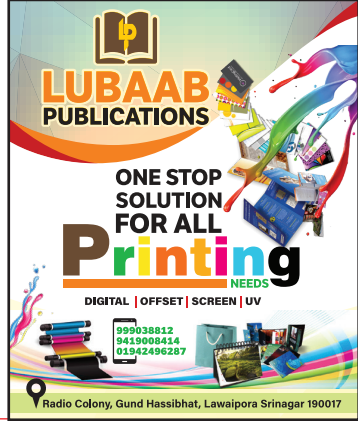


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HEADLINES
TODAY

Voice To The Voiceless



Youth Must Lead Sustainable, Innovative Development: LG Sinha

LG addresses Foundation Day Ceremony of University of Jammu

■ HT News Desk

JAMMU, SEP 08: Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha delivered the keynote address at Foundation Day ceremony of University of Jammu, today.

In his address, the Lieutenant Governor called upon Jammu University to leverage innovation and cutting-edge technology for conservation, integrating sustainability in education and preparing students to address emerging challenges to build Viksit Bharat. "Our youth must drive development that

meets societal needs without compromising ecosystems and optimize the use of resources through modern innovation. We need to adopt a multi-dimensional approach to make the earth better for the future generations," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor urged the faculty members to guide and lead youth in their responsibility to balance nature with development. It is our shared responsibility to protect Mother Earth and promote the culture of environmental awareness at all levels of society, he added.

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LG Thanks PM, Union Health Minister for 50 MBBS Seats at SMVD Institute of Medical Excellence

■ HT News Desk

SRINAGAR, SEP 08: Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha has expressed gratitude to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Hon'ble Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Shri J.P. Nadda for sanctioning 50 MBBS seats for newly established Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence (SMVDIME).

In a post on X, the Lieutenant Governor said: "Grateful to Hon'ble PM Shri Narendra Modi Ji and Hon'ble Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Shri J.P. Nadda Ji for sanctioning 50 MBBS seats for newly established Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence (SMVDIME).

This decision not only fulfills the resolve of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board to provide world-class

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Kulgam encounter: Foreigner among 2 terrorists, 2 soldiers killed

■ HT News Network

KULGAM, SEP 08: Two terrorists, including a foreigner, were killed while two Army soldiers also lost their lives in an encounter in the Guddar forest area of South Kashmir's Kulgam district on Monday, officials said.

An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observ-

er (KNO) that following a "specific intelligence input" about the presence of terrorists, a joint team of Police, Army's 9 Rashtriya Rifles, and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) launched a cordon-and-search operation in Guddar area this morning. "The search operation turned into an encounter after the terrorists opened fire on the security forces," he said.

The official added that one Pakistani and one local terrorist have been killed and the operation is on. "Three soldiers sustained injuries in the encounter and were shifted to an Army hospital, where two of them succumbed," he said.

"Despite heavy rain and dense foliage, the operation continued throughout the

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AIIMS Awantipora Site Chosen On Political Grounds, Not Feasibility: CM Omar



■ HT News Desk

AWANTIPORA, SEP 8: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today chaired a meeting at Awantipora, Pulwama, to review the progress of ongoing works at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Kashmir.

The Chief Minister, accompanied by Minister for Health & Medical Education Sakina Ittoo, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief

Secretary to the CM Dheeraj Gupta, Executive Director AIIMS Awantipora Dr. S. Mohanty, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg, Secretary Health & Medical Education Dr Syed Abid Rashid, Deputy Commissioner Pulwama Dr Basharat Qayoom and representatives of executing agency NCC Ltd, inspected the site and took a detailed review of the project.

Reviewing the status of infrastructure development, procurement of

● Turn on Page 2

CM Reviews

Kashmir Marathon Prep, Unveils Promo Video

■ HT News Desk

SRINAGAR, SEP 8: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today chaired a meeting to review preparations for the upcoming Kashmir Marathon-2025, a flagship sporting event aimed at promoting sports, fitness, tourism, and Kashmir's vibrant culture.

The meeting was attended by Advisor to the CM, Nasir Aslam Wani; Additional Chief Secretary to the CM, Dheeraj Gupta; Additional Chief Secretary Tourism; Principal Secretary Finance; Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; Secretary IT, Information and GAD; and other senior officials.

Director Tourism, Kashmir made a detailed presentation on the preparations

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Kashmir's Rs 1623 cr flood plan hits roadblock

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, SEP 08: Despite recurrent flood threats in Kashmir, two critical components of the Rs 1623 crore comprehensive flood management plan for Jhelum River remain untouched. The delay in executing work on these components arises from additional financial implications triggered by alterations recommended by the Central Water Commission (CWC), following conflicting assessments in two separate studies regarding their efficacy. As a result, the ambitious project—meant to safeguard lives and infrastructure from future flood disasters—finds itself mired in financial and technical gridlock.

Details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) reveal that the Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation approved Phase-II (Part A) of the flood management project for the Jhelum River and

● Turn on Page 2

MLA Doda Mehraj Malik detained under PSA

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, SEP 08: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Mehraj Malik from Doda was arrested on Monday and booked under the stringent Public Safety Act (PSA), marking the first instance in Jammu & Kashmir where a sitting legislator has been detained under the law.

Malik, who defeated BJP candidate Gajay Singh Rana by 4,538 votes in last year's

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J&K RECEIVES EXCESS RAINFALL OF 41% IN 3 MONTHS

MeT predicts briefs spells of rains till Sept 12

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, SEP 08: Amid frequent flood threats Jammu and Kashmir has received an excess rainfall of 41 per cent from June to September this year.

According to the Meteorological department (MeT) data, accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News

Observer (KNO), five stations in Jammu region have recorded the large excess rainfall from June 01, 2025 to September 03, 2025. The stations include Udhampur, Samba, Rajouri, Ramban and Doda. (Areas where rainfall exceeds 60% above the normal are categorized as experiencing 'Large Excess Rainfall'.)

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CS Reviews Implementation of Mission YUVA

Focus on Quality, Capacity Building & Timely Credit Flow

■ HT News Desk

SRINAGAR, SEP 08: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo today chaired the Apex Level Committee meeting of Mission YUVA in Jammu, during which the progress of the mission was comprehensively reviewed and key directions were issued to further accelerate its implementation across the Union Territory.

The meeting besides Secretary, Labour & Employment, Kumar Rajeev Ranjan was attended by Principal Secretary, Finance, Santosh D. Vaidya; Vice-Chancellors of Universities; Commissioner Secretary, of H&UDD; Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce; Commissioner Secretary, Cooperatives; Secretary, RDD; Director, IIM Jammu; Deputy Commissioners; Director, Colleges; CEO, CITAG; representatives from J&K Bank, NABARD, IIT Jammu; and other concerned officers.



Reviewing the mission's performance, the Chief Secretary underscored the importance of targeting specific potential groups such as college students, Self Help Group members (especially Lakhpati Didis), Vishwakarma-sponsored artisans;

● Turn on Page 2

CS Seeks Central Aid for Flood-Hit Infrastructure Restoration

■ HT News Desk

SRINAGAR, SEP 08: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo today held a detailed meeting with the Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT) that arrived in the Union Territory to assess the damages caused by the recent floods. The deluge affected several districts, damaging homes, infrastructure, standing crops and horticultural produce.

While no casualties were reported in the Kashmir Valley, the mountainous districts were deeply affected by flash floods, leading to the loss of human lives and extensive damage to public assets. The agriculture and horticulture sectors have also suffered

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dated.08-09-2025.

MESSAGE

DO NOT PAY BRIBE TO ANYONE, IF ANY GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL, EMPLOYEES OF GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED CORPORATIONS, LOCAL AUTHORITIES OR OTHER INDIVIDUALS PERFORMING PUBLIC DUTIES DEMANDS BRIBE FROM YOU OR IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ON THE CORRUPTION OR IF YOU ARE A VICTIM OF CORRUPTION, PLEASE MAKE A COMPLAINT TO DIG, ANTI-CORRUPTION BRANCH, CBI SRINAGAR LOCATED NEAR MLA HOSTEL SRINAGAR ON PHONE NO'S (LAND LINE) 0194-2455514 AND (MOBILE NO.) 9419900977. YOU CAN ALSO SENT YOUR COMPLAINT ON EMAIL ID-HOBACSGR@CBI.GOV.IN. IDENTITY OF THE INFORMER WILL BE KEPT SECRET AND NOT DISCLOSED.

SAY NO TO CORRUPTION. BE A LEADER TO ERADICATE THE MENACE OF CORRUPTION. ISSUED IN PUBLIC INTEREST.

Sd/-(Raman Kumar Meena) IPS DIG
& Head of the branch,
CBI ACB Srinagar

DIPK: DIT/KM/8/25

CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

Youth Must.....

Extending his heartiest congratulation to the Vice Chancellor, faculty members, non-teaching staff and students on University's foundation day celebration, the Lieutenant Governor urged to set new and challenging goals and pursue them with a renewed sense of zeal and enthusiasm.

"Today's occasion is also an opportunity for self-analysis, self-exploration, and self-introspection. I am proud of the exceptional accomplishments of our universities in the recently released NIRF-2025 Rankings. While on one hand these rankings should be seen as a revolution, a transformation in the higher education landscape of Jammu Kashmir, on the other, we should critically evaluate our rankings and go back to the drawing board to set new goals," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He observed that the process of change in the campus should continue uninterrupted so that the students remain determined, eager to learn and do something new and have the passion to face the future challenges.

"Real world experience bridges the gap between theory and application. Classroom must be transformed into a thinking room, a room full of curiosity and creativity. Experience-based, interdisciplinary, life-skills & project-based education should be our focus to prepare youth for the unpredictable world," the Lieutenant Governor further said.

The Lieutenant Governor exhorted the University to start short-term professional programs to deal with climate challenges and research on floods and landslides.

"Today the whole world is affected by natural disasters. There was massive destruction of infrastructure and loss of lives in Jammu Kashmir. The Government of India is fully committed to ensure that normal life resumes once again and the affected people are rehabilitated properly.

Once the road connectivity is completely restored, the university administration must send groups of students to serve in different areas and prepare a team of volunteers who will assist and help the district administration in relief and rehabilitation of families affected due to recent natural calamities in the UT," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor felicitated the Alumni of the University of Jammu and called upon them to make their valuable contribution to the progress of the University.

NSS and NCC Volunteers, retired teaching and non-teaching staff of the Jammu University were also felicitated on the occasion.

Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (Northern Region Transmission System – II) handed over PA System and Streetlights to University of Jammu under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative.

Shri Justice Tashi Rabstan, former Chief Justice of J&K and Ladakh High Court; Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu; Shri Tarun Bajaj, Executive Director, PowerGrid; Dr Neelu Rohmetra, Dean Research Studies; Prof. J.P Singh, Dean Academic Affairs; Dr Neeraj Sharma, Registrar, distinguished alumnus, faculty, staff and students of Jammu University were present.

LG Thanks PM.....

Medical Education in J&K but also our objectives to improve healthcare access, increasing highly skilled medical professionals in underserved areas.

The Shrine Board in its 71st Meeting held on 19th August 2023 had granted in-principle approval for establishment of a 50-seat Medical College at Kakryal, with a long-term plan for up-gradation to a 100-seat Medical College subsequently.

Our aim is to help more MBBS aspirants to study in the UT and we have made significant strides in this area by increasing MBBS seats in the past few years. These achievements will ensure greater access to specialized care and build a stronger healthcare system".

Kulgam encounter.....

day and is expected to go on through the night. There is a possibility of more terrorists. Searches are on and the operation will continue until the area is fully cleared," the official said.

The Kashmir Zone Police wrote on X: "Based on specific intelligence, an encounter has started in the Guddar forest of Kulgam. SOG of J&K Police, Army and CRPF are on the job. Further details to follow."

Meanwhile, Chinार Corps said that two terrorists were killed in the encounter while a Junior Commissioned Officer sustained injuries. Security forces are working to ascertain the identities of the slain terrorists as the operation continues.

"Vigilant troops observed suspicious movement and upon being challenged, terrorists opened fire, prompting a fierce exchange of gunfire. During the encounter, two terrorists were eliminated while a JCO was injured," it said on X.

Later in the evening Army wrote on X: "Chinार Corps honours the supreme sacrifice of the bravehearts, Sub Perbhat Gaur and L/ Nk Narender Sindhu, in line of duty for the Nation. Their courage and dedication will

forever inspire us. IndianArmy expresses deepest condolences and stands in solidarity with the bereaved families. Operation continues."

The operation is being monitored by senior police and Army officials. Director General of Police (DGP) J&K, Nalin Prabhat, also visited the site of the ongoing encounter in south Kashmir's Kulgam district—(KNO)

AIIMS Awantipora.....

machinery, workforce mobilization and allied works, the Chief Minister stressed that strict adherence to timelines is critical for commissioning this prestigious project. He directed the executing agency to expedite all pending works and ensure their completion within fixed deadlines.

Omar Abdullah emphasized that AIIMS Awantipora must be commissioned as a single integrated unit, with both OPD and IPD services made operational simultaneously for the benefit of the general public.

To facilitate this, he instructed the executing agency to fortnightly review status of the progress of works.

The Chief Minister also called upon the executing agency to mobilize additional manpower and machinery to accelerate the pace of work. He reviewed in detail the physical and financial progress of the project, including the construction of the main hospital building, priority building works, approach road, water supply, final master plan, routes to emergency department and other allied facilities.

He further impressed upon them the need to ensure proper stabilization of the surrounding areas, especially in view of the recent heavy rainfall and the institution's location on hilly terrain.

Earlier, Executive Director AIIMS, Dr. Mohanty, briefed the meeting on the progress achieved so far, informing that MBBS courses are scheduled to commence in July 2026, while OPD and allied services are expected to become functional early next year, with the institution fully operational by the end of the same year.

Later, the Chief Minister inspected the site, the premises and perused master plan of the institution.

CM Reviews.....

and proposed plan of activities for the marathon.

The Chief Minister emphasized that the marathon must go beyond being a sporting event to become a holistic cultural and tourism experience.

He directed officials to tie up with hotels, restaurants, and local businesses to provide special packages for participants and visitors, allowing them to explore Kashmir's hospitality, cuisine and heritage during their stay.

He also suggested introducing 10 km and 5 km runs for local participants in addition to the full and half marathons, thereby expanding community engagement and encouraging youth participation.

Stressing the importance of sustainability, he called for efforts to secure a title sponsor for the mega event to ensure financial viability and greater brand visibility.

Taking into account the Delhi Marathon and Diwali festivities, Omar Abdullah instructed that the Kashmir Marathon-2025 be scheduled on November 2 (Sunday), 2025, instead of the earlier proposed 19 October date.

Director Tourism Kashmir briefed about the scale and structure of the event. The second edition will feature Full Marathon (42.19 km), Half Marathon (21.09 km), and a 10 km Run, covering iconic locations of Srinagar including Poloview, Rajbagh, Lal Chowk, TRC, Nishat Garden, and SKICC, offering participants the breathtaking autumn backdrops of Kashmir.

