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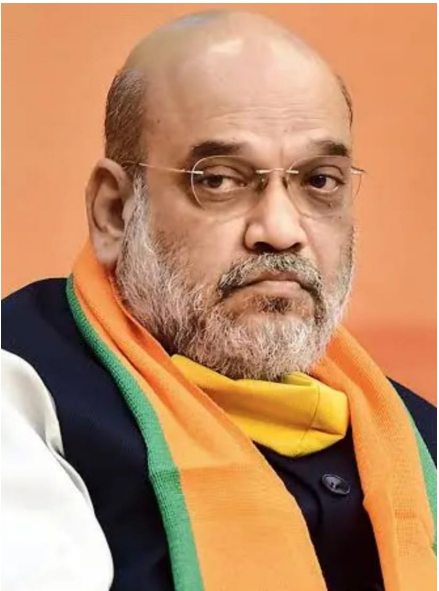
# Congress Responsibe For Three Decade Kashmir Mess: Amit Shah

Says Modi Govt Crushed Terror Roots, Vows Firm Retaliation Against Any Future Attack

■ HT NEWS DESK

**SRINAGAR, NOV 6:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday accused successive Congress governments of allowing terrorism to flourish in Jammu & Kashmir for over three decades, asserting that the Narendra Modi-led government has “crushed terror and its roots” with decisive action. Addressing a public rally in Madhubani, Shah said former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s tenure saw no serious response to cross-border terrorism. “During the Congress regime, terrorists would enter India, plant bombs and escape. They were even served biryani. But under PM Modi, terrorism has been dealt with an iron fist,” he said.

Referring to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, Shah said India launched Operation Sindoor within 20 days. “We entered



Pakistan’s territory and eliminated the terrorists. If bullets are fired from across the border, they will now be answered with shells,” he warned. The Home Minister also announced that a defence corridor will be set up in Bihar’s Mithila region. “Every shell that hits Pakistan will soon be made in my Mithila,” he said.

Targeting the Congress and its INDIA bloc partners, Shah alleged they “protected infiltrators” and warned that their return to power would “reopen the doors for illegal entry”. He criticised Rahul Gandhi for raising questions about caste and religion in the Army. “Shame on you, Rahul Gandhi. The Army belongs to every Indian. We honour every soldier who wears the uniform,” Shah said.

Stating that the NDA government had acted firmly against illegal arms

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## CM Launches Scheme to Revive Heritage Craft Courses in J&K

500 Students to Be Enrolled Across 15 ITIs, Polytechnics; Students to Get ₹1,000 Monthly Stipend

■ HT NEWS DESK

**SRINAGAR, NOV 6:** The Jammu and Kashmir Government has approved a major initiative to revive and institutionalise traditional crafts through formal vocational training under the newly sanctioned Chief Minister’s Scheme for Introduction of Heritage Courses.

The scheme, cleared by the



Council of Ministers in a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on October 15, provides for the continuation and revival of seven heritage craft courses across 25 units, with a total intake of 500 students—20 in each unit—spread over 15 Government ITIs and Polytechnics in Jammu and Kashmir.

According to the  
● Turn on Page 2

## Sat Sharma takes oath as RS member

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR, NOV 06:** Sat Paul Sharma, newly elected Member of Parliament to the

Rajya Sabha from Jammu and Kashmir, took oath of office on Thursday.

The oath was administered by Vice President and Rajya Sabha Chairman C.P. Radhakrishnan in a brief ceremony held at Parliament House.

A senior leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and president of the party’s

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## PM Modi To Launch Year-Long 150th Anniversary Celebrations Of ‘Vande Mataram’ Today

■ HT NEWS DESK

**SRINAGAR, NOV 6:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the year-long nationwide commemoration marking 150 years of India’s



National Song ‘Vande Mataram’ at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium here on Friday.

The event, scheduled to begin at 9:30 am, will also see the release of a commemorative postal

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## Bye-poll results won’t affect Govt stability: CM Omar

Makes maiden appearance in Nagrota, campaigns for NC candidate

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**NAGROTA, NOV 06:** Asserting that results of bye-polls in Nagrota and Budgam assembly constituencies won’t have any impact on the government’s stability in J&K, Chief Minister Omar Adullah on Thursday called on the people to actively participate in the democratic process.

Making his maiden appearance in Nagrota to campaign for the National Conference candidate, the Chief Minister, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, “The election would have no effect on the present dispensation. This election is not aimed at choosing the government. It is already there and will remain there

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## CM Approves ₹19.99 Cr Used Water Project for Ganderbal

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR, NOV 6:** Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has approved the ‘Used Water Management

Project’ with a dedicated outlay of ₹19.99 crore, which includes the establishment of a modern Sewage Treatment Plant (STP)

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## Power Demand Surges by 400 MW as Kashmir Records Season’s Highest Load

■ HT NEWS DESK  
■ (KNO RIYAZ BHAT)

**SRINAGAR, NOV 06:** With the dip in temperatures, Kashmir’s power demand has shot up by nearly 400 megawatts (MW) in just a month, touching the highest peak load of the ongoing season.

Official sources told Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the region, which required around

1,300–1,400 MW of power in October, is now witnessing a peak demand of 1,698 MW and an average load of 1,264 MW.

In Jammu division, the peak load as of November 6 has reached 1,117 MW, the official added.

