step towards building a self-reliant MSME ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir, aligning with JKEDI's mission to bridge the development gap between UT-based enterprises.

DC releases booklet Visual Highlights of Development under District Capex Budget 2024-25 at Kathua

Brochure Showcases transformative Initiatives

HT News Network

KATHUA, APRIL 15: District Development Commissioner Dr. Rakesh Minhas today released a dedicated booklet titled 'Visual Highlights of Development under District Capex Budget 2024-25'. Compiled by the Chief Planning Office, the booklet captures the breadth and impact of developmental initiatives carried out across the district during the last financial year. The publication reflects a focused and inclusive approach adopted under Dr. Minhas's leadership, aiming to align government initiatives with grassroots-level needs and aspirations. By prioritizing genuine public demands during the preparation and execution of the Capex Budget, the district administration has succeeded in translating policy into meaningful on-ground transformation.



The documented highlights include progress made in education infrastructure, healthcare accessibility, water resource management and community development. Special attention has been given to rural areas, with initiatives that address long-standing challenges while promoting resilience, equity and opportunity. The administration also made key interventions to improve rural connectivity, safety, and

environmental sustainability. New infrastructure supporting youth engagement, health awareness, and social upliftment forms a central part of the district's developmental narrative over the past year. Efforts to strengthen power infrastructure and address critical service gaps in remote areas have also been underscored in the booklet, showcasing a holistic approach to rural transformation. These steps have collec-

tively enhanced the quality of life and boosted economic potential for residents across various regions of Kathua. Dr. Minhas commended the efforts of all stakeholders, including the District Development Council, field departments and community members, whose collaboration made these achievements possible. He emphasized that the visual compilation not only serves as a record of accomplishments but also as a motivation for future goals. The launch of this maiden visual booklet is a significant step by District Administration Kathua towards transparent governance. It offers citizens a clear glimpse into the district's development journey and is available on the official website: [www.kathua.nic.in/http://www.kathua.nic.in]. ADDC, ADC, CPO and ACD were also present on the occasion.

Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan.... GCW Parade organises anti-drug awareness campaign

HT News Network

JAMMU, APRIL 15: The NCORD Cell of Government College for Women Parade Ground, in collaboration with District Administration, Jammu today organized an awareness camp as part of "Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan" initiative. The programme, hosted under the supervision of College Principal, Dr. Ravinder Kumar Tickoo and Tehsildar Jammu Khas Paramdeep Singh, aimed at to sensitize students about the growing menace of drug addiction & highlight the devastating consequences of substance abuse on individuals and the society as a whole. The program featured expert talks by health professionals Dr. Arti Sharma and Dr. Vandana Abrol, SHO Police Station Pacca Danga, Rakesh Jamwal and Tehsil Social Welfare Officer Manjeet Singh. THEY highlighted the harmful effects of drug abuse, early signs of



addiction, the importance of early intervention, rehabilitation, and societal support to persons struggling with addiction. The students actively participated in the session, asking questions and engaging in meaningful discussions about how to avoid and overcome the dangers of substance use. The speakers shared different helpline numbers with the students to report and seek help for those entangled in the problem. The Principal appreciated the initiative and stressed the importance of continuous awareness campaigns to combat this societal challenge. He encouraged students to become ambassadors of change and spread awareness among peers and communities.

JMC Commissioner reviews Bioremediation Trial at Kot Bhalwal Dump Site, Project launch soon

HT News Network

JAMMU, APRIL 15: Commissioner Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC), Dr. Devansh Yadav today visited Kot Bhalwal dump site to review the trial of an advanced bioremediation process aimed at treating legacy waste and reclaiming land. The initiative involves the deployment of high-capacity machinery including the Warrior 1200, Screens, and Komtrack 1800, with a combined processing capacity of approximately 3,500 metric tonnes (MT) of waste per day. This cutting-edge technology will help in converting organic waste into manure while efficiently segregating non-biodegradable materials such as polythene and stones. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Yadav highlighted the significance of the project in promoting sustainable waste management and restoring ecological balance in the region. "The entire dump site will be cleared at the earliest, and we aim to transform it into a lush green park for the benefit of the local community," he said and added that the initiative marks a key milestone in JMC's ongoing efforts to build a cleaner and greener Jammu. As a symbolic gesture of environmental commitment, the Commissioner planted a sapling at the site. Among others, Joint Commissioner Health and Sanitation, Abdul Star, Joint Commissioner (W), Firdous Ahmed Qazi, besides other senior officers from JMC were present on the occasion. Among others, Joint Commissioner Health and Sanitation, Abdul Star, Joint Commissioner (W), Firdous Ahmed Qazi, besides other senior officers from JMC were present on the occasion.

Implementation of Jal Shakti Abhiyan-Catch the Rain Campaign reviewed in Poonch District

DC constitutes committee for effective conservation activities

HT News Network

POONCH, APRIL 15: District Development Commissioner Vikas Kundal convened a meeting today to assess the progress of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain campaign and to discuss the Action Plan for the fiscal

year 2025-26. The meeting, held at the DC complex, brought together officers from various line departments. The District Development Commissioner reviewed the physical and financial progress achieved under the Jal Shakti Abhiyan in the year 2024-25. He underscored the critical need for water conservation in view of growing challenges



related to water scarcity in the region. The functionaries of stakeholder departments provided updates on the initiative, detailing the advancements made under different schemes. The DDC directed the planning department to constitute a water conservation committee, comprising PO ICDS, DFO, PO IWMP, Executive Engineer Jal Shakti and

Irrigation and the Chief Agriculture Officer. He emphasized the need for a thorough study of the campaign to ensure effective implementation in the current financial year. The DDC stressed the importance of proper documentation of all programs and activities conducted under the Abhiyan to ensure transparency and effectiveness.