The event will be supported by a professional event management agency, responsible for logistics, branding, athlete facilities, and post-event management.

The marathon will also be featuring a Marathon Expo and a Gala Cultural evening, aimed at engaging athletes, tourists, and locals, while showcasing Kashmiri art, culture, and traditions.

Importantly, the event is being aligned with eco-friendly practices. The marathon will encourage youth involvement through school-level activities and fun runs, while NGOs and local volunteers will be engaged as "eco-volunteers" for route clean-ups and sustainability initiatives.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister launched the promotional video of Kashmir Marathon-2025 and was presented with his participation certificate from last year's edition, in which he himself successfully completed the half marathon.

Reiterating his government's commitment, Omar Abdullah said the Kashmir Marathon will be positioned as a world-class sporting spectacle that celebrates the Valley's scenic beauty, promotes tourism, and fosters a spirit of health, wellness, and community togetherness.

Kashmir's Rs.....

its tributaries in March 2022.

The Union Ministry recommended the project for inclusion under the Flood Management Project (FMP) component of

the Flood Management Project & Border Areas Programme (FMPBAP) for the period 2021–26, with 90 percent central funding and 10 percent Union Territory funding.

After Union Government's approval, the administrative council gave its go-ahead to the project in July 2022.

Two key components—resectioning of the Flood Spill Channel (FSC) and its linked components, and widening of the Outfall Channel (OFC)—were conceived as part of the project, with a combined financial implication of up to Rs 1280 crore.

However, the Irrigation and Flood Control Department Kashmir did not initiate work due to differences in findings between two studies conducted by the Pune-based Central Water & Power Research Station (CWPRS) and EPTISA, a multinational engineering company specializing in engineering, consultancy, information technology, and institutional development.

Given divergences, the matter was referred to the CWC, which nominated the Member (River Management) as the nodal officer to recommend a way forward.

After holding 11 meetings with various stakeholders, the CWC forwarded its recommendations to the J&K government on December 23, 2024.

Officials told KNO that the alterations recommended by the CWC would have an additional financial implication of Rs 300 crore. "We need to get approval for additional funding before executing work on these two components," an official said.

He added that around 20 bridges crossing the Flood Spill Channel (FSC) may have their foundations exposed due to excavation up to 2 meters deep. "Extra cost will be required to strengthen their foundations," he said.

When contacted, Minister for PHE, Irrigation and Flood Control, Javed Rana said they are examining the project.

He said that nothing was done in the past 11 years for prevention of floods in Kashmir—(KNO)

MLA Doda Mehraj.....

Assembly elections, had initially supported Omar Abdullah during government formation.

The government later informed the Legislative Assembly Speaker about the detention of Malik.

According to intimation by District Magistrate Doda, Harvinder Singh, a copy of which lies with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Malik, who represents Doda-52 constituency, has been booked under the provisions of the J&K Public Safety Act, 1978.

The communication states that the action was taken on grounds of his activities being "prejudicial to the maintenance of public order."

"After examining relevant materials, reports, and circumstances, authorities concluded that the continuance of such activities posed a 'grave threat' to peace, public order and tranquillity in the district," it reads.

The government said preventive detention under the PSA was found necessary "in the interest of maintaining public order and safeguarding law and order in the region".

The arrest has drawn criticism from political leaders across the region.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah voiced his opposition through social media, calling the detention unjustified. "There is no justification for detaining Mehraj Malik under PSA. He's not a threat to public safety, and using this discredited law against an elected representative is wrong. If the unelected government can use its powers against an elected representative like this, how can the people of J&K continue to have faith in democracy?" he wrote.

Reacting to the arrest, Arvind Kejriwal, National Convenor and Chief of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), said, "Is it a serious offense to request a hospital for one's constituency that an elected MLA is imprisoned? Mehraj Malik is a committed leader of the AAP. He will continue to represent the people and fight for their rights. Jail, threats, or conspiracies will not deter any dedicated member of AAP."

People's Conference President and Handwara MLA Sajad Lone condemned the move, saying it undermines democratic processes. "We strongly condemn the use of the PSA against MLA Mehraj Malik. This is a soulless democracy," Lone said, adding that such actions reduce the people's mandate to a symbolic exercise.

He added that the will of the people remains subservient when elected representatives are denied the right to express their views, warning that such measures damage the credibility of democratic institutions in the region.

PDP leader and MLA Waheed Parra also denounced the arrest, describing the use of PSA as a tool to silence political voices.

"Draconian laws are being weaponised to crush dissent. Such authoritarian measures are no way to resolve political differences in a democracy," Parra said.

"Invoking the Public Safety Act (PSA) against MLA Mehraj Malik is unjustifiable. If an elected representative has erred, he must be questioned and dealt with under due

process of law. That is how accountability works in a democracy," Srinagar MP, Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi said.

The PSA, he said, intended for exceptional cases of grave security threats, has been repeatedly misused in Jammu & Kashmir to detain individuals on vague and arbitrary grounds. "It has effectively become a tool to silence voices. Such misuse erodes public trust in institutions and reduces a legal safeguard into an instrument of suppression. We strongly condemn the use of abusive language by Mehraj Malik, but this is not justice; it is repression," he added.

NC legislator Salman Ali Sagar said Malik's arrest under the PSA sets "a dangerous precedent" in Jammu and Kashmir. Terming the move as an attempt to "stifle democracy" and "silence dissent", he added, "Free speech and political voices must be protected, not suppressed.

Senior Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) leader and MLA from Langate, Sheikh Khursheed, also condemned the detention of fellow MLA.

Addressing a press conference, Khursheed urged the Lieutenant Governor to review the decision immediately and appealed to the Chief Minister to convene an all-party meeting to formulate a collective response.

"This decision is not just against Mehraj Malik, but against all the people of Doda who elected him through democratic means," Khursheed said, demanding immediate revocation of the order.

The legislator said that any objectionable remarks or actions attributed to Malik should have been dealt with through judicial or parliamentary channels, not through draconian laws.

The MLA also raised serious questions over what he termed as 'discriminatory use' of the PSA in Jammu and Kashmir. "Is this law meant only for the people of J&K? Is there any other region in India where such action is taken against elected representatives?" he asked—(KNO)

J&K receives.....

The large excess rainfall came at a time when the region experienced back-to-back years of deficit rainfall.

Pertinently, Jammu and Kashmir experienced its driest year in five decades in 2024, witnessing a significant deficit of 29%. In 2023, J&K recorded 7% deficit, in 2022 16% deficit, 2021 saw 28% deficit and 2020 experienced 20% deficit.

The data reveals that Srinagar & Jammu, summer and winter capitals of Jammu and Kashmir, are among the five stations where excess rainfall has been recorded during the period. The other three stations include Anantnag, Pulwama and Reasi. (Areas where rainfall exceeds 20% to 59% above the normal are categorized as experiencing 'Excess Rainfall'.)

Seven stations including Budgam, Ganderbal, Bandipora, Baramulla, Kulgam, Kathua and Poonch recorded a normal precipitation in this season, the data reveals. However, it shows that the two stations including Kishtwar, Kupwara and Shopian have recorded a deficit rainfall of 33 per cent, 20 per cent and 57 per cent respectively.

Meanwhile, the weatherman has predicted more spells of rain and thunder till September 12th.

Director MeT, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad told KNO that generally cloudy weather was expected today with one or two spells of light rain and thunder at many places of J&K with possibility of brief moderate showers over isolated districts of Jammu division.

From tomorrow, he said that generally hot & humid conditions are expected with brief spells of rain and thunder at a few places till September 12th evening.

He also said that a fresh spell of light to moderate rain and thundershower is expected at many places of J&K towards early morning and morning hours on September 13—(KNO)

CS Reviews.....

and existing nano-enterprises for their upgradation.

He directed departments to ensure that Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) are meticulously prepared to minimize the risk of business failure and stressed the need for continuous capacity building of applicants. He also emphasized hiring skilled manpower for the Project Management Unit (PMU) to ensure professional execution of the mission.

Calling upon banks to clear existing pendencies at the earliest, he urged them to play a proactive role in assisting applicants in DPR preparation, noting that the quality of DPRs is pivotal in translating ideas into sustainable enterprises.

He further asked financial institutions and departments to fast-track sanctioning and disbursement of loans so that eligible youth do not face delays in setting up their ventures.

Expressing satisfaction over the progress achieved so far, the Chief Secretary directed all stakeholders to work in synergy to scale up the mission's outreach and impact.

Principal Secretary, Finance, Santosh D. Vaidya, in his remarks, underlined that the programme's success hinges on three pillars including that of skilling of youth, financial support through banks, and strong market linkages. He stressed leveraging existing institutional mechanisms to ensure the goals remain practical and achievable.

Director, IIM Jammu, highlighted the need for a year-long activity calendar for capacity building of stakeholders, with timely listing of training topics and resource persons from reputed institutions.

Presenting the progress report, Secretary, Labour & Employment, Kumar Rajeev Ranjan, informed that Mission YUVA has so far received 42,334 applications including 36,951 for nano enterprises, 1,557 for new MSMEs, and 210 from existing MSMEs.

He further added that the mission has also recorded 90,611 registrations on the YUVA portal, of which 20,304 applications have been verified by Single Business Development Units (SBDUs) and 15,438 approved by District Level Implementation Committees (DLICs).

At the banking level, 15,771 applications involving projects worth Rs 1,071.43 Cr have been submitted. Of these, 4,190 applications have been sanctioned and 2,087 projects disbursed, reflecting strong momentum in youth-led entrepreneurship.

The average project cost, supported under the scheme, was said to stand at Rs 6.3 lakh, with banks sanctioning projects worth Rs 264.47 Cr, disbursing Rs 133.46 Cr, and subsidies worth Rs 23.18 Cr claimed so far.

Director, Employment, Shahzad Alam, further highlighted the strong digital engagement of the mission, with the YUVA mobile app crossing 50,000 downloads and the portal recording over 9 lakh visitors, positioning it as one of the most transparent and accessible platforms for youth empowerment in the UT.

Later, the Chief Secretary reviewed the live YUVA Dashboard, assessing district-wise performance on applications, credit flow, DPR generation, and youth skilling activities across blocks and municipal areas. He also reviewed the status of DLIC clearances, pendencies at banks, and the impact of Udyam Jagriti sessions being conducted across J&K.

CS Seeks.....

heavy losses, with vast stretches of paddy fields and apple orchards bearing the brunt.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary made a strong pitch for immediate central assistance to restore vital infrastructure such as power supply lines, water supply schemes, schools, roads, bridges and other public utilities. He underscored the need of a comprehensive safety audit of critical public infrastructure, particularly schools, healthcare facilities, bridges and roads, to ensure their resilience for their utility for continuous public use.

The Chief Secretary also sought special relief for farmers whose crops or agricultural lands were damaged due to the floods. He proposed that the Central Government bear the farmers' share of premium too under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) so that the affected growers can avail insurance cover for their crop losses.

Highlighting the issue of connectivity, he pressed for immediate directives to central road agencies to undertake swift restoration of damaged roads and support new connectivity projects in flood-hit districts that remain cut off.

The Chief Secretary later took note of the restoration measures taken in Jammu division. He took detailed appraisal first from Divisional Commissioner Jammu and then enquired from each Deputy Commissioner about the status of essential amenities there along with relief and rehabilitation measures initiated to bring respite to the locals in terms of connectivity, power, water and other public infrastructure.

The IMCT has already visited several worst-affected areas of Jammu region, which has borne the maximum brunt of the recent floods and landslides. Over the past month, inclement weather has left J&K reeling, with around 150 people losing their lives and key roads, including the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway, frequently blocked, thereby affecting the movement of traffic on these roads here.

DC Srinagar reviews progress in testing, tracking & treatment

HT News Desk / DIPR

SRINAGAR, SEP 08: In order to review the progress towards Tuberculosis-Free Srinagar under the TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan in the district and assess the measures taken to achieve the goal of a TB Free status, a meeting of District TB Control Society was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar Akshay Labroo (Chairman District TB Control Society) here on Monday at meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex.

At the outset, DC took a Medical Zone/Block wise appraisal of key performance indicators including, TB notification rates, early detection and treatment adherence, implementation of Ni-Kshay Mitra initiative aimed to provide additional patient support to improve treatment outcomes of TB patients.

During the meeting, DC was given a detailed overview about the availability and utilisation of diagnostic equipment, screening



mechanisms and treatment facilities in all Medical Zones and Blocks of the district.

On the occasion, Labroo laid emphasis on coordinated efforts, community engagement and

optimal utilisation of resources to achieve the objectives of the TB Free Srinagar under TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan. He called for intensified screening drives, particularly targeting vulnerable



sections of the population to curb the spread of TB.

DC pressed for optimised resource utilization to deliver timely diagnosis and ensure effective treatment regimens to the

TB patients. He stressed the importance of home visits by ASHA workers to extend 'at-home' support to patients and enhance recovery rates.

He said though the efforts of the administration are yielding significant results, the District TB Society has to further intensify efforts under the TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan and work collectively towards achieving a TB-Free Srinagar in alignment with national health goals.

DC assured all required support from the District Administration to District TB Control Society to further strengthen its functioning and improve testing measures to achieve required screening.

The meeting was attended by Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, Chief Medical Officer, Dr Tahir Sajad, all Zonal Medical Officers, Block Medical Officers, Medical Superintends of SKIMS, Soura, SMHS, Hospital, JVC Bemina, JLN Hospital, Gousia Hospital, CD Hospital and other concerned.

Mushtaq Ahmad Wani of BHSS Beerwah Honoured with Prestigious best teacher Award

Ubaid Mehdi Kashmiri

BUDGAM, SEP 8: Mushtaq Ahmad Wani, a distinguished teacher at Government Boys' Higher Secondary School (BHSS) Beerwah, Budgam, has been conferred with the Best Teacher Award 2025 by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

The award was presented on Teachers' Day by Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha at SKICC Srinagar, in the presence of the Chief Secretary, Secretary School Education, and Director School Education J&K.

Selected among 34 outstanding educators from across the Union Territory, Wani was honoured for his exceptional contribution to school education. His dedication, innovative teaching methods, and unwavering commitment to nurturing young minds have earned him recognition at the highest level.

Expressing his gratitude, Wani thanked the Government of Jammu and Kashmir and the Department of Education for acknowledging his efforts. "This award,

JKCIP Rural Credit Workshop Held at KB Pora, Kulgam

Farooq Rather

KULGAM, SEP 8: A concluding workshop on Rural Credit under the Jammu & Kashmir Competitiveness Improvement in Agriculture and Allied Sectors Project (JKCIP) was held today at KB Pora, Kulgam. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from over 130 farmers and rural youth, reflecting growing awareness about the role of institutional credit in rural economic development.