This sharp rise comes at a time when a central government study has already warned that Jammu and Kashmir may face a serious power deficit over the next nine

years, even with existing and planned Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) and Transmission Service Agreements (TSAs).

The study notes that during harsh winter months, the level of unserved energy—power demand that cannot be met—will remain high, despite surplus power capacity being available in other states due to renewable energy

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## 100 more modern looms for carpet weavers sanctioned

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR, NOV 06:** Close on the heels of distribution of 100 Modified Modern Steel Looms amongst the carpet weavers, the Union Ministry of Textiles has sanctioned ₹51.00 lakh for procurement and distribution of 100 more looms under the ‘Wool Processing Scheme’ of the Central Wool Development Board.

Each loom costing ₹51,000 has been specially designed by the Indian Institute of Carpet Technology (IICT), Srinagar, which provides a suitable back-rest and comfort seating

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## Strengthening security grid our top priority: DGP

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**SRINAGAR, NOV 06:** Director General of Police (DGP) Jammu and Kashmir, Nalin Prabhat Thursday chaired a high-level security review meeting at the Police Control Room (PCR) Kashmir to assess the prevailing security situation in the Valley and outline strategies to further strengthen the security and intelligence grid.

The meeting was attended by Spl. DG Coordination J&K S.J.M. Gillani, IGP Kashmir Zone, IG CRPF (KOS), IG CRPF (Srinagar Sector), Range DIs G of

● Turn on Page 2

## Railway Board Clears DPR for Qazigund–Budgam Line Doubling

Survey Launched for Jammu–Katra Section; More J&K Rail Links in Pipeline

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNS

**SRINAGAR, NOV 6:** The long-pending project to double the railway track between Qazigund and Budgam is set to take off soon, with the Detailed Project Report (DPR) now finalised and awaiting final approval from the Railway Board.

A senior railway official confirmed

to Kashmir News Service (KNS) that the decision was reviewed in a high-level meeting in New Delhi ahead of Diwali.

“The DPR is in its final stage of approval. Once cleared, physical work on the ground will begin shortly,” the official said.

Alongside, the survey work for

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## DIPR's Online Essay Competition for Media Professionals on AI-Driven Future of Journalism

To mark National Press Day, J&K DIPR Invites Working Journalists From Kashmir Division to Participate

■ HT NEWS DESK

**SRINAGAR, NOV 3:** In connection with the celebrations of National Press Day, the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), Jammu & Kashmir, has

announced an online essay competition exclusively for media professionals working in the Union Territory.

The theme of the competition is “The Evolving Nature of Media in the Age of Artificial Intelligence”, aiming to encourage journalists to reflect on the sweeping transformation AI is bringing to news gathering, reporting, and public communication.

The competition has already opened on 3rd November 2025, and entries will be accepted till 5:00 PM on 11th November 2025 through an online submission link shared by the department.

According to the official communication

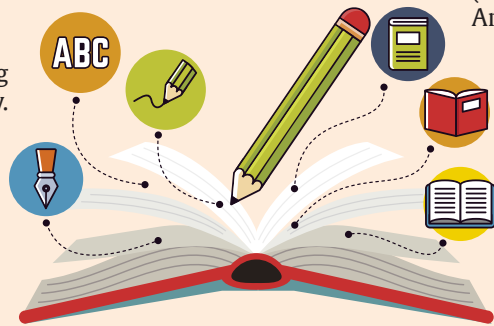
issued by the Cultural Officer, DIPR Kashmir, only media professionals currently working or reporting from Jammu & Kashmir are eligible to participate. The essays must be between 800–1000 words, submitted in PDF format in 12-point font

(Times New Roman/ Arial), and must be typed—not scanned.

The department has also announced cash prizes for the top three winners from Kashmir Division, with the 1st prize carrying ₹10,000, 2nd prize ₹7,500, and 3rd prize ₹5,000.

The essay submission link has been made available at: <https://tinyurl.com/Essaycompetition-byDIPRJK>

Officials said the initiative is part of DIPR’s continued efforts to engage with the journalist community and promote informed discourse on emerging media trends.



## CS Reviews JKIP, KKG Progress to Boost J&K Agriculture

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

**JAMMU, NOV 6:** Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today chaired a comprehensive review meeting to assess the progress made in the implementation of the Competitiveness Improvement of Agriculture & Allied Sectors Project in Jammu & Kashmir (JKIP) and the Kisan Khidmat Ghar (KKG) programme aimed at strengthening the agriculture sector across all districts of the Union Territory.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture Production Department; Managing Director HADP; Heads of Departments of the Agriculture

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# District Budgam gears up to celebrate 150 years of “Vande Mataram” with zeal

DC chairs meeting to finalize activity plan for First phase of year-long event

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**BUDGAM, NOVEMBER 06:** The District Administration Budgam is all set to commemorate 150 years of the national song “Vande Mataram” with grandeur and patriotic fervour.

In this regard, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat, today chaired a meeting of officers from all line departments in the VC room of the DC Office Complex to finalize the activity plan for the first phase of the year-long celebration.

At the outset, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mehraj-ud-Din Shah briefed the meeting about the objectives, framework, and schedule of events planned for the celebration. He informed that the commemorative campaign will unfold in four phases, commencing with a mega inaugural event on November 7, which will feature live streaming of the Hon'ble Prime Minister's speech and the inaugural session.