Pvt Haj tour operators' quota for 10,000 pilgrims restored as govt seeks Saudi help

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 15

With the intervention of the Indian government, the Saudi Haj Ministry has offered a lifeline to private Haj operators whose quota of sending about 10,000 pilgrims faced cancellation due to delayed documentation, an official said on Tuesday.

The Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA) said that the Saudi Haj Ministry, in a rare gesture, has agreed to re-open the Haj Portal (Nusuk Portal) to all Indian Combined Haj Group Operators (CHGOs) to complete their work with respect to 10,000 pilgrims.

The portal had been closed earlier as CHGOs, despite reminders, had failed to comply with the necessary timelines set by the Saudi authorities to finalise the mandatory contracts, including for Mina camps, accommoda-



tion, and transport of pilgrims, as required under the Saudi regulations.

The Ministry of Minority Affairs has now issued directions to Haj group operators to avail of the special relaxation offered by the Saudi authorities and urgently complete the formalities on the Nusuk Portal.

The matter of 'cancellation' of private tour operators' quota was raised by Former Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Chief Minister

and President of the ruling National Conference (NC) Dr Farooq Abdullah on Monday.

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and President of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Mehbooba Mufti also expressed concern over the development.

"Urge the Ministry of External Affairs to immediately intervene by taking up this matter with the Saudi government to seek a resolution", she said on

social media platform X.

The Minority Affairs Ministry said that due to the Indian Government's efforts, the Haj quota allocation for India has increased from 136,020 in 2014 to 175,025 in 2025.

These quotas are finalised by the Saudi authorities closer to the time of the pilgrimage, it said.

The Ministry, through the Haj Committee of India, manages arrangements for the bulk of the quota allotted to India, which is 122,518 in the current year.

The balance of over 52,000 slots of the quota were allotted, as is customary, to private tour operators, said a statement.

Due to changes in Saudi guidelines, more than 800 Private Tour Operators were consolidated into 26 legal entities termed Combined Haj Group Operators (CHGOs), by the Ministry this year.

Supreme court extends relief to ex-IAS trainee officer Puja Khedkar

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

The Supreme Court on Tuesday extended, till next week, its earlier order directing that no coercive action be taken against sacked Maharashtra cadre probationary IAS officer Puja Khedkar, who allegedly submitted false OBC and PwBD (Persons with Benchmark Disabilities) certificates and fraudulently availed attempts beyond the permissible limits provided for the civil services examination by faking her identity.

A bench of Justices B.V. Nagarathna and S.C. Sharma decided to adjourn the proceedings after Khedkar's counsel submitted that the reply to the counter affidavit filed by the Delhi Police has been filed but has not yet come on record.

Posting the matter for hearing on April 21, the Justice Nagarathna-led Bench asked the apex court reg-



istry to verify the status of the rejoinder affidavit filed on Khedkar's behalf and, in the meantime, ordered extension of the interim relief.

In an earlier hearing, the top court questioned Delhi Police over the slow pace of the investigation in the matter.

Additional Solicitor General S.V. Raju, who appeared on behalf of the Delhi Police, had submitted that Khedkar's custodial interrogation was necessary to probe the "larger scam" and find out the names of the middlemen

involved.

"We want to investigate whether this (Puja Khedkar's) is an isolated case or there is a larger number of cases," he said.

At this, the apex court remarked that the Delhi Police could widen the scope of the investigation but questioned the need for Khedkar's custodial interrogation.

"You must track up this investigation steadfastly," it told the Delhi Police as it had asked Puja Khedkar to continue her cooperation in the ongoing investigation.

Senior advocate Sidharth Luthra, appearing on Puja Khedkar's behalf, submitted that she is "willing and available" to attend the probe launched by the Delhi Police.

On January 15, the apex court asked the Delhi Police and the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) to file their replies to Khedkar's anticipatory bail plea as it passed an ad interim protection from arrest in her favour.

Previously, the Delhi High Court had dismissed Khedkar's pre-arrest bail petition and vacated its earlier order shielding her from arrest.

In its judgment delivered on December 15, 2024, a Bench of Justice Chandra Dhari Singh opined that prima facie, a strong case was made out against Khedkar, adding that custodial interrogation of a person accused of an offence of such nature is required to unearth the facts.