Organized jointly by Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Kulgam in collaboration with the Departments of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Sheep Husbandry, and other allied agencies, the workshop served as a multi-stakeholder platform to discuss strategies for strengthening rural credit systems. The presence of the Principal of ITI KB Pora added an educational dimension to the workshop, emphasizing the importance of linking skill development with financial literacy and access. During the technical session, Dr. Ab Shikoor Khanday, Dr. Shahid Ahmad, and Dr. Tariq Iqbal from KVK Kulgam highlighted that access to affordable and timely rural credit is fundamental to boosting agricultural competitiveness. They underscored that JKCIP enables farmers and rural youth to adopt high-value crops, modern farming technologies, and enterprising agricultural ventures.

Officials from various departments provided detailed insights into credit-linked government schemes, subsidies, and crop/livestock insurance. They encouraged participants to utilize financial assistance for projects like dairy farming, poultry, and sheep rearing—ventures that can significantly enhance income and diversify livelihoods.

The workshop also included an interactive session, where attendees raised questions regarding loan eligibility, repayment terms, and insurance benefits. Officials assured that under JKCIP, steps are being taken to streamline banking procedures and enhance coordination among farmers, financial institutions, and line departments.

IGP Traffic Holds Key Meeting with Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers Union on Highway Blockade

Farooq Rather

SRINAGAR, SEP 8: Inspector General of Police (Traffic), Mr. M. Suleman Choudhary (IPS) held a crucial meeting today with the management of the Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers cum Dealers Union, headed by Chairman Mr. Bashir Ahmad Basheer, to address the ongoing crisis caused by the continuous closure of the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway (NH-44) due to inclement weather conditions.

During the meeting, Chairman Bashir Ahmad Basheer apprised the IGP Traffic of the severe distress faced by fruit growers as hundreds of fruit-laden trucks remain stranded at various locations along NH-44 for several days. This, he said, has resulted in major damage to fresh fruit consignments, particularly early-season varieties such as Babugosha, Galamast, and Red Galla.

He further highlighted that despite advisories issued to fruit growers to delay harvesting, apple crops are naturally falling from trees, causing additional damage. As a result, the estimated losses to the horticulture sector are expected to exceed ₹500-700 crore, with the figure rising daily as the highway remains blocked.

Mr. Basheer appreciated the government's step of allowing six-tyre trucks to ply via the Mughal Road, but emphasized that this arrange-



ment is not sufficient for the transportation of large fruit consignments. He clarified that high-volume fruit transportation is traditionally carried out using 10, 12, and 14-tyre trucks, which are currently not suitable for the Mughal Road due to its infrastructure limitations and terrain conditions.

In response, IGP Traffic Mr. M. Suleman Choudhary informed the delegation that Mughal Road is not feasible for larger vehicles in its present condition. He acknowledged the gravity of the situation and assured the Union that the Traffic Department is making every possible effort to restore NH-44 at the earliest. He also confirmed that telephonic discussions with SSP Traffic (National Highway) have been held to expedite efforts.

Highlighting the economic strain, Mr. Basheer noted that freight charges have surged nearly 300% above normal rates, adding a heavier financial burden on growers already facing crop losses.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Union delegation expressed satisfaction upon being informed that, if weather conditions improve, there is a strong possibility of NH-44 reopening within a day. The IGP assured that once reopened, priority will be given to stranded fruit-laden trucks to ensure timely delivery to markets across the country.

The meeting concluded on a positive and hopeful note, with both sides committed to mitigating the crisis and supporting the horticulture community.

TIFFS Set for Bigger, Better 4th Edition in Srinagar

Gulfam Barji

SRINAGAR, SEP 8: The International Film Festival of Srinagar (TIFFS) organized by Vomedh announced that its 4th edition will be held on 13-14 November 2025 in Srinagar, Kashmir. The festival has already received more than 100 film submissions from 20 countries reaffirming its position as one of the fastest-growing cultural events in North India. The last date for film submissions is 30th September 2025.

Since its inception TIFFS has played a pivotal role in establishing Srinagar as a hub of art, culture, and cinematic excellence. The previous editions have not only attracted entries from over 40 countries but also witnessed the gracious presence of the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of J&K, "UT" Shri Manoj Sinha Ji, at the opening and closing ceremonies. The festival has also been graced by eminent Bollywood

personalities including B. Subhash, Subhash Kapoor, and Atul Tiwari.

Opening the first press briefing, Co-Festival Director Rohit Bhat said, "What started as a humble initiative has today evolved into a movement that celebrates not just films, but also the creative spirit of Kashmir. TIFFS is about giving local talent a platform while bringing world cinema to Srinagar. This edition will be bigger and more impactful, building on the strong foundation of the past three years."

Festival Director Rakesh Roshan Bhat added, "TIFFS has become a global platform for showcasing diverse cinematic voices while positioning Srinagar on the international festival map. With growing international participation, we are committed to celebrating cinema that inspires, engages, and connects people across borders."

Sharing his perspective, Jury



Head Manzoor Ahmad Mir remarked, "It is heartening to see filmmakers from across the world recognizing TIFFS as a credible platform. The quality of films submitted this year reflects how seriously the global community is taking the festival, and we look forward to curating an enriching experience for audiences."

Bhavna Pandita, Advisor to Vomedh, noted, "TIFFS is not just a festival, it's a celebration of Kashmir's resilience and creativity. By engaging youth, nurturing local

talent, and fostering cultural exchange, TIFFS continues to build a positive narrative about our region."

The festival is also witnessing strong collaborations this year. Pankaj Lidoo, Co-founder and Director of Landmark Crafts Pvt. Ltd. and Landmark Fasteners Pvt. Ltd. who is closely associated with TIFFS 2025, stated, "It is a privilege to be part of TIFFS, which has grown into a beacon of cultural pride for J and K. Our association is aimed at helping TIFFS

scale newer heights and reach a larger global audience."

Further strengthening its impact, Varun Sharma (Founder and CEO) and Saajan Kherni (Founder and COO) of Snowtales, an upcoming OTT platform dedicated to high-quality regional content from J and K, announced their association with TIFFS. Snowtales' collaboration with TIFFS will open up new avenues for young storytellers from the region. Our shared vision is to showcase authentic Kashmiri stories to the world and empower local talent with a platform that goes beyond the festival, they said jointly.

The 4th edition of TIFFS promises an exciting line-up of screenings, panel discussions, workshops, and networking opportunities. By bridging local narratives with global cinematic perspectives, TIFFS continues to make Srinagar a proud center of art, culture, and creativity.

CEO Ganderbal Combines Supervision with Teaching Spirit During School Visit

HT News Desk

GANDERBAL, SEP 08: Chief Education Officer Ganderbal, "Shri Oneel Kumar Bhat", today undertook a surprise inspection of various educational institutions in Zone Tullamulla to take firsthand stock of their overall functioning. During the visit, the Officer closely checked the attendance of staff and students, reviewed the academic environment, and assessed the adherence to institutional discipline.

Adding a unique dimension to the inspection, the Officer stepped into the classrooms—not as an official, but as a teacher among students. He interacted with learners in a lively manner, posing questions, sharing insights, and encouraging them to express themselves freely. The atmosphere briefly turned into a spirited classroom session, leaving the students both surprised and motivated.



The Officer also gave on-the-spot directions to staff for further improvement in teaching-learning outcomes, punctuality, and overall institutional performance. He emphasized the importance of student-centric learning and urged teachers to nurture curiosity, discipline, and holistic development.

The visit, blending supervision with active engagement, reflected the officer's commitment to strengthening the educational landscape of the district while keeping students at the heart of the system.

Verinag Tourism Development Authority at the Forefront of Public and Tourist Service

Farooq Rather

VERINAG, SEP 8: The Verinag Tourism Development Authority (VDA) continues to play a leading role in promoting tourism while actively serving the local population, pilgrims, and tourists alike. Guided by the principles of "We Care, We Serve, We Facilitate", the Authority remains committed to ensuring the provision of essential services and improved facilities in the region.

With a firm belief that "Service to Mankind is Service to God", the VDA is working diligently to preserve and enhance the spiritual, cultural, and natural heritage of Verinag, all while enriching the overall experience for visitors.

Speaking on the occasion, Rouf Rahman (JKAS), CEO of Verinag Development Authority, said:

"Our mission is to develop Verinag as a model tourist destination while maintaining its natural charm and spiritual essence. We are focused on creating a welcoming and comfortable environment for both locals and visitors, with continuous upgrades to infrastructure and services."

Locals and tourists have lauded the efforts of the Authority and expressed hope that these services will continue with the same dedication and spirit in the future.

IIM JAMMU SIGNS TRIPARTITE MOU WITH JKTPO, I&C DIRECTORATES J&K TO LAUNCH MSME HEALTH CLINIC

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

JAMMU, SEP 8: The Indian Institute of Management, the Jammu & Kashmir Trade Promotion Organization (JKTPO) and the Directorates of Industries and Commerce Government of Jammu & Kashmir signed a landmark Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) today at the Board Room, Jagti Campus to establish the Jammu & Kashmir MSME Health Clinic (JKMHC) under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) program.

The formal signing ceremony included detailed presentations on the scope, funding structure and implementation of the roadmap of the initiative.

The MoU signing ceremony was graced by Prof. B. S. Sahay, Director, IIM Jammu; Sudershan Kumar, Managing Director, JKTPO; Arun Kumar Manhas, Director, Industries & Commerce, Jammu, Government of J&K and Khalid Majeed, Director, Industries and Commerce, Kashmir, Government of J&K.

From the Directorate of Industries and Commerce and JKTPO, the ceremony was attended by Imran Mehmood, FA-/

CAO, JKTPO; Naser Ali, Joint Director, M&P, Directorate of Industries and Commerce, Jammu; Sourabh Sharma, General Manager, JKTPO and Vishal Ray, Faculty, JKTPO. Also present were senior faculty members of IIM Jammu, including Prof. Jabir Ali, Dean, Faculty and Research; Prof. Sanjeev Pathak, Chairperson, Executive Education and Consultancy; Prof. Shyam Narayan Lal, Chairperson, Media and Publication Division; Prof. Rajesh Sikka, Co-Chairperson, Executive Education & Consultancy; Prof. Pranab Ranjan Das, Chairperson, SBDU; Dr. Rashmi Ranjan Parida, Associate Professor; Dr. Mahesh Gadekar, Associate Professor and Cmdr. Kesavan Baskaran, Chief Administrative Officer, IIM Jammu.

Speaking on the occasion, Director, IIM Jammu Prof. B. S. Sahay remarked that hosting the PMU at IIM Jammu will enable a strong knowledge-driven and research-based framework to address real-world challenges faced by MSMEs. He underscored that this collaboration aligns with the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, as articulated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra



Modi Ji and reflects IIM Jammu's commitment to nation-building through capacity development, innovation, and entrepreneurship support. He also proposed active involvement of IIM Jammu's students in live projects with industries across the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir, providing them with valuable hands-on exposure and opportunities to contribute innovative solutions towards the progress and development of the region. This initiative, integrated into the course curriculum and evaluation process, will not only prepare students to become industry-ready professionals but also empower faculty to drive impactful research, consultancy, and knowledge creation in the MSME sector.

Managing Director, JKTPO Sudershan Kumar emphasized JKTPO's role in enhancing global market access for local enterprises through branding, promotion and trade facilitation, particularly for traditional industries such as handicrafts, carpet weaving and horticulture.

Director, Industries & Commerce Jammu Arun Kumar Manhas stated that the MSME Health Clinic will act as a transformative support system, ensuring that small businesses adapt and thrive in a rapidly evolving economic landscape.

Dean, Faculty and Research, IIM Jammu Prof. Jabir Ali stated that this initiative provides a unique opportunity to integrate rigorous academic research with field-level interventions for MSME

development. He emphasized that insights generated from this program will not only help rehabilitate distressed units but also contribute toward policy design and knowledge creation in the MSME sector.

The Jammu & Kashmir MSME Health Clinic will serve as a dedicated institutional mechanism to identify early signs of stress in MSMEs and provide tailored solutions through financial and non-financial interventions. A Project Management Unit (PMU), to be hosted at IIM Jammu, will comprise experts in branding, marketing, finance, technology and strategy, supported by young professionals and data analysts.

The primary objective of establishing the Jammu & Kashmir MSME Health Clinic (JKMHC)

under the RAMP Programme is to create a proactive mechanism for the early identification and prevention of stress in Micro and Small Enterprises (MSMEs). This initiative aims to provide both financial and non-financial support to MSMEs that exhibit signs of stress and are on the verge of slipping into sickness. It is designed as a preventive measure to address the developmental needs of MSMEs, focusing on diagnostic and clinical support exclusively for enterprises showing early signs of stress.

The program has been structured to run over a two-year duration from FY 2024-25 to FY 2026-27, with a total outlay of 30.64 crore. It will cover nearly 959 identified MSMEs across Jammu & Kashmir and will be implemented in three distinct phases. Phase I will focus on diagnostic studies and identification of vulnerable enterprises, Phase II will implement financial and non-financial interventions and Phase III will establish long-term monitoring and sustainability frameworks.

Financial interventions under the program will include working capital loans, technology upgradation subsidies, warehouse

receipt financing and export promotion grants, while non-financial interventions will emphasize capacity building, skill training, quality certification and strategic mentoring.

The signing of this MoU marks a significant step in strengthening the MSME ecosystem in Jammu & Kashmir. By combining academic expertise, government support, and trade promotion mechanisms, the initiative seeks to create a scalable and sustainable model over a clearly defined two-year duration with a total outlay of 30.64 crore, transforming distressed enterprises into resilient contributors to the regional and national economy.

With IIM Jammu as the knowledge partner and host of the Project Management Unit, the initiative draws upon the Institute's strengths in research, innovation, and executive training. This collaboration not only reinforces IIM Jammu's position as a leading national institution committed to inclusive development but also showcases its growing role as a catalyst for industry-academia-government partnerships in the region.

DLSA Srinagar observes 'International Legal Literacy Day'

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

SRINAGAR, SEP 08: A comprehensive legal awareness programme was today organized by the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Srinagar, to observe International Legal Literacy Day, at Government S.P Higher Secondary School, Srinagar.

The initiative was aimed at sensitizing students about their legal rights and the importance of understanding the law, thereby promoting awareness and empowering the youth with crucial legal knowledge.

The programme was conducted under the chairmanship of Tasleem Arief, Principal District and Sessions Judge, Srinagar, and held under the supervision of Sajad Ur Rehman, Sub-Judge/Secretary, DLSA Srinagar.

During the session, Zeenat Nazir, Deputy Chief Legal Aid Defence Counsel (LADC), delivered an insightful presentation on important legal issues such as Child Custody and Guardianship, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, and Drug Abuse.

She elaborated on the legal framework that governs child custody and guardianship disputes, the provisions and procedures under the POCSO Act aimed at safeguarding children against sexual offences, and the laws relating to the prevention of drug abuse and its social consequences.

