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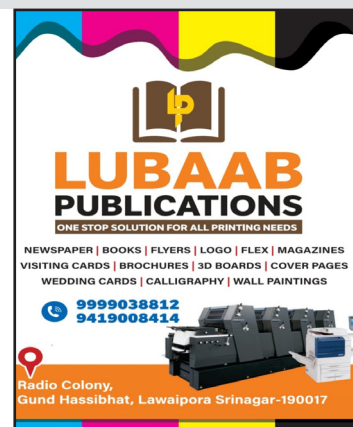
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HEADLINES TODAY

Voice To The Voiceless



Next DGP-IGP Conference To Discuss J&K Situation, Other Issues

PM Modi, HM Shah to attend

■ HT News Network

NEW DELHI, OCT 01: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah are set to attend the All India DGP-IGP Conference in Chhattisgarh in November, where top police officials from across the country will deliberate on key issues including internal security, anti-Naxal operations, cyber security, the fight against narcotics, the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, and border management.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) the 60th edition of the three-day conference beginning November 28 will be inaugurated by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, while the valedictory session is likely to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said an official.

He said about 250 officers in the rank of DGP and IGP will attend the event physically while more than 200 others would participate virtually, said an official.



He said the special focus at the conference will be on Naxal-affected regions. It is expected to discuss ways to build further on these gains and chalk out new strategies. "Other key issues that will

come up for discussions include internal security, cyber security, the fight against narcotics, the situation in Jammu and Kashmir and border management."

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Jammu Gears Up For Vibrant Dussehra Today

■ HT News Network

JAMMU, OCT 01: As the city of temples prepares to immerse itself in the joyous fervor of Dussehra on October 2, the authorities have rolled out comprehensive arrangements to ensure a safe and seamless celebration of the festival.

Thousands of devotees are expected to flock to key venues across Jammu for Ram-lila enactments, processions and the iconic burning of Ravana's effigy, marking the culmination of the nine-day Navratri festivities.

Dussehra, also known as Vijayadashami, commemorates Lord Rama's victory over the demon king Ravana, as narrated in the epic Ramayana.

In Jammu, the celebrations blend deep-rooted spiritual traditions with community spirit, featuring elaborate stage performances, cultural parades and family gatherings.

Preparations have been in full swing since mid-September, with effigies of Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Meghnath being meticulously crafted at temple complexes and community grounds.

The highlight of tomorrow's celebrations

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LG greets people on Vijayadashami

■ HT News Desk

SRINAGAR, OCT 01: The Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, has greeted the people on the eve of Vijayadashami.

In a message, the Lieutenant Governor

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CM greets people on Dussehra

■ HT News Desk

SRINAGAR, OCT 01: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Wednesday extended warm greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the auspicious occasion

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Cabinet okays 3% hike in DA, DR for employees, pensioners

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, OCT 01: In a major relief for government staff and retirees, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a 3 per cent increase in Dearness Allowance (DA) and Dearness Relief (DR). The decision will benefit nearly 49.19 lakh central government employees and 68.72 lakh pensioners across the country.

The hike, effective from July 1, 2025, raises the DA/DR from the existing 55 per cent to 58 per cent of the basic pay or pension. The revision aims to offset the impact of inflation on salaries and pensions.

Briefing the media on the Cabinet decisions, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the move would put an additional burden of Rs 10,083.96 crore per year on the exchequer.

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NO SEDITION, RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE CASE REPORTED IN J&K IN 2023, REVEALS NCRB DATA

UT EMERGES AS INDIA'S MOST COMMUNAL-FRIENDLY REGION

■ HT News Desk / KNO

SRINAGAR, OCT 01: Jammu and Kashmir did not record a

single case of communal or religious violence in 2023, reveals the annual report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

The report which is in possession of the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) states that while 425 riot cases

were registered involving 655 people, none of them were linked to communal tensions. No sedition cases were registered during

the year either.

The report, as per the news agency—Kashmir News

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'Under present PPA's, J&K unlikely to cater power demand by 2034-35'

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, OCT 01: With the present and other planned Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) or a Transmission Service Agreement (TSA), Jammu and

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Ladakh LG Chairs Security Review Meeting, Says Restrictions To Be Lifted In A Phased Manner

■ HT News Network

LEH, OCT 1: Ladakh Lt Governor Kavinder Gupta on Wednesday reviewed the prevailing law and order situation in the Union Territory (UT), assuring people of

lifting in a phased manner of restrictions imposed in the aftermath of last week's violence.

Gupta has been holding high-level meetings twice daily, one in the morning and another in the evening, for the past

week following violent clashes on September 24 that left four people dead and scores of others injured over their agitation demanding grant of statehood to Ladakh and its inclusion in the Sixth

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Pak Shelling Hit J&K Border Villages Rebuild

Celebrate Peace with Weddings, Festivities

■ HT News Desk / KNO

BARAMULLA, OCT 01: Life is fast returning to normal in villages along the Line of Control (LoC) and International Border months after suffering heavy damage in Pakistan

shelling following the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, which left 26 civilians, mostly tourists dead.

Pertinently, after Indian armed forces destroyed nine terrorist camps deep inside Pakistan and PoK, the neighbouring country

resorted to heavy shelling on the civilians in frontier areas leading to loss of lives and widespread damage to property. After 4 days of skirmishes, Pakistan Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) reached out to his counterpart in

India and requested for the cessation of hostilities, which led to the truce between the two nations.

Since then, residents told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) life is gradually

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JKPSC ignoring LG's directions, says JKAS aspirants

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, OCT 1: Despite a letter from the Lieutenant Governor's office to the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission (JKPSC) urging it to look into the matter, nothing has been done for the last six months, leaving a group of JKAS aspirants frustrated and demanding immediate redressal.

The candidates, who appeared in the JKAS examination

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J&K Police attach TeH Headquarters

■ HT News Network

SRINAGAR, OCT 01: In a major crackdown on separatist networks, Jammu and Kashmir Police on Wednesday attached the headquarters of Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, the outfit founded by late separatist leader Syed Ali Geelani, in Srinagar.

Officials said the attached property comprises a three-storey building on one kanal and one marla of land in Hyderpora, located along the Airport

Road. The premises once served as Geelani's residence and office, from where he led the Hurriyat Conference.

The action was taken under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in connection with a case registered at Budgam police station. Police said the attachment followed "collected evidence" and due approval from the competent authority.

Tehreek-e-Hurriyat was banned by the Union Home Ministry in 2023

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PM Modi hails RSS's role in nation-building

■ HT News Network

NEW DELHI, OCT 01: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday lauded the RSS on its centenary celebrations, and said the organisation never displayed any bitterness despite several attacks on it as it continued to work on the principle of nation first.

Participating in the centenary celebrations of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) here, Modi highlighted the contribution of the Sangh in nation-building and said it reached every corner of the country with the goal of fostering harmony by removing divisions of caste or creed and spreading the message of an inclusive society.



"The Sangh has fought against the atrocities of the British. Their only interest has always been love towards the nation," Modi said, adding that Sangh volunteers gave shelter to freedom fighters and its leaders were also jailed during the freedom struggle.

The prime minister said there have been numerous attempts

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DC Srinagar visits Parimpora Fruit Mandi, holds interaction with members of Mandi

Also takes stock of work on upgradation & macadamisation of approach roads & internal links

HT News Desk / DIPR

SRINAGAR, OCT01: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, on Tuesday visited the Fruit Mandi at Parimpora and held an interactive session with the members of the Mandi to discuss key issues and developmental needs.

The DC was accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Mir Imtiyaz Ul Aziz; Chief Planning Officer Fayaz Ahmad Dar; SDM West Irfan Bahadur; Executive Engineer R&B Core Ashiq; Tehsildar Shalteng Rayees Ahmad Dar, and other concerned officials.

During the session, members



projected certain demands and suggestions, including the establishment of a dedicated truck terminal, effective garbage disposal mechanisms, and upgradation of the approach road & link roads leading to the mandi, among others.

DC gave a patient hearing to the delegation and asked officials from SMC, R&B, SDM West, and other departments to submit a detailed report on the issues for its timely redressal.

On the occasion, the DC

assured all possible support from the administration to address the needs of fruit growers and strengthen the horticultural infrastructure in the district.

Following the meeting, the DC conducted a comprehensive inspection of the Mandi, and took stock of the ongoing macadamization work being undertaken by the R&B department.

The DC was informed that under NABARD, upgradation of Parimpora Fruit Mandi has been taken up for development of internal roads, parking site, block patches, external peripheral roads, construction of auction sheds etc.

KU holds two-day master training workshop for mental health

HT News Desk

SRINAGAR OCT01: To strengthen teachers' role in addressing substance abuse, suicide prevention, and overall youth well-being in Kashmir, the Department of Social Work, University of Kashmir (KU), organised a two-day Master Training Workshop for Mental Health (Training the Teachers Programme) at the Main Campus. The workshop included selected faculty members from higher secondary schools and colleges of the Valley to strengthen their capacity as frontline responders for supporting students' mental health.

The workshop was based on an ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) research project on primary prevention interventions for youth in Kashmir, carried out by the Department of Social Work, KU, with Dr. Aadil Bashir, faculty member at the department, as the Principal Investigator (PI). Drawing from extensive research and assessments, the team has developed a practical manual titled "Wal Sukoon Chandaw" (Come let's find peace), designed to provide teachers with structured tools and strategies for guiding young people towards



healthier coping mechanisms and resilience.

Vice-Chancellor KU, Prof. Nilofer Khan, in her message, said, "Equipping teachers with knowledge and skills to address mental health challenges is an important step in ensuring a safer, healthier academic environment. This initiative reflects our varsity's commitment to addressing pressing social concerns through research-based interventions."

Controller of Examinations KU, Dr. Majid Zaman, in his inaugural address, highlighted the urgent need to address the growing mental health challenges among youth. He said, "Teachers, apart from being academic guides, are also key figures in safeguarding the emotional and psychological well-being of students. This workshop equips them with evidence-based tools to detect early signs of distress, intervene effectively, and create safe spaces for dialogue."

Prof. Shazia Manzoor, Head, Department of Social Work KU, emphasized the need to address mental health challenges among children and young adults as Kashmiri society undergoes transitions, highlighting that teachers, parents, and the community must work collectively to ensure early support and well-being of youth.

Dr. Aadil Bashir, faculty at the Department of Social Work KU and PI, presented a detailed overview of the Wal Sukoon Chandaw manual, which includes modules on mindfulness, emotional regulation, stress management, and peer support systems. He also unveiled the e-manual, highlighting its accessibility for wider use across schools and colleges.

The workshop featured technical sessions on experiential learning for stress management, role plays focused on classroom-based interventions, group activities to build peer support, and training modules on risk assessment. These sessions aimed to translate the manual into practical classroom strategies for teachers.

Sewa Parv-2025: DC Srinagar leads "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam", "Ek Ped Shaheed Ke Naam" campaign by planting Saplings at DC Office premises

HT News Desk / DIPR

SRINAGAR OCT01: As a part of ongoing Sewa Parv-2025 celebrations, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo today led "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam", "Ek Ped Shaheed Ke Naam" campaign by planting Conifer Saplings at DC Office premises, reaffirming the administration's commitment to environmental conservation and sustainability.

The event saw enthusiastic participation from senior Officers including Additional District Development Commissioner, Rifat Aftab Qureshi; Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Mir Imtiyaz Ul Aziz; Additional Deputy Commissioner, Aadil Fareed; Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar; SDM East, Zubair Ahmad; Assistant



Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar; DFO Urban Forestry, Dr Mehraj and other officials of the DC Office Srinagar.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC emphasized that plantation drives are not merely symbolic gestures but powerful contributions to safeguarding the environment for future generations. He said "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam", "Ek Ped Shaheed Ke Naam" is not just a campaign, it is a movement that inspires us to reconnect with our roots and fulfil our responsibility towards nature.

The DC added that the campaign aims to encourage citizens to plant trees in honour of their mothers and Martyrs of the nation by promoting both environmental consciousness, emotional resonance with nature and deep gratitude for their sacrifices.

Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (RA) Remembered In Kashmir; Conference Highlights Love, Compassion And Unity

HT News Desk

SRINAGAR, OCT01: A special commemorative conference was held at Amar Singh Club Srinagar, bringing together leading intellectuals, academicians and cultural figures of Kashmir to reflect on the life and teachings of the great philosopher-poet Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (RA).

The event celebrated Rumi's timeless message of love, humanity and spiritual enlightenment. His 13th-century poetry, originally written in Persian, continues to transcend cultures and faiths, inspiring people around the world to embrace compassion, tolerance, and unity. The conference featured a distinguished gathering of scholars, educationists, writers, lawyers and other eminent personalities of the Valley, who deliberated on the enduring relevance of Rumi's philosophy in today's world. Speakers highlighted how his vision of love and human dignity provides guidance for fostering harmony, understanding, and mutual respect in contemporary society.

Advocate Zaffar A. Shah, Senior Counsel, said "Rumi's poetry reflects the true spirit of Islam, emphasizing love, compassion and justice. His words guide us toward kindness, respect for all humanity and a closer connection with Allah."

Prof. Mushtaq A. Siddiqi, Former Vice Chancellor, IUST, said "Rumi's words touch the heart and unite people. They inspire love, kindness and understanding, guiding us toward harmony, compassion, and inner peace."

Prof. Naseem Ahmad Rafiabad, Visiting Professor, University

of Malaysia, said "Rumi's message is truly universal. From Turkey to Kashmir, his words reflect spiritual wisdom rooted in Islam, inspiring love, compassion, understanding and fostering meaningful dialogue among peoples and civilizations."

Prof. Jahangir Iqbal, Head of Department, Persian, University of Kashmir said "As a Persian teacher, I see Rumi as someone who filled the hearts of people with love, faith and wisdom. His words remind us that knowledge and faith always go hand in hand. To truly understand Rumi is to feel the deep love, kindness and humanity that Islam inspires in every soul."

Dr. Mushtaq Ahmad Ganie Professor Kashmir University, said "In today's world, it is the need of the hour to guide our new generation through the wisdom of Rumi. True education goes beyond earning a livelihood, it nurtures the heart, mind and soul, cultivating knowledge with purpose, character with compassion, and a life dedicated to Allah and service to humanity."

M. Saleem Beg, Former Director General of Tourism Department J&K, said "Maulana Rumi's wisdom teaches us that the essence of life lies in love for Allah, compassion for humanity, and the pursuit of knowledge that elevates the soul."

Dr. Sameer Siddiqui, Patron, Khanqah-i-Hyderi, Ashmuqam said "Maulana Rumi's message is a call for love, compassion and humanity. In an age of division, his philosophy reminds us that unity, kindness and mutual respect are the only paths to peace."

Dr. Syed Afzal Hussain, HoD Persian, Govt. College for Women, Srinagar, said "Rumi has inspired

writers and thinkers around the world for centuries. His poetry goes beyond any religion or country and speaks to the love and goodness of all humanity."