The first phase includes flag hoisting, invocation of “Vande Mataram,” cultural performances, screening of short films, felicitation of artists, and a handicraft and handloom exhibition.



The week-long celebration will further include essay and quiz competitions, exhibitions on the freedom struggle and “Vande

Mataram,” police band performances, mural and wall paintings, cleanliness drives, youth rallies, mini-marathons, and documentary screenings to be organized by various departments.

The DC said that the celebration of 150 years of “Vande Mataram” would serve as a tribute to India's rich cultural heritage and the spirit of patriotism that binds the nation together.

He said that the celebrations are envisioned as a platform to rekindle national pride and to remind the younger generation of the sacrifices made by freedom fighters in shaping the nation.

The DC further said that the celebrations should reflect the diversity, unity, and cultural vibrancy of Budgam district, ensuring that every citizen feels connected to the spirit of the event. He stressed that departments must work in close coordination to guarantee widespread public involvement, particularly from students, youth, and community groups.

The DC emphasised that all activities should be executed in an inclusive, innovative, and people-centric manner, making the celebrations a district-wide movement of patriotic expression and cultural pride.

The meeting was attended by ADC Budgam, ASP Budgam, CPO Budgam, all SDMs, ACD Budgam, CEO Budgam, DIO Information, DIO Informatics, principals of all colleges, and other senior officers of the district administration.

## DLSA Budgam observes Legal Services Day

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**BUDGAM, NOVEMBER 06:** District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Budgam under the Aegis of J&K Legal Services Authority organized series of events to commemorate National Legal Services Day, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to the delivery of justice, free legal aid, and legal awareness to the citizens of Budgam.

While observing the Legal Services week, the celebration of Legal Services Day took place at the ADR Center of the District Court Complex, Budgam, under the supervision of Secretary, DLSA Budgam, Nusrat Ali Hakak.

The event was attended by the Principal District & Sessions Judge/Chairman DLSA Budgam, O.P Bhagat. Legal



Aid defense Counsels, Para Legal Volunteers and staff members of DLSA Budgam were also present.

During the event, Chairman DLSA Budgam delivered a special address, emphasizing the significance of Legal Services Day. He also lauded the remarkable work accomplished by DLSA, Budgam in the year 2025. He stated that during the year 2025, the DLSA, Budgam organized three National Lok Adalats in which around 3513 cases were settled and an amount of Rs. 37,153,917 was settled and realized from the concerned parties, and eight special Lok Adalats were also conducted during the year in which around 1530 cases were amicably settled and settlement amount of Rs 39,188,340 was realized.

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary, DLSA Budgam, said that a series of awareness programs were organized throughout the year for creating a socially aware society. These programs have reached to the hearts and minds of our citizens, educating them on crucial legal and social issues such as child rights, women empowerment, and welfare schemes of the Government, the rights of senior citizens, combating drug abuse, preventing domestic violence, addressing child labor and upholding the principles of Juvenile Justice, at various locations in district Budgam, She added. She further said DLSA, Budgam in collaboration with Doordarshan has also conducted a number of awareness programs for the benefit of common masses and also saw the compassionate implementation of the Victim Compensation Scheme, offering much-needed support to victims of legal injustices.

On the occasion certificates of appreciation were awarded to the Staff members, Legal Aid Defense Counsels and Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs) for their tireless efforts in advancing the cause of justice.

These accolades underscores DLSA, Budgam's commitment to excellence and its spirit in enhancing access to justice for all. The series of events on National Legal Services Day stands as a testament to the tireless efforts of the entire DLSA team and their commitment to promoting the cause of justice and legal awareness.

## Unity March under Sardar@150 celebrations organised at Anantnag

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**ANANTNAG, NOVEMBER 06:** As part of the Sardar@150 celebrations, Mera Yuva Bharat (MY Bharat) in collaboration with the District Administration Anantnag along with NSS Wings of various Degree Colleges and Higher Secondary Schools, organized a Padyatra (Unity March) from Shaheed Humayun Muzammil Memorial, Government Degree College (GDC) to Khanabal Bridge today.

The march was held to honour the legacy and contribution of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Iron Man of India, in commemoration of his 150th Birth Anniversary.

Flagged off by the Member of Parliament (RS), Ghulam Ali Khatana, who was the Chief Guest on the occasion, the march witnessed enthusiastic participation from senior officers of civil and police administration, officials of various departments, students, NYK, NSS, and BSG volunteers besides members from civil society and the general public.

The march passed through the main road before culminating at Khanabal Bridge; the participants carrying Tricolour high and aloft reflecting a sense of collective pride and resilience.

During the march, local artists presented musical performances on patriotic themes creating a cheerful and vibrant atmosphere.

Speaking on the occasion, the MP paid rich tributes to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel for his pivotal role in unification of the country and highlighted his glorious efforts in strengthening national unity and integrity. He urged the youth to imbibe Sardar Patel's vision and work for unity and harmony.

The Unity March concluded with the resolve to uphold the values of national unity, integrity, and harmony embodied by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

ADC, ASP, ACR, CEO, Dy Director MY Bharat and other senior officers also marked their presence and joined the march in unison.