Her session provided the students with a detailed understanding of their rights and the legal measures in place to protect vulnerable individuals.

Additionally, Sehar Nazir, Assistant Legal Aid Defence Counsel, addressed the audience on the broader topic of International Legal Literacy Day. She highlighted the significance of knowing one's legal rights and responsibilities as an informed citizen and emphasized the role of law in promoting justice, equality, and social welfare.

The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from the students, who actively engaged with the resource persons. Their curiosity and thoughtful questions created a dynamic atmosphere, allowing for productive discussions.

DLSA B'gam organizes Legal awareness prog. for Legal Services Unit on Mental Illness & Intellectual Disabilities

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

BUDGAM, SEP 08: District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Budgam, under the aegis of the Jammu & Kashmir Legal Services Authority (JKLSA), successfully organized Legal Awareness programmes for the Legal Services Unit on Mental Illness and Intellectual Disabilities, Budgam in collaboration with Alasma Educational Institute, Budgam.

The programme was conducted under the supervision of O.P. Bhagat, Chairman, DLSA Budgam,

and the active guidance of Nusrat Ali Hakak, Secretary, DLSA Budgam, along with Neforah, Principal, Alasma Educational Institute, Budgam.

The primary objective of the programme was to highlight the rights of students with mental illness and intellectual disabilities, with a particular focus on promoting inclusive education. It also aimed to sensitize and educate school teachers and students about the legal provisions available for persons with disabilities in educational institutions.

The event also sought to pro-

vide free legal counseling to individuals and families facing challenges related to mental health care, guardianship, and disability rights.

Resource persons, Lateef Ahmad Khan (Chief LADC) and Zahoor Ahmad Malik (Assistant LADC) Budgam delivered detailed presentations on the subject and raised awareness among participants.

Awareness campaigns were also conducted in local schools and colleges to sensitize teachers and students about the legal protections available for persons with disabilities.

In their address, resource persons emphasized that students with mental illnesses and intellectual disabilities are entitled to free, compulsory, and inclusive education. This includes admission without discrimination, provision of reasonable accommodations such as modified curricula and additional time, access to essential support services and assistive devices, and the option to choose between regular or special schools, as guaranteed under the Right of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act of India.

They further stressed that to

strengthen inclusive education, governments and institutions must ensure teacher training, accessible infrastructure, provision of necessary learning materials, and regular surveys to identify and support children with disabilities.

Teachers and students of Alasma Educational Institute actively participated in the programme and expressed great enthusiasm towards the awareness drive.

The programme witnessed the participation of a large number of teachers, students, and other stakeholders.

IMCT visits Kulgam, chair review meeting on relief, rehabilitation measures

Also conduct tour of various flood affected areas

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

KULGAM, SEP 08: The Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT) deputed by the Union Government, today visited Kulgam and held a review meeting to take stock of relief, rehabilitation and restoration measures in the aftermath of recent floods in the district.

The team comprised of Col. K.P. Singh, Joint Secretary & Advisor (Ops & Comm), NDMA; Navin Kumar Chauraisa, Regional Officer, MoRTH Jammu; Arti Singh, Deputy Director Ministry of Power; Dr Vikram Singh, Joint Director, Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare; Shachi Jain,

Director Ministry of Jal Shakti; Kandarp V Patel, Deputy Secretary FCD and Rakesh Kumar, Under Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development.

During the meeting, the team took detailed assessment and review of damages caused by recent floods, cloudbursts, and landslides in the district.

The meeting was attended by the Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan; Senior officers of district administration and engineers from key departments like PWD (R&B), Jal Shakti, Irrigation & Flood Control, KPDC, PMGSY, and senior officers of Health, Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal & Sheep Husbandry, FSC, and

Revenue departments.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner presented an overview of the recent flood situation in the district.

Addressing the officers in the meeting, the IMCT said that the observations and recommendations as well as damage report will be shared with the Union Government to ensure immediate relief as well as long-term resilience planning for the district.

Later, the IMCT team also visited various flood affected areas of the district including Khudwani and Qaimoo to gather on-ground assessment of the damages caused.

Deputy AG presides over Pension Adalat at Bandipora

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

BANDIPORA, SEP 08: The Principal Accountant General, J&K Srinagar, in collaboration with district administration Bandipora and District Treasury office Bandipora, today organized a Pension Adalat at the Conference Hall, Mini Secretariat Bandipora.

On the occasion, Deputy Accountant General, Pawan Kumar Rathi, presided over the Adalat and said that it was meant for facilitation of all participants. He reiterated that no pension case would be accepted in physical mode and emphasized the importance of using the online system for form filling and documentation.



District Treasury Officer Bandipora informed that awareness sessions on the Pension Suvidha Portal have already been conducted for the benefit of employees and pensioners. He said such initiatives help in bringing transparency and timely disposal of cases.

On the occasion, participants appreciated the services of the Principal Accountant General, J&K Srinagar, for their swift delivery and efforts in making the process easier for pensioners.

During the programme, representatives from the Pensioners United Front Bandipora raised various issues before the officers.

Senior Accounts Officer, presented a detailed overview of the Pension Suvidha Portal and explained the related facilities available for pensioners.

The programme was aimed at resolving pension-related issues and creating awareness among DDOS, pensioners and family pensioners about new facilities available.

DC Baramulla chairs meeting on implementation of Vibrant Villages Programme 2.0

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

BARAMULLA, SEP 08: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, today chaired a meeting at Dak Bungalow, here for the implementation of the Vibrant Villages Programme 2.0 (VVP-II) in the district.

During the meeting, it was informed that 18 strategic villages in the border areas of Baramulla district have been identified under VVP-II for targeted and holistic development.

The programme aims at achieving the saturation of 10 key interventions, encompassing livelihood generation, financial inclusion, infrastructure strengthening, skill development, tourism promotion, education and other crucial sectors



to uplift border and remote habitations.

Speaking during the meeting,

DC emphasized that VVP-II is not just a developmental initiative but also a strategic effort to ensure

inclusive growth in border villages, thereby integrating them more closely with mainstream progress.

Highlighting the importance of grassroots planning, DC instructed all concerned departments to nominate dedicated officers for 18 identified villages who will be tasked with conducting baseline surveys and village assessments to identify infrastructural gaps and prepare comprehensive development plans in coordination with local communities.

Minga Sherpa further directed the appointed Nodal Officer to ensure proper training of these members so that the planning and execution process remains efficient, and need-based.

Meanwhile, DC directed that the concerned department shall host cultural festivals, outreach activities, and Gram Sabhas in all identified villages to generate awareness among people about the beneficiary schemes and benefits available under the programme.

Stressing on transparency, DC directed all officers to ensure that field-level data submitted must be accurate and free from discrepancies, as this would form the foundation for effective planning and timely execution of interventions.

The meeting was attended by the Chief Planning Officer Baramulla, Nisar Ahmad; Sub-Divisional Magistrate Uri, and other district and sectoral officers.

DLIC approves 200 cases under Mission YUVA in Ramban

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

RAMBAN, SEP 8: Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Alyas Khan today chaired the meeting of the District Level Implementation Committee (DLIC) under the ambitious Mission YUVA initiative. The meeting was convened to evaluate applications and extend financial support to local youth for establishing viable business ventures, thereby giving a major push to self-employment in the district.

The Committee undertook a detailed block-wise review of applications received under Mission YUVA, scrutinizing them for eligibility and project feasibility. A roadmap was also charted to empower the district's youth with sustainable livelihood opportunities.



The meeting was attended by GMDIC Ravinder Anand; Assistant Director Employment & Career Counseling Officer Amit Kumar; Lead District Manager Ramban and other concerned officers.

As many as 200 applications, verified by the Small Business Development Unit (SBDU), were placed before the committee. After comprehensive evaluation, based on eligibility norms, project feasibility and socio-economic

background of applicants, all 200 cases were approved for financial assistance and mentorship support under the Mission.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner termed Mission YUVA "a ray of hope for

the youth" and said that by providing access to credit facilities and handholding support, the Government aims to nurture entrepreneurship and reduce dependency on government jobs. "The district administration is committed to reaching every eligible youth and fostering a culture of self-reliance," he added.

The Deputy Commissioner also directed the District Nodal Officer JKEDI and the General Manager DIC to fast-track preparation and verification of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) to ensure pending applications are processed without delay.

The Assistant Labour Commissioner informed the Deputy Commissioner that so far 907 cases have been approved under Mission YUVA in Ramban district.

One Day Capacity Building Workshop organized to mark Int'l Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

JAMMU, SEP 8: To mark the International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies, the Department of Ecology, Environment & Remote Sensing (DEERS) – EIACP Hub, J&K, in collaboration with the Directorate of Industries & Commerce, Jammu organized a One-Day Capacity Building Workshop here at Bari Brahmana Industries Association (BBIA), SIDCO Industrial Complex.

The programme began with a plantation drive led by dignitaries of the event. The programme was attended by ESC Jammu/Coordinator EIACP Programme of MoEF&CC Dr. Rajan Singh; President BBIA Lalit Mahajan; Vice President Ajay and General Secretary Viraj, Functional Manager Bharat Bhushan; Functional Manager Pankaj Singh Jasrotia; Functional Manager Amit Kumar Digra; Industrial Promotion Officer Rajeshwar Singh; Range Officer DEERS Anil Sharma; Programme Officer EIACP Dr. Kirti and owners of Industrial Units.

The Coordinator Dr Rajan Singh delivered the welcome address and explained about the air quality which is closely linked to the earth's climate and ecosystems globally and importance of the day.

The workshop commenced with an enlightening lecture by Divisional Nodal Officer, NPCCHH DHS Jammu Dr. Rashmi Sharma, highlighting the serious health implications of air pollution, including respiratory disorders, cardiovascular diseases and increased vulnerability to climate related illnesses.

Associate Professor, Central University of Jammu Dr. Ankit Tandon spoke on "Targeting Clean Air for Blue Skies: Role of Industries in Mitigating Aerosol Pollution", stressing that aerosols were one of the main causal agents of air pollution. He emphasized that construction, vehicular, biomass burning etc. emissions contribute significantly to air pollution and climate change, leading to rising temperatures, extreme weather events and ecosystem degradation.

The Speakers further highlighted that Air pollution is contamination of the both indoor and outdoor environment and it can be due to any chemical, physical or biological agent that modifies the natural characteristics of the atmosphere. Household combustion devices, motor vehicles, industrial facilities and forest fires are common sources of air pollution. Pollutants of major public health concern include particulate matter, carbon monoxide, ozone, nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide. Outdoor and indoor air pollution cause respiratory and other diseases and are important sources of morbidity and mortality. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr Kirti PO underlined the need for collaborative efforts to reduce air pollution, build climate resilience and ensure sustainable development.

Aadi Karmayogi Abhiyan: 3-Day District Process Lab Training Programme commences at BGSBU Rajouri

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

RAJOURI, SEP 08: A three-day District Process Lab Training Programme, under the Aadi Karmayogi Abhiyan, commenced today at Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University. The training programme, being held from September 08 to 10, is designed to build the capacity of field staff to strengthen governance and development initiatives in tribal areas.

The programme was inaugurated in the presence of Deputy Commissioner Abhishek Sharma.

In his address, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted the shared responsibility of all stakeholders in uplifting tribal areas. He emphasized that meaningful outcomes can only be achieved through concerted efforts and collaboration to bridge gaps in key development indicators.

Reiterating the district's vision for tribal empowerment, the Deputy Commissioner stressed the need to create self-reliant, resilient and inclusive communities across all 104 tribal villages of Rajouri. He underlined that ensuring every household benefits from government schemes will significantly improve governance outcomes and foster holistic tribal development.

The training programme places special focus on capacity-building through skill development workshops, interactive sessions, and the implementation of the Dharti Aabha Plan for sustainable and inclusive tribal growth. It also emphasizes grassroots participation by involving Aadi Karmayogis, Aadi Sahyogis and Aadi Saathis in the effective execution of welfare schemes and programmes.

Serving as a platform to align strategies and build the capacities of frontline staff, the three-day District Process Lab is expected to ensure last-mile delivery of services and promote inclusive growth in tribal areas.

The event was attended by Assistant Commissioner Development, Auqil Nuvaid; Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, Sheraz Chowhan; District Social Welfare Officer, Abdul Raheem; Chief Agriculture Officer, Madan Gopal Singh; Chief Medical Officer, Dr Manohar Rana and other officers and officials.

Ayush Department Doda organizes medical camps to promote health & wellness

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

DODA, SEP 8: Ayush Department Doda successfully organized a series of medical camps across the district today.

On the directions of Health Secretary J&K, Dr. Syed Abid Rasheed Shah, Deputy Commissioner Doda, Harvinder Singh and the Directorate of Ayush J&K, the camps were held at six Ayush Health and Wellness Centres located at Neota Bhaderwah, Udyanpur, Thandapani, Dongroo Thathri, Trown, and Goshti Chirala. The camps were held under the supervision of District Ayush Officer Dr. Ajay Kumar Tickoo.

A total of 529 patients were examined by Ayush Medical Officers and provided with free Ayush medicines. The medical teams also distributed awareness material and delivered health talks focusing on the importance



of personal hygiene, safe drinking water and preventive healthcare practices, especially in the aftermath of recent rains and floods.

In addition to treatment and medicines, the Ayush teams emphasized the role of Ayurveda, Yoga and other traditional systems of medicine in strengthening immunity and improving overall well-being. The initiative aimed not only to provide immediate relief to patients but also to promote long-term health awareness in the community.

The Ayush Department reaffirmed its commitment to bringing healthcare services to the doorsteps of people in rural and far-flung areas. The dedication of Ayush Medical Officers and staff played a vital role in ensuring the success of this outreach program, which received appreciation from the local population.

Kishtwar: DLTC approves 42 cases under JK REGP

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

KISHTWAR, SEP 08: The District Level Task Force Committee (DLTC) under the Jammu and Kashmir Rural Employment Generation Programme (JK REGP) met today to discuss the loan proposals processed by the implementing agency J&K Khadi & Village Industries Board.

The meeting was chaired by Additional Deputy Commissioner Pawan Kotwal.

The Committee meticulously reviewed the applications proposing businesses such as grocery stores, readymade garment shops, tile manufacturing units, and other enterprises. Out of 60 cases presented, 42 were approved, while



18 applicants did not turn up for the interview.

The total sanctioned amount stands at around 3.87 crore (3,87,00,000), with a subsidy of 1.35 crore (1,35,00,000) to be provided to the beneficiaries.

The establishment of these

units is expected to generate new employment opportunities, thereby contributing significantly to Kishtwar's economic growth and providing livelihood support to local residents.

The meeting was attended by LDM Harsh Rawal and representa-

tives from RSETI, JKEDI, Polytechnic, JK Bank Cluster Office, ITI, along with other stakeholders.

During the proceedings, ADC Pawan Kotwal highlighted the government's continued efforts to boost entrepreneurship and self-employment in rural areas. He urged beneficiaries to actively engage in their ventures and utilize the financial assistance efficiently to ensure long-term sustainability.