Dr. Mudasir Nazar, Assistant Professor, Persian, GDC Bhelssa, Doda, said "Rumi's poetry brings together timeless wisdom and beautiful expression. As a teacher of Persian, it is our duty to keep his legacy alive."

Nasir Hamid Khan, Secretary, Amar Singh Club, said "It is an honor to host this special gathering. Today, Rumi has brought together thinkers from different backgrounds to share ideas and understanding."

The event saw active participation from well-known scholars and other representatives, including G.N. Var, State President Private School Association Jammu Kashmir (PSAJK), Dr. Mohammad Marouf Shah, Prof. Aijaz Hussain, Dr. Wahid Ahmad HoD Persian Amra Singh College, Aga Syed Muzaffar of MET Sopore, S.M. Akhtar, Dawar Mir, Syeda Mana Sanobar, Ritu Kapoor, Sumairah Jeelani, Irfan Ah Shah, Ayaz Ali, Moonis Ali, Umair Ali, and H. Manzoor.

The conference concluded with a shared commitment to carry forward the timeless message of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (RA), emphasizing interfaith harmony and the importance of integrating his philosophy into contemporary education, culture and social life.

The gathering at Amar Singh Club Srinagar was widely hailed as a great tribute to one of the world's greatest thinkers and poets, inspiring participants to uphold his timeless ideals of love, compassion and unity in everyday life.

Bandipora's Pride: Vijpara Hajin Resident Anayat Bashir Cracks UPSC Indian Statistical Service Exam

Khan Jahangeer/Prince Ayaz

BANDIPORA, OCT01: In a moment of pride for North Kashmir's Bandipora district, Aniyat Bashir Sheikh, a resident of Vijpara Hajin, Sonawari, has successfully cleared the prestigious UPSC Indian Statistical Service (ISS) Examination 2025.

Aniyat has been serving as a Panchayat Secretary in the Rural Development Department since 2015. He is the third from Bandipora district to achieve such a feat, following Altaf Hussain Haji (2001) and Syed Aadil Bukhari from Baramulla (2022).

Speaking about his journey, Aniyat as per news agency JKNS said, "It has been a two-and-a-half-year journey. I started preparing for two exams in 2023, and the final one was held in 2025. One must maintain target-focused study and have strong clarity of basics."

He credited his success to his family, saying, "My parents played a crucial role in this achievement, and my role model throughout has been my cousin, who serves as an Assistant Professor in the Higher Education Department."

In 2022, I was inspired by Syed Aadil Bukhari who qualified ISS in 2022, and I was also guided by Altaf Hussain who qualified this exam in 2001, Aniyat noted.

Recalling the sacrifices made during preparation, he shared, "For the last two years, I hardly gave any time to my wife and children. I often asked my wife to stay with her parents so that I could focus entirely on studying. She never complained and silently supported me. This success belongs to her, to my parents, and to my children."

Describing his daily routine, Aniyat said, "I used to wake up at 4 a.m. and study till 8 or 9 before leaving for work. After returning from my job, I continued my preparation late into the night."

"Balancing work and studies was very challenging, but I managed it with determination. I am thankful to Allah. Hard work truly pays," he added. (JKNS)

DY. CM LAYS FOUNDATION STONES FOR KEY ROAD PROJECTS IN SUNDERBANI RAJOURI

ALSO PAYS OBEISANCE AT MANGAL DEVI JI TEMPLE

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

SUNDERBANI, OCT 01: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary today laid the foundation stone for the construction of vital road from Chak Tabala to Nowbad up to Kangri in Sunderbani area of Rajouri district.

The project will be executed at an estimated cost of Rs 452.11 lakhs, fulfilling a long-pending demand of the local populace for better road connectivity.

The Deputy CM also laid the foundation stone of another important road stretch from Main Road Charyala to Ghai at an estimated cost of Rs 214 lakhs, which will significantly benefit residents by improving transportation facilities and easing movement.

During his visit to Block Seri, Choudhary also paid obeisance at the revered Mangal Devi Ji Temple, where he interacted with devotees and assured them of continued government sup-



port in the development of pilgrimage and religious sites.

Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Chief Minister reaffirmed the Government's commitment towards strengthening rural infrastructure and accelerating development works in Sunderbani and adjoining areas. He stressed that improved connectivity will open new avenues for economic growth and ensure last-mile delivery of public services.

In addition, Choudhary also

listened to various issues and grievances of locals. He assured them prompt redressal of these issues. Local residents and PRI representatives expressed gratitude to the Deputy CM for prioritising the region's developmental needs and initiating projects that will directly benefit the common masses.

SEPWD Tilak Raj; Exen Nowshera Sarwar Mehmood; other district and sectoral officers accompanied the Deputy CM during the visit.

Kulgam Police Arrest Three Drug Peddlers in Mirbazar; Seize Contraband

■ Farooq Rather

KULGAM, OCT 1: In a significant breakthrough in its ongoing crackdown against drug trafficking, Kulgam Police arrested three notorious drug peddlers and seized a substantial quantity of contraband substances from their possession in the Mirbazar area of the district. The arrests were made during routine patrolling at Baghi Sakloo, Mirbazar, by a special police party led by the In-charge Police Post Mirbazar under the close supervision of Addl. SP NHW Qazigund Kulgam Mumtaz Ali Bhatti (JKPS). Upon noticing suspicious movement, the police intercepted three individuals who attempted to flee but were swiftly apprehended.

Upon their personal search, police recovered 80 grams of charas and 2.7 kilograms of wet cannabis leaves, which were concealed in their possession.

The arrested individuals have been identified as: Zahid Bashir Bhat, son of Bashir Ahmad Bhat, resident of Bonpora Nambal, Anantnag; Aidal Ahmad Wani, son of Mohd Iqbal Wani,



resident of Khandaypora Krangsoo, Anantnag.

Razwan Ahmad Itoo, son of Nazir Ahmad Itoo, resident of Hangalpahlo, Pahalgam, Anantnag. A case has been registered under FIR No. 201/2025 at Police Station Qazigund under relevant sections of the law. Further investigation is underway to trace the wider nexus, including possible links to drug syndicates operating in South Kashmir. SSP Kulgam, Shri Sahil Sarangal (IPS), while commenting on the operation, said:

"Drugs are not just a law and order issue, but a serious threat to our future generations. Kulgam Police has adopted a zero-tolerance policy against narcotics. With the support of the community, we are determined to dismantle every network involved in this illicit trade and bring the culprits to justice." The police have once again appealed to the public to remain vigilant and report any suspicious drug-related activity by contacting the nearest police station or dialing 112. The identity of informants will be kept strictly confidential.

Ehsaas Foundation Extends Warm Greetings on Mahanavami

■ HT News Desk

SRINAGAR, OCT 1: Ehsaas Foundation has extended heartfelt greetings to the people on the auspicious occasion of Mahanavami.

In a statement, the Foundation said that the festival, which holds great cultural and spiritual significance, is a time of devotion, unity, and celebration of good over evil.

"On this sacred day, we pray for peace, prosperity, and happiness for all. May the spirit of Mahanavami bring harmony and blessings to every home," the Foundation conveyed in its message.

The organization also emphasized the importance of fostering compassion, kindness, and collective well-being, in line with its mission of service to humanity.

Four Firefighters Injured as Fire Tender Overturns on Way to Blaze in Khansahib

■ Ubaid Mehdi

BUDGAM, OCT 1: A massive fire on Tuesday reduced a residential house in Shalnar village of Khansahib to ashes, leaving a family homeless. The tragedy was compounded when a Fire and Emergency Services vehicle rushing to the scene overturned, injuring four firefighters.

The gutted house belonged to Muhammad Shaban Gors, son of Ali Gors. The blaze, which broke out under mysterious circumstances, spread rapidly due

to the wooden structure of the house. Within minutes, flames had engulfed the entire building.

Alarmed residents rushed to the site and, assisted by Jammu and Kashmir Police personnel, began dousing the flames with water and sand. Their swift response prevented the fire from spreading to adjoining houses in the densely populated area. Police confirmed that there was no loss of life in the incident.

Meanwhile, tragedy struck on the way to the operation. A fire tender from Khansahib



overturned at Kaitch, injuring four firefighters, including the

driver. They were rushed to Sub-District Hospital (SDH) Khansahib, where doctors said their condition was stable despite multiple injuries.

The accident strained firefighting resources at a critical moment. However, other fire service teams, joined by locals and police, battled the blaze for several hours before bringing it under control. By then, the house had been completely destroyed.

Police said a case has been registered, and investigations into the cause of the fire are underway.

DE&CC conducts one day job fair at Kupwara

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

KUPWARA, OCT 1: The District Employment & Counselling Centre (DE&CC) Kupwara today organized a One-Day Job Fair at its office premises. The job fair, inaugurated by Assistant Director Employment, Kupwara, Arshad Qadir, witnessed enthusiastic participation from over 300 job aspirants across the district.

In his inaugural address, Assistant Director Employment guided the participating youth on how to benefit effectively from such employment initiatives. He further assured that the District Employment & Counselling Centre will continue to organize similar job-oriented events in the future for the benefit of the district's



unemployed youth.

Prominent employers and organizations that participated in the job fair included Al-Yafur Pvt. Ltd, LIC, Airtel, Swiggy, WEPS Training Institute, Byoh Health Care and LMS Corporation Pvt. Ltd.

During the fair, the participating employers interacted directly with the job seekers and conducted on-

the-spot assessments. As a result of these interactions, 104 candidates were shortlisted for various positions across diverse sectors.

The District Employment & Counselling Centre, Kupwara, remains committed to empowering the youth through such employment initiatives and by providing essential counselling and career guidance to job aspirants.

Iqra Bilal of GDC(W) Anantnag bags second place in Kashmir Division Declamation Contest

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

ANANTNAG, OCT 01: As a proud moment for Government Degree College (Women) Anantnag, Iqra Bilal, a 1st Year student of the college secured second position in Division Level Declamation Contest, held on Monday at Srinagar.

The event was organized in connection with Gandhi Jayanti celebrations on the theme "The

Relevance of Gandhian Philosophy Particularly Truth and Non-Violence in Contemporary Times". One student each from all districts of Kashmir Division participated in the competition, which served as a platform for young students to critically engage with Gandhiji's ideals and reflect on their relevance in addressing contemporary social, ethical, and political challenges.

Iqra Bilal's performance was distinguished by scholarly insight, clarity of expression, and persuasive articulation, earning accolades from both the jury and audience.

Principal of the college, Professor Dr. Masood Ahmad Malik, Convener Debates and Seminars Committee, Prof. Farooq Ahmad Malik, and the entire teaching and non-teaching staff of the college

congratulated Iqra Bilal for her exemplary achievement, calling it a reflection of the college's commitment to intellectual excellence and holistic student development.

Principal remarked that Iqra Bilal's success exemplifies her personal dedication and the institution's ethos of nurturing students who are thoughtful and socially responsible and remain committed to acquiring knowledge.

Shat Chandi Yagya Concludes at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine

■ HT News Desk

KATRA, OCT 1: The sacred nine-day-long Shat Chandi Maha Yagya, organized by the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) during the auspicious Shardiya Navratras, concluded with immense spiritual fervor and devotion on the occasion of Mahanavami. The Purnahuti ceremony was performed amidst the chanting of Vedic mantras for universal peace and prosperity.

Shri Sachin Kumar Vaishya, Chief Executive Officer, SMVDSB; officers and staff of the Shrine Board besides a large number of pilgrims participated in the concluding rituals. The Maha Yagya was conducted by a group of learned Pandits led by Padma Shri Prof. Vishwamurti Shastri, adding sanctity and depth to the spiritual proceedings.

The Navratras witnessed an overwhelming influx of devotees from across the country and

abroad, reaffirming the spiritual magnetism of the Holy Shrine.

During the auspicious Navratra, the Shrine Board in collaboration with District Administration, Reasi also organized Sewa Parv, a dedicated initiative towards pilgrims and devotees. The Hon'ble Chairman, SMVDSB (Lt. Governor, JK-UT) also graced the occasion with his esteemed presence and actively participated in the activities of Sewa Parv, further inspiring and reinforcing the Board's dedication to fostering inclusive and meaningful engagement during the sacred festivities.

To enrich the pilgrim experience, the Shrine Board also introduced initiatives including establishment of dedicated help desks at key locations to assist pilgrims on the track. Besides, elaborate arrangements were made by the Shrine Board to ensure the comfort and convenience of pilgrims. These included decorative floral installations at Bhawan, Atka and sur-



rounding areas, uninterrupted water and power supply along the tracks and Bhawan premises, enhanced sanitation and hygiene

measures and special "fast-related" meals at the Shrine Board's Bhoj-analayas and Langars. Devotees also availed free food services at various

Langars of Shrine Board.

The Bhawan area and other sectors on the track were illuminated with attractive façade lighting, while facilities such as accommodation, battery-operated vehicles, passenger ropeway and helicopter services operated smoothly.

A major highlight of the celebrations was the series of melodious Bhajan and Bhaint performances by renowned artists at Bhawan and Adhkuwari including Lakhwinder Wadali, Kumar Vishwas, Kavita Paudwal, Ankit Batra, Akhil Sachdeva, Varsha Jamwal, Palak Muchhal, Roshan Prince, Narinder Sachdeva, Reshmi Sharma, Chaman Lehri, Mahakali Group, Akriti Kakkar, Master Aryan, Master Koko and Malini Awasthi. The students of SMVD Gurukul also captivated audiences with their devotional renditions, blending tradition with youthful vibrancy and elevating the spiritual ambience.

Secy RDD inaugurates Kaushal Parv 2025 at Jammu

Also flags off 'Kaushal Rath' to mobilise youth for Himayat 2.0 skill training, placements

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

JAMMU, OCT 01: Giving a major boost to youth employment, Secretary, Rural Development Department (RDD) & Panchayati Raj, Mohammad Aijaz Asad today inaugurated 'Kaushal Parv 2025', an IEC-cum-placement drive under the Himayat-Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY).

The placement drive turned into a significant recruitment platform with 17 reputed employers, like PepsiCo, Domino's, Coca-Cola, Barbeque Nation, Burger King, Vardhman Textiles and Rubli Foods, offering a wide range of opportunities across sectors including retail, hospitality, textiles, food & beverages, IT-ITES, and surveillance services.

The event witnessed the participation of over 250 skilled youth mobilised by Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) under Himayat, with several candidates receiving on-the-spot job offers. In his address, the Secretary underscored that placements are the core milestone of the Himayat-DDU-GKY programme. "Job fairs like Kaushal Parv serve as a direct bridge between trained youth and employers, ensuring transparent, sustainable, and industry-driven employment outcomes," he said.



Highlighting the Department's focus on market-relevant skills, Aijaz Asad said that the twin initiatives, Kaushal Parv and Kaushal Rath, reflect the commitment to equip J&K's youth with skills for sustainable livelihoods.