## District Admin Bandipora finalizes preparations for Vande Mataram celebration

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**BANDIPORA, NOVEMBER 06:** The District Administration Bandipora on Thursday finalized preparations for the commemoration of 150 years of national pride “Vande Mataram”, to be observed from 7th to 14th November 2025 during a review meeting.

The meeting was chaired by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Bandipora, Zaffar Hussan Shawl, at the Conference Hall, Mini Secretariat, Bandipora. During the meeting, all arrangements for district-level event were thoroughly reviewed.

On the occasion, the ADC directed officers to ensure the smooth conduct of the mass singing of “Vande Mataram” at 10:00 AM on November 7, in alignment with the national event to be led by the Hon'ble Prime Minister from IG Stadium, New Delhi.

The meeting emphasized the need for extensive participation from schools, colleges, and public institutions to mark the occasion with public participation.



During the programme, Pan-

el Lawyers of DLSA Srinagar delivered informative sessions on the importance of legal awareness and the preventive measures individuals can adopt to avoid falling prey to fraudulent online practices. They explained the role of the Consumer Forums, the process for lodging grievances, and the importance of digital literacy in today's interconnected world.

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historical significance of “Vande Mataram.”

Among others, the meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioner Revenue Bandipora, Shabir Ahmad Wani; ACD Bandipora, ACP Bandipora, CAO Bandipora, CHO Bandipora, DIO Bandipora, officers from the Education Department, Social Forestry, Rural Development, Youth Services & Sports, PDD, and other concerned departments, besides SDM Sumbal and SDM Gurez, principals of degree colleges joined virtually.

## DLSA Srinagar Organizes Awareness Programme on Consumer Protection and Cyber Laws

**SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 06:** In connection with the upcoming National Legal Services Day to be observed on November 9, 2025, the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Srinagar organized an Awareness Programme on Consumer Protection and Cyber Laws at the ADR Centre, District Court Complex, Srinagar.

The programme was held under the chairmanship of Principal District & Sessions Judge,

Srinagar, Tasleem Arief, and under the supervision of Sub-Judge/Secretary, DLSA Srinagar, Sajad Ur Rehman.

The event aimed to educate citizens, students, and Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs) about their legal rights and remedies available under the Consumer Protection Act, as well as to equip them with the knowledge to deal with cyber frauds, online scams, and digital threats in the modern era.

During the programme, Panel Lawyers of DLSA Srinagar delivered informative sessions on the importance of legal awareness and the preventive measures individuals can adopt to avoid falling prey to fraudulent online practices. They explained the role of the Consumer Forums, the process for lodging grievances, and the importance of digital literacy in today's interconnected world.

Addressing the participants, Principal District & Sessions Judge, Tasleem Arief, highlighted that consumer protection and cyber awareness are essential pillars of an informed society, emphasizing that citizens must remain vigilant and aware of their rights and remedies. He also urged the participants to act as ambassadors of legal awareness in their respective communities. Speaking on the occasion, Secretary DLSA

Srinagar, Sajad Ur Rehman, stressed the need for timely reporting of cyber offences and underscored the role of DLSA in extending free legal assistance to victims of cyber fraud, particularly to marginalized and vulnerable sections of society.

The participants, including PLVs and members of the general public, interacted actively with the resource persons and sought clarifications on various.

## Awareness programme on women Empowerment held at Shopian

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**SHOPIAN, NOVEMBER 06:** Mission Shakti-Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women, Shopian, today organized an awareness-cum-interactive programme at AWC, Aloo-pora, Shopian, aimed at sensitizing the local community about various government welfare schemes and initiatives for the upliftment of underprivileged women in the district.

During the programme, the team from Mission Shakti briefed participants about the active schemes and services available for women's welfare, their rights, entitlements and ways to access these benefits. Women were also



encouraged to become self-employed by taking advantage of different government-supported livelihood programmes.

The participants were informed about important helpline numbers and support mechanisms available for them.

The team also listened to the grievances and concerns of women from the area and assured them of necessary follow-up through the concerned authorities.

The event received an enthusiastic response from the local women, who appreciated the efforts of Mission Shakti for reaching out to rural communities and guiding them towards self-reliance and empowerment.

## AWARENESS-CUM-GERIATRIC HEALTH CAMP HELD AT SHOPIAN

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**SHOPIAN, NOVEMBER, 6:** The Department of Social Welfare Shopian in collaboration with the Department of Ayush today organized a significant Awareness cum Free Geriatric Health Check-up Camp for senior citizens at the Tehsil Social Welfare Sub Office, Chitragam, Shopian.

The event was held under the aegis of the National Action Plan for Senior Citizens (NAPSrC) which focused to create awareness regarding various welfare schemes of the department and address the specific health needs and well-being of the senior citizen community in the region.



A dedicated team of doctors and healthcare professionals from the Ayush Department provided comprehensive health check-ups, consultations and preventive health advice.

Over 200 senior citizens attended the camp and availed themselves of free medical services, including crucial health screenings, dietary guidance and awareness on managing age-related ailments.

The event also served as a platform to raise awareness about various government welfare measures and schemes available for senior citizens under the NAPSrC, greatly benefiting the participants through accessible and specialized healthcare.

# Secretary ITD reviews progress on implementation of e-SAM Inventory Management Portal across J&K

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**JAMMU, NOVEMBER 06:** Secretary, Information Technology Department (ITD), Dr. Piyush Singla today chaired a meeting at Civil Secretariat here to review the progress on implementation of e-SAM (e-Security Assessment and Management) Inventory Management Portal across Jammu & Kashmir.