The committee also discussed ways to facilitate skill development and provide handholding support to new entrepreneurs. Representatives from various agencies assured their cooperation in offering technical training, marketing assistance, and post-loan monitor-

ing to ensure smooth execution of business plans.

Beneficiaries expressed appreciation for the assistance provided under the JK REGP scheme and committed to working diligently to expand their businesses. Several applicants from remote and hilly areas expressed hope that the initiative would help reduce migration by creating local employment.

The ADC reiterated that such schemes are instrumental in promoting inclusive growth and empowering youth and women from disadvantaged sections. He also directed concerned departments to conduct periodic reviews and ensure transparency throughout the loan disbursement and implementation process.

DC Jammu directs measures to ease traffic in city with focus on Kunjwani, Satwari, Narwal-Kunjwani stretches

■ HT News Desk

JAMMU, SEP 8: Deputy Commissioner Jammu has directed stakeholder agencies to ensure smooth vehicular movement and public safety amid the ongoing Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway works at the Kunjwani, Satwari and Narwal-Kunjwani stretches. The directions were issued to officers from NHAI and other concerned authorities by the DC during an inspection of the area.

He inspected several points of the project from Qasim Nagar and Narwal up to Satwari.

The Deputy Commissioner assured the public that the measures decided today will be implemented within seven days and people can expect smoother and safer traffic flow.

He was accompanied by SSP Joginder Singh; SSP Traf-



fic Jammu Farooq Qaiser; ACR Dr Rajesh Kumar; SDM Jammu South Manu Hansa and Tehsildar Jammu South Arti Bhardwaj.

During the inspection, the DC emphasized the importance of minimizing inconvenience to commuters, especially during peak hours, while ensuring that construction activities progress as scheduled. He directed relevant departments to install clear signage, proper lighting, and barricades at critical points to guide drivers and pedestri-

ans safely.

The Deputy Commissioner also instructed the Traffic Department to deploy additional personnel at key junctions and intersections to regulate movement and prevent bottlenecks. Emergency response teams were advised to remain on standby to handle any incidents promptly.

Stakeholder agencies were asked to coordinate closely with local police and transport authorities to implement temporary diversions and alternate

routes where necessary. The DC further directed regular monitoring of traffic conditions and immediate reporting of issues to ensure timely corrective action.

He urged citizens to cooperate with the administration by following traffic advisories and exercising patience as infrastructure development progresses for the long-term benefit of the region.

Officials highlighted that once completed, the expressway work will significantly improve connectivity and reduce travel time, benefiting commuters, traders, and tourists alike.

The DC concluded by reiterating the administration's commitment to balancing development with public convenience and safety and assured periodic reviews to assess progress and address challenges effectively.

Relief Camp held at Ghatti to support flood-hit families

DC Kathua reaffirms commitment to rehabilitation efforts

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

KATHUA, SEP 8: To provide timely succor to calamity-affected households, the District Administration Kathua today organised a relief distribution camp at Manhas Mohalla Ghatti which was presided over by Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Sharma. Families that suffered losses due to incessant rains and flash floods were provided relief material comprising dry ration, blankets, mattresses and tents to ease their immediate difficulties.

Interacting with locals, the Deputy Commissioner said the administration is afoot to reach out to all affected families, even in the remotest corners of the district to provide immediate relief and support for rehabilitation under SDRF norms.

The DC disclosed that out of approximately 1200 partially or fully damaged houses reported across the district due to incessant rains and landslides. The administration has already extended financial assistance to over 500 families under SDRF, while the process is on to clear remaining



cases.

He further informed that machinery has been pressed into service to retrieve remains from damaged properties, enabling affected households to begin restoration where possible. He said such relief camps are being organised at subdivision levels, while parallel efforts are underway to restore road, power and drinking water connectivity disrupted by rains and floods.

The Deputy Commissioner reiterated that early restoration of essential services, timely disbursement of relief assistance and addressing public grievances remain top priorities of the administration.

ADC Kathua Vishavjeet Singh and other revenue officials were present during the camp and also interacted with the affected families to take stock of their concerns.

HT EDITORIAL

Take all precautions before reopening of schools in Jammu division

As the authorities have decided to reopen the educational institutions in the Jammu division from Wednesday, September 10 it is important that all the safety parameters are followed in the same. The people at helm should ensure that no risk whatsoever is involved in the reopening of educational institutions and the safety of the students as well as teachers is not compromised in this process.

It would be in place to mention here that the educational institutions in the Jammu division had to be closed following prolonged spell of rainfall that led to flooding and inundation of many areas. Precious lives were lost and huge damages were caused to the properties spread across the Jammu division. Given the fact that there has been continuous rainfall in the Jammu division it is important that a proper check of the school buildings and related infrastructure is done.

Once a proper check is carried out and the infrastructure is found fit then only a school should be reopened. The condition of the private school buildings is better when compared to the government school buildings. Day in and day out there are reports that the condition of scores of school buildings is dilapidated and the same needs to be improved. There are many schools in both the Kashmir and Jammu divisions which don't have doors and windows and there are many others which do not have proper seating arrangements.

The children in these schools are forced to sit on jute matting which too is worn out in most of the cases. Since the government school buildings are prone to weather vagaries it is imperative that no compromise whatsoever is made with respect to safety and security of the children, teachers and the other staff. This would ensure that the children receive their education in a proper manner and the other activities are also carried out in a systematic manner. Once the mind of a child is diverted then it is quite possible that the education of the child would be affected.

At the same time it is also important that the educational institutions are free from water logging or stagnant water. The presence of water logging or stagnant water is a breeding ground for mosquitoes and as such one cannot rule out the outbreak of water borne diseases. All the precautions need to be taken in this regard so that the children don't fall prey to the water borne diseases.

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Disaster Strikes, We React: The Flaw in Our Management System



■ **Munish Bhatia**

India is a country blessed with incredible natural diversity. The towering Himalayas, vast plains, fertile soil, networks of rivers, and long coastlines provide us with immense natural wealth. But along with this diversity comes the recurring devastation of natural disasters. Sometimes cloudbursts strike, sometimes sudden floods swallow entire villages. At times the earth trembles, while elsewhere mountains crack apart. Modern science and technology have given us the ability to forecast weather, to estimate rainfall and its intensity in advance—yet, every time, our preparedness proves incomplete. This has become our greatest weakness.

The irony of disaster management in India is that we become active only after disaster has struck. Preparations for relief camps, strengthening of roads and bridges, cleaning of drains, and stocking essential medicines—all of this looks impressive on paper, but the ground reality is very different. Administration and concerned agencies often wait until the crisis is upon them. This is why thousands of people lose their homes each year, and properties worth crores of rupees are destroyed. At times, the negligence and apathy of government machinery proves to be even more dangerous than the disaster itself.

In particular, landslides have now become common in mountainous regions. What was once considered an unusual occurrence is now a recurring phenomenon during the monsoon. The reasons are not only natural, but man-made as well. Rampant deforestation has weakened the soil. Illegal construction on mountain



slopes, carried out without regard for geographical capacity, has destabilized the land. Expert reports constantly warn that the limit for construction on these slopes has already been exceeded. Governments too issue guidelines from time to time. Yet, in reality, large builders and hotel projects easily get approvals. Local administration and corruption only worsen the situation. The result is that even moderate rainfall during monsoon turns deadly, and entire villages or towns are wiped out by landslides.

A large part of India falls in earthquake-prone zones. Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, the northeastern states, and even the national capital Delhi lie within this danger zone. Every few years, a major earthquake reminds us how vulnerable we are. After every earthquake, discussions on earthquake-resistant construction gain momentum. Suggestions for safer buildings, recommendations of construction standards, and government directives come forward. But once conditions normalize, everything is forgotten. Builders and ordinary citizens are made aware of earthquake-resistant norms, yet there is never strict monitoring to ensure compliance. That is why the next time the earth shakes,

we are forced to bear heavy losses all over again.

The situation is no different when it comes to floods and cyclones. Every year, our coastal regions face cyclones. The meteorological department often provides accurate forecasts, but the question is—do local administrations and communities prepare accordingly? In many cases, warnings are taken lightly. Relief material, safe shelters, and deployment of rescue teams are not arranged on time. As a result, thousands of people lose both lives and livelihoods. The same negligence is evident during floods. River embankments collapse, drains are not cleaned in time, water disposal systems remain incomplete, and cities struggle with waterlogging.

Disaster management must not be confined to post-disaster relief and rescue operations. It must be integrated into our development policies and daily lives. For example, if urban planning is approached with disaster-resilience in mind, the extent of damage can be greatly reduced. Strict enforcement of earthquake-resistant construction standards, regular cleaning of rivers and drains, prevention of illegal constructions, and promotion of afforestation can all significantly strengthen our preparedness.

Social awareness is another major need of disaster management. Citizens must be made to realize that disaster preparedness is not only the responsibility of the government, but also of every individual. Schools and colleges should provide special training on disaster management, mock drills should be organized, and people should be taught how to protect themselves and their families in times of crisis. If preparedness at the citizen level is strong, the burden on the administration will be reduced, and loss of life and property will also decline.

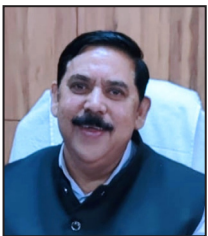
India has institutions such as the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). These organizations have comprehensive plans and policies for disaster management. But their impact is visible only when implemented effectively at the local level. Often, these plans look excellent on paper, but their execution is extremely weak. Corruption, negligence, and shortage of resources dilute them. What is needed is a stronger monitoring mechanism and clear accountability.

It is not in our hands to completely prevent natural disasters. But the extent of their impact depends entirely on our preparedness. If we remain careless, we will continue to suffer the loss of lives and property every year. But if we prepare seriously, adopt scientific recommendations, incorporate environmental balance into construction and development, and build public awareness—we can significantly minimize the impact of disasters.

Today, the need of the hour is to stop treating disaster management as a formality undertaken only after calamities strike. It must be integrated into our policies, our planning, and our personal responsibility. Unless we take preparedness seriously, floods, earthquakes, and landslides will continue to shake us year after year. This remains our greatest weakness—and we must overcome it.

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International Literacy Day: A Mandate for Higher Education Institutes in the Digital Age



■ **By Prof. Dinesh Chandra Rai**

Every year on 8 September, as we observe International Literacy Day, we reflect on our progress as a society. While the classic image of a child learning to read a book remains powerful, today's landscape is different. This year, with the focus on "Promoting literacy in the digital era," we face a new reality. Literacy isn't just about reading words; it's about navigating a world shaped by screens, apps, and data. As a university leader, I can tell you this isn't just a policy goal for us—it's a human mission. Our job is to make sure the promise of a digital future reaches every single person, not just those with a fast internet connection.

The gap we're seeing in India today is stark. We have a generation of young people who are true digital natives, building tech empires and pushing the boundaries of innovation. But a short trip to any village shows the other side of the story. There, the digital divide isn't an abstract concept; it's a very real barrier. It's the farmer who can't access critical weather data, the student who missed class because of a poor network, or the parent who can't get government services online. Our challenge isn't just to catch up—it's to bridge this divide with compassion and smart strategy, turning potential into real progress for everyone.

The Vision from the Ground Up

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 gives us the perfect blueprint for this. It's not just another document; it's a living guide that encourages us to break free from old ways of thinking.

The policy's push for a well-rounded, hands-on education, one that mixes different subjects and puts technology at the center, is exactly what we need. We're asked to do more than just produce graduates; we're asked to create people who can solve problems, think critically, and contribute to their communities.

This is where our work gets truly personal. We've embraced programs like Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA), which isn't just about adopting villages; it's about building a connection. It's about our students and faculty spending time in rural communities, understanding their daily struggles, and helping them find solutions. Imagine our students from the computer science department helping villagers set up a basic internet hub, or our education majors creating simple, visual tutorials in local languages on a tablet. This isn't just a project; it's a partnership. In this, our youth volunteers from the National Cadet Corps (NCC) and National Service Scheme (NSS) can play a particularly important role. Their existing framework of community service and discipline makes them ideal for leading on-ground digital literacy campaigns, acting as the first point of contact and support for village residents.

The Real Barriers and Our Next Steps

The work isn't easy. I've seen firsthand the obstacles we face. The biggest one is simply a lack of infrastructure. You can't teach digital literacy without electricity or a reliable internet signal. Then there's the people part of the problem. Many of our educators themselves need to be comfortable with new technology before they can teach others. And we can't forget the relevance issue: if the digital tools we offer don't solve a real-life problem for people, they won't be used. A study at Dibrugarh University even showed that even our postgraduate students struggle with some digital skills, which tells us we have work to do right at home before we go out into the community.

To start, we must team up with private service

providers and local governments. They have the resources and expertise to help us build community Wi-Fi spots and set up digital labs in villages. A combined effort is much stronger than a solo one. Within our own walls, every professor and student, no matter their field, should receive ongoing training in digital skills. We need to create a university-wide culture where digital literacy is a core part of everything we do, not just a separate subject. We should also invest in creating digital content in local dialects and languages. Think simple video tutorials for farmers on using a mobile app to check market prices or for women's self-help groups to manage their finances. It's about meeting people where they are. To incentivize this, we could launch a special "Digital Impact Fund" to support student-led projects aimed at solving digital literacy challenges, turning our students into entrepreneurs and innovators who are rewarded for practical solutions that directly help our communities.

A Call to Action

The journey ahead is about more than just technology. It's about building a more inclusive society where everyone has a chance to succeed. The principles of NEP 2020 and the spirit of initiatives like UBA show us the way. By committing ourselves to these goals, we can transform our universities from academic centers into true engines of national development. It is a big task, but with a clear vision and collective effort, we can make sure that our nation's story in the digital age is one of universal access and shared opportunity.

Prof. Dinesh Chandra Rai's contributions to both academics and research have been exceptional throughout his three decades in academia. His leadership, both as a professor at BHU and as Vice-Chancellor of BRA Bihar University, has significantly enriched the academic landscape Email: dcrai@bhu.ac.in

After All Humans Are Humans!



■ M S Nazki

What we have once enjoyed and deeply loved we can never lose, for all that we love deeply becomes a part of us! Death leaves a heartache no one can heal; love leaves a memory no one can steal!..... Assam Rifles

To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die because the world may never notice, but we will always remember! At least we did something.....The women of Manipur!

You are not forgotten, loved one, nor will you ever be, as long as life and memory last, we will remember thee.....Ema Producers present this story!

Obviously the script writers and the producers are Assam Rifles!

Once again the giant behind the scenes is DG (AR) Lt General V. Lakhera!

The story line we got was a thin one which went something like this!

Ema Foundation, situated in Keithelmanbi, a sensitive area between the Imphal Valley and Kangpokpi District, is a beacon of harmony and resilience.