The Secretary also distributed offer letters to selected candidates on the occasion. Addressing the gathering, COO, HMMU-JKRLM, Rajneesh Gupta said, "This is not merely a placement drive; it is a platform where skills meet opportunities and dreams take their next step forward. Each placement secured today is not just about a job but about dignity, courage, and empowerment."

The event concluded with Secretary flagging off of 'Kaushal Rath', a mobile outreach vehicle that will travel block-to-block for 20 days, disseminating recorded messages, distributing pamphlets, and mobilising rural youth for skill training and placements—taking the scheme's benefits to last-mile villages.

Pertinently, Himayat, the J&K chapter of the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), is a flagship placement-linked skill development programme of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.



Gandhi Shilp Bazaar inaugurated at Srinagar Numaish Gah

General public advised to visit and buy craft products at affordable rates, support artisans

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

SRINAGAR, OCT 01: A 10-day UT level Gandhi Shilp Bazaar, was inaugurated at Kashmir Haat, here today, showcasing Kashmir's famed handicrafts and handloom products.

Director, Handicrafts and Handloom, Kashmir, Mussarat Islam, along with Assistant Director, Handicrafts, Ministry of Textiles, Rafiq Ahmad, Manager Central Market, and other senior officers, were present on the occasion.

Organized by the Ministry of Textiles, Gol, as many as 70 stalls have been installed for artisans and weavers to display a wide range of exclusive Kashmir Handicrafts including Sozni embroidery on Pashmina, Kani Shawls, Crewel Embroidery, Chain stitch and Aari work.



Speaking on the occasion, Director Handicrafts urged the general public to come to Kashmir Haat in large numbers and buy authentic handmade products on extremely affordable prices. "By buying directly from the artisans, you shall support the department's endeavor to safeguard the interests of the community," he stated.

The Director interacted with all the stall holders and advised them to invest in packaging to give their unique products of Kashmir an aesthetic look. "The Department will continue to focus on implementation of welfare schemes for benefit of artisans and also provide them platforms for display and sale of their unique craft products," he added.

Secy RDD reviews progress on SASCI, UT CAPEX, SBM-G

Issues strict directives for speedy completion of projects

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

JAMMU, OCT 01: Secretary, Rural Development department (RDD) & Panchayati Raj, Mohammad Aijaz Asad today chaired a meeting to review the physical and financial progress under UT-CAPEX, Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI), SNA-Sparsh and Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin).

The meeting was attended by DG Rural Sanitation, Anu Malhotra; Mission Director NRLM, Shubhra Sharma; Director Panchayati Raj, Sham Lal; Director RDD Kashmir, Shabir Hussain Bhat; Director RDD Jammu, Shahnaz Akhtar; Director Finance, Umar Khan; Joint Director Planning, Kamal Kumar Sharma; Additional Secretary, Waseem Raja, besides all ACDs, ACPs, Executive Engineers, and BDOs of various districts.

While reviewing SASCI, it was revealed that loan assistance of Rs 21.10 crores has been sanctioned for RDD projects.

The Secretary highlighted Finance Department directives mandating utilization of 75% of sanctioned assistance by December and surrender of non-viable projects for reallocation. Departments, he said, must demonstrate capacity to incur at least Rs 2 crore expenditure within the financial year, failing which funds may be withdrawn.

While reviewing UT Capex works, Secretary directed that the pace of execution of works be further accelerated.

Aijaz Asad instructed the concerned Executive Engineers to personally visit construction sites, inspect each building and asset, and ensure their completion strictly within the stipulated timelines.

The Secretary emphasized that in the Kashmir division, where developmental activities get slowed down during winter, the pace of work must be doubled to meet targets well in time.

With regard to SNA-Sparsh, the Secretary asked the heads of all schemes to complete critical



post-sanction processes, including integration, FTO generation, and DSC enrolment, so that the implementation of schemes does not face any bottlenecks.

Reviewing progress under SBM-Gramin, Secretary laid special emphasis on timely execution of Gobardhan Plants, Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs), and Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Plants (DEWATs). He directed the officers that Detailed Project Reports (DPRs), feasibility studies, and tendering processes for the remaining Gobardhan projects be completed expeditiously so that all such plants are operational within the next two months.

He added that these projects are a top priority and will be reviewed on a weekly basis. Secretary observed that many districts of J&K are already running such plants successfully, and stressed the need for ACPs and BDOs of other districts to undertake exposure visits to these functional units for adopting best practices.

Speaking on FSTPs, Aijaz Asad underlined that as Deputy Commissioners are the Chairpersons of Sanitation Committees, any issues related to execution should be resolved through their direct intervention. He also called for awareness programmes to sensitize the public about the significance of these projects and the role they play in ensuring cleanliness and sanitation in rural areas.

Similarly, Secretary stressed the timely completion of DEWATs and instructed that restoration of assets damaged during the recent floods must also be included in the planning process.

The Secretary issued strict directions to ACPs that any delay in the timely completion of these projects would invite disciplinary action.

GMC Rajouri Student bags Bronze Medal in Inter-College Yoga Competition

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

RAJOURI, OCT 01: Miss Anadya Handa, a Final Year MBBS student of Government Medical College (GMC) Rajouri has brought laurels to the institution by securing Third Position (Bronze Medal) in the Inter-College Yoga Competition organized by the University of Jammu.

Her remarkable achievement reflects the institution's commitment to nurturing talent and encouraging students to actively participate in extracurricular and sports activities, alongside their rigorous academic curriculum.



This success was made possible under the able guidance of Prof. (Dr.)

A.S. Bhatia, Principal GMC Rajouri, and Prof. (Dr.) Jameel UI Hussain, Chairman Sports Committee GMC Rajouri.

Miss Anadya Handa was accompanied and supported by Mr. Jagtar Singh, Sports Assistant GMC Rajouri, whose dedicated efforts ensured smooth participation in the competition.

GMC Rajouri continues to promote holistic student development by providing its students with ample opportunities to excel in both academics and sports, thereby fostering a culture of excellence and all-round growth.

NSNP Campaign Blood Donation Camp organized at GMC Doda

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

DODA, OCT 01: As a part of the ongoing Swasth Nari Sakshat Parivar 2025 campaign and under the directions of Deputy Commissioner Harvinder Singh, the District Red Cross Society in collaboration with Blood Centre Government Medical College (GMC) Doda today organized a Blood Donation Camp here at College Campus to mark the of National Voluntary



Blood Donation Day.

The Medical College Principal Dr. Rakesh Bahl, inaugurated the camp as the Chief Guest in the presence of Dr. Sumat-ul-Khursheed (HOD Pathology), Dr. Abdul Gafoor (BMO Ghat), Dr. Younis Saleem Bhat (HOD Dentistry) and others.

As many as 21 persons including IRP Jawans, GMC Staff, MBBS students, JK Bank Staff and other volunteers donated blood.

Speaking on the occasion, The Principal GMC welcomed the District Red Cross Society and the Blood Centre for organizing the camp. He further emphasized the importance of blood donation, terming it a noble cause that not only saves lives but also strengthens the spirit of humanity and social responsibility.

The District Red Cross Society extended heartfelt thanks to all participants and assured that such camps will continue to be organized in the district in the future.

At the end of the programme, a pledge was also taken by the staff in the presence of the Chief Guest, reaffirming their commitment to promote voluntary blood donation and serve humanity with dedication.

DIPR Kathua lights up Basohli Utsav with spectacular laser extravaganza

Audience mesmerized as faith, festivity and patriotism come alive in laser visuals

■ HT News Desk / DIPR

KATHUA, OCT 01: The third edition of Basohli Utsav witnessed yet another spectacular evening as the Tri-Theme Laser and Beam Show organized by the District Information Centre Kathua of DIPR J&K lit up the skies over Ramleela Ground, leaving spectators mesmerized.

The Chief Guest, Director ACB, Shakti Pathak along with jam packed Ram Leela Ground witnessed the colourful show. Other prominent dignitaries present on the occasion included ADC Basohli, Pankaj Bhagotra and District Information Officer, Rajinder Digra.

The specially curated show was designed around three powerful themes - the eternal saga of Ramleela, the spiritual fervour of Navratri and the spirit of patriotism. Through vibrant laser projections

and synchronized beam effects, epic tales, devotional narratives and nationalistic motifs were brought alive in a rare fusion of tradition and modern technology.

The Ramleela segment of the show recreated key episodes from the epic, blending devotional chants with striking visuals that celebrated the timeless values of righteousness and sacrifice. The Navratri theme radiated the festive energy of the season, portraying divine power and devotion through vibrant colours and synchronised music. The patriotic sequence, marked by stirring imagery of the national flag and freedom struggle, drew loud cheers from the audience, igniting a collective sense of pride and unity.

The dazzling beam show added another dimension to the spectacle as coordinated rays of light swept across the venue, symbolising divine blessings, festive energy and national pride, thus creating a truly immersive experience for the spectators.



Earlier in the day, traditional sports events like Santolia and Tug of War, witnessing active participation of school children. Academic and cultural competitions including essay writing, painting, storytelling and Sanskrit Shloka recitation highlighted the creative zeal of young participants.

The cultural evening also featured soulful performances of Dogri Geetru and Sithania songs, adding a folk flavour to the festivities. At Rani Ka Talab, departmental and SHG stalls drew large crowds with live demonstrations of Basohli paintings, Pashmina weaving and local handicrafts, besides exhibitions on manuscripts, archives and services of different departments.

With an overwhelming response from locals, tourists and students, Basohli Utsav 3.0 continues to stand out as a confluence of heritage, devotion and patriotism, reaffirming Basohli's identity as Vishwasthali—the land of faith.

HT EDITORIAL

RTI Act needs a booster shot in J&K

Jammu & Kashmir had the distinction of having a strong Right to Information (RTI) Act of 2009 and the same was being viewed as a revolutionary step in the process where-in an ordinary person can seek information from any government department. Since the central RTI was implemented in 2005 the civil society activists of Jammu & Kashmir along with other important stakeholders including advocates came forward and improved upon the Central RTI Act of 2005.

The loopholes and the shortcomings in the central RTI Act were thoroughly studied by the concerned stakeholders following which the all important RTI Act of Jammu & Kashmir came into existence in 2009. Civil society activists, advocates and other important people across the country acknowledged that the Jammu & Kashmir RTI Act is much more powerful than the central RTI Act. The significant feature of the Jammu & Kashmir RTI Act was that the second appellate authority was directed to dispose of a matter within a period of 120 days once the officer is approached by an RTI applicant.

As there is no such provision in the central RTI Act the success of the RTI Act in Jammu & Kashmir is more visible as compared to the other states and union territories of the country. For the 10 years or so the RTI Act was a success in the state of Jammu & Kashmir but the scenario changed in 2019. The Article 370 was abrogated on August 5, 2019 and the state of Jammu & Kashmir was downgraded into two union territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

Following this Jammu & Kashmir came under the direct control of the Home Ministry and all the central acts were extended to the present union territory. As a result of this the Jammu & Kashmir RTI Act of 2009 got replaced by the Central RTI Act of 2005. Once this became the reality the RTI Act became weak in the union territory and the officers started to dictate the terms to the information seekers. As on date most of the officers give a damn to the RTI applications.

The information seekers are disturbed over the present trend and they want the officers to be made accountable as was being done prior to August 5, 2019. The RTI Act needs to be given a fillip in Jammu & Kashmir so that the RTI applicants are relieved and able to get the information as desired by them through their receptive applications.

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Victory over Evil: Did Ravana Really Die?

Has the message of Dussehra been lost?



■ Dr. Priyanka Saurabh

Dussehra symbolizes the victory of good over evil, but today the burning of Ravana has become mere entertainment. Effigies are burned, but crime, rape, domestic violence, and corruption are on the rise in society. The old Ravana was learned and powerful, but was destroyed by arrogance and lust. Today's Ravana is even more dangerous, as he represents the evils prevalent in society, regardless of law and morality. The true message of Dussehra is that we must destroy the evils within ourselves and in society, for only then is true victory possible.

Dussehra, also known as Vijaydashami, symbolizes the victory of good over evil in our society. The burning of Ravana on this day is said to convey the message of the end of evil and the establishment of righteousness and morality. However, today this festival is becoming merely a means of celebration and entertainment. While effigies of Ravana are burned, the demons of Ravana – crime, vice, and moral degradation – continue to pervade society.

Every year on Dussehra, people enthusiastically break and burn effigies of Ravana. The purpose has always been to destroy evil and ensure the triumph of good. However, in modern society, this symbolic act has become merely a visual entertainment. People come to watch, post photos and videos on social media, but make no effort to change the evils prevalent in their lives or society.

In ancient times, Ravana was a wise, powerful, and ethical ruler. He was a devotee of Lord Shiva, a scholar,



and a valiant warrior. His one mistake—his lustful abduction of Sita—led to his doom. Ravana's life teaches us that no one can stay on the path of moral degradation by virtue of their wisdom, power, or resources. If ego and lust overwhelm the heart, destruction is certain.

Today's society is also filled with similar Ravana figures. The Ravana of old was merely a figure, while today's Ravana exists in every home, street, city, and village. Crime, murder, rape, domestic violence, bribery, and corruption are constantly on the rise. This is not just a police or law and order issue, but also a sign of society's moral decline.

The burning of effigies during our Dussehra festival symbolizes the end of evil. But the reality is that evil has not diminished in society. Today's "Ravanas" are cunning, arrogant, and cruel. They do not hesitate to harm anyone for their own gain. Burning wives for dowry, kidnapping women, rape, and child abuse—these are just a few examples. All of this is happening on a large scale in society.

The Ravana of old chose the path of destruction because of his inner desires and ego. The Ravana of today is even more dangerous, as he uses external power and law to pursue his own selfish ends. He has no respect for morality, honesty, or religion. As

a result, the crisis of trust and humanity in society is growing.

The true purpose of Ravana Dahan isn't simply to burn effigies. It teaches us to recognize and overcome our inner Ravanas—faults, negative emotions, and evils. Lasting change in society is impossible until we kill the ego, hatred, lies, deceit, and lust within us.

Your poem, "Burning Puppets Ask..." beautifully conveys this message. It shows that effigies are burned, but the real Ravana continues to grow in society. Ravana is killed every year, but the Ravana grows elsewhere in our hearts. This means that external celebrations are merely symbolic, while the real battle must be waged within us.

Today's society is educated and aware, yet evils are on the rise. Crime, rape, domestic violence, corruption, and immoral trade—all are examples of modern Ravanas. Children and youth are particularly affected. If we simply enjoy the Ravana Dahan celebrations without making real efforts to combat evil, the festival will become an empty symbol.

The true meaning of Dussehra is realized when we destroy our inner vices. True victory lies in recognizing and eliminating these—lies, deceit, ego, lust, and hatred. This is not only the path to social and moral reform,

but also to personal progress.

Ravana's life is deeply instructive. He was a great scholar, but was destroyed by ego and lust. This lesson is crucial for today's society. We must understand that external symbols can only guide; real change must come from within.