During the meeting, detailed discussion was held on various issues related to smooth implementation of e-SAM Inventory Management Portal.

Addressing the officers in meeting, the Secretary highlighted that the core vision of e-SAM Portal is to establish a unified, real-time, and end-to-end inventory management system for all IT infrastructure across Government departments, extending up to the grassroots level. He added that in later stages, the complete IT inventory of the UT of J&K will be integrated with EDR and other cyber security systems to enhance asset visibility and strengthen overall cyber security posture. He asked the officers to or-



ganise regular training and on boarding sessions for Administrative Departments and Sub-

DDOs to ensure smooth operational rollout across all levels.

The Secretary directed that NIC will incorporate an additional module in the e-SAM Portal to capture software inventory details, in addition to hardware assets. He emphasized on the importance of timely coordination among all stakeholders and directed that the complete implementation of the e-SAM Portal should be ensured by 15th December 2025.

During the meeting, the Secretary was informed that user accounts for all 42 departments

Administrative Departments have been created and that admin credentials have already been shared with the respective departments. The departmental administrators will now create Store In-charge level user accounts at their end.

The Project Management Unit (PMU) further apprised the Secretary that department-wise coordination meetings with Nodal Officers are scheduled to commence from 10th November 2025 to provide structured on-boarding and handholding support.

## CUJ hosts Inter College Men, Women Table Tennis competition

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**JAMMU, NOVEMBER 6:** The Inter College Men & Women Table Tennis Competition under the aegis of Cluster University of Jammu was successfully organized at Government College of Education, Jammu.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from all the five constituent colleges of Cluster University of Jammu i.e., GGM Science College, SPMR College of Commerce, Government MAM College, PSPS Government College for Women, Gandhi Nagar and Government College of Education, Jammu. The competition showcased remarkable talent, team spirit and sportsmanship among the participating players.

The event commenced with a welcome address by the Host College Principal Dr. Jyoti Parihar, who applauded the Sports Committee for organizing the competition and extended a heartfelt welcome to the guests and participants.

Dean School of Teacher Education Dr. Zubair Kalees was the Chief Guest. He commended the college for promoting physical education and co-curricular engagement among students. Dr. Jyoti Parihar was the Special Guest, while Director Physical Education Cluster University of Jammu Dr. Vinod Bakshi was the Guest of Honour for the event.

Among others present included Head, Department of Hindi Prof. Satish Sharma; Physical Director Government SPMR College of Commerce Ravi Kumar; Physical Director, Government College for Women Gandhi Nagar Kajal Premi; Assistant Physical Director, Government MAM College Neelam and Dr. Shalini Sharma from Department of English, GGM Science College. Their presence added grace and encouragement to the event.

The matches were officiated by Table Tennis Coach IIT Jammu, Ajay Ratra and Sakshi from Army Public School, Ratnuchak, ensuring fair play and smooth conduct throughout the competition.

In the Men's Singles Tournament, Government SPMR College of Commerce emerged as the winner, while Government College of Education, Jammu was runner-up. In the Women's Singles Tournament, GGM Science College bagged the winner's trophy and Government SPMR College of Commerce stood as the runner-up.

The Best Player Award in the Men's Category went to Tejashwar Singh of Government SPMR College of Commerce, while the Best Player Award in the Women's Category was bagged by Bhumika Thakur of GGM Science College for their outstanding performances and exemplary sportsmanship.

The entire event was coordinated by Ramandeep Kralia, Physical Director, Government College of Education, Jammu, whose meticulous planning and dedication ensured the smooth conduct of the competition.

The event concluded with a Prize Distribution Ceremony, during which the winners and best players were felicitated by the dignitaries. The programme came to an end with a formal Vote of Thanks delivered by Dr. Shalini Rana, who expressed gratitude to all the participants, officials and faculty members for their contribution to the success of the event.

The competition was attended by faculty members Dr. Rajinder Kour, Anuradha Choudhary, Balwan Singh, Dr. Ambica Sharma and Dr. Sonam Gandotra, who encouraged the participants and lauded the efforts of the organizing team.

## Rana meets several delegations; assures timely redressal of issues

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**JAMMU, NOVEMBER 06:** Minister for Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, today met scores of delegations who raised various concerns and submitted representations for their redressal.

During the interactions, the Minister reiterated Omar Abdullah Government's commitment to ensure prompt resolution of public grievances, strengthen developmental and welfare initiatives across Jammu and Kashmir.

A delegation from the Gujjar & Bakerwal Post-Graduate Boys Hostel met the Minister and presented a detailed charter of demands focusing on skill development, exposure tours, and digital learning opportunities for students.

The delegation urged that an educational tour be organized at the earliest to broaden students' exposure and enhance their learning experience.

They also requested the distribution of digital tablets to im-



prove access to e-learning resources and align educational facilities with modern academic standards.

Rana assured the delegation that the government remains deeply committed to advancing the educational and infrastructural needs of students, particularly those belonging to tribal and marginalized sections.

He emphasized that every pos-

sible step will be taken to ensure better academic resources and facilities in hostels under the department's purview.