Managed by a Kuki-Meitei couple, Donjalal Haokip and Rebati Devi, the orphanage stands as a poignant reminder of the unity and coexistence that once defined Manipur before the ethnic strife erupted in May 2023.

The foundation provides a safe haven for 19 children (14 Boys and 5 Girls) from diverse communities, including Kuki, Meitei, Naga, and Nepali backgrounds.

In a profound display of solidarity, all 19 children from the Ema Foundation are being sponsored by the Assam Rifles and are receiving their education at the Assam Rifles Public School in Keithelmanbi. Also, over a period of time, the foundation has received administrative support from various interested donors.

Your children are not your children. They are sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you. And though they are with you yet they belong not to you... you may give them your love but not your thoughts.... A parent's love is a constant, enduring gift to their children, who ultimately belong to themselves and the future.....Some forget and some parents love the art..... Honestly speaking I was inspired by many books and one of them happened to be Khalil Gibran.....The first was.....On a river side I saw a frog dancing on the head of a snake.....(I'm neither a frog or a snake, but love children.....MD)!

A short love story from Manipur:

Once upon a time there lived a very hardworking widow. The greenery and tidiness of her surroundings proved her character. There also lived a supernatural frog who could talk like humans. Both of them were lonely since no one lived with them so the frog suggested that he shall live with the widow as her son to which the widow agreed happily.

One day, the frog insisted his mother go and ask for the princess hand, as he came to know that the princess was so beautiful. The mother didn't agree at once as she thought that it was not a good idea to ask for marriage for a frog. But she had to give up as her son insisted again and again and went at once for her son's marriage to the princess.

The mother had to face embarrassment and came back home as she was told by the King not to come again with such a senseless proposal but she could take any amount of wealth she wishes to have from the treasury.

The mother, after reaching home, was insisted more by her son to ask for the same. The King this time was so angry that he ordered the widow to chase away, beating her. The blood on her mother's face seemed to be 'kwa' (betel nut) by her son to which he thought that it was a token of agreement to his marriage. But after learning the truth from his mother he swore to take revenge.

One day again the son requested his mother to go and ask the same proposal to which the mother agreed at last because of the love for her son. But this time instead of getting angry the King agreed to the proposal thinking that the bridegroom must not be an ordinary person who had been insisting for so long. He led down certain conditions.

He ordered the son and mother to build a place with gardens and servants to serve his daughter. But if they fail to provide her the said things then both of them would be put to death. The mother was so fright-



ened to hear this that she returned home depressed. After narrating all the stories the son consoled his mother to rest well.

After the mother had fallen asleep, the frog took out gems, jewels with pearls and prayed to fulfil all the wishes of the King. As he opened his eyes, seeing all the jewellery, the King was so pleased for his daughter that the marriage took place with great pomp and show.

The princess, on their wedding night, had a dream where she was with a charming prince enjoying together in a garden. After waking up she was more amazed to find only the skin of the frog, the same prince charming from her dream came out as he turns out to be the frog. And then they live happily forever.

It could be a myth but the people of Manipur believe in the same!

Anyway coming to the era of modernization:

New Keithelmanbi is a location within the Kangpokpi District of Manipur, India. It is notable for having a Police Station (NKM-PS) responsible for policing the area, including areas like Kotzim village and the surrounding villages of the Kom community.

The region has recently seen activity related to community issues, including the recovery of arms and explosives by security forces and reports concerning the resettlement of IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons).

It is situated in the Kangpokpi District, a significant tribal district in Manipur.

Community and Administration: The area is home to a diverse population and the New Keithelmanbi police station is involved in various aspects of maintaining public order and investigating crimes.

Recent Developments: In 2025, security forces recovered arms and explosives in a general area under the New Keithelmanbi Police Station. There have also been efforts to resettle Internally Displaced Persons in areas like New Keithelmanbi.

The District was created in 2016 from the former Sadar Hills area, and is predominantly inhabited by ethnic groups including the Kukis. The area has seen historical significance, including being the site of ethnic conflicts, particularly during the Manipur violence that began in 2023, leading to displacement and ongoing tensions between communities.

Ethnic Tensions: The area has seen conflict between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities.

Displacement and Return: Many Meitei families from Kuki-majority districts, including New Keithelmanbi, were displaced and are now in the process of returning.

National Highway Blockades: The area, which sits on National Highway-2, has been a site of frequent blockades by protesters attempting to block essential supplies to the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley.

Other Developments: Kuki Christian Church: The Kuki Christian Church Manipur Synod has dedicated a new center in Keithelmanbi, highlighting the community's presence and activities.

Military Support: The Red Shield Division has supported the upgrading of the Peniel Care Centre at Keithelmanbi to combat substance abuse, showing military engagement in the community's well-being.

There is always some madness in love. But there is also always some reason for madness! Love sought is good, but given unsought, is better.....57 Div Indian Army does not fight a losing battle because they love humanity.....MD!

The 57th Mountain Division, also known as the Red Shield Division, is a formation of the Indian Army primarily involved in counterinsurgency operations in the Northeast Indian states, particularly Manipur and Tripura. Established in 1966, the division has played a significant role in maintaining security and stability in the region, conducting operations against rebel groups and engaging in humanitarian and civic action programs to foster goodwill with the local population. Its area of responsibility includes operations along the Indo-Burmese border and cooperation with the Assam Rifles in areas such as Manipur and Tripura.

Role: Counterinsurgency and maintaining border security.

Geographic Focus: Northeast India, specifically Manipur and Tripura.

Headquarters: Based in Masimpur near Silchar, with a role also in Tripura.

Historical Significance: Raised in 1966 for counterinsurgency in Mizoram and served in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971.

Operations: Engaged in significant operations like Operation Golden Bird and has worked closely with local civil authorities and military bodies like the Assam Rifles.

Community Engagement: Involved in medical camps and other outreach activities to support local communities in the region.

It was raised in 1966 for counterinsurgency operations in Mizoram. Until 1990, headquartered at Aizawl with III Corps. Previously the division was headquartered in Masimpur near Silchar.

57th Mountain Division took part in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 as part of IV Corps. It also successfully conducted



Operation Golden Bird in 1995 to eliminate rebels in Northeast India.

Areas Served

The formation and units of the Division operate in some of the remote corners of Manipur along with Indo-Burmese border.[6] It cooperates with Assam Rifles Imphal Sector wing for any insurgency in Manipur .

The Kuki insurgency refers to several related conflicts involving Kuki ethnic groups, primarily in Northeast India, driven by demands for self-determination, land, and ethnic identity, particularly in the context of ethnic clashes with the Naga community in Manipur and the British colonial era. A key aspect is the demand for a separate Kuki homeland or "Kukiland," leading to the formation of various militant organizations like the Kuki National Army (KNA). These efforts culminated in various agreements, such as the Suspension of Operation (SoO) pacts, aimed at political dialogue, though tensions and related violence continue.

The Meitei insurgency refers to militant activities carried out by Meitei separatist groups in Northeast India, primarily aiming for a sovereign and socialist Manipur, like the United National Liberation Front (UNLF). This term gained more prominence during the 2023 ethnic violence, where the Meitei community was involved in armed conflict with the Kuki-Zo community. Following the 2023 violence, there was a resurgence of insurgent activities across Manipur, with both Meitei and Kuki groups engaging in armed conflict and looting weapons from state armories.

Separatist Aim: Meitei insurgent groups like the UNLF have historically aimed to establish an independent Manipur.

Roots in Conflict: The term "Meitei insurgency" in the context of the 2023 conflict refers to the self-defense and militant activities by Meitei groups during the ethnic unrest with the Kuki-Zo community.

But in present everything has changed: A short love story from Manipur is about a Kuki woman and a Meitei man whose relationship was interrupted by the ethnic clashes of 2023, forcing the man to leave for Guwahati to rejoin work, creating uncertainty for their future. Another tale is the traditional Zeliangrong folk story of Meiriang and Lubuannei, who grew up together, sharing a mutual affection that became a deep love, though their story is now part of folklore. An Interrupted Love During the 2023 Unrest!

The Couple: A Kuki woman, employed in a market, and a Meitei man, a digital marketer working remotely from Imphal. The Setting: They met while trekking

The 57th Mountain Division, also known as the Red Shield Division, is a formation of the Indian Army primarily involved in counterinsurgency operations in the Northeast Indian states, particularly Manipur and Tripura. Established in 1966, the division has played a significant role in maintaining security and stability in the region, conducting operations against rebel groups and engaging in humanitarian and civic action programs to foster goodwill with the local population. Its area of responsibility includes operations along the Indo-Burmese border and cooperation with the Assam Rifles in areas such as Manipur and Tripura

at Cheirao Ching hill in Imphal.

The Interruption: Their relationship was put on hold due to the ethnic clashes, leading to the man having to leave for Guwahati to work.

The Uncertainty: Their future became uncertain as they faced the prospect of being separated for a long time.

A Subtle Confession: When Meiriang asked Lubuannei about her preference for marriage, her decisive bite on his arm revealed her unspoken romantic feelings, confirming his own love.

As they grew into respected adults, the story culminates in their promise of marriage and a shared future.

And Now:

One year on: Orphanage run by Kuki-Meitei couple offers hope...The Ema Foundation is a home for destitute children located in New Keithelmanbi, Kangpokpi district, Manipur. Run by a Kuki-Meitei couple, Doujalal Haokip and M. Rebati Haokip, the foundation was established in 2015 and provides care and shelter for children from diverse ethnic backgrounds, fostering harmony between communities. The orphanage is supported by public donations, the Assam Rifles, and the CRPF, who provide essential items and infrastructure.

Location: New Keithelmanbi, Kangpokpi district, Manipur

Purpose: Home for destitute children

Founders: Doujalal Haokip and M. Rebati Haokip

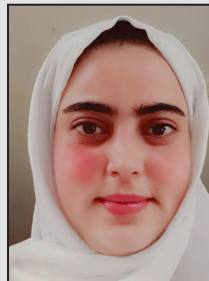
Children: Housed from various ethnic groups, including Kuki, Meitei, Naga, and Nepali, promoting inter-community harmony

Support: Receives support from the public, Assam Rifles, and CRPF!

Educational Support: Children attend Assam Rifles Public School

The last sirens: Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift of God, which is why we call it the present. Listen to the mustn'ts, child. Listen to the don'ts. Listen to the shouldn'ts, the impossibles, the won'ts. Listen to the never haves, then listen close to me... Anything can happen, child. Anything can be. You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us. And the world will live as one!.....We all have dreams!

Genetic Engineering: Reimagining Life Through the Lens of Molecular Precision



■ **Bisma Ashraf**

Introduction: A New Frontier in Biological Innovation

Genetic engineering stands as one of the most transformative scientific advancements of our time. It offers humanity the ability to not only understand the blueprint of life but to rewrite it with precision. As a student pursuing an MSc in Genetics, I view this field as both a marvel of molecular science and a mirror reflecting our ethical responsibilities. From curing inherited diseases to enhancing agricultural resilience, genetic engineering is reshaping the boundaries of possibility.

What Is Genetic Engineering?

Genetic engineering refers to the deliberate modification of an organism's DNA using biotechnological tools. Unlike traditional breeding, which relies on generational cycles and chance mutations, genetic engineering allows scientists to make targeted changes at the molecular level. This includes:

- **Gene editing:** Techniques like CRISPR-Cas9, base editing, and prime editing enable precise alterations to DNA sequences.
- **Synthetic biology:** Designing new biological systems and organisms from scratch.
- **Epigenetic modulation:** Influencing gene expression without altering the DNA sequence itself.

These innovations have ushered in the era of programmable biology, where life can be designed with intention and foresight.

Medical Applications: From Treatment to Cure

In the realm of medicine, genetic engineering is revolutionizing how we approach disease:

- Gene therapy involves correcting defective genes responsible for conditions like cystic fibrosis, sickle cell anemia, and muscular dystrophy.
- CAR-T cell therapy reprograms

immune cells to target and destroy cancer cells, offering hope for previously untreatable malignancies.

- **Pharmacogenomics** tailors drug treatments to individual genetic profiles, enhancing efficacy and reducing side effects.
- **mRNA vaccines**, developed using synthetic genetic sequences, have proven vital in responding to global pandemics like COVID-19.

These breakthroughs are not merely treating symptoms—they are addressing the root causes of disease at the genetic level.

Agricultural Innovation: Feeding a Growing World

Genetic engineering has dramatically improved agricultural productivity and sustainability:

- **Climate-resilient crops** such as drought-tolerant maize and salt-resistant rice help farmers adapt to changing environmental conditions.
- **Nutrient-enhanced foods** like Golden Rice (rich in Vitamin A) and fortified cassava combat malnutrition in vulnerable populations.
- **Pest-resistant varieties** such as Bt cotton reduce the need for chemical pesticides, promoting ecological balance.
- **CRISPR-edited crops** with optimized growth cycles and yield potential are paving the way for food security in the face of population growth.

Gene-edited livestock and vertical farming systems are also emerging as sustainable solutions for future food demands.

Industrial and Environmental Impact

Beyond health and agriculture, genetic engineering is driving innovation in industry and environmental conservation:

- **Biomanufacturing** uses engineered microbes to produce biofuels, biodegradable plastics, and pharmaceuticals.
- **Environmental remediation** involves genetically modified bacteria that can clean oil spills, absorb heavy metals, and detoxify polluted ecosystems.
- **Carbon capture technologies** are being enhanced through



modified algae and plants that sequester atmospheric CO₂ more efficiently.

- **Space biology** explores the use of engineered organisms to support life in extraterrestrial environments, including food production and waste recycling.

These applications demonstrate the versatility and potential of genetic engineering to address global challenges.

Ethical Considerations: Editing Life with Caution

With the power to alter life comes the responsibility to do so ethically.

Genetic engineering raises profound questions:

- Should we enhance human traits such as intelligence or physical ability?
- Is it ethical to edit the germline—DNA that is passed to future generations?
- How do we prevent misuse, such as the creation of biological weapons?
- Who decides which traits are desirable, and who has access to these technologies?

The controversial case of He Jiankui, who edited human embryos in China, sparked international debate and high-

lighted the urgent need for global ethical frameworks. As scientists and citizens, we must ensure that innovation is guided by compassion, equity, and transparency.

Regulation and Global Governance

Regulatory approaches to genetic engineering vary across regions:

| Region | Regulatory Body | Approach |

|-----|-----|-----|

| USA | FDA, USDA, EPA | Case-by-case safety assessment |

| EU | EFSA | Strict GMO labeling and approval |

| India | GEAC | Oversight of genetically modified crops and trials |

| Global | Cartagena Protocol | International biosafety standards |

There is growing momentum for a unified bioethics charter to ensure responsible innovation and equitable access.

The Future: Bio-Intelligence and Beyond

The next decade promises even more radical advancements:

- **CRISPR 3.0** will allow multiplex editing and epigenetic control.
- **Digital DNA synthesis** will enable on-demand creation of genetic code.
- **Biocomputing** may use DNA for data storage and logic processing.
- **De-extinction efforts** aim to revive lost species like the woolly mammoth.
- **Human-machine biology** will merge synthetic biology with neural interfaces, redefining the boundaries between organic and digital life.