Nine arrested for violence over Waqf Act in West Bengal

AGENCIES

KOLKATA, APRIL 15

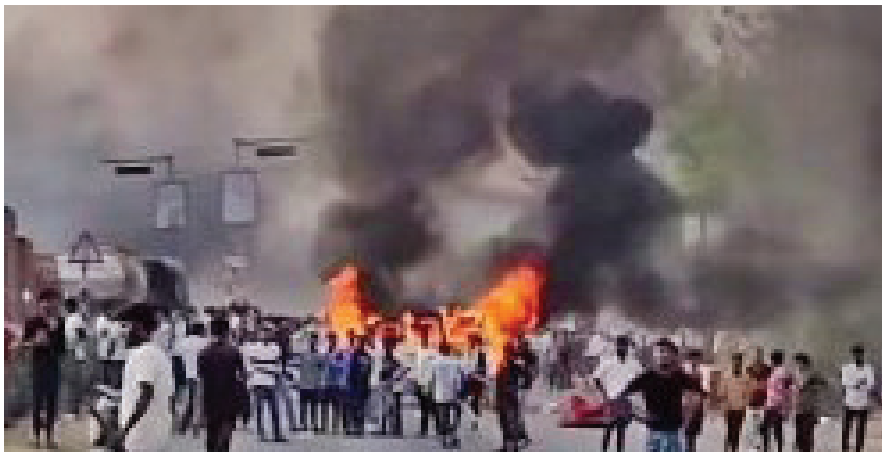
Nine people were arrested for violence over the Waqf (Amendment) Act in West Bengal, Kolkata Police said on Tuesday.

Kolkata Police said the arrests were made in connection with violence at Bhangar in South 24 Parganas district on Monday.

The violence was carried out by All India Secular Front (AISF) activists after they were stopped from approaching Kolkata from Bhangar to participate in a rally protesting against the Waqf Act, the police said.

The police have registered five cases in connection with the matter.

The AISF supporters blocked the Basanti Highway in protests, and the tension mounted further as the police tried to remove the blockades using force. During the violence, AISF activists torched five police motor-



cycles.

They claimed that apart from that, a police vehicle and a prison van were also vandalised.

The police started action on Monday evening and conducted raids and search operations to track those involved in the vandalism. Finally, after the nightlong raid and search operations, nine people were arrested.

"Some other individuals involved in the vandalism are still absconding, and

efforts on our part are still underway to track them. The accused had been booked on charges of destruction of public property," said a city police official.

He added that the situation at Bhangar is totally under control and peaceful as of Tuesday afternoon. However, the cops are constantly alerting the people to ignore attempts by vested interests to spread rumours. A huge police contingent is

still deployed at Bhangar, and they will continue to remain so for some more time.

Recently, Bhangar, where political clashes had been frequent traditionally since the previous Left Front regime, was shifted from the jurisdiction of South 24 Parganas district police and brought under the jurisdiction of Kolkata Police to establish better control over the law and order situation there.

New York Declares April 14 as Dr. Ambedkar Day

AGENCIES

NEW YORK, APR 15

New York City officially declared April 14 as Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar Day to celebrate the 134th birth anniversary of the architect of India's Constitution. Mayor Eric Adams praised Dr. Ambedkar's legacy, highlighting his role as a political leader, economist, and fierce advocate for equality.

In his speech, Mayor Adams emphasized Ambedkar's strong opposition to caste discrimination and his efforts to protect farmers and tenants in India. "Generations of people from around the world have crossed oceans seeking new possibilities in New York City. Over time, their contributions have transformed our neighborhoods and enriched the city's cultural tapestry," Adams said.

Ambedkar's fight against caste discrimination was personal. He experienced it firsthand in his youth, which led him to dedicate his life



to fighting for diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Mayor highlighted Ambedkar's famous call to action: "Educate, agitate, organize," which became the foundation of his movement for social justice.

The Mayor also stressed New York City's alignment with Ambedkar's principles of equality and justice. "We must renew our commitment to these ideals every day," Adams

remarked, praising those involved in the event for honoring Ambedkar's contributions.

India's Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Virendra Kumar, also praised the move, calling it a matter of pride for all Indians. He expressed gratitude for the recognition of Dr. Ambedkar's contributions on a global stage under the leadership of Prime Minis-

ter Narendra Modi.

Dr. Ambedkar, born on April 14, 1891, in Mhow, India, was a renowned economist, political leader, and social reformer. He earned a PhD from Columbia University and a DSc from the London School of Economics. He chaired the committee that drafted India's Constitution, leaving a lasting legacy in the fight for civil rights.

Govt focused more on providing preventive healthcare than just curative: JP Nadda

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

The government is focused more on providing preventive healthcare rather than just curative care in the country, said Union Health and Family Welfare Minister JP Nadda on Tuesday.

In addition, palliative and rehabilitative care is also being provided extensively in the country, he said, while reiterating the central government's commitment to providing world-class healthcare for all citizens.

Speaking at the fifth convocation ceremony of AIIMS Rishikesh, Nadda said providing affordable and quality healthcare to every poor person in the country is a priority of the central government.

"The government is focused on providing healthcare which is not only curative but also preventive, palliative and rehabilitative," the Union



Minister said.

Nadda also highlighted the achievements of AIIMS institutes across the country in medical education and services.

"Till the advent of this century, India only had one AIIMS in the country. Today, 22 AIIMS are operating in the country."

Highlighting the achievements of the Union Government in the health sector, Nadda stated that currently "1.75 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs are operational across the

country".

These centres provide a range of services pertaining to healthcare and wellness.

Further, Nadda said that medical education has also been improved in the country.

"There has been a 101 per cent increase in medical colleges, totalling 780 across the country. There has been a 130 per cent increase in MBBS seats while PG seats have seen an increase of 138 per cent in the last 10 years".