Later, a delegation of Seasonal Educational Volunteers (SEVs) also called on the Minister and submitted a memorandum seeking an extension of their service period.

The SEVs underlined the crucial importance of continuity in educational services for migra-

tory and nomadic communities spread across Jammu and Kashmir.

They informed the Minister that SEVs play an indispensable role in imparting education to migratory children enrolled in Seasonal Centers, ensuring that their studies are not disrupted during migration.

They further highlighted that through Baseline and End Line Surveys, a marked improvement

in learning outcomes had been observed among over 4,300 migratory students benefiting from these educational interventions.

The Minister gave a patient hearing to the delegation and acknowledged the vital role SEVs play in bridging educational gaps and ensuring inclusive learning opportunities for children from migratory communities.

He reaffirmed Government's commitment to supporting such initiatives that foster empowerment and upliftment across all sections of society.

Recognizing the importance of SEVs in sustaining the educational progress of nomadic populations, the Minister assured that their grievances would be examined on priority and merit basis.

He reiterated that the Government remains steadfast in its resolve to strengthen the educational ecosystem, empower tribal, migratory communities and promote equitable development throughout Jammu and Kashmir.

## JMC Commissioner inspects civic amenities in Govt Quarters

Directs for enhanced sanitation, dengue prevention measures

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**JAMMU, NOVEMBER 6:** Commissioner Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) Dr. Devansh Yadav today visited different areas of Jammu City and inspected the status of civic amenities at residential Quarters earmarked for Civil Secretariat Darbar Move employees.

During the visit, Dr. Yadav took stock of the overall sanitation system and interacted with residents to understand their concerns regarding cleanliness, waste disposal and mosquito control in the locality. He directed the concerned officers to ensure that both dry and wet waste from every household and surrounding areas be properly segregated at the source. He emphasized that all collected waste must be loaded systematically into autos for transportation and scientific disposal at the designated waste management sites to maintain hygiene and prevent littering.

Highlighting the importance of preventive health measures, Dr. Yadav instructed the concerned sanitation and health teams to intensify spraying and fogging operations in and around the residential quarters to prevent mosquito breeding and control the spread of vector-borne diseases such



as dengue and chikungunya. He also stressed on the need to identify stagnant water sources, clean drains and maintain proper waste disposal channels to eliminate potential breeding grounds.

The Commissioner reiterated JMC's commitment to maintaining a clean, healthy and disease-free environment for all citizens and directed officers to ensure that every sanitation worker and supervisory staff performs their duties diligently. He also appealed to the residents to cooperate with the Corporation's teams by keeping their surroundings clean, segregating waste at home and reporting any sanitation-related issues through the JMC helpline

or mobile application.

Reviewing the existing cleanliness arrangements, the Commissioner issued on-the-spot directions to the field staff to maintain strict vigilance and ensure daily lifting of garbage from residential quarters and open spaces. He further directed that door-to-door waste collection be monitored regularly and public awareness on waste segregation be increased among residents and workers alike.

Among others, Health Officer, JMC, Dr. Vinod Sharma and other senior officers of the Health section of JMC accompanied the Commissioner during the tour.

## Series of Voter awareness programs under SVEEP held to encourage Voter Participation

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**BUDGAM NOVEMBER 6:** Under the directions of the District Election Officer (DEO) Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat, the District Administration in collaboration with School Education department today organised a series of voter awareness activities under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) programme.

The initiative was spearheaded by the District Nodal Officer SVEEP (Chief Education Officer Budgam) with the aim to enhance voter turnout in polling stations identified with lower participation rates in Soibugh, wadwan, Daharmunah and chewa Polling stations.



The programme was attended by ZEO Soibugh and Principal complex head BHSS Wadwan HOIs of all schools falling in these villages and District officials from Budgam.

As part of the campaign, a range of engaging activities were conducted including Nukkad Natak (street plays), rallies, distribution of voter awareness pamphlets, and display of informative hoardings. These activities were designed to sensitize and motivate the local populace, especially first-time voters, about the importance of active participation in the democratic process.

A large number of students, teachers, and local residents took part in the awareness rally, which commenced from main chowk Soibugh to Daharmunah Wadwan and chewa and culminated at GHS Daharmunah. The vibrant and energetic participation of the community reflected a collective commitment towards ensuring greater electoral participation in the forthcoming bye-elections to 27-Assembly Constituency Budgam.

The district administration Budgam reiterated its commitment to continue such awareness programmes across different areas of the district to promote informed, ethical, and inclusive voting.

## Anganwari, ASHA workers roped-in to promote anti-drug campaign in Kathua

### DC calls for collective action to curb drug abuse

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**KATHUA, NOVEMBER 6:** The District Administration Kathua today organised a Training Programme for field functionaries including Anganwari and ASHA workers under the Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan here at Degree College for Women (GDCW).

The event was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Sharma, who emphasised the urgent need for collective and coordinated efforts to eradicate the menace of drug addiction from

society. He underscored the pivotal role of Anganwadi Workers and ASHA Workers, terming them as frontline ambassadors who remain closely connected with households at the grassroots level. "If field workers are able to guide and protect even two individuals from falling prey to drug abuse, it would be a significant achievement in furthering the mission of a drug-free society," he said.