Change in society is possible only through the efforts of individuals. Parents, teachers, senior members of society, and policymakers must all work together to sow the seeds of moral education, virtue, and humanity in young people and children. Only then can the true message of Dussehra—the triumph of good over evil—be realized.

If we want the festival of Ravana Dahan to be more than just a burning of effigies, we must eradicate the lies, deceit, arrogance, and hatred within ourselves. We must overcome the crime and immorality prevalent within our society. Only then will Dussehra become not just a celebration, but a true symbol of social reform and morality.

Today, Ravana is not just the name of a person, but a symbol of all the evils prevalent in society that harm relationships, family, and social life. Until we destroy these Ravanas within ourselves and in society, Dussehra will continue to lose its true meaning.

Ultimately, this should not be merely a symbolic festival, but an opportunity for introspection and reform. Burning effigies only reminds us that Ravana's end is necessary, but true victory is possible only over the evils within ourselves and in society. If we fail to understand this message, the annual killing of Ravana on Dussehra will remain merely a spectacle, and the real Ravanas will continue to multiply in society.

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The Days Of The Exams



■ Mool Raj

It is destructive to mount unnecessary pressure on children to score excessively high or perform consistently beyond their inherent capacity.

I vividly recall a moment last year when a 10th grade student came to me completely overwhelmed and distraught. She was so crippled by exam stress that she had abandoned all hope even appearing for, let alone passing the exam. Through focussed guidance and support she not only appeared for the examination but achieved high scores.

This experience was a powerful realisation that students rarely lack the ability to succeed. What they truly need is to remove fear that paralyzes them. Consistent, compassionate support paired with practical guidance is the key. By simply showing them the way and reminding them of their strength we can immediately dissolve their stress and unlock their path to success. Experiencing some stress and pressure to perform well during exams is completely normal. However the real danger emerges when students fail to manage stress effectively. Unchecked pressure can quickly become detrimental, leading to disturbed sleep patterns, a dramatic loss of concentration, diminished interest in studying and ultimately poor academic performance. It is therefore crucial to manage stress before it undermines their health and their results.

First and foremost we must learn to recognise the signs of stress in students. Once the signs are identified, it becomes imperative for parents and teachers to initiate open and honest communication with students to help them emerge stronger. As parents and teachers, our fundamental responsibility is to provide students with the opportunities to set achievable learning goals. It is destructive to mount unnecessary pressure on them to score excessively high or perform consistently beyond their inherent capacity.

Every child possesses a unique ability and pace of learning and they can thrive when allowed to



achieve according to their strengths. When subject to intense external pressure, a student often fails to achieve even their true potential. Therefore the focus must shift from demanding perfection to nurturing potential.

Effective time management is without doubt a crucial tool for stress management. A common pitfall for many students is their failure to manage time efficiently for studies and exam preparation throughout the session. They often start cramming only when the exam looms near leaving insufficient time to cover the entire syllabus. The simple solution is to follow a regular structured study schedule. It will definitely come to students' rescue during exams.

To deliver their best during exams, students must prioritize proper rest and adequate sleep with a minimum 7 to 8 hours each night. Sleep is not luxury, it is essential for memory consolidation and peak cognitive function. Furthermore incorporating a gentle physical activity, such as short walk into their daily routine can do wonders. Educators need to inculcate positive thoughts and encourage students to regularly look and reflect on the immense

journey they have completed and significant achievements they already secured. It is equally important to reinforce that they have prepared well and there is no reason to worry. Besides maintaining a healthy physical body it is equally important to enrich and nourish the mind. Simple yet powerful practices like breathing exercises, meditation and mindfulness are essential tools for mental clarity and stability. Furthermore students can take immense motivation by taking inspiration from successful individuals. Exploring their struggles, resilience and success stories and understanding how they overcome hurdles to achieve milestones can be profoundly encouraging. Ultimately parents and teachers must emphasize the value of sincere efforts over the final results. It is crucial to genuinely appreciate the hard work students put in and reinforce the idea that their efforts are more important than their results. In turn students should focus on giving their sincere best, remain optimistic and actively heed the advice of their parents and teachers.

THE AUTHOR IS A REGULAR COLUMNIST AND FREELANCE WRITER

Model For Peace-Building In Sensitive Regions



■ By M S Nazki

It was another emotional day yesterday so I lost the color black of my ink and thus was absent without leave! But today I'm fresh so here we start.....!

Badaltery Mausam: Like the world, like the customs, like the promises, like the vows, will you change like the weather, too? Will you change like the weather, too? The world changes, the seasons change, but you can't change my heart, will you change like the weather, too?.....It is impossible!

You have made a promise beyond the skies, we (The Indian Army) have given you my love in exchange for my heart! By the earth, by the sky, I swear, By your head, I swear, the sights change, the dreams change, but you will make my heart beat! Will you change like the weather, too? Will you change like the weather, too?.....Impossible again as Indian Army stands for the people of Nagaland and Manipur!

While there isn't a single widely-documented story of "a weaver's daughter who made it big in Manipur," Bijiyashanti Tongbram from Manipur is a prominent contemporary example of a successful woman from a weaving background who achieved significant recognition. Initially a home-maker and weaver to support her family, she transformed her skills into a successful business, earning her a prestigious Padma Shri award for her contributions to entrepreneurship and women's empowerment. She is an inspiration, embodying the successful journey of a Manipur woman who leveraged traditional crafts into significant economic and social achievement.

The Story of Muktamani: Humble Beginnings: Muktamani began her journey as a weaver from Manipur, driven by the necessity to survive and provide for her children.

Entrepreneurial Spirit: She evolved from being a weaver to a shrewd businesswoman, using her traditional craft as a foundation for her entrepreneurial endeavors.

Recognition and Achievement: Her dedication and success in building a business led to her recognition with the prestigious Padma Shri award, a high civilian honor in India. She now has an annual income in the lakhs, demonstrating the transformative power of her entrepreneurial journey.

Contextualizing Weaver Traditions in Manipur: A Rich Tradition: Weaving is a deeply ingrained cultural practice in Manipur, with women traditionally weaving from their homes and within communities. The skill is passed down through generations, often starting at a young age.

Economic and Cultural Significance: Weaving is both a household activity and a significant source of income, forming a strong cottage industry in the state.

Preservation of Culture: The intricate handloom traditions, such as the production of Innaphree and Phanek, are vital to preserving Manipur's cultural heritage, with weavers serving as guardians of this tradition.

The Impact of Women like Muktamani: Empowerment: Women like Muktamani serve as powerful role models, empowering other women and communities in Manipur to embrace their traditional skills and pursue entrepreneurship.

Inspiration for Generations: The success of women like Muktamani inspires younger generations to recognize the value of their heritage and provides pathways to create independent and successful futures for themselves.-

Without tradition, art is a flock of sheep without a shepherd. Science and technology revolutionize our lives, but memory, tradition and myth frame our response!

Weaving in Manipur is believed to have started with the goddess Panthoibee, who was inspired by observing a spider's intricate cobwebs, or alternatively with the goddess Chitnu Tamitnu who discovered cotton and produced the yarn. The Meitei people's folklore and oral tradition also describes the practice as a cosmic process initiated by Maiba and Maibi, messengers of God, during creation.

Goddess Panthoibee: One legend states that the goddess Panthoibee saw a spider creating fine threads for a cobweb and was inspired to begin weaving.

Goddess Chitnu Tamitnu: Another belief suggests that the goddess Chitnu Tamitnu was the first to discover cotton and to produce yarn, arranging the necessary equipment and constructing a weaving shed (the Sinnaishang) to start the craft.

Cosmic Origin: Another folklore perspective describes weaving as a cosmic creation process, with the sounds of spinning and



weaving stimulated by the god's messengers, Maiba and Maibi.

Historical Context: Weaving is a long-established tradition in Manipur, with royal patronage seen during the reign of King Meidingu Loiyumba in the 11-12th century, who commissioned the weaving of the Moirang Phee.

Silk weaving also has a deep history in Manipur, with references to its use during the reign of King Kangba and later king Meidingu Senbi Kiyamba.

King Kangba (1405–1359 BC) was a ruler of Ancient Manipur (Kangleipak) traditionally credited with inventing Sagol Kangjei, the earliest form of the modern game of polo. Son of King Tangja Leela Pakhangba, he is a significant figure in Meitei history, with his life and family recorded in the ancient text Ningthou Kangbalon. His memorial is being developed as a tourism site in Kangmong, the village where his last rites are believed to have been performed.

Senbi Kiyamba (Old Manipuri: Senpi Kiyampawas a Meitei monarch and a ruler of Kangleipak kingdom (Manipur kingdom). He was the son of Medingu Ningthou Khomba and his warrior queen Leima Linthoin-gambi. Born Thangwai Ningthouba, he succeeded his father at the age of 24. He took the name Kiyamba meaning "Conqueror of Kyang", after conquering the Shan kingdom in the Kabaw Valley in alliance with King Choupha Khe Khomba of Pong in 1470.

The Northeastern region of India is a rich tapestry of tradition, where culture thrives in the intricate patterns of handwoven textiles, the vibrant sparkle of bead jewellery and the earthy wisdom of natural cosmetics. Passed down through generations, these crafts have not only preserved ancestral knowledge but also shaped community identities across states like Manipur and Nagaland.

In Manipur, handloom artistry finds expression in textiles like the Wangkhei Phee and Moirang Phee, woven with fine cotton and ceremonial significance. The iconic phanek, a wraparound skirt, is not just a garment but a symbol of feminine grace and cultural heritage. The tribes of Nagaland - Ao, Angami and Chakhesang are distinguished through their unique shawls which include the Tsungkotepu that originally served as warrior clothing and now function as identity symbols and status markers. Traditional bead jewelry creation is a vibrant practice which produces spiritual and ancestral heirloom ornaments that the Tangkhul and Konyak tribes specialize in making.

Further details:

In the 18th century, there was a decline in the worship of Panthoibi mirrored a rise of Vaishnavism in Manipur. Hindu King Garib Niwaj Pamheiba (1709-1748) pulled down her temples and broke her statues, and from the 18th century onwards, Panthoibi was treated as a manifestation of the Hindu goddess Durga or as her incarnation or as her manifestation. The identity of Panthoibi was changed to that of Hindu goddess Durga. She was worshipped for five days in September – October

The goddess Panthoibi from Manipur's Meitei mythology is a prominent figure related to handicraft, fertility, and warfare, whose worship has also been extended to the Meitei Tamil community in places like Moreh, where she is known as Konthong Lairembi. Another goddess, Hiyangthang Lairembi (also known as Irai Leima), was associated with the Hindu goddess Kamakhya (a form

In Manipur, Maiba refers to the male religious functionary and a traditional healer in the Meitei culture, while Maibi is the female counterpart, a priestess who

serves as a spirit medium and carries the oral traditions of the Sanamahi religion. Both Maiba and Maibi play crucial roles, especially in the Lai Haraoba festival, but the Maibi holds a more prominent spiritual and ritualistic significance, as she is the one who can become possessed by a divine spirit to deliver oracles.

Maiba (Male Religious Practitioner)

Role: A male priest, ritual officiant, and often a traditional medical practitioner who acquires knowledge from mystical texts.

Significance: He also plays a vital role in the Lai Haraoba festival, performing rituals and chanting.

Maibi (Female Priestess):

Role: The female priestess, spirit medium, dancer, and singer who is considered the primary carrier of the oral religious traditions of the Meitei.

Spiritual Significance: A woman becomes a Maibi through direct possession by a divine spirit, or Lai.

Prominence: The Maibi is more significant than the Maiba, playing a leading role in rituals and possessing the ability to deliver oracles while possessed.

Traditional Dress: She wears a distinctive white attire, including a phanek (skirt) and enaphi (chaddari), often with colorful borders for visual performance.

Interrelationship and Cultural Importance-

Lai Haraoba: Both the Maiba and Maibi play essential roles in the Lai Haraoba festival, which honors the Umang Laïs and Lam Laïs.

Spirit Possession: While a Maibi is a woman chosen through divine possession, a traditional Maiba who experiences possession was historically known as a "male Maibi" and was expected to adopt the clothing of a female Maibi, though this practice is changing.

Preservation of Culture: The Maibis are vital in preserving the essence of Meitei culture, religion, and worldview, acting as major carriers of indigenous customs and traditions.

King Loiyumba also known as Meidingu Loiyumpa, was a Meitei monarch and a ruler of Kangleipak kingdom. He was the first king to order a written constitution in the 11-12th century CE which is known as the Loiyumpa Silyel (Loiyumba Sinyen).

Roso Phishahanba was appointed the head of weaving loisang (department) during the time of Meidingu Loiyumba. The Puya "Loiyumpa Silyen" or "Loiyumba Shinyen" records the names of royal weavers such as Naotam Phishapa, Ngantgi Phishapa, Yangnu Phishapa, Heisu Naha Phishapa and more.

They had been crying, but I just can't let it show, I should be hoping, but I can't stop thinking. Of all the things I should've said, that I never said, all the things we should've done, that we never did, qll the things I should've given, but I didn't! Make it go away and let us start a new chapter!..... (Major's Diary)

Wangkhei Phee is a delicate, traditional handloom textile from Manipur, India, characterized by its transparency and intricate, fine patterns. Traditionally made with cotton fibers and an airy weave of spaced warp and weft threads, this fabric was historically reserved for the royal family and is now a protected Geographical Indication (GI) product.

Key Characteristics: Fabric: Made from white cotton, often with silk fibers woven in.

Weave: Features a very open, airy weave with spaced warp and weft threads, making the fabric translucent.

Designs: Handwoven with intricate, delicate patterns and motifs, showcasing masterful weaving skills.

Origin: Originates from Imphal East,



Manipur, and is a protected GI product.

Cultural Significance: Embodies tradition and was historically worn by royalty.

The fabric is woven by women.

It requires exceptional skill to create the fine patterns and airy texture.

Moirang Phee is a hand-woven textile from Moirang, Manipur, characterized by the MoirangPheejin design—a pattern of triangular motifs on the borders of the cloth. "Phee" means "cloth" in the Meitei language, and while it can be made of cotton or silk, the design itself is significant and historically was reserved for royalty. The fabric is woven on a back-strap loom by skilled artisans, often women, and holds cultural importance, being used in traditional clothing like the Manipuri phanek.

Origin: The Moirang Phee originated in the village of Moirang, Manipur, and is now produced throughout the state.

Moirang Phee: This is the defining design, featuring sharp, consistent triangles on the longitudinal edges of the fabric that point towards the center.

Materials: It can be woven from cotton or silk threads.

Significance: The Moirang Phee is a symbol of Manipuri identity and cultural heritage.

Weaving process: Skillful craftsmanship: The intricate MoirangPheejin design requires precision and is a slow, contemplative process, often performed by women in home workshops.

Back-strap loom: The fabric is traditionally woven on a back-strap loom.

Cultural significance: Weaving is an art that is taught to girls at a young age in many Meitei clans.