"Similarly, to cater to the paramedics, 157 nursing colleges are also being established, to be co-located with the medical colleges", he added.

The Union Health Minister also lauded AIIMS Rishikesh for effectively utilising the helicopter and drone services by rescuing 309 critical patients using the services; and for being one of the best institutes in the country for using digital services like telemedicine (eSanjeevani) to serve the remote and underserved areas of the state.

During the event, Shri Nadda inaugurated several healthcare facilities to enhance the institute's medical services, including Integrated Medicine in the Ayush Department, a PET scan machine in the Nuclear Medicine Department, a PACS facility in the Radiology Department, and a Centre for Advanced Paediatrics in Paediatric Care.

Murshidabad is burning, they are silent: CM Yogi slams Oppn

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday launched a scathing attack on the Opposition over their silence on the violence in West Bengal's Murshidabad.

During the inauguration of various development projects at the Amar Senani Raja Narpati Singh Memorial site in the Hardoi district, he referred to the ongoing communal tensions in Bengal, where Hindus were attacked during protests against the Waqf Act.

CM Yogi lambasted political opponents for what he called "selective outrage" and "appeasement politics".

Addressing a large gathering, the CM said, "Those who create unrest and incite violence, their only treatment is with the danda (stick). You've all seen how West Bengal is



burning, yet the Chief Minister there remains silent."

He further criticised Mamata Banerjee's stance, adding, "She calls the protesters and those causing unrest 'peace bearers'. But those who deserve a danda cannot be handled with words. In the name of secularism, they have given complete freedom to the unruly elements of society."

"Murshidabad has been burning for a week, yet the

state government chooses to stay quiet. Such intolerance cannot be accepted in a democratic society," CM Yogi added.

CM Yogi also thanked the judiciary for stepping in to ensure the safety of citizens. "I would like to express my gratitude to the court for deploying Central security forces and taking action to ensure the security of Hindus."

Turning his criticism toward Congress and the

Samajwadi Party (SP), the Chief Minister said, "Congress is silent on Murshidabad; SP is silent too. These are the same people who supported the unrest in Bangladesh. It seems they would rather go to Bangladesh than stay in India; why be a burden here?"

Praising the Central leadership on the Waqf Act, CM Yogi stated, "I am indebted to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for passing the Waqf Amendment Bill. It's a significant step to reclaim land that was forcibly taken from the poor."

On Sunday, CM Yogi lashed out at his West Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee over the Murshidabad violence and said that the Hindus being targeted in Bengal were Dalits, who stand to gain the most from the amended Waqf Act.

REMEMBERING DR. ISRAR AHMED(RA)



DR. TASADUK HUSSAIN ITTOO
drtasadukittoo@gmail.com

To begin with the name of Almighty Allah (SWT), we must always be thankful enough and owe due credit of our success to HIM only. The more we owe credit of our success to our Lord, the more we get closer to HIM and seek HIS pleasure. To realise a dream in our life - we must always give right direction to it. Ensuring right direction to a dream will bring success and enable us to fulfil the true purpose of our life - seeking the pleasure of Almighty Allah. That right direction to a dream is possible only by imbibing and seeking true guidance, good character and values - by following the Word of Almighty Allah through Holy Qur'an and noble teachings

of His beloved messenger - Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Islam is a perfect religion and the last prophet, the epitome of humanity as well as of prophethood, is blessing for entire creation including humanity. He (SAW) enlightened the lives of people with the education of Islam and guided us onto the right path.

A very prominent Hadith says that the scholars are the deputies of messengers and prophets and in Islam we have seen great number of visionary scholars and personalities who devoted their lives to the cause of Islam. One among such personalities was Dr. Israr Ahmed (RA)- a prominent scholar who influenced a great number of modern- day scholars and public speakers. He was a Muffasir, an Islamic author, a thorough intellectual who enlightened the lives of people from all sects with the education of Islam, revolutionized millions of people with his great sort of determination, passion and devotion towards the work of Dawah, while at

the same time having deep understanding on the issues of current relevance and contemporary times. Moreover, his powerful speeches inculcate an idea about his forthcoming predictions, which significantly carry huge relevance in today's times. The soulful speeches of Dr. Israr Ahmed - solely based on the Word of Allah (the Holy Qur'an) and teachings of our beloved Prophet Muhammad(SAW) are found to be an ideal guide - phenomenally meant for our spiritual development and character building. During the current age of social media and digital revolution, we are blessed to have an unlimited access to the sermons by renowned religious scholars like Dr. Israr Ahmed - whose role in developing and shaping our character is phenomenal.

Ye Raaz Kisi Ko Nahin Maloom Ke Momin

Qari Nazar Aata Hai, Haqiqat Mein Hai Qur'an(Allama Iqbal)

He was a great Islamic academic, humanitarian, an institution and always

found to encourage truth, peace and tranquillity in his speeches. He taught us lessons of truthfulness, bravery and courage. His magnanimous speeches delivered in the light of Holy book of Qur'an and the teachings of our beloved Prophet Muhammad(SAW), were soul-enriching and have a revolutionary impact on the millions of lives. He believed in the Prophetic and Caliph model of Islamic revolution. He is an inspiration and a guiding light to millions. We should carry forward his legacy and adhere upon the teachings that he has taught to us. May Almighty Allah bless his noble soul highest places in Jannah...Aameen.