The programme was attended by the Principal host College Dr. Savi Behl; District Programme

Officer ICDS Mohammad Syed Khan; Chief Medical Officer Dr. Vijay Raina; Mental Health and Drug De-addiction Expert, Dr. Anayat Mir (Resource Person); Child Development Project Officer Haqiqat Singh and Tehsil Social Welfare Officer Vishav Bandhu Sharma among others.

Resource Person Dr. Anayat Mir conducted an in-depth training session for the field functionaries, focusing on early identification of substance use, counselling methods, preventive strategies at the community level, ways to support

affected individuals and their families and measures to reduce social stigma associated with drug dependence. He highlighted that the involvement of field-level functionaries is crucial in building awareness, strengthening early intervention and connecting vulnerable individuals with a timely support system.

Earlier, the programme commenced with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp followed by a welcome address by District Social Welfare Officer Varun Kumar Choudhary. He highlighted the

purpose of the training and the significance of involving ground-level workers in sustained community awareness campaigns against drug abuse.

The programme concluded with a Vote of Thanks presented by District Mission Coordinator Itika Mahajan. She appreciated the active participation of trainers and field workers in furthering the Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan at the grassroots level. Refreshments were served to all participants at the end of the event.

HT EDITORIAL

## Humans continue to be at receiving end of attacks by dogs

Dog menace has assumed alarming proportions across the Kashmir valley and the people are worried about the recurrent attacks of the canines on the common masses. Day in and day out there are reports in the newspapers about the attacks of dogs on the people with the masses sustaining injuries in such incidents? Despite assurances from the people at helm there is no end to the attacks on people by dogs.

Couple of months back a five year old child got killed after he was attacked by a pack of stray dogs in South Kashmir's Shopian district. The incident did not get the coverage as it should have been and the people manning the different newspapers or channels should have the answer about the same. There are people who champion the rights of animals across the country but there are very few people who talk about the casualties suffered on account of attacks by the dogs.

It is important that similar parameters are followed by the people advocating for the rights of animals, especially dogs. Since these people resort to hue and cry as and when cruelty is inflicted on dogs one expects that a similar attitude is adopted once humans get attacked by dogs. There is no scope for double speak from the people in general, especially from those who claim to be champions of animal rights.

The unfortunate part is that the animal activists tend to close their eyes when they come to know about the attack of a dog on a human being. The people as a whole should understand that the life of a human being is more important as compared to an animal and there should not be any confusion in this regard. If the animal activists do not buy this theory they should at least keep humans at par with the animals and not claim that animals are superior to human beings.

At the same time the administration needs to be serious with regards to the sterilization process of the dogs. In the Srinagar city the sterilization is going on at a tardy pace and it would take ages for the Srinagar Municipal Corporation to sterilize the dogs in the city. This process needs to be taken up in a serious manner and the sterilization should be completed within a particular time frame. Once this happens then one can hope for things to improve in this respect.

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# Labourers Deserve Dignity and Equal Wages for Equal Work

Labourers form the backbone of every nation. They courageously face daily challenges and contribute tirelessly to achieving developmental goals. Their dedication and hard work leave no stone unturned in driving progress and prosperity.

#### Rising Support from the Department of Labour

The Department of Labour Commissioner is taking the labour class to greater heights through reforms and welfare measures. A recent amendment in the Marriage Assistance Scheme has brought much relief—now, every card-holding girl is eligible for marriage assistance, irrespective of educational qualifications. Earlier, only those who had passed the 8th standard could apply. This progressive change reflects the department's commitment to social equity and empowerment.

#### Development and the Role of Workers

Development is the collective dream of every citizen. Various sectors contribute to a nation's progress by generating employment and providing essential services to its people. Whether directly or indirectly, labourers are at the heart of every major industry—be it tourism, agriculture, horticulture, transport, science and technology, or healthcare.

Every road we travel on, every product we use, and every building we see is a result of their tireless effort. The unseen hands of labourers shape the infrastructure of our lives and form the silent foundation upon which society flourishes.

#### Workers' Rights and May Day Observance

India has observed May 1st as Labour Day since 1923 to recognize the immense contributions of the working class. On this day, rallies, seminars, and awareness programs are organized nationwide to highlight workers' rights and acknowledge their

sacrifices.

Writers, teachers, and media professionals also play a vital role by spreading awareness through print and digital platforms, while educational institutions conduct discussions to sensitize students to the struggles faced by the labour community.

#### Government Initiatives and the Way Forward

The government has launched several welfare schemes to uplift and empower labourers, such as: Scholarship schemes for the education of labourers' children.

Marriage assistance for daughters of registered labourers.

MGNREGA, ensuring 100 days of employment to rural households.

However, continued progress requires further measures, such as:

Providing loans at subsidized interest rates.

Reserving jobs for qualified children of labourers.

Offering AAY ration cards and domestic gas at special subsidized rates.

Granting festival bonuses to help workers celebrate with dignity.

Ensuring compensation and policy support for families of labourers who lose their lives during work.

#### Conclusion

Labourers are the unsung heroes who strengthen the foundation of our nation. It is our collective responsibility to uphold their dignity, protect their rights, and ensure their well-being. Through inclusive policies, awareness campaigns, and genuine respect for their work, we can truly honour the hands that build our dreams.

sahilmanzoor411990@gmail.com

# Jemimah Rodrigues: Tears of Faith and the Game of Intellectual propaganda



Harish Shivnani

Hindi writer Madhu Kankaria posted on Facebook – "Behind this moment of victory lies the poignant history of her (Jemimah's) anguish. Her privacy was attacked regarding her religious beliefs and identity. She was trolled by radicals."