The Tronglaobi Yarn Bank is an Indian Army-backed skill development project in Tronglaobi village, Manipur, that provides raw materials and training to women weavers to revive traditional textile crafts, empower the community, and create a sustainable model for local development and peace-building. The project is a collaboration with the Aseem Foundation, a non-governmental organization, and aims to foster community well-being by creating a platform for women weavers to sell their products and use their profits to sustain the bank.

Key Aspects of the Tronglaobi Yarn Bank: Collaboration: The project is a partnership between the Indian Army and the Aseem Foundation, in collaboration with local villagers, particularly women artisans.

Empowerment: It focuses on empowering local women by providing them with the necessary raw materials, machinery, infrastructure, and guidance to excel in their weaving skills.

Revival of Tradition: The Yarn Bank helps to revive and promote the rich, traditional weaving culture of the region.

Sustainable Development: The initiative creates a self-sustaining model by ensuring that the profits generated by the weavers are reinvested into buying raw materials and supporting the Yarn Bank.

Economic & Social Impact: It serves as a significant step towards community well-being, fostering resilience, promoting entrepreneurship, and building a more cohesive and peaceful society.

Peace-Building: The project's emphasis on cultural revival and economic empowerment is seen as a replicable model for peace-building in sensitive regions.

What is the Indian Army doing:

Complementing these are the natural cosmetics derived from plants and herbs and flowers like leihao, the turmeric, rice water and sesame oil occurs for both daily care and sacred rituals. The practices demonstrate ecological wisdom before sustainability became the popular buzzword of modern times. Yet, despite their deep roots,

these traditions faced the risk of fading away until a heartening intervention arrived from the Indian Army.

Reviving Tradition, Empowering Women: Indian Army personnel often received handmade shawls and jewellery from Northeast villagers during their deployment in remote areas where they discovered this valuable yet fading cultural heritage. Recognizing the untapped potential of these heritage crafts and requirement of their exposure to other states, the Indian Army initiated a unique empowerment drive.

Leveraging the local skill set of women in the region, the Army partnered with Aseem Foundation, a Pune based NGO known for its work in entrepreneurship, education and development in remote and conflict-prone areas. This collaboration gave rise to a series of community-driven initiatives under Operation Sadbhavana, resulting in the establishment of production units centered on weaving, yarn banking, natural cosmetics and bead jewellery. These projects were crafted with a dual purpose to revive the region's rich cultural heritage and to empower local women through sustainable livelihoods and economic self-reliance.

Loktak Mist: Beauty Rooted in Nature: During community engagements, the local women of Phubala village in Bishnupur district of Manipur showed interest for making natural cosmetics based on traditional Manipuri knowledge. The women from this region used rice water with wild herbs and aromatic oils as part of their beauty practice. The Phubala Cosmetic Centre developed as a new initiative which drew its wisdom from ancestral knowledge. The cosmetic brand, "Loktak Mist", draws its name and inspiration from Loktak Lake, Manipur's iconic freshwater treasure. It beautifully blends age-old beauty recipes with modern cosmetic standards, offering a harmonious fusion of tradition and innovation in every product. The Army provided women with technical skills for skin-care formulation and branding with marketing techniques. Loktak Mist products made from rice water, leihao flowers and herbal oils serve as more than natural skin-care because they embody cultural pride, entrepreneurial success and resilience.

Zakhama Textile Unit: Threads of Unity in Nagaland: In Nagaland's Kohima district, the Red Shield Division established a textile unit in Zakhama village, tapping into the tribal weaving traditions symbolized by shawls like the Tsungkotepu. The facility, outfitted with traditional looms and variety of yarns including cotton, polyester, acrylic and silk along with other necessary equipment, became a hub of structured training and income generation.

Local women gained access to structured skill development and sustainable income avenues. The initiative provided livelihood support but also strengthened the emotional relationship between Indian Army and local communities, making Army a true partner of peace and development.

A Skill Development Centre for Bead Jewellery opened its doors at P Moulding Village in Kangpokpi district of Manipur through Operation Sadbhavana. Local women receive hands-on training through this program for traditional beadwork techniques which include wire looping and bead identification and stringing and knotting.

Expert guidance and continuous support from Army enables the center to develop into a sustainable commercial business that turns cultural artistry into financial opportunities for women. This project unites traditional heritage with business practices to create better livelihood options that supports the Army's mission to drive social transformation and self-reliance and inclusive development in the area.

A Tapestry of Change: These initiatives represent economic possibilities beyond their surface value because they revive cultural heritage while providing self-expression platforms and traditional connections to modern innovation. The women of Northeast now share their narratives through the musical loom rhythms and beadwork elegance and Loktak Mist fragrance.

The Indian Army's distinctive initiative with Aseem Foundation ensures that traditional crafts which almost disappeared from existence now serve as drivers of social transformation and self-reliance. Through their joint efforts they have established a new perspective that combines empowerment with peace and tradition to show remote areas that a brighter future can be built through vision and compassion.

The last drummers call for today: Badaltery Mausam: Duniya ki tarah, Rasmo ki tarah, Wado ki tarah, Kasmao ki tarah, Mausam ki tarah tum bhi, Badal toh na jaoge, Mausam ki tarah tum bhi, Badal toh na jaoge.....But a promise has been signed between the Indian Army and people of Manipur.....!

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Fragrances To Set The Mood For This Festive Season



■ **Shahnaz Husain**

Festival and wedding season is here, and it is time to prepare for endless celebrations, family gatherings, and social events that stretch from early-morning rituals to late-night parties.

It is the time of year when families, friends, and loved ones come together to celebrate the Festival of Lights.

As you prepare to welcome guests into your home during this auspicious occasion, creating the perfect ambience is essential. One way to do this is by using delightful fragrances that not only infuse your space with a sense of festivity but also leave a lasting impression on your visitors.

Selecting the perfect perfume for the festive season is an art that combines personal preference with the mood of the occasion.

The right fragrance has the power to evoke emotions, set the tone for your interactions, and even become a cherished part of your festive traditions.

The scents associated with these festivals are more than just pleasant aromas; they are an integral part of the cultural and spiritual experience. From the calming scent during Navratri to the invigorating fragrance during Diwali, these scents are deeply intertwined with the Indian way of life.

Eucalyptus

Fill your home with the refreshing scent of eucalyptus this festive season. It will smell amazing in your home and have a refreshing and mood-boosting fragrance for you and your guests that matches the vibrant atmosphere of the festive season.

One of the simplest ways to enjoy the scent of eucalyptus in your home is by lighting a scented candle. Eucalyptus has a beautiful aroma. It can be used for its aesthetic appearance to decorate your home and the beautiful fragrance will keep your rooms smelling fresh.

Not only does eucalyptus look aesthetically placed among your Diwali decorations, it also has great benefits for you too. Eucalyptus aromatherapy can help soothe discomfort, protect against infection, and facilitate deeper breathing.

Eucalyptus aromatherapy has been known to soothe discomfort, help protect against infection, facilitate deeper breathing and rejuvenate the body and spirit.

These candles are created to promote the health of the body, mind, and soul through comprehensive therapeutic care. Scented candles are the most reliable



and easiest standby to get into the festive spirit, whether alone or with family.

The pollution level during Diwali gets grave every year and one can use eucalyptus as an air freshener. Put few sprigs in a glass jar and place it in different parts of the home in whatever room you like. It will create a wonderful aroma of eucalyptus that will last anywhere between 1-2 weeks.

Rose

Rose, the queen of flowers, signifies love and beauty. Its sweet, floral notes create a romantic and sensual sensory experience. That can be used to infuse your home with this classic fragrance. The scent of roses will create a soothing and welcoming ambience.

There are over a dozen rose perfumes that smell fresh, modern, and chic, and each one generally lends itself well to different accords. Rose oil is a pure distillation of rose that tends to smell cool, fresh and green. Rose extracts vary based on when and where the flowers were grown and processed.

Rose Attar is made traditionally using the age-old method devised about 500 years ago. The rose flowers used in the process are carefully selected for quality. 'Rosa damascena' is used to extract this attar. It is estimated that more than 50kgs of rose petals are needed for producing about 10 ml of attar. The process used is Hydro-distillation, similar to many other attars. Musk is a rich and warm fragrance that is both spicy and sweet. Within the rose, it is produced in the stamens, as opposed to the petals, which means the scent easily shakes off and perfumes the air with its heady aroma. Musk Roses tend to be found in Ramblers.

Sandalwood

Sandalwood is a versatile player in the world of perfumery which evoke a sense of luxury and sophistication.

Sandalwood is one of the most revered fragrances in India.

The use of sandalwood dates back thousands of years where it is highly revered for its fragrance and spiritual.

Known for its rich, warm, and woody aroma. It has been used in various cultures for its calming and meditative properties.

Its woody, sweet, and creamy scent is often associated with divinity and

purity.

You can use sandalwood incense sticks, essential oils, or even sandalwood-infused potpourri to create a serene and welcoming atmosphere in your home. Sandalwood's calming properties can also help set a relaxed mood during the Diwali festivities.

Sandalwood fragrances are a favourite among both men and women. The warm and creamy scent of sandalwood blends well with various other notes, appealing to a wide range of tastes.

Jasmine (Mogra)

Jasmine, known as "Mogra" is a fragrant flower that blooms in abundance during Diwali.

Jasmine is revered in ancient scriptures, beautified temples, homes, and hearts since time immemorial.

Angel wing Jasmine, Wild Jasmine, Arabian Jasmine, and Lemon-scented Jasmine are all known for their scent.

Known for its sweet and intoxicating fragrance, jasmine flowers are small, star-shaped, and typically white.

Jasmine represents innocence, holiness and hopefulness.

They can be grown in pots, hanging baskets, or directly in the garden. Regular watering is essential, but overwatering will spoil the plant. Pruning after flowering helps maintain the plant's shape and encourages more bloom.

The aroma of jasmine will undoubtedly create an inviting and lively atmosphere for your guests and commemorate the feeling of Diwali.

The aroma of jasmine has a soothing effect, allowing one to relax in the midst of lively Diwali festival celebrations.

You can place fresh jasmine flowers in vases, string them into garlands, or use Mogra (Jasmine) Incense Sticks to fill your home with the enchanting aroma of this beautiful flower.

Make a special Diwali gift with dried petals, spices and jasmine essential oil in a jar that will evoke the smell of the festivity. Jasmine essential oil, with its ethereal fragrance and profound cultural significance, is more than just an aroma during Diwali.

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

Clean Air, Healthy People



■ **Vijay Garg**

World Environmental Health Day was initially observed in 2011 following its initiation by the International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH). Since that time, it has served as an international platform to highlight critical issues such as water quality, food safety, sanitation, and, more recently, the pressing crises of air pollution and climate change. The day serves as a moment to recognise the quiet but critical contributions of environmental health professionals, who work tirelessly to prevent disease and promote healthier living environments. In 2025, the 15th yearly recognition of this day arrives when India's struggle against contaminated air has turned into a crucial public health and development concern.

India today bears the ignominious distinction of hosting the majority of the world's most polluted cities. The World Air Quality Report 2024, released by Swiss company IQAir, ranked India as the 5th most polluted country globally. Delhi frequently dominates the news for its dangerous smog, particularly during the winter season, when a harmful mix of vehicle exhaust, industrial waste, crop burning, and construction dust envelops the city. In November 2023, for example, Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) exceeded 450 on multiple days — levels categorised as "severe" and "hazardous" to human health. Cities such as Kanpur, Lucknow, Ghaziabad, and Patna often show air quality levels significantly exceeding safe limits, endangering millions daily. The issue extends beyond large cities; smaller urban areas are similarly facing increasing pollution from unregulated industrial zones and the growth of vehicles.

The effects on health caused by this toxic air are overwhelming. The Lancet Commission on Pollution and Health stated that air pollution caused almost 1.6 million early deaths in India in 2019, designating it as the primary environmental risk factor for mortality. Children are especially at risk, with increasing instances of asthma, bronchitis, and hindered lung growth noted in city schools. Adults encounter heightened risks of heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and even cognitive decline associated with prolonged exposure. In addition to human health, air pollution impacts livestock and farming. Animals exposed to elevated levels of particulate matter experience respiratory issues and lower milk production. Ground-level ozone, a result of air pollution, endangers crop yields by disrupting photosynthesis and inhibiting plant growth. Air pollution also carries a heavy economic burden for India. Estimates suggest annual losses between \$95 billion and \$150 billion, equivalent to nearly 3 per cent of the country's GDP. These losses stem from multiple factors — declining labour productivity, higher healthcare costs from pollution-related diseases, and reduced economic output due to premature deaths.

This crisis is rooted in a complicated network of factors. Swift urban growth and industrial development, along with weak enforcement

of environmental laws, have transformed Indian cities into pollution hotspots. Vehicle emissions continue to be the primary cause, worsened by the rapid increase in private cars and insufficient public transportation. Coal-fired thermal power stations and brick manufacturing facilities discharge significant quantities of pollutants, whereas construction work generates dust that remains airborne. Seasonal stubble burning in regions such as Punjab and Haryana contributes to the winter smog in Delhi. The use of biomass for cooking in rural and peri-urban households remains a quiet yet considerable factor in both indoor and outdoor air pollution. Collectively, these elements form an air pollution emergency that resists immediate solutions.

Public awareness is crucial in tackling this issue. Although government regulations and technological solutions are essential, the behaviour of citizens can determine their effectiveness. Initiatives like the "Odd-Even" vehicle restriction in Delhi or the encouragement of cleaner LPG cooking fuel through the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana demonstrate that with active public involvement, significant progress can be achieved. Regrettably, understanding of the health effects of pollution is still limited in numerous communities, resulting in delayed actions. For example, the implementation of masks on high smog days or routine air quality assessments in educational institutions and workplaces remains infrequent. Enhancing environmental health literacy is crucial to fostering demand for cleaner policies and responsible living.

Acknowledging the magnitude of the issue, India has implemented various laws and initiatives to address air pollution. The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, enacted in 1981, established the basis for overseeing industrial emissions. The Environmental Protection Act of 1986 granted the government extensive authority to safeguard environmental quality. Recently, the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), which started in 2019, seeks to lower particulate matter levels by 20-30 per cent across 131 cities by 2024. The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) was also set up in 2021 to oversee pollution control in the National Capital Region and surrounding states. Policies promoting electric vehicles, renewable energy, and stricter emission norms for industries and vehicles reflect India's commitment to tackling the crisis. Still, considerable voids persist. The application of regulations varies, and penalties for offenders are frequently insufficient to discourage repeat violations. Collaboration among state governments — essential during the stubble burning period — is often hindered by political disagreements. Public transport systems are unable to keep pace with urban expansion, leading to reliance on personal cars. Open-air waste burning remains unregulated in numerous cities. The NCAP has faced criticism for insufficient funding and the absence of effective monitoring systems. Lacking strong political will, sufficient funding, and community involvement, these initiatives may fail to meet their ambitious goals. To address these challenges, India requires a thorough and multifaceted action strategy.