Having said that, we have to follow the teachings of Holy book of Qur'an(The Word of Allah) and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to live a life of peace, prosperity, happiness, justice and in best way for service to humanity through pleasure of Almighty Allah. Following the Qur'an(The Word of Allah) and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

would serve as an ideal motivation and guide in fulfilling the true purpose of life and fulfilling our dreams and aspirations in this world in a rightful, truthful, justful and humanity-serving way.

Moreover, we have to discover Allah's blessings through realizing our inner being and get to know the real purpose of our life. Our journey in this world is just a test to do good deeds in order to achieve the final dream, that is beyond our sight(the world hereafter and its magnanimous reward, Jannat Ul Firdous). We are from Allah to this world - here we have to work to please HIM(that is the real purpose of this life) and to HIM we shall return - and when we return, we should have pleased our Lord to such an extent so that HE should happily receive us and bless with that magnanimous award of Jannat Ul Firdous (the final dream).

Har Ek Maqam Se Aage Maqam Hai Tera;

Hayat Zouq-e- Safar Kay Sewa Kuch Aur Nahi (Allama Iqbal).

What's the Right Time to Eat Fruit? Here's the Truth You Need to Know



In the cacophony of health fads promoted by celebrities, dietitians, and nutritionists on social media, it can often be a daunting task to keep up with the ever-evolving trends.

One celebrity might advise their followers to eat fruits on an empty stomach, while another might caution against doing so to prevent blood sugar spikes. Meanwhile, a third person, who is completely unaware of this brewing discussion, might drop a bombshell and tell you that you should not eat fruits after 2 pm.

As opinions keep piling on, your question remains unanswered: What time of the day should you really be eating fruits?

According to Healthline, "Any time of the day is a great time to eat fruit. There's no evidence that you should avoid fruit in the afternoon or around meals. Fruits are healthy, nutritious foods that can

be eaten throughout the day."

However, in certain cases, such as for someone diagnosed with diabetes, the timing of fruit intake might make a difference.

Fruits are an excellent way to add nutrition to your diet. The high fibre content in some fruits can help you feel full for longer periods, helping you maintain a calorie-deficit diet.

How a particular cat-

egory of food reacts in the body varies from person to person. Sometimes, eating fruit on an empty stomach might cause acid reflux or heartburn.

So instead of relying on what celebrities or influencers follow, it is important to understand your own body. As every body is different, it is essential to observe how different foods affect you in order to design a tailored diet that will help you achieve your goals.

AI tool inspired by fraud detection pinpoints disease-linked proteins: Study

AGENCIES
JERUSALEM

Israeli researchers have created an AI-based tool to identify critical proteins that could unlock insights into human diseases.

The tool, called Weighted Graph Anomalous Node Detection (WGAND), uses methods similar to those that detect fraud in social networks to analyse how proteins interact in the body, Xinhua news agency reported.

Published in the journal GigaScience, the algorithm spots unusual proteins that connect heavily with others and play central roles in biological processes -- key to understanding health and disease.

Proteins are essential molecules in our bodies, and they interact with each other in complex networks, known as protein-protein interaction (PPI) networks.

The team from the Ben-Gurion University of



the Negev developed the algorithm to analyse these PPI networks to detect "anomalous" proteins -- those that stand out due to their unique pattern of weighted interactions.

This implies that the amount of the protein and its protein interactors is greater in that particular network, allowing them to carry out more functions and drive more processes.

Studying these networks helps scientists

understand how proteins function and how they contribute to health and disease, said the team.

"This innovative algorithm has the potential to pinpoint which proteins are important in specific contexts, helping scientists to develop more targeted and effective treatments for various conditions," said Prof. Esti Yeger-Lotem, from the varsity

In tests, WGAND suc-

cessfully identified proteins linked to brain and heart disorders, as well as those involved in essential functions like nerve signalling and muscle movement. Researchers from the Ben Gurion University (BGU) said it performed more accurately than existing methods.

By combining expertise in biology and cybersecurity, the tool could lead to more targeted medical treatments and provide new insights into how the human body works.

"It's exciting to see how bringing together expertise from bioinformatics and cybersecurity can lead to breakthroughs in understanding human biology. By applying network analysis and machine learning, we have developed a tool that helps uncover key proteins in different tissues -- paving the way for new insights into human health and disease," said Dr. Michael Fire, from the varsity.

Early detection, proper management key for babies born with kidney defect: Experts

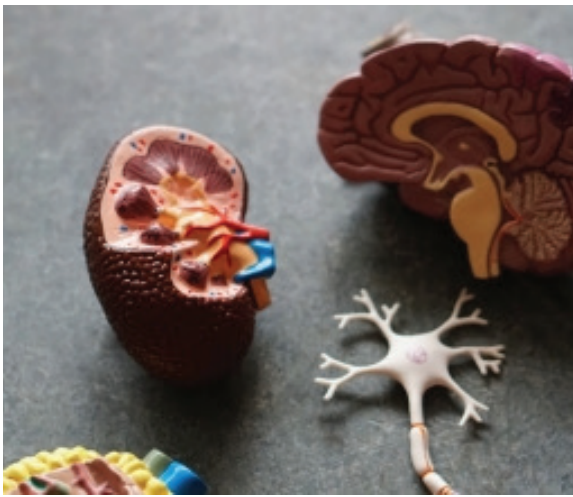
AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Early detection and proper management is crucial for babies born with a birth defect called antenatal hydronephrosis -- a condition where kidneys get swollen due to water accumulation while in the womb --, said experts emphasising the need for raising awareness.