As biology becomes programmable, our understanding of life itself may evolve.

Conclusion: Engineering with Purpose

Genetic engineering is not just a scientific tool—it is a philosophical turning point. It challenges our notions of identity, evolution, and ethics. As we gain the power to sculpt genomes, we must also cultivate wisdom, humility, and inclusivity. The future of genetic engineering will be shaped not only by what we can do, but by what we choose to do.

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Midterm review meeting of UT-level Apex Committee on HADP commences at SKUAST-K

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 08: The UT-level Apex Committee for the Holistic Agriculture Development Program (HADP) convened today for a three-day midterm review (2023-2025) meeting at the Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, Kashmir here.

The meeting aims to evaluate the progress of the Rs 5012 crore program and strategies for the remaining period.

The meeting was presided over by Chairman, Apex Committee, Dr Mangla Rai, renowned agriculture scientist and former DG ICAR.

Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture Production Department, Shailendra Kumar and other committee members including Dr PK Joshi, Secretary NAAS; Dr HS Gupta, former Director IARI; Vice Chancellor SKUAST-K, Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai; Vice Chancellor SKUAST-J, Dr BN Tripathi and Dr. JP Sharma, former VC SKUAST-J.

The meeting is also being at-



tended by key stakeholders, including directors from various line departments, directors and deans from SKUAST-K, Principal Investigators (PIs) of the 29 HADP projects, and other senior officials from SKUAST-K.

In his remarks, Chairman Dr. Mangla Rai presented several suggestions to further enhance the program's implementation and

impact. ACS, Shailendra Kumar, during the meeting talked about the various initiatives taken by the APD. He said HADP is reaching out to people and uplifting farmers.

Vice Chancellor SKUAST-K Prof Nazir Ahmad Ganai, while welcoming the apex committee members, gave an overview of the HADP and the meeting's objectives.

Mission Director HADP, Sandeep Kumar, presented a comprehensive two-year progress report on the program's initiatives before the committee.

The Apex Committee is the governing body of HADP responsible for overseeing the implementation of the program through comprehensive agricultural development strategies aimed at transforming the agricultural sector and improving the socio-economic conditions of farmers.

The committee will continue its deliberations over the next two days to ensure the successful achievement of all HADP goals.

Earlier in the day, the committee members led by Dr Mangla Rai, conducted a field visit to Ganderbal. They visited FPO Facilitation Centre for Aromatic Plants and Medicines at Nunar, as well as the Faculty of Forestry, SKUAST-K. The visit was aimed at assessing the progress and potential of these initiatives in promoting high-value agriculture and rural development.

IMCT visits Anantnag, takes stock of relief, rehabilitation measures

Also conduct spot-visit of flood affected areas

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

ANANTNAG SEPTEMBER 08: The Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT), constituted by the Central Government today visited Anantnag to assess the damages caused by recent heavy rainfall and natural calamities in the district.

The team also held a brief meeting with the district administration and held detailed deliberations on the relief and rehabilitation measures being carried out in the district.

During the meeting, Deputy Commissioner, Anantnag presented a detailed briefing to the team covering the extent of damages, relief measures undertaken like evacuation of vulnerable families, provision of temporary shelters, restoration of connectivity, and health and sanitation interventions as well as the requirements for long-term rehabilitation.

During the meeting, a comprehensive plan for flood mitigation and resilience-building was also discussed to strengthen long-term disaster preparedness in the district.

The IMCT, along with district officials,



thereafter conducted a spot visit to various affected areas to assess damages on the ground, including river embankments, roads, nallahs, and public infrastructure, besides reviewing immediate restoration priorities.

The IMCT, during the visit, highlighted that the Union Government is closely monitoring the situation at the highest levels and will extend full financial and logistical support for relief, rehabilitation, and long-term mitigation measures in Anantnag district.

Block level orientation workshops on Aadi Karmayogi Abhiyan held at Bandipora

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

BANDIPORA, SEP 08: On the directions of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, block level one-day orientation workshops under the Aadi Karmayogi Abhiyan were conducted today across Bandipora, including the blocks of Bandipora, Bankoot, Arin, Gurez, Tulail, and Bagtore.

These workshops were aimed at sensitizing officials, youth leaders, and tribal volunteers about the objectives and guidelines of the Abhiyan.



The workshops were organized under the supervision of the Block Development Officers, who are also Block Nodal Officers. Officials from various line departments including ICDS, Forest, Education, Health, Social Welfare, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Handicrafts, PDD, PHE, ITI, and other concerned departments actively participated in the orientation.

During the sessions, the designated block level Master Trainers and tribal volunteers were also involved to ensure wider dissemination of the information at the grassroots level.

IMCT assesses impact of flood across Shopian district

Also review relief, rehabilitation measures

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

SHOPIAN SEPTEMBER 08: The Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT) deputized by the Union Government today held a review meeting to assess the damages caused by recent floods and incessant rainfall across district Shopian as well as relief and rehabilitation measures carried out by district administration.

Deputy Commissioner, Shopian, Shishir Gupta, presented a detailed assessment of damages suffered in Shopian district before the IMCT members which included senior officers from NDMA, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Jal Shakti, MoRTH, Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Power and Finance.

During the meeting, DC Shopian gave a detailed PowerPoint presentation covering the disaster



preparedness framework. He informed the team that Shopian, spread over seven tehsils, although comparatively less vulnerable to floods than other districts, has suffered damages to public infrastructure including Roads, Bridges, Water Supply Schemes, Power assets and standing crops and

houses of lower riparian villages in Zainapora sub division.

DC Shopian also briefed on immediate restoration of services which were disrupted during floods and relief and rescue measures carried out in the district.

DC Shopian informed the IMCT that in Shopian district, 2 out of

6 major 33 KV lines, 16 feeders, 13 transformers and 19 electric poles were affected and have been restored; 55 out of 92 drinking water supply schemes were impacted and all have been restored, 25 roads were damaged of which 24 stand restored and 1 is under restoration besides PMGSY road length of about 860 metres was damaged.

The DC also apprised the IMCT that Mughal Road at KM 24 witnessed severe damage due to sliding and efforts are on to keep it open 24*7.

It was further informed that 28 villages in low lying areas covering 4284 hectares with a population of 17,200 were impacted, 4 villages namely Hydergund, Zainapora, Melahura/Wandina and Reshipora were directly hit, 21 shelter sheds were established, 129 families evacuated and 644

persons rescued.

The DC also briefed that 11 residential houses have been damaged while crop and orchard losses are being assessed.

The DC informed the team that Shopian administration has already initiated both short-term restoration measures and long-term resilience planning. He added that protective and restoration works like crate bunds, embankments and flood protection measures have been initiated at Hydergund, Zainapora, Safanagri and other vulnerable spots.

Addressing the officers, the IMCT directed for department-wise damage details be compiled for submission to GOI and assured that recommendations will be included in their report to enable immediate relief as well as long-term resilience planning for Shopian district.

One Day Capacity Building Workshop organized to mark Int'l Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

JAMMU, SEP 8: To mark the International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies, the Department of Ecology, Environment & Remote Sensing (DEERS) – EIACP Hub, J&K, in collaboration with the Directorate of Industries & Commerce, Jammu organized a One-Day Capacity Building Workshop here at Bari Brahmana Industries Association (BBIA), SIDCO Industrial Complex.

The programme began with a plantation drive led by dignitaries of the event. The programme was attended by ESC Jammu/Coordinator EIACP Programme of MoEF&CC Dr. Rajan Singh; President BBIA Lalit Mahajan; Vice President Ajay and General Secretary Viraj, Functional Manager Bharat

Bhushan; Functional Manager Pankaj Singh Jasrotia; Functional Manager Amit Kumar Digra; Industrial Promotion Officer Rajeshwar Singh; Range Officer DEERS Anil Sharma; Programme Officer EIACP Dr. Kirti and owners of Industrial Units.

The Coordinator Dr Rajan Singh delivered the welcome address and explained about the air quality which is closely linked to the earth's climate and ecosystems globally and importance of the day.

The workshop commenced with an enlightening lecture by Divisional Nodal Officer, NPCCHH DHS Jammu Dr. Rashmi Sharma, highlighting the serious health implications of air pollution, including respiratory disorders, cardiovascular diseases and increased vulner-

ability to climate related illnesses.

Associate Professor, Central University of Jammu Dr. Ankit Tandon spoke on "Targeting Clean Air for Blue Skies: Role of Industries in Mitigating Aerosol Pollution", stressing that aerosols were one of the main causal agents of air pollution. He emphasized that construction, vehicular, biomass burning etc. emissions contribute significantly to air pollution and climate change, leading to rising temperatures, extreme weather events and ecosystem degradation.

The Speakers further highlighted that Air pollution is contamination of the both indoor and outdoor environment and it can be due to any chemical, physical or biological agent that modifies the natural characteristics of the atmosphere.

DC Kupwara reviews Implementation of Vibrant Villages Programme-II

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

KUPWARA, SEPTEMBER 08: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, today chaired a detailed review meeting to accelerate the implementation of the Vibrant Villages Programme Phase-II.

The session focused on strategizing the holistic development of identified villages through enhanced infrastructure, livelihood opportunities, healthcare services, education, and improved connectivity.

Speaking on the occasion, DC underscored the critical need for inter-departmental convergence to ensure the successful execution of the central government's initiative. He emphasized that coordinated efforts between various departments and local administration would play a pivotal role in transforming the socio-econom-



ic landscape of border villages.

These efforts are aimed at significantly improving the quality of life for residents in these remote areas and integrating them into the mainstream of development while ensuring that security and accessibility challenges are addressed through targeted interventions.

To ensure a systematic and data-driven approach, detailed booklets containing a comprehensive questionnaire were distributed to the nodal officers for conducting field visits to create a baseline survey of the status of existing facilities and implementation of various schemes. The questionnaire covers areas such as access to education, healthcare, road connectivity, water supply, sanitation, and livelihood options.

DC directed officers to visit their assigned villages, engage with community members, gath-

er accurate data, and submit baseline survey findings within a stipulated timeline. He also urged them to ensure that vulnerable sections, including women, elderly residents, and youth, are actively involved in identifying challenges and shaping development priorities.

The meeting was attended by Programme Officer ICDS, Yaar Ali Khan; SDM Lolab, SDM Karnah; CPO, DIO, BDOs, Executing Engineers, and other concerned officers. Technical departments were advised to coordinate with line departments for timely implementation of infrastructure projects, while social welfare teams were tasked with mobilizing community participation.

The DC further instructed that periodic review meetings be scheduled to monitor progress, address field-level challenges, and ensure transparency in execution.

Attendance must for all classes particularly 9th, 10th, 11th & 12th: DSEK

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 08: Directorate of School Education Kashmir (DSEK) has issued a vital directive mandating regular attendance of students in all high and higher secondary schools, with special emphasis on classes 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th, in strict alignment with the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020).

This step is designed to promote holistic development, hands-on learning, and overall academic growth.

Director School Education Kashmir, Dr. G N Itoo stated, "Ensuring students presence in classrooms is foundational to building their intellectual curiosity, creativity, emotional intelligence, and ethical awareness. NEP 2020 envisions education as a transformative journey, and regular attendance plays a crucial role in making that vision a reality."

"Every missed day in school is a missed opportunity for skill-building and personal growth. It is our shared responsibility to ensure that classrooms are spaces where students feel motivated, engaged, and eager to learn," Dr. Itoo emphasized.

The circular issued in this regard calls for strict enforcement of attendance using modern systems like the VSK Attendance Chatbot and Aadhaar-based attendance tracking, applicable across all government and private schools. Principals are instructed to ensure that practical classes, particularly in science subjects, are conducted regularly to enhance hands-on learning.

Moreover, the circular stresses that principals and faculty members must take proactive steps to foster a supportive and engaging environment that encourages students to attend classes regularly. This includes creating interactive academic spaces, promoting peer engagement, and offering guidance that builds confidence and participation.

Dr. Itoo added, "Teachers are mentors and motivators. By creating a positive environment where students feel supported and encouraged, we can inspire them to attend classes regularly and pursue excellence in academics and beyond."

All Joint Directors, Chief Education Officers, Cluster Heads, and Zonal Education Officers have been tasked with personally monitoring the implementation of this directive and ensuring full compliance.

Former EU foreign policy chief states Europe almost a US vassal

■ **United News of India**

BRUSSELS, SEP 8: Former EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell on Monday stated that Europe could no longer be considered an independent actor, as its increasing appeasement of every US demand and weak leadership is pushing it closer towards becoming a vassal for Washington.

Borrell warned that the US under the Trump administration can never be considered an ally.

Referring to the frictions in the bloc, he wrote in a column for Politico, "Our union appears dangerously fragmented and weak, stuck in a hostile internal and external environment."

"Home to just 5% of the global population and a widening economic gap with other major powers, Europe isn't just

facing up to a world of continental empires but is at real risk of becoming America's vassal."

He cited Europe's agreement towards increasing its defence budget by 5% of its GDP due to US pressure at a time when its economy is in dire straits. He said Europe was becoming a "junior partner" to the US, in global conflicts all the way from its handling of the Russia-Ukraine war, to the conflicts in Gaza, and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Borrell asserted that "EU's involvement in conflicts abroad has become largely irrelevant, either due to its lack of credible international standing or unity."

Further attacking the European Commission's current leadership on domestic policies, he opined that the bloc under "President Ursula von der Leyen's second term has been coun-



terintuitively marked by the undoing of the Green Deal—the flagship project of her first term—as if climate change isn't get-

ting worse. "The Commission has also proposed an underwhelming Multiannual Financial Framework with no real

increase, thus sacrificing cohesion policy to new priorities in defence products and research." He further remarked that the

bloc—be it the EU council or Commission—is becoming heavily divided as the leadership lacks any form of long-term political vision, leadership and unity, with "Trump sympathisers and nostalgic Atlanticists" content in flattering the US and entertaining all its whims, "in the hopes of damage control, in turn fostering our political, strategic and even economic dependency on Washington—and it's hardly working."

Declaring that the US under Trump can never be an ally of Europe, the former VP of the Commission argued that all contracts signed under his tenure is only being binding to the other party. In this context, he referred to the EU's silent acceptance of US demands to increase its defence spending and buy greater stocks of US weapons, while Trump did not pledge to

strengthen European security.

"His America constitutes a huge geopolitical, economic and cultural shock to Europe," stating that becoming "a U.S. protectorate isn't inevitable—especially given increasingly indignant public opinion over the series of concessions and humiliations we're witnessing."

To counter this, Borrell urged a "reinvigoration of a pro-European majority in the bloc's three institutions—particularly the European Parliament," as well as ending the "vetocracy" being used by countries like Hungary to block Ukraine's EU membership and hindering Europe's ability in helping Ukraine.