Vijay Garg Retired Principal Educational columnist Eminent Educationist street kour Chand MHR Malout Punjab

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Adopting a healthy lifestyle, ensuring timely medical attention key to prevent heart diseases and stroke: Dr Tasaduk on World Heart Day, 2025

■ **HT News Desk**

SRINAGAR, OCT 01: Prominent Kashmiri doctor, public health expert and columnist, Dr Tasaduk Hussain Itoo on the occasion of World Heart Day, 2025 said that adopting a healthy lifestyle and ensuring timely medical attention is key to prevention of heart diseases and stroke. In a statement issued on World Heart Day 2025, he said that this year's theme "Don't miss a beat" encourages individuals and the global community to prioritize heart health by recognizing the importance of every heartbeat and taking action to prevent cardiovascular disease.

He cautioned that adopting unhealthy routines like eating poorly, exercising less, or leaning more heavily on substances such as alcohol, smoking and drug abuse, could increase the potential risks of heart diseases in general and heart attacks and stroke in particular. Dr Itoo said that there are many modifiable risk factors responsible for heart diseases that can be modified well in healthy ways to prevent the latter from occurring.

"Controlling your blood pressure and blood sugar levels, maintaining a healthy weight, eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and monitoring your cholesterol and triglyceride levels and keeping them under control are crucial hallmarks in prevention of heart diseases and stroke", he said



In addition he said that controlling one's lifestyle choices such as avoiding smoking and alcohol consumption are too important to help in prevention of heart diseases and stroke.

He said that cardiac death is largely preventable if patients with a heart attack come to hospital in time to get treatment. "If you think you are having any heart issue, it is really important to come to hospital and get evaluated so you can get the problem taken care of early", Dr Itoo said.

He further added that people should also avoid unnecessary stress in their lives by following a good health routine as research has shown that the inflammation caused by depression can increase a person's risk for a heart attack.



Sat Sharma calls for mass movement on Swadeshi and Atma Nirbharta in India's journey to 3rd largest economy

■ HT News Desk

JAMMU, OCT 1: India's path to 3rd largest economy lies in adoption of Swadeshi products and promotion of Atma Nirbharta in day-to-day life, stated Sat Sharma.

Jammu & Kashmir BJP President Sat Sharma (CA), accompanied by party Convenor for Atma Nirbhar Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan Sanjita Dogra (General Secretary, J&K BJP), and Abhiyan Committee members Rekha Mahajan (Vice-President, J&K BJP) and Arun Sharma (Secretary, J&K BJP), was addressing a press conference today at the party headquarters, Trikuta Nagar, Jammu.

Extending his greetings on the auspicious occasion of Mahanavmi, Sat Sharma wished for peace, prosperity, and harmony in Jammu & Kashmir.

Elaborating on the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan, Sharma said the campaign was initiated on September 25, the

birth anniversary of Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyay, and will continue till December 25, the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister, Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee. He emphasized that the Abhiyan is focused on the mission of Vocal for Local, which is key to achieving true self-reliance.

"Vocal for Local will ensure India secures the number one position in the global economy. The path to Atma Nirbharta rests upon the participation of villages, the poor, women, farmers, and youth. Our aim is to ensure a self-sufficient Bharat," he asserted.

Sat Sharma reminded that BJP's commitment to Atma Nirbhar Bharat dates back to the Bharatiya Jana Sangh era, when Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyay championed decentralization and the promotion of Swadeshi. He highlighted that the mission of self-reliance gained true momentum during the COVID pandemic. He said that it was feared that India would suffer like other nations, but in-



stead, India developed vaccines, masks, ventilators, and medicines, and exported them to nearly 100 countries. That was the first major step of true Atma Nirbharta

in modern times, he said.

Today, the time has come to regain our rightful position as the world's economic capital, he said. Referring to Operation Sin-

door, he described it as a proud moment for India that showcased the nation's indigenous technology and commitment to self-reliance.

"Today India has become the world's fourth-largest economy, with a GDP crossing 4 trillion dollars. We are moving swiftly towards the third place. This has

been achievable only through enhanced self-reliance and the Vocal for Local campaign," Sharma said, adding that the BJP has undertaken this campaign in mission mode on the call of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He announced that BJP cadre will reach every sector over the next three months to transform the Abhiyan into a mass movement.

Appealing to the people, Sat Sharma urged citizens to maximize the use of locally made products and minimize reliance on imports. This will strengthen local industries, boost India's export capacity, and contribute to national prosperity, he said and further called for promoting Swadeshi products, adopting Khadi in daily life, and beginning the mission from homes and society itself.

Sharma also described the recent GST modifications as an important milestone in promoting local production and ensuring a favorable ecosystem for indigenous businesses.

Community mobilisation programme on Ullas Nav Bharat Sakshartya program held at GGHSS Miran Sahib

■ HT News Desk

MIRAN SAHIB, OCT 1: A Community Mobilisation Programme on Ullas Nav Bharat Sakshartya Karyakaram was conducted at Government Girls Higher Secondary School (GGHSS) Miran Sahib today. The program was organized under the guidance of Worthy ZEO Miran Sahib, Smt. Verthana Sharma, and on the direction of Worthy CEO Jammu, Ajeet Sharma. The initiative aimed to raise awareness among residents about the Ullas scheme and its benefits. Participants were briefed about the forthcoming examinations scheduled for October 12, 2025. The event sought to mobilize the community around various government schemes and encourage active participation at the grassroots level. The program underscored a commitment to inclusive outreach, empowering citizens with essential information and encouraging proactive engagement with public programs.

Rakesh Kumar, Vice Principal of GGHSS Miran Sahib, was the chief guest of the program. His presence highlighted the importance of community mobilization and awareness about government schemes. The program aimed to sensitize local communities about the importance of participating in government initiatives and to provide them with essential information about various schemes. By doing so, the initiative sought to empower citizens



and promote community development. The Community Mobilisation Programme on Ullas Nav Bharat Sakshartya Karyakaram was a successful initiative that raised awareness about the Ullas scheme and encouraged community participation. Such programs are essential for promoting inclusive development and empowering citizens with essential information.

Ladakh UT LG remarks against Nepalese, Doda residents in bad taste: Bhalla

■ HT News Desk

JAMMU, OCT 1: Congress has fully supported the demand of entire Ladakh people for high-level judicial probe into the mishandling of the situation and the firing incident killing four persons.

Working President Raman Bhalla has lashed out at the centre and UT administration for mishandling of the situation in Leh causing great resentment and anger amongst people of entire Ladakh region and supported high level probe as demanded by both Apex and KDA. The peaceful region of Ladakh having strategic importance for the nation has been pushed into turmoil by the BJP due to total mishandling, he added.

He said people of Ladakh were promised the 6th schedule by the BJP and centre five years ago, like statehood to J&K. But the centre betrayed both Ladakh

UT and J&K people after getting a complete mandate on false promises. Centre should fulfill the genuine demands of both UTs without further delay.

Shri Bhalla was interacting with the inhabitants of areas of Greater Kailash in Jammu regarding the brewing resentment and concern of the people over the approach of the centre government.

He also reacted to the unwarranted and irresponsible remarks of LT Governor of Ladakh UT blaming the Nepalese and residents of Doda behind Leh violence and said that it was in bad taste. Even if anyone is found involved in ugly incident individually, should not be referred to in the manner, he has done, sending wrong signals.

Nepal and Nepalese had been friends of our country for centuries, and the Gorkhas are known for their honesty, loyalty, and bravery

& have fought in the Indian Armed Forces, gave sacrifices defending our borders. They are engaged & preferred in private security duties for their qualities of loyalty, sincerity, and bravery.

Millions of Nepalese work in our country, and similarly, millions of Indians work in Nepal, without any incident of discrimination and enmity on the basis of origin.

Even in the recent turmoil in Nepal, no Indian was harmed or suffered.

Ant criminal act is an act of individual or individuals involved and can't be attributed to any region, religion, or community in the circumstances in which the incident happened.

The LG should have taken due caution in his address keeping in view its several connotations and our friendly relations with the neighbouring country and the well being of lakhs of our countrymen

working there. Although law should take its own course against any individuals found involved in any violence.

Bhalla also took stock of the problems faced by the people in different localities due to lack of urgent repairs and restorations after the devastated floods and rains and blamed the lack of comprehensive package from Centre and dual control system in J&K, as reasons behind delay in rehabilitation measures.

The 28 BJP MLAs and MPs should impress upon their government at the center to fulfill its promise and restore statehood without delay, as dual system is hurdle in speedy relief, rehabilitation and restoration works.

People complained that extended portion of Greater Kailash totally ignored in development of internal roads and drains.

MLA Jasrotia holds Public Darbar in Dinga Amb, addresses grievances and flood-related issues

■ HT News Desk

KATHUA, OCT 1: MLA Jasrota Rajiv Jasrotia today held a Public Darbar in Dinga Amb, providing a platform for the local community to raise their grievances and concerns. The program was attended by senior officials, including SDM Hiranagar Phulail Singh JKAS, SDPO Border Dheeraj Katoch JKPS, BDO Dingaamb Akhil Bahu, and other departmental representatives.

The public raised various issues, including restoration of road connectivity, drinking water supply, flood protection, and compensation for private property damaged due to recent floods. Demands were made for restoration of roads towards Galman,

Dabi to Babiti, and Baloute, as well as rural paths by RDD. The public demanded drinking water supply to Badouli, Mangloor West, and other Kandi areas.

The public sought restoration of landslides and flood protection in areas damaged due to recent floods. Demands were made for compensation for private property damaged due to floods. Ex-Sarpanches demanded posting of MBBS doctor at Dingaamb Sub Centre.

MLA Jasrota assured the public that he will take up each issue with the District Administration and provide funding out of CDF for restoration of flooded areas. He advised sectoral officers to prepare proposals for early

restoration of supplies in flood-affected areas. SDM Hiranagar Phulail Singh JKAS assured the MLA and public that issues will be addressed within a time frame and directed sectoral officers to examine public demands. The public thanked the MLA and Subdivisional Administration for swift help, relief, and restoration during recent floods.

The Public Darbar in Dinga Amb demonstrated the commitment of MLA Jasrota Rajiv Jasrotia and the Subdivisional Administration to address public grievances and concerns. The event highlighted the importance of community engagement and responsive governance in addressing local issues.

BJP Slams NC Government for Gross Neglect of Kashmiri Culture, Demands Immediate Revival Policy

■ HT News Desk

SRINAGAR, OCT 1: The Jammu and Kashmir Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) today strongly condemned the ruling National Conference (NC) government for what it termed "irresponsible governance that has led to the severe neglect of the region's priceless cultural heritage, language, and traditional art forms.

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters in Srinagar, BJP J&K Spokespersons Manzoor

Bhat along with Altaf Thakur and Er Sahil Bashir outlined the NC government's failures and contrasted them with the decisive actions taken by the BJP-led Central Government under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to preserve and promote Kashmir's identity.

"For centuries, Jammu and Kashmir has been known as the cultural crown of India, but sadly, this priceless heritage is facing serious neglect under the present NC Government," stated Manzoor Bhat.

Our traditional theatre, Bhand Pather, is dying, and its artists are struggling without support. Our mother tongue, the Kashmiri language, was sidelined for decades. This is not just a policy failure; it is an attack on the very soul of Kashmir.

Bhat pointed out that while states like Gujarat and Punjab proudly promote their folk arts, the NC government has failed to create a cultural policy, provide financial grants, or offer recognition to the custodians of Kashmir's traditions.

Bhat highlighted the Central Government's commitment to the region's culture. Fulfilling a long-standing demand of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the Prime Minister gave official recognition to languages like Kashmiri and Dogri, granting them the dignity and status they have deserved for decades," he added.

These are real actions, not empty promises, Bhat emphasized. This proves that BJP truly cares for every culture and every commu-

nity. Our vision is of a 'Viksit Bharat' a developed India that is culturally proud and inclusive.

This is not about politics; this is about the identity of Kashmir," concluded Bhat. If we lose our language, our theatre, and our culture, we lose a part of ourselves. The BJP has shown the way with strong actions under Modi Ji's leadership. It is now the responsibility of the NC Government to act. BJP will continue to stand as the guardian of Kashmir's rich legacy.

Public Notice

I am applying for fresh Pesticides/Fertilizers/Seed License under the name Farm Edge Solutions Pvt Ltd situated at Aglar Pattan. In this regard if anybody is having any objection may file the same to Chief Agriculture Officer Baramulla and PPO Lal Mandi Srinagar within the time period of 07 days from the date of Publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained. (Aabid Ashraf S/o Mohammad Ashraf Bhat R/o Aglar pattan) Cell No. 6005461490)

Public Notice

This is for information of general public that the (Electric bill) power connection is registered on my Son's name PARVAIZ AHMAD SIRAJ S/O MANZOOR AHMAD SIRAJ R/O WATERGAM .Now this Connection bearing Consumer ID NO 021204040000862 wants to be registered on my name MANZOOR AHMAD SIRAJ F/O PARVAIZ AHMAD SIRAJ R/O WATERGAM .If anybody have any objection in this regard He/She may file his/her objection in the concerned PDD office within seven days from the date of publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained.

Name...MANZOOR AHMAD F/O .PARVAIZ AHMAD SIRAJ R/O ...WATERGAM WAGOORA

Public Notice

My son's Date of Birth has been wrongly written as 21/03/2016 in her date of Birth certificate while his correct date of Birth is 22/03/2016 which needs to be corrected if anybody having any objection in this regard he /she may file his /her objection in the office of concerned authorities within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained

NameBASHIR AHMAD MIR F/OUMER BASHIR R/O ...PUSNAG KREERI DOB ...22/03/2016

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeri

Subject: Application of PEER ISHTYAK AHMAD S/O PEER SHAMAS UD DIN R/O THINDIMA KREERI for the issuance of LEGAL HEIR certificate

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the subject cited above in this context a report sought from patwari halqa concerned and the Death certificate issued by the competent authority reveals that LT MUNEEERA AKHTER W/O PEER SHAMUS UD DIN has passed away on 06/06/2025 .The report of the patwari further depicts that the deceased has left behind following dependent as tabulated below
1.... , PEER ISHTIYAK AHMAD son 35 Govt employee
2.... , PEER SUHAIL AHMAD SON 35 years //
The applicant has applied for Issuance of Legal heir certificate in favour of Self

If anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of said certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained.

Naib Tehsild Kreeri

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TEPA agreement between India and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) come into effect

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

New Delhi, Oct 1 The Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) between India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) comprising Switzerland, Norway and Iceland, came into effect today and is expected to reduce tariff barriers and expand India's share in key commodities in EFTA countries.

India's exports to EFTA stood at USD 72.37 million in 2024, contributing 0.41 per cent of EFTA's total imports.

The agreement signed on March 10, 2024, offers binding commitment of 100 bn US Dollar investment and one million direct jobs in the next 15 years and will stimulate services exports in sectors like IT, business services, education, audio-visual etc.

It also provides Mutual Recognition Agreements in Professional Services like nursing, chartered accountants, architects etc. and incorporates, for the first time in any Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed by India, a commitment linked to investment and job creation.