Antenatal hydronephrosis is a common disease, with one or two cases in every 100 pregnancies. It occurs when a foetus develops swelling in one or both kidneys due to urine buildup.

While the initial discovery may cause worry, doctors believe that this condition is often manageable with proper monitoring and care.

"With appropriate follow-up and care, the majority of infants with antenatal hydronephrosis grow up healthy with normal kidney function,"



said Dr Prabudh Goel, additional professor, paediatrics surgery, at AIIMS-Delhi.

The condition is typically identified during routine ultrasound scans in the second or third trimester of pregnancy. It occurs due to a partial obstruction in the urinary tract or a reflux of urine back into the kidneys.

While some cases resolve naturally before or after birth, others may

require medical intervention to prevent complications such as urinary tract infections or kidney damage.

Dr Shandip Kumar Sinha, the director of paediatric surgery from a city-based hospital said the rising number of antenatal scans are increasingly detecting instances of antenatal hydronephrosis.

"If antenatal hydronephrosis is detected and proper medical interven-

tion is made in the first five to six months of birth, the kidneys can heal completely," Sinha said.

"Early detection allows us to closely monitor the condition and take necessary steps to ensure the baby's health and kidney function," he added.

In mild cases, antenatal hydronephrosis often resolves on its own without requiring treatment. For moderate to severe cases, one may need to get additional tests such as ultrasound, voiding cystourethrograms, or nuclear medicine scans, of the baby done after birth to determine the severity of obstruction or reflux.

In rare instances, surgical intervention may be required to correct underlying issues.

"By raising awareness about this condition, we hope to reassure families that early detection and proper management can lead to positive outcomes," Goel said.

Indian scientists find protein mutation linked to hearing loss in elderly

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Scientists at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Mohali, in Punjab, have identified a protein mutation that can boost treatment against hearing loss in the elderly population.

The team focussed on a fault in Cadherin-23 -- a protein essential for hearing in vertebrates.

The protein, which is embedded in inner ear hair cells, works by converting sound waves into electrical signals that the brain can interpret.

In mice studies, the team found that the mutated form of Cadherin-23 fails to unfold properly and causes disruption in sound transmission through the inner ear.

This led to progressive hearing loss in mice, said the team led



by Sabyasachi Rakshit from the Insititute.

In the study, the team used a magnetic tweezer to expose the protein's three variants -- S47, V47 (natural variants), and P47 (mutant) -- to continual and oscillatory forces.

The scientists found that V47 tolerated the greatest force and

slowly unfolded. In other words, it could withstand mechanical stress better.

While S47 exhibited intermediate stability, P47 unfolded quickly, tolerating the least force. It was more likely to remain unfolded, the reason behind its link to hearing loss.

Further, when sub-

jected to repetitive force pulses that mimic natural mechanical stimuli in hearing, p47 exhibited less ability to tolerate repeated mechanical stresses. The results suggest a molecular basis for hearing impairments later in life.

The findings, published in the journal Nature Communications, will have potential use in hearing loss treatment by correcting the anomaly of the protein, said the researchers.

However, they noted that although the results may provide a mechanism for human hearing loss, they likely do not encompass the entire picture.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 1.5 billion people (nearly 20 per cent of the global population) live with hearing loss, while 430 million suffer disabling hearing loss.

Study links poor oral health with body pain, migraines in women

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI

Suffering from migraine headaches and body pain? Blame your poor oral health, according to a study on Wednesday.

The study, which focussed on women, identified specific oral microbes correlated with certain pain conditions. It also suggested a potential relationship between the oral microbiome and the nervous system.

The research examined associations between self-reported oral health, the oral microbiome, and various pain presentations in a group of 67 women from New Zealand with and without fibromyalgia -- a chronic condition characterised by widespread musculoskeletal pain, fatigue, and sleep disturbances.

The results, published in the journal Frontiers in Pain Research, showed



that lower oral health was a statistically significant predictor of frequent and chronic migraine.

"This is the first study to investigate oral health, oral microbiota, and pain commonly experienced in women with fibromyalgia, with our study showing a clear and significant association between poor oral health and pain," said lead investigator Associate

Professor Joanna Harnett from the Faculty of Medicine and Health.

Participants with the poorest oral health were more likely to suffer from higher pain scores. About 60 per cent of women were more likely to experience moderate to severe body pain, and 49 per cent were more likely to experience migraine headaches.

Four oral microbial species from the Dialister, Fusobacterium, Parvimonas, and Solobacterium genera were significantly associated with pain after age, BMI and added dietary sugars were considered.

"Our findings are particularly important to fibromyalgia which, despite being a common rheumatological condition, is often underrecognised," said Sharon Erdrich, doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Medicine and Health.

The team also observed a weak but significant inverse correlation between diet quality and oral health. However, the researchers note this has yet to be investigated in detail.