"If no action is taken, and we wait for the next crisis to improvise on hard decisions, Europe as a political project risks dying," he concluded. UNI

Trump-Putin can prevent WW-III by working together, says top Kremlin official

■ **United News of India**

MOSCOW, SEP 8: US and Russia can prevent a third World War by working together, said Kirill Dmitriev, Russia's presidential aide on international economic affairs, stating that President Donald Trump and President Vladimir Putin are working on ending Kremlin's war with Ukraine.

Taking to X, the envoy posted an old picture from the 1945 Yalta Conference featuring Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill, and underneath it—another picture of Trump and Putin.

He captioned the post: "Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill won WWII. Putin and Trump will prevent WWIII."

The historic conference in Crimea between the



Allied leaders was noted to have laid the foundation for post-war construction of Europe and the establishment of a new world order.

It resulted in the creation of the UN, called for complete demilitarisation of Nazi Germany, and its division into four spheres of influence—US, Soviet, British, and French.

Putin and Trump have held several phone conversations and met face-to-face in Alaska in mid-August to discuss a settlement for Ukraine.

While no agreement was reached in the Alaska summit, the two sides praised the engagement as highly productive, with a noteworthy change taking place in Washington's earlier stance of calling for a permanent settlement rather than just a ceasefire.

Following the talks, Trump said that Ukraine cannot hope to join NATO or reclaim Crimea, calling those prospects unrealistic.

Despite a diplomatic breakthrough in communications, the US has sent mixed signals, as it has also warned of secondary tariffs on Russia—which currently has a duty 90%—taking it to 100%, if the Kremlin does not reach an agreement with Kyiv soon. UNI

Nepal's 'Gen Z agitation' spirals out of control, protesters breach Parliament premises; 6 dead

■ **United News of India**

KATHMANDU, SEP 8: In a major development, Nepal's 'Gen Z' protesters—agitating against corruption, social media censorship, and negligence—breached the Parliament's Gate 2, hurling stones, and setting fire to certain parts of the structure. The Kathmandu administration has imposed curfew in parts of the capital, amid reports that six people have died in violent clashes with the police.

The mass agitation occurred in wake of the government's controversial ban on several social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, alleging that they had failed to register with the Ministry of Communication and Information

Technology.

The youth-led protests, which began peacefully in the morning with patriotic songs and anti-corruption slogans, have now turned into one of the most serious challenges to state authority in recent years, reports Nepal News.

The strong anti-administration protests—particularly the breaching of Parliament premises—point towards a nationwide unrest in the country, as parallel demonstrations in a similar light have also spread to Pokhara, Butwal, Dang, Nepalgunj, and other major cities.

According to reports, four demonstrators died at the Trauma Center and one at Civil Hospital in New Baneshwor after suffering critical injuries from rubber bullets. Another protester suc-



cumbed at Kathmandu Medical College in Sinamangal, bringing the total fatalities to six, Nepal Online Khobar said.

Dozens more were injured, though the exact number is yet to be confirmed. Hospitals con-

tinue to receive casualties from across the city.

The protests escalated after police used force to disperse crowds, deploying tear gas, rubber bullets, and water cannons. Despite a curfew imposed from

12:30 pm across several areas of Kathmandu, the demonstrations have not subsided.

New Baneshwor and surrounding areas remain tense as angry protesters continue to defy the curfew, clashing with security forces.

Security forces remain on high alert across the country as analysts warn that the movement reflects a generational shift in Nepal's political landscape.

Post the clash with authorities, Gen Z Nepal movement organisers urged participants via Facebook to leave the area immediately and safely.

The postread: "Many self-interested groups are attempting to provoke the crowd. Our day has already been a success. Everyone should return home safely." UNI

ED conducts raid over alleged fake gold loan fraud

■ **United News of India**

NEW DELHI, SEP 8: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) today said that it recently conducted search operations at multiple locations in Goa in connection with a Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) case. The case relates to an alleged bank fraud involving the sanctioning of gold loans against fake gold ornaments, which resulted in a loss of Rs. 2.63 crore to UCO Bank.

The action was initiated by its Panaji Zonal Office. A senior ED official said that the searches were conducted at the residential and business premises of Gundu Kelvekar and Hemant Raikar.

The ED initiated an investigation under the PMLA based on an FIR registered by the Economic Offence Cell, North Goa.

The FIR alleges that Gundu Kelvekar, in a criminal conspiracy

with Hemant Raikar, the empanelled gold valuer for UCO Bank, fraudulently obtained multiple gold loans from the Verna, Fatorda, and Margao branches of the bank.

The loans were acquired by pledging fake yellow metal ornaments, which Hemant Raikar knowingly certified as genuine gold.

The ED investigation revealed that between 2019 and 2023, Gundu Kelvekar, assisted by his wife Mayuri Gundu Kelvekar, systematically obtained these loans in their names and in the names of their associates.

The investigation established a clear money trail where the loan amounts, once disbursed to the associates' accounts, were immediately transferred to the savings bank account of Gundu Kelvekar.

A significant portion of these funds was withdrawn in cash, with Gundu Kelvekar withdrawing Rs. 79.65 lakh and his wife withdraw-

ing Rs. 48.75 lakh. Part of the funds were further layered through transfers to various entities, including bullion dealers, to project the Proceeds of Crime (POC) as untainted.

During the search operations at the residence of Gundu Kelvekar, assorted yellow metal ornaments weighing 4.5 kg were found. An authorised valuer confirmed these items were not gold but white metal with yellow plating. The PMLA investigations revealed that the gold loans procured fraudulently were not only from UCO Bank but also from other public sector banks and even a cooperative bank.

Therefore, the POC, presently estimated at Rs. 2.63 crore, is expected to increase significantly. The seized evidence is being scrutinised to unearth the complete trail of the POC.

Further investigation into the matter is on. UNI

AAP legislator demands compensation for Delhi farmers

■ **United News of India**

NEW DELHI, SEP 08: Sanjeev Jha, the Aam Aadmi Party's Chief Whip in the Delhi Assembly, has written to Chief Minister Rekha Gupta seeking compensation for Delhi's farmers saying their crops were destroyed by recent flooding from the Yamuna River.

In the letter, Jha, who is the MLA from Burari, stated that rising water levels have caused severe waterlogging, submerging crops in low-lying areas of his constituency. He described the situation as a "serious livelihood crisis" for numerous farming families, noting that the destruction of their crops has resulted in a significant loss of income after months of work.

Jha urged the Chief Minister to deploy special survey teams to quickly assess the extent of the crop damage. He pointed out that in previous instances of similar natural calamities, the government had provided timely compensation and relief to affected farmers, and he expects the same response this time. UNI

ED FILES CHARGESHEET IN UDUPI COOPERATIVE SOCIETY SCAM

■ **United News of India**

NEW DELHI, SEP 8: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) today filed a chargesheet against Kamalakshi Vividodhesha Sahakara Sangha Niyamitha, B.V. Laxminarayana, Asha Rao and Radhika in connection with a Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) case related to a cooperative society scam. The chargesheet was filed before the Additional District and Sessions Judge in Mangalore.

The ED initiated its investigation

based on multiple FIRs registered by the Udupi CEN Crime Police Station, Karnataka, under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) against B. Laxminarayana, Rao, Radhika and others. The ED investigation revealed that Laxminarayana (president of the cooperative society), with the aid of Rao (manager of the cooperative society) and Radhika (wife of Laxminarayana and director of the society), had mobilized funds from depositors to the tune of Rs 32,73,98,448.

They operated under the names

Kamalakshi Vividodhesha Sahakara Sangha Niyamitha, Udupi, and Ganapathi Investments, promising high interest rates of up to 15 per cent per annum. They subsequently cheated the depositors by defaulting on the promised interest and capital repayments. The ED investigation further revealed that the funds mobilized from the depositors were utilized by Laxminarayana to purchase immovable properties in his name and in the name of Radhika. These properties have been subjected to attachment. UNI

'Phoolwalon Ki Sair' will be held from Nov 2-8: Mishra

■ **United News of India**

NEW DELHI, SEP 8: Delhi's Art, Culture and Languages Minister Kapil Mishra today said that 'Phoolwalon Ki Sair' is Delhi's identity and the government is committed to reviving the centuries-old tradition, adding that steps are being taken to celebrate the event in a grand manner.

Highlighting its historical and cultural significance, Mishra held a meeting during the day with senior officials and representatives from the Department of Art, Culture & Languages, Revenue Department, Delhi Waqf Board, and Anjuman

Sair-e-Gul Faroshan Society.

The Minister stressed that 'Phoolwalon Ki Sair' is a symbol of Delhi's Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb (composite culture), and for centuries, both Hindu and Muslim communities have come together to offer floral sheets and fans as a mark of reverence.

"This festival has always symbolised brotherhood, cultural unity, and collective celebration," he added.

During the meeting, the minister stated that 'Phoolwalon Ki Sair' will be celebrated from November 2 to 8, and directed all concerned departments to ensure active participation and also come up with concrete

plans to make the programme grand and historically significant.

He further shared that this year, under the initiative of the Delhi government, 'Phoolwalon Ki Sair' will feature vibrant processions, cultural performances, qawwali, folk music, programmes showcasing historical glimpses, and displays of traditional fans. Artists and social workers from different parts of Delhi will participate in the festivities.

The Delhi government aims to give official recognition to this tradition and further strengthen Delhi's position as the "Cultural Capital," Mishra added. UNI

India's Nets speak, But Not Of Samson

■ Pratyush Sinha

DUBAI: If India's first practice session at the ICC Academy in Dubai was about finding their bearings, the second was about intent. There was a sharper edge to the drills, a clearer order to who batted where and, in the process, a few quiet hints about how the team management is beginning to imagine its playing XI. None of it spoke more clearly than the silence around Sanju Samson. After his warm-up sprints and a token hit in the outfield, he settled on a red icebox and remained perched there for most of the evening, watching as Shubman Gill, Jitesh Sharma and Rinku Singh batted in the three centre-wicket nets. The irony was hard to miss. Of Samson waiting while Gill, India's returning vice-captain, for whom he had stood in during those months of breakthrough runs and centuries through late 2024 and early 2025, took his turn. Of Samson waiting while Jitesh, the squad's other wicketkeeper, and Rinku, the other des-

ignated finisher, sweated it out.

For the first couple of hours, the nets belonged to only six names: Gill, Abhishek Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak Varma, Jitesh and Rinku.

Gill and Abhishek, teammates since their U-12 days, moved almost as a pair. The evening even began with Abhishek inspecting and playfully swinging Gill's bat, one that had already carried him to milestones, including his first international hundred in Zimbabwe. Later, the two slipped seamlessly into catching drills under fielding coach T. Dilip. From there, Gill and Abhishek headed to the farthest of the three nets, facing the new ball from Arshdeep Singh and Jasprit Bumrah. The bowling group was soon joined by Hardik Pandya and, notably, Shivam Dube, who ran in hard. In the adjoining net, Rinku was first in, tackling the spin trio of Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakaravathy and Axar Patel. Tilak and Suryakumar followed, both logging extended time against spin, including a skiddy, round-arm legspinner. Tilak was

the last to finish, effectively closing a session Rinku had begun hours earlier. Meanwhile, Varun Chakaravathy bowled one of the night's longest spells, then worked with Dilip on his high catching. The coach's advice seemed to be pointed: crouch and move in only once the ball has left the bat. Dilip's presence was everywhere but his extended time with Rinku and Kuldeep stood out. Samson, though, remained peripheral. No fielding drills were lined up for him and his batting window was narrow. He got a hit out alongside allrounders Hardik, Dube and Axar, sharing a net with Hardik before moving quietly to the spin nets. When Samson was in the middle, Gautam Gambhir was deep in conversation with Suryakumar, and they were later joined by Gill. They could have been discussing anything, but given how the night unfolded, it was unlikely to be about Samson. Practice sessions don't name XIs, but they do whisper hints; and for Samson, the verdict seemed to arrive before his turn did.

Cricbuzz



BCCI's finances hit new highs; INR 14,627 crore added since 2019

■ Vijay Tagore

NEW DELHI: Death and taxes are not the only certainties in life after all - the ever-swelling riches and coffers of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), it seems, are just as guaranteed. As per a report, circulated among the state associations, the Board had a bank balance of INR 20,686 crore as of 12 months back.

Inevitably that must have gone up exponentially over the last one year, the financial assessment of which will be revealed at the AGM on September 28, even as it has emerged that the BCCI continues to pay income tax in thousands of crores.

A relevant part of the statement of accounts, submitted at the 2024 AGM, reads, "Honorary Secretary apprised the members that since 2019, the cash and bank balance of BCCI has increased from INR 6,059 crore which was before disbursing any amount to the state cricket associations to INR 20,686 crore which is after disbursing all amounts owed to the state cricket associations."

"Therefore, since 2019, BCCI has added INR 14,627 crore in the last five

years. This is an increase of INR 4,193 crore since the last financial year. Further, since 2019, the general fund too has increased from INR 3,906 crore to INR 7,988 crore which is an increase of INR 4,082 crore."

The report also seems to bust the myth that the BCCI does not pay income tax. It set aside over INR 3000 crore towards taxes while continuing its appeal in various tribunals. "The BCCI has provisioned INR 3,150 crore towards income tax obligations for FY 2023-24. While BCCI is on the right track before the courts and tribunals, it has still made provisions towards paying any obligations that may arise towards tax," the report reveals.

The revenue would have been much more for the board but the gross media rights income from BCCI's international fixtures was reduced to INR 813.14 crore as compared to INR 2,524.80 crore of the previous year. "This decrease is the result of a reduced number of international home matches/series played during the year as compared to the previous year. During the year, ICC CWC 2023 (ODI World Cup) was hosted by BCCI during the month



of Oct-Nov 2023," says the report.

Some other key points of the Audited Statement of Accounts of 2023-24

Income from Tours: The gross receipts from Men's Senior International Tours and events have decreased to INR 361.22 crore compared to INR 642.78 crore of the previous year.

Investment Income: The BCCI earned an interest income on bank

deposits of INR 986.45 crore as compared to INR 533.05 crore of the previous year. BCCI has managed to get the highest ROI available in the market with minimal risk from the major Nationalized/Private banks under the guidance and support of Mr. (Jay) Shah.

Surplus: The surplus of income over expenditure was INR 1,623.08 crore as against INR 1,167.99 crore in the previous year. This increase is mainly due to increase in IPL 2023 surplus & distributions received from ICC.

Funds: BCCI has allocated INR 1,200 crore towards infrastructure development fund, INR 350 crore towards platinum jubilee benevolent fund and INR 500 crore towards infrastructure for cricket development funds. These allocations supplement the long-term vision of BCCI towards growth of cricket and supporting its former players.

"Substantial provisions have been made towards distribution of amounts to state cricket associations. The total for 2023-24 stands at INR 1,990.18 crore with projected allocation of INR 2,013.97 crore for 24-25," it read.

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