The agreement comprises 14 chapters with main focus on market access related to goods, rules of origin, trade facilitation, trade remedies, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, investment promotion, market access on services, intellectual property rights, trade and sustainable development and other legal and horizontal provisions.

The EFTA's market access offer under TEPA covers 100 percent of non-agri products and tariff concession on Processed Agricultural Products (PAP). Sensitivity



related to PLI in sectors such as pharma, medical devices and processed food etc. have been taken while extending offers.

The agreement goes beyond goods and services and is committed to promoting investments with the aim of increasing the stock of foreign direct investments by USD 100 billion in India in the next 15 years, and to facilitate the generation of one million direct employment in India, through such investments, an official statement said.

EFTA is an important regional group, with several growing opportunities for enhancing international trade in goods and services. EFTA is one important economic block out of the three (other two - EU and UK) in Europe. Among EFTA countries, Switzerland is the largest trading partner of India followed by Norway.

The TEPA will empower India's ex-

porters by providing access to specialized inputs and create conducive trade and investment environment. This would boost exports of Indian made goods as well as provide opportunities for services sector to access more markets.

As per Article 7.1 of TEPA, the EFTA States shall aim to increase foreign direct investment (FDI) in India by USD 50 billion within 10 years and an additional USD 50 billion in the succeeding 5 years, amounting to a total of USD 100 billion over 15 years.

Concurrently, the EFTA States shall aim to facilitate the generation of 1 million direct jobs in India resulting from these investment inflows. This investment commitment explicitly excludes foreign portfolio investment (FPI), focusing on long-term capital for productive capacity building.

HLC approves Rs 4,645 cr for recovery and reconstruction projects across nine states

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

New Delhi, Oct 1 A High-Level Committee (HLC), under the chairmanship of union Home Minister Amit Shah, today approved a number of mitigation, recovery and reconstruction projects having total outlay of Rs. 4645.60 crore.

Nine states - Assam, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh - will benefit, a Home Ministry statement said.

The Committee, comprising of Finance Minister, Agriculture Minister and Vice Chairman NITI Aayog as members considered the proposal for financial assistance to the state from National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF).

The HLC has approved the restoration and rejuvenation of wetlands plan of Rs 692.05 crore to Assam. The implementation of this project will enhance wetland capacity, create flood storage, increase flood resilience, protect the aquatic environment and will help in economic growth through improved fisheries infrastructure.

Out of total approved outlay of Rs 692.05 crore for the project, the Central share will be Rs 519.04 crore (75 per cent) and state share will be Rs 173.01 crore (25 per cent). This includes projects for mitigation activities towards restoration and rejuvenation of 24 distinct wetlands of



Guwahati city with a total financial outlay of Rs 200 crore out of which Rs 180 crore will be the central share from NDMF.

The activities involved for urban flood risk mitigation project for Guwahati cities ranges from structural measures of interlinking of water bodies to stormwater management, construction of flood protection wall, erosion control and soil stabilisation using Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) etc as well as non-structural measures such as flood early warning system and data acquisition system and capacity building etc. Earlier, Central Government had approved urban flood risk management programmes of total financial outlay of Rs 3075.65 crore for seven metro cities - Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Pune. Further central government had also approved a number of mitigation projects for mitigating the risks of a number of hazards in the areas of landslides (Rs 1000 crore), GLOF (Rs 150 crore), forest fire (Rs 818.92 crore), lightning (Rs 186.78 crore) and drought (Rs 2022.16 crore). The HLC, also approved financial assistance of an amount of Rs 1270.788 crores to the Assam government and Rs 260.56 crore to Kerala for recovery and reconstruction activities for both the states in the aftermath of flood and landslide incident of 2022 and Wayanad landslide-2024 respectively.

nine districts of Assam, spread across the Brahmaputra river system.

Through a number of structural and other measures, this project will enhance water retention capacity of wetlands and Beels and will help mitigate risk of flooding and erosion. This approval is in line with Home Minister's vision for the development of wetlands for conservation and flood mitigation in Assam. The project's long-term coverage is aimed at the entire length of Brahmaputra within Assam and therefore this project would be taken up as a pilot project to establish a flood-proof Brahmaputra valley. The HLC has also approved the Urban Flood Risk Management Programme (UFRMP) Phase-2 for eleven cities viz. Bhopal, Bhubhaneswar, Guwahati, Jaipur, Kanpur, Patna, Raipur, Trivandrum, Vishakhapatnam,

Indore and Lucknow with a total financial outlay of Rs 2444.42 crore to be funded from the National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF).

The selection of these 11 cities is on the basis of their status of being most populous cities, primarily prone to floods, as well as consideration of other physical, environmental, socio-economic and hydro-meteorological factors. The programme will complement the states in mitigating risk of urban flooding in their cities through uniform structural and non-structural intervention measures. The funding pattern will be on cost-sharing between the centre and state as per NDMF guidelines i.e 90 per cent from Centre and 10 per cent from state.

Additionally, out of afore-said 11 cities, the HLC has approved the programme designed for flood mitigation projects of

India-Russia Strategic Partnership continues to develop dynamically across the board : Sergey Lavrov

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

New Delhi/Moscow, Oct 1 Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov today said the Strategic Partnership between India and Russia continues to develop dynamically across the board with trade, economic ties, scientific and technological collaboration and cultural and humanitarian exchanges between the two countries on the rise.

Welcoming the organisers and participants of the first Tatarstan-India Mutual Efficiency (TIME) business forum to be hosted in the city of Kazan, Lavrov said that this year, both countries mark the 25th anniversary of the Declaration on India-Russia Strategic Partnership. "A decade after its signing, our bilateral relations were elevated to a special and privileged strategic partnership," he said.

He said Kazan has a proven track record of successfully hosting high-profile international events, most recently the 16th BRICS summit in October 2024, which featured a high-level Indian delegation headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"I am delighted to see that the forum's substantive programme reflects the multifaceted nature of Russian-Indian



cooperation," he said.

He expressed confidence that the Kazan discussions will contribute to expanding practical cooperation between the two countries further strengthening the bonds of friendship, trust and mutual understanding between the people of the two countries. On October 8-9 the city of Kazan will host the TIME Business Forum. India and the Russian Republic of Tatarstan are strengthening business ties, opening up new horizons for co-operation and the implementation of mutually beneficial projects. The focus of the event is on building a strategic partnership between Russian regions and Indian states.

The upcoming forum will become a key platform for exchanging experiences between

business leaders, representatives of industrial sectors and experts from the Republic of Tatarstan and India's states.

Participants will discuss ways to implement joint initiatives, promising investment projects as well as opportunities for technological and economic cooperation.

"In recent years, India has become one of Tatarstan's leading export partners. Relations are developing in the spirit of strategic partnership and the potential for economic ties remains high. India is one of the friendly countries committed to a constructive economic agenda, and this is a very large market." - Mrs. Taliya Minullina, Chief Executive of the Tatarstan Investment Development Agency, said.

Delhi govt taking steps for elderly, Rs 20 cr to be spent on new recreation centres: Indraj

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

New Delhi, Oct 1 On the occasion of International Day of Older Persons, Delhi's Social Welfare Minister Ravinder Indraj Singh extended greetings to the senior citizens, saying the state government is consistently working for their security, dignity and ensuring a fulfilling life.

Indraj said the government is continuously working on new schemes for senior citizens, and is working on a fresh plan for recreation centres to ensure better mental health well being, along with special focus on counselling in old age homes.

He said the provision of post-retirement counseling will be further expanded in Delhi, and Rs 20 crore will be spent on developing recreation centres, to promote mental health well being of senior citizens.

The minister also shared that 50,000 new pension vacancies have been created for senior citizens in Delhi during the ongoing service fortnight, inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision.

Along with this, the Savitribai Phule Old Age Home in Paschim Vihar has also been inaugurated, which will provide modern and secure housing facilities for 96 senior citizens.

The minister said Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has issued clear directions that every scheme of the Delhi government should reach senior citizens of the state, and that they should not face any difficulty.

Indraj said all eligible senior citizens will receive the benefit of pension, and if they require any assistive device, they may inform the department.

These devices include wheelchairs, walkers, wheel bearers and wheel-bearer commodes, hearing aids, spectacles, silicon foam pillows, spinal support belts, knee presses, cervical collars, and other health-support kits.

The Social Welfare Minister emphasized that the Delhi government is providing not only facilities, but also security and dignity to the elderly. He has appealed to people, saying that everyone must respect and support senior citizens.

Delhi records best air quality in first nine months: CAQM

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

New Delhi, Oct 1 Delhi's air quality showed marked improvement in the first nine months of 2025, aided by favourable meteorological conditions and sustained efforts by all concerned stakeholders, according to a statement here from the union Environment Ministry.

As per data released by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), the city recorded an average Air Quality Index (AQI) of 164 during the period January to September 2025—the lowest for this period in the past eight years, barring 2020, the year of the COVID-19 lockdown.

It also said that there was not even a single day with average AQI of more than 400, besides witnessing highest number of 'Satisfactory' days, during January - September



period in 2025.

This year's average Air Quality Index (AQI) for the period January to September stood at 164, reflecting a consistent improvement in Delhi's air quality over the past several years. In comparison, the average AQI for the same

period was 178 in 2024, 167 in 2023, 184 in 2022, 180 in 2021, 144 in 2020 (the lockdown year), 188 in 2019, and 193 in 2018. This downward trend highlights the positive impact of sustained air pollution control efforts and favourable meteorological conditions, said the statement.

ED attaches Rs 10.55 cr Ansal Properties

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

New Delhi, Oct 1 The Enforcement Directorate's (ED) Gurugram Zonal Office has attached six immovable properties worth Rs 10.55 crore.

The properties, located in Gurugram (Haryana), Greater Noida (UP), and Ludhiana (Punjab), are held by directors of Ansal Properties and Infrastructure Ltd. (APIL)—Sushil Ansal, Pranav Ansal, his Son's HUF, and Kusum Ansal.

The action is part of a money-laundering case stemming from violations of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act.

The attached properties con-

sist of commercial units and space. APIL is engaged in real estate development in the residential, commercial, and retail segments.

The ED initiated its investigation based on prosecution complaints filed by the Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB).

The complaints involved the commission of scheduled offences specifically, non-compliance with environmental norms by APIL in its two Gurugram-based real estate projects, 'Sushant Lok-F' and 'Esencia'.

The ED's investigation revealed that APIL did not install a Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) in its 'Sushant Lok Phase-I' project, instead discharging effluent through a HUDA sewerage line.

The STP installed in its 'Esencia' project was of inadequate capacity.

During inspections, HSPCB officials found the STPs abandoned and non-operational.

The investigation further revealed that by not treating domestic effluent and sewage water as per norms, APIL caused damage to public health and the environment while profiting from its cost-saving actions.

The company's promoters failed to treat the waste or take measures required by HSPCB norms, thereby unduly benefiting to the tune of Rs 10.55 crore.

The ED has identified this amount as the proceeds of crime generated from the criminal activity. Further investigation into the matter is ongoing.

Indian Army to host UN Troop Contributing Countries' chiefs conclave from Oct 14

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

New Delhi, Oct 1 The Indian Army will host the United Nations Troop Contributing Countries' (UNTCC) Chiefs Conclave here from October 14 to 16, bringing together senior military leadership of over 30 nations that are key contributors to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Lt Gen Rakesh Kapoor, DCOAS (IS&T), briefed about the modalities of conduct of the upcoming conclave today, a Defence Ministry statement said.

He underlined the significance of the conclave as a unique platform for UN Troop Contributing Countries to foster dialogue, cooperation and mu-

tual understanding. He highlighted India's steadfast commitment to UN peacekeeping, its role as one of the largest troop contributors and the Indian Army's readiness to share its operational experience, innovations and best practices. He expressed confidence that the conclave would pave the way for deeper collaboration, collective preparedness and stronger partnerships in addressing contemporary peacekeeping challenges. As one of the largest and most consistent contributors to UN missions, India is convening this conclave to provide a high-level forum for sharing best practices, fostering common understanding and creating a collaborative approach to chart out the future trajectory of peacekeeping.

Delhi to pay Rs 1 cr to covid duty families

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

New Delhi, Oct 1 The Delhi government has taken a historic decision for the families of its employees who lost their lives while they were on Covid duty during the pandemic.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has announced that now the families of those Delhi government employees, the Covid heroes, will be granted an ex gratia amount of Rs 1 crore.

According to the CMO, the government will shortly release this assistance to the families of 10 such employees.

The CM said the process is underway, and a Group of Ministers' committee is continuously working on it.

She emphasised that the contribution of those employees who passed away during their service in the pandemic will be remembered as one of the most selfless and inspiring chapters in the national Capital's history.

Gupta said during the pandemic, doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, sanitation workers, teachers, and other frontline employees of the Delhi government risked their lives and served the public selflessly.

When the entire world had come to a standstill out of fear of the pandemic,



these employees carried on their duties day and night, ensuring that healthcare, sanitation, essential services, and other facilities continued without interruption.

She said their contribution would be etched in Delhi's history as an inspiring legacy.

The government has also decided to approve and release the pending ex gratia payments of employees who were deployed on Covid duty during 2020-2021.

Soon, the amount will be handed over as recognition of the extraordinary service of the 10 employees who put service to society above their own lives during the most difficult period of the pandemic, she said.

Gupta asserted that the government is treating this matter with utmost seriousness, and pointed out that the previous administration, despite making many announcements, failed to act with the urgency that the situation de-

manded.

The CM noted with regret that the ex gratia payment meant as a gesture of respect and gratitude was held back for a long time due to procedural delays and other reasons.

However, she emphasised that no delay can ever diminish the value of the services rendered by the employees.

Gupta expressed condolences to the bereaved families and assured them that the government will provide ex-gratia support to all employees who lost their lives while serving during the Covid pandemic.

Ministers Ashish Sood, Kapil Mishra, and Dr Pankaj Kumar Singh will monitor the process, and they will be supported by senior officials from the Relief Branch, including Divisional Commissioner Neeraj Senwal and District Magistrate Amol Srivastava.

The CM added that this is not a one-time exercise, but a continuous process, and the committee is regularly reviewing such cases, and in the coming days, more families of employees are expected to receive the ex gratia payment.

She said that the ex gratia is more than a financial aid - "it is a token of gratitude, solidarity and justice".



Vance blames Democrats for White House shutdown, accuses them of ‘hostage takeover’

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

Washington, Oct 1: US Vice President JD Vance placed the blame for the government shutdown squarely on the shoulder of Democrats, accusing them of “hostage taking” over health care demands in his first public remarks since the shutdown began at midnight.

In a Fox News interview Tuesday morning, Vance said Democrats had forced the shutdown to extract concessions on health care funding, a move he argued was reckless and unnecessary, reports CNN.

“You don’t take the government as a hostage because you want to engage in negotiation about health care costs,” Vance said.

“Let’s do that negotiation, but let’s do it in the context of actually opening the government and ensuring those essential services are actually provided to the American people.”