The researchers recommend regular oral hygiene appointments and dental health checks, in addition to twice daily teeth brushing and flossing.



Contrasting fortunes as DC host RR in crucial clash

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, APR 15 (UNI)

A resurgent Delhi Capitals will be aiming to seize the top spot on the IPL 2025 table when they lock horns with a beleaguered Rajasthan Royals outfit at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here on Wednesday evening.

The high-stakes encounter marks a crucial turning point in the league phase – a potential coronation for Delhi and a possible curtain call for Rajasthan.

Sitting pretty in second place with 8 points from five matches, Delhi have been one of the most consistent sides this season, led by the calm authority of KL Rahul and bolstered by the wily spin of Kuldeep Yadav. With a superior net run rate and four wins from their last five outings, Delhi know a win here could catapult them to the top of the standings, edging ahead of Gujarat Titans.

Rajasthan, in contrast, find themselves in a downward spiral. Eighth on the points table with just two wins from six games, the 2008 champions are running out of time to revive their flagging campaign. Their recent form – a 58-run hammering by Gujarat followed by a crushing nine-wicket defeat to Royal Challengers Bangalore – has exposed deep cracks in both their batting order and bowl-



ing attack.

The form charts of both teams reflect their contrasting trajectories. For Delhi, Rahul's return to form has been the cornerstone of their campaign. The India opener, who endured a lean patch last season, has struck three fifties in five matches, including an unbeaten 93 off 54 balls against RCB. His assured presence at the top has given Delhi a solidity that was missing in previous editions.

Adding to their strength is Kuldeep's magical touch with the ball. The left-arm wrist spinner has been in vintage form, picking up 10 wickets at a miserly average of 11.20, bamboozling batsmen with flight, drift and turn on sluggish surfaces.

Meanwhile, Rajasthan have struggled to click as a unit. Despite flashes of brilliance from skipper Sanju Samson and allrounder Riyan Parag, the team has looked disjointed. Yashasvi Jaiswal's lean run – just 126

runs in six matches – and Jos Buttler's inconsistency have compounded their woes. In the bowling department, Jofra Archer has lacked support, and the spin duo of Ravichandran Ashwin and Yuzuvendra Chahal have failed to deliver regular breakthroughs.

Wednesday's fixture has all the ingredients of a season-defining clash. For Delhi, it offers a chance to consolidate their playoff push and build momentum in the second half of the season. For Rajasthan, it is a must-win – a loss would leave them stranded at four points with just seven games remaining, making the path to the top four almost mathematically improbable.

The pitch at the Arun Jaitley Stadium has traditionally favoured spin, but recent matches have seen scores in excess of 180 posted under lights. With the weather expected to be dry and warm, the toss could play a crucial role, with chasing

likely to be the preferred option under the dew.

Delhi are unlikely to tinker with their winning combination, though there may be a temptation to rest one of the pacers given the short turnaround between matches. Rajasthan, on the other hand, may look to shake things up – with Devdutt Padikkal and Obed McCoy in contention to return to the XI.

As the IPL caravan rolls into the capital, fans can expect a gripping contest between two sides with vastly different destinies. Whether Delhi surge to the summit or Rajasthan script a comeback for the ages remains to be seen – but the stakes could not be higher.

Delhi Capitals Predicted Playing XI: Jake Fraser-McGurk, Abishek Porel, Karun Nair, KL Rahul (wk), Tristan Stubbs, Axar Patel (c), Ashutosh Sharma, Vipraj Nigam, Mitchell Starc, Mohit Sharma, Kuldeep Yadav

Key players: KL Rahul, Kuldeep Yadav, Ashutosh Sharma, Karun Nair
Rajasthan Royals Predicted Playing XI: Yashasvi Jaiswal, Sanju Samson (c & wk), Nitish Rana, Riyan Parag, Dhruv Jurel, Shimron Hetmyer, Wanindu Hasaranga, Jofra Archer, Maheesh Theekshana, Sandeep Sharma, Tushar
Key players: Yashasvi Jaiswal, Sanju Samson, Riyan Parag, Jofra Archer, Deshpande.

Shreyas Iyer named ICC Player of Month for March



AGENCIES

DUBAI, APR 15 (UNI)

India's stylish middle-order batter Shreyas Iyer secured the honour of the ICC Men's Player of the Month Award for March 2025, overcoming competition from New Zealand's Jacob Duffy and Rachin Ravindra.

Iyer finished as the highest run-scorer with 243 runs, playing a crucial role in India's Champions Trophy triumph.

Iyer's victory of this award means that India have won the award back-to-back, with Shubman Gill winning the award for February.

Iyer was a key factor in India's 2025 Champions Trophy campaign, playing a key role in the middle-order.

He helped India progress through the middle overs with his masterful stroke-play and his knack for anchoring the innings and forging crucial partnerships played a vital role in steering his side through a victorious campaign.

On winning the accolade, Iyer said, "I'm truly honored

to be named the ICC Men's Player of the Month for March. This recognition is incredibly special, especially in a month where we lifted the ICC Champions Trophy – a moment I will cherish forever.

"Being able to contribute to India's success on such a big stage is something every cricketer dreams of. I'm grateful to my teammates, coaches, and support staff for their unwavering support and belief," he said.

"A heartfelt thank you to the fans as well – your energy and encouragement keep us going every step of the way," Iyer said.