The VP singled out what he called a “far-left faction” of the Democratic Party, accusing it of holding up a short-term funding bill over Obamacare’s premium support program.

“What makes it extra preposterous is



that the programme doesn’t even expire until next year,” Vance said. “So why are you shutting down the government on October 1?”

Vance insisted the White House remains open to talks on health care costs, but only if Democrats agree to reopen the government first. “We obviously care a lot about lowering health care costs for Americans,” he said. “But we’re not

going to engage in negotiations with hostage takers, which is exactly what the Democrats have done.”

He also suggested Democratic leadership would not be able to withstand the political fallout of a prolonged shutdown. “You’re going to see more and more Democrats come to the side of reason and reopen government,” Vance said.

Democrats have pushed back, accus-

ing Republicans of failing to negotiate in good faith. They argue GOP leaders ignored their concerns about protecting health care subsidies for low-income families and instead allowed the government to close.

The standoff marks the first shutdown since President Donald Trump’s return to office in January, and it threatens to furlough hundreds of thousands of federal workers, disrupt military pay, and halt a wide range of government services.

Both parties are betting the public will blame the other side—a familiar dynamic in Washington, but one with high political stakes.

For Vance, the crisis has become a high-profile test of his role as Trump’s deputy and chief negotiator on Capitol Hill.

His sharp rhetoric Tuesday reflected both the administration’s confidence that Democrats will eventually fold and its determination not to give ground on the shutdown itself.

As the impasse enters its first day, neither party is showing any signs of a compromise, thus compounding fears of a prolonged shutdown with no immediate resolution in sight.

US govt goes dark as vast swathes of bureaucracy get laid off amid collapse of federal funding

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

Washington, Oct 1 The US government has for the most part gone dark as much of the bureaucracy was laid off on Wednesday, after Congress failed to reach a deal to approve new funding.

The ruling Republicans had proposed extending government funding at current levels until Nov. 21 to allow for members to continue working on full-year appropriations bills.

Democrats had countered this with a shorter extension until the end of October, but tied their offer to health care provisions and new limits on President Donald Trump’s ability to withhold funds — conditions Republicans rejected outright.

Talks at the White House on Monday between congressional leaders and Trump failed to produce any compromise, leaving both sides entrenched and the government without money to operate, resulting in the shutdown, reports CNN.

A shutdown occurs when Congress fails to pass funding bills, leaving agencies unable to spend money not explicitly approved by lawmakers. Since 1980, there have been 14 such shutdowns, including the record 34-day standoff in 2018.

A shutdown has drastic effects on all but the most essential of federal services. Essential services like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid benefits remain intact, but a wide swathe of federal functions have ground to a



halt.

Air traffic controllers and TSA agents continue to work without pay, keeping flights operational. The National Weather Service, Veterans Affairs medical services, and passport and visa processing remain active, though strained.

The disruption comes against the backdrop of Trump’s push earlier this year to shrink the federal workforce. In February, he signed an executive order directing agencies to draw up plans for large-scale staff reductions, citing costs to taxpayers and poor performance.

Some agencies cut deeply, others reversed course, and still others quietly asked laid-off workers to return.

Both the political parties took to playing the blame game and accused each other for the blackout.

Republicans accused Democrats of engineering the shutdown for political leverage. “Democrats have officially voted to CLOSE the government,”

House Speaker Mike Johnson wrote on social media.

“Results: Moms and kids lose WIC nutrition. Veterans lose health care and suicide prevention programs. ... The only question now: How long will Chuck Schumer let this pain go on — for his own selfish reasons?”

Democrats fired back, placing responsibility on Trump and GOP leadership. “After months of making life harder and more expensive, Donald Trump and Republicans have now shut down the federal government because they do not want to protect the health-care of the American people,” House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said in a joint statement.

With neither party showing signs of compromise, the length of the shutdown is uncertain. Each day it drags on will intensify pressure on lawmakers to resolve their standoff — and add to the economic and political fallout of Washington’s latest budget crisis.

Yunus denies surge in minority persecution in Bangladesh, faces backlash from rights group



UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

Dhaka, Oct 1 Denying a surge in minority violence and persecution, Chief Adviser Md Yunus has dismissed allegations that the Bangladesh’s Hindu community was being targeted in Bangladesh, stating that there is “no anti-Hindu violence” in the country, instead attributing the reports to Indian media’s peddling of “fake news.”

His denial was strongly condemned by the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, a human rights organisation against religious discrimination, which expressed both deep sorrow and massive anger over his dismissal, according to Daily Observer.

Speaking to the Global Thinkers Organisation (GTO) on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York, Yunus insisted there was “no anti-Hindu violence” in Bangladesh.

“No, it has not increased. I would say the government is very alert on that one, because this is the one thing India is always pushing,” he said.

The remarks stood in stark contrast to Yunus’ own comments last year, when he publicly acknowledged the persecution of Hindus and Buddhists as well as the growth of Islamist extremism. At the time, he described minority attacks as a serious challenge for the country, and one his administration was determined to tackle — to no avail yet.

The Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council, a prominent rights group, issuing strong condemnation called his dismissal “a denial of the truth.”

In a statement, the Council said it had already presented evidence of “ongoing organised violence” against Hindus during an August 2024 meeting with the Chief Adviser.

It also cited a February 2025 UN Fact-Finding Mission report that documented continuing attacks on minorities after the interim government came to power last August.

The Council also weighed in on his comments from last year, noting that he himself had acknowledged the violence in an interview with the US broadcaster NPR last October, remarks later published by Bangladeshi daily Prothom Alo.

“By now dismissing the reality, the Chief Adviser is undermining victims’ suffering and the credibility of his own earlier admissions,” the Council said.

Despite his dismissal, and claiming that Indian media peddling fake news, separate reports from both its domestic and other independent international media outlets have likewise noted a similar surge in communal violence in recent months, including attacks on Hindu homes, temples and businesses.

The Council’s activists stated that many of the assaults have gone unpunished, fostering a climate of impunity and indifference.

The country’s now banned opposition party, the Awami League also weighed in, accusing Yunus of complicity in the abuses.

In a statement, the party said, “Inhuman persecution of Hindus has continued under his interim administration, with looting, arson and indiscriminate killings that amount to genocide.”

“While these atrocities were previously carried out under the protection of this illegitimate, fascist Yunus regime, it is now the regime itself that is launching attacks,” the party stated.

International watchdogs have warned that the treatment of minorities has become a critical test for Yunus’ credibility as he seeks to maintain foreign support for his interim government.

Despite mounting evidence and condemnation, Yunus maintains that allegations of systematic minority persecution are politically motivated and fabricated.

For rights groups and minority leaders, his dismissal of their plight has only deepened anger — and reinforced fears that attacks will continue unchecked.

US govt enters shutdown for first time in nearly 7 years

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

Washington, Oct 1 The US federal government entered a shutdown at the start of Wednesday as partisan divisions prevented Congress from passing a funding bill, which marks the first government shutdown in nearly seven years.

Hundreds of thousands of federal employees will be forced to take unpaid leave, with some pub-

lic services potentially suspended or delayed, and the release of economic data possibly impacted as well. The shutdown commenced hours after the US Senate failed to pass a short-term spending bill that would have temporarily kept the government running. The continuing resolution proposed by Senate Republicans was blocked by Democrats, falling short of the 60 votes required for passage. In the latest negotiations,

healthcare benefits have been one of the core sticking points between the two parties. Democrats are demanding stronger healthcare-related benefits, including an extension of the enhanced subsidies for Affordable Care Act set to expire at the end of the year, as well as restoring the act’s coverage eligibility for certain immigrants who are legally present, including refugees and asylum seekers.

Qatar, Turkey, Egypt urge Hamas leaders to accept US peace proposal amid Trump ultimatum

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

Ankara, Oct 1 Qatar, Egypt and Turkey have reportedly urged Hamas to quickly accept the 20-point proposal presented by US President Donald Trump to end the war in Gaza, as per Axios.

The three countries — which have been the longest mediators between Israeli authorities and the terror outfit — have met several of the group’s commanders in the past 24 hours.

Trump, on Monday unveiled his plan, and gave Hamas an ultimatum — giving them only “three to four days” to accept — or otherwise be destroyed.

Speaking before a gathering of Pentagon generals and admirals in Quantico, Virginia, he warned “We have one signature that we need, and that signature will pay in hell if they don’t sign. I hope they sign for their own good and create something really great.”

Political-military officials in both Washington and Jerusalem have been cautiously optimistic, as they expect the hardline group Hamas to agree, and most likely with reservations.

While Trump was presenting the plan in Washington, Qatari Prime Minister Md bin Abdulrahman al-Thani and Egyptian intelligence chief Hassan Rashad were briefing Hamas leaders in Doha.

According to a source of the media platform, both had pressed Hamas’s senior command to accept the proposal, with al-Thani telling the group the proposal was the best deal he could secure — and that Trump appeared personally committed to seeing it through.



Hamas leaders had not immediately issued a response post the proposal, and later said that they would study the plan “in good faith.”

A day later, al-Thani and Rashad returned for a second meeting in Doha, this time joined by Turkish intelligence director Ibrahim Kalin.

Ahead of that meeting, al-Thani told Qatari media Al Jazeera that he hoped “everyone looks at the plan constructively and seizes the chance to end the war.”

He stressed that Hamas needed to coordinate with other Palestinian factions in Gaza before issuing a formal response, but stressed that Trump’s framework “achieves the main goal of ending the war, though some issues in it need clarification and negotiation.”

Trump’s 20-point proposal contains several major concessions to Hamas, including the release of 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and a sharp increase in humanitarian aid.

But it also demands the group’s full disarmament and outlines a phased Israeli withdrawal from Gaza — points that Hamas has historically rejected.

Some of the conditions and timetables for Israel’s withdrawal, are said to have sparked the ire of Arab officials, who claimed that these terms made mediation efforts tougher. The new conditions were said to be inserted at the insistence of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Al-Thani described the plan as “still at an early stage and needing development,” saying further negotiations would be required to translate its principles into an actionable framework.

Trump has made his stance clear, and said there is next to no room for negotiations, bargaining, or any amendments.

“There isn’t much room” to negotiate further, he said Tuesday, laying forward his ultimatum.

White House officials have signalled a willingness to discuss further clarifications or limited amendments but will not reopen the deal in full.

Despite the POTUS’ hardline rhetoric, coupled with his delicate balancing act behind-the-scenes, mediation efforts have been successful so far despite their fragility, as the deal has brought onboard Israel, Europe, and almost all the Muslim-Arab world, all of whom have accepted it in unison.

Arab and Israeli officials have thus warned the terror group to accept the proposal quickly, or otherwise embrace its own destruction and cause further deaths in Gaza.

Death toll in strong quake in Philippines rises to 69



UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

Manila, Oct 1 The death toll in the 6.9-magnitude earthquake that struck Cebu province in the central Philippines last night climbed to 69, the Philippines’ Office of Civil Defense (OCD) said today.

Assistant Secretary Bernardo Rafaelito Alejandro, deputy administrator for the OCD, told a public briefing that 30 died in

Bogo City, the epicenter of the earthquake, 10 in Medellin town, 22 in San Remigio town, five in Tabogon town, and one each in the municipalities of Sogod and Tabuelan. He said the victims died after they were crushed by the collapsed walls of houses and buildings. The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) initially reported that at least 147 people were injured.

Alejandro did not give the latest figures on injuries and the missing people.

The death toll is expected to climb as emergency workers continue search and rescue operations for survivors trapped in the debris and collapsed buildings. “We are waiting for our assessment team to complete their rapid assessment,” Alejandro said in an earlier media briefing.

The province of Cebu has declared a state of calamity, enabling the government, particularly local government units, to quickly access emergency funds (calamity funds) to provide relief and rehabilitation, as well as to impose measures such as price freezes on essential goods to protect affected residents. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology initially reported that a 6.7-magnitude offshore earthquake struck Cebu province at 9:59 pm local time yesterday.

At least 91 trapped after school building collapse in Indonesia



UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

Jakarta, Oct 1 Indonesia’s disaster management agency today said that at least 91 people were trapped after a school building collapsed on September 29 in the Sidoarjo district of East Java province.

Abdul Muhari, spokesperson for the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB),

said that as of last evening, the accident had left three people dead and more than 90 injured, with 26 still hospitalised.

Hundreds of rescuers from various agencies have been deployed to the site. Due to concerns that the use of heavy machinery could trigger further collapse, rescue workers have focused on manual excavation. They are delivering food and

water to those trapped under the rubble. Rescuers at the scene said signs of life have been detected in parts of the collapsed structure, and efforts are being concentrated there.

Meanwhile, the BNPB is working with construction experts to draw up a safe debris-clearing plan so that heavy equipment can be used in later stages if necessary.



Priyansh Arya, Shreyas Iyer Demolish Australia A With centuries

After India A posted 413, they dismissed Australia A for 242 in 33.1 overs



■ ESPNcricinfo

DUBAI: Hundreds from opener Priyansh Arya and captain Shreyas Iyer set up India A's demolition of Australia A in the first unofficial ODI in Kanpur on Wednesday. After rain allowed no play on Tuesday, the weather cleared for the series to get underway on the reserve day.

After being asked to bat, India A posted 413 for 6 on the back of Arya's 101 and Iyer's 110. In response, Australia A were dismissed for 242 in 33.1 overs.

Each of India's top six had a strike rate of over 100, and five of their top six scored at least 50. Arya and Prabhsimran Singh, who had combined powerfully for Punjab Kings (PBKS) in IPL 2025, were reunited at the top for India A, putting on 135 for the opening stand in 20.3 overs. Iyer then took charge of the innings, hitting 12 fours and four sixes in his first List A match since the Champions Trophy in March earlier this year.

Rajat Patidar was originally named captain for the 50-over series against Australia A but Iyer replaced him, with Patidar taking charge of the Rest of India side in the ongoing Irani Cup in Nagpur. Iyer is on a break from red-ball cricket due to concerns about his back, but continues to be available for white-ball cricket.

Riyan Parag (67) and Ayush Badoni (50) also hit half-centuries to propel India A to a mammoth total. Iyer's dismissal in the 47th over left India A at 380 for 4, but Badoni and allrounder Nishant Sindhu took them past 400.

Australia A used seven bowlers, with only Liam Scott going at less than seven an over.

Chasing 414, Australia A had a good start: they were 116 for 1 in the 13th over, but Cooper Connolly's wicket triggered a slide. They lost their last nine wickets for 126 and left almost 17 overs unused in their chase.

Opener McKenzie Harvey top-scored for the visitors with 68 off 62 balls while captain Sutherland made 50 off 33 balls. Spinners Sindhu, Bishnoi and Badoni shared seven wickets among them.

Gurjapneet Singh, who was making his List A debut, having been fast-tracked into the India A side, came away with 1 for 40 in five overs.

India A will be bolstered by the arrival of Asia Cup hero Tilak Varma for the remaining two one-dayers.

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