The 30-year-old scored 172 runs across three matches in March, averaging 57.33, with a modest strike rate of 77.47, which included some spectacular knocks.

Iyer scored 79 off 98 balls which included 4 fours and 2 sixes in a win against New Zealand in a Group A fixture of the Champions Trophy, an innings that gave India a competitive total of 250 in the first innings on a tricky pitch.

Georgia Voll named ICC women's Player of Month for March

AGENCIES

DUBAI, APR 15 (UNI)

Australia's newest batting sensation Georgia Voll, who made her international debut in December of last year, took home the honour for the ICC Women's Player of the Month for March 2025.

Voll beat competition from senior compatriot Annabel Sutherland and USA's Chetnaa Prasad.

The 21-year-old played a crucial role in Australia's 3-0 whitewash of the White Ferns in March.

Voll helped the team by providing confident starts along with the experienced Beth Mooney at the other end, finishing second in the run-scoring charts (161 runs) behind her opening partner.

Voll began with a 50 off 31 deliveries in the opening game, before a quickfire 36 off 20 in the second T20I, and wrapped up the series with a career-high 75 off 57 in the final game.

Voll's success means that Australian players have won the monthly award for the fourth month in a row, with Annabel Sutherland bagging it in December 2024 followed by Beth Mooney in January and Alan King in February.

Elated at being named the Player of the Month, Voll said, "Winning this award is certainly a nice way to cap off what's been an incredible summer for myself and the team."

"To go to New Zealand and claim that T20 series against the World Champions was the perfect way to end the season. It's been a whirlwind first summer in the Australian side and I'm excited for what next season holds," she added.



Schedule announced for India's white-ball tour of Bangladesh

AGENCIES

DHAKA, APR 15 (UNI)

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has announced the fixtures for India's upcoming tour of Bangladesh in August 2025, featuring three ODIs and three T20Is.

The Indian team are set to arrive in Dhaka on August 13 ahead of the ODI series that begins on August 17 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

The third and final ODI will be

Schedule for India's tour of Bangladesh:

ODI Series:

1st ODI - 17 August, Mirpur
2nd ODI - 20 August, Mirpur
3rd ODI - 23 August, Chattogram

T20I Series:

1st T20I - 26 August, Chattogram
2nd T20I - 29 August, Mirpur
3rd T20I - 31 August, Mirpur.

played in Chattogram, which will also host the first game of the three-match T20I series on 26 August.

The action will head back to Mirpur for the second and third T20Is. The T20I series will be the first time Bangladesh will host India in a bilateral series at home.

The most recent T20I series between the two teams took place in 2024, when Bangladesh toured India and the hosts secured a comfortable 3-0 victory, an ICC report said.

In their last ODI series clash in 2022, India visited Bangladesh and suffered a 2-1 defeat.

Pakistan edge West Indies to extend unbeaten run in ICC Women's CWCQ 2025

AGENCIES

LAHORE, APR 15 (UNI)

Pakistan claimed a clinical win over the West Indies at the Gaddafi Stadium here to mark their third successive victory at the Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 Qualifier.

With both teams coming into the contest on the back of wins, the hosts put on a comprehensive display to come one step closer to a World Cup spot. Pakistan skipper Fatima Sana won the toss and elected to bat first. Despite losing opener Gull Feroza early, the hosts got off to a steady start.

Muneeba Ali and Sidra Amin built a valuable 47-run partnership, providing some early stability to the innings. However, the stand was broken by Afy Fletcher, who wrapped Muneeba Ali in front of the wickets in the 17th over.

Aliya Riaz then joined



Sidra Amin in the middle, and the latter continued her fine form to bring up a brilliant half-century, an ICC report said.

After Riaz was run out, Omaira Sohail came into the mix with another vital partnership alongside Sidra. But the momentum began to shift when Sohail was caught by West Indies skipper Hayley Matthews off Fletcher in the 37th over.

From there, Pakistan's innings started to unravel. The West Indies bowlers struck in quick succession, preventing any further

partnerships from developing. As a result, Pakistan collapsed from a strong position at 132/4 after 37 overs to being bowled out for 191.

Hayley Matthews was the standout bowler with impressive figures of 2/30, while Karishma Ramharack (2/55) and Afy Fletcher (2/39) also chipped in with a brace each.

Defending the total, Pakistan got off to a perfect start as captain Fatima Sana struck on the first ball of the innings, trapping Hayley Matthews LBW for a crucial breakthrough.

West Indies found themselves in the deeper end soon after, with Zaida James and Shemaine Campbelle both being run out, leaving the side teetering at 29/3. Nashra Sandhu intensified the pressure by dismissing both Jannillea Glasgow with an jaffa and inducing a Chinelle Henry caught behind in the same over, reducing West Indies to 54/5 in the 12th over.

Shabika Gaj Nabi and Stafanie Taylor attempted to revive the innings with a steady partnership of 33, but Taylor was soon caught out by Muneeba Ali off Rameen Shamim.

Pakistan bowlers kept enforcing the pressure - skipper Fatima leading the charge, with bowling figures of 3/16 - as West Indies bundled out for 126.

The win - Pakistan's third from as may games at the Qualifier - takes the hosts to the top of the standings with two games left in their campaign.

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