The truth is that Rajdeep Sardesai's image has clearly been that of an agenda-driven journalist. This very image has landed him in controversies several times.

Furthermore, this is not the first time that the mediocre writer Madhu Kankaria has crafted such a narrative. In August 2024, after the coup against Sheikh Hasina in Bangladesh

The country is currently in a state of euphoria. While on one hand, the nation is celebrating the victory of winning the Women's Cricket World Cup, on the other, it is grappling with a malicious disinformation campaign, orchestrated under the guise of a player, which is extremely detrimental to our social fabric and sportsmanship. This disinformation began with batter Jemimah Rodrigues's emotional speech after India's victory in the World Cup semi-final.

Jemimah was chosen as the 'Player of the Match' for her brilliant unbeaten innings of 127 runs in the semi-final. During the prize distribution ceremony, Jemimah expressed heartfelt gratitude to Jesus, and then, in a tearful address, quoted a few lines from the Bible, describing her innings as a 'miracle' of overcoming anxiety. Immediately thereafter, the game of disinformation against Hindutva began on social media by India's so-called secular left-liberal intellectuals. Jemimah's statement was a personal expression of her faith, but India's so-called progressive, secular left-liberal intellectuals instantly turned it into a political weapon. Senior journalist Rajdeep Sardesai wrote on 'X': "Right-wingers have trolled Jemimah and her family for their religious faith. Hopefully, some people will bury their heads in the pit with shame today."

Hindi writer Madhu Kankaria posted on Facebook – "Behind this moment of victory lies the poignant history of her (Jemimah's) anguish. Her privacy was attacked regarding her religious beliefs and identity. She was trolled by radicals." The truth is that Rajdeep Sardesai's image has clearly been that of an agenda-driven journalist. This very image has landed him in controversies several times. Furthermore, this is not the first time that the mediocre writer Madhu Kankaria has crafted such a narrative. In August 2024, after the coup against Sheikh Hasina in Bangladesh, when violent atrocities

were being committed against the minority Hindu community – news of violent incidents like rape of women, looting of homes, and vandalism of temples were making headlines in international media – even during that horrific period, Madhu Kankaria had made an insensitive comment like "There is minor tension in Bangladesh," attempting to divert attention from the violence of Muslim radicals. That comment of hers was also highly controversial, but the so-called progressive leftists came to her support. In the Jemimah episode as well, her false comment about 'an attack on her privacy regarding her religious beliefs and identity' is indicative of the same mentality. In such an atmosphere, documentary film producer Anand Patwardhan, who claims to be impartial towards caste and religion, credited India's victory solely to 'Christian and Sikh' players instead of the entire team. Then, a senior Rajasthani poet Malchand Tiwari emphatically declared "Salute to an Indian Christian daughter," prioritizing her religion over Jemimah's talent. Former CPI(M) MP Sarla Maheshwari promptly wrote a 'poem' on Jemimah. These examples reflect their double mentality, which places an individual's caste, community, and religion above their merit, talent, and expertise.

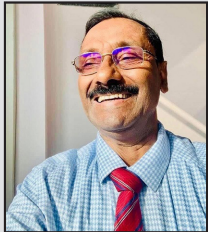
The progressive poet-writers and self-proclaimed intellectual class turned Jemimah crediting the success of her century innings to Jesus and the Bible into a narrative against Hindutva forces. They began portraying it as 'the spirit of a Christian girl against Hindutva' and started describing Jemimah's innings as a symbol of 'Christian courage,' whereas the reality is that Jemimah is related to sports and she is a player. Her success was a result of her talent, teamwork, and personal faith, and not any religious issue. However, instantly giving a religious colour to any issue related to a minority (Muslim or Christian) and starting disinformation against Hinduism, Hindutva, and right-wing forces

has been an old identity of India's so-called secular leftist faction. Factually, Jemimah herself never spoke about trolling or Hindus, Hindutva, or the right-wing, but the leftist factions imposed this narrative. To do this, they use two events as a false basis. One is Jemimah's 'miracle healing' interview and the other is the cancellation of membership from the gymkhana. In July 2023, on podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia's show 'The Ranveer Show', Jemimah mentioned several of her 'miracle healing' incidents, such as: injuries sustained during cricket that healed quickly through prayer and faith. The second is the Khar Gymkhana incident. In October 2024, the historic Khar Gymkhana in Mumbai had cancelled Jemimah's honorary membership. This action was taken because Jemimah's father, Ivan Rodrigues, had been conducting unauthorized religious gatherings at the club. It was alleged that Ivan Rodrigues had organized about 35 religious gatherings under the 'Brother Manuel Ministries' in approximately 18 months, which was a violation of the club's rules. Members complained that there were trance music, dark rooms, and propagandistic sessions happening in the hall, which seemed like conversion. Club President Vivek Devnani said that the members had passed a resolution unanimously to cancel their membership. Certainly, this was not any 'Hindutva conspiracy', but a secular club enforcing its rules. Yet, leftist intellectuals turned it into a case of 'Christian persecution'.

Their pattern is clear – ignore facts, use sloppy emotional appeals, and finally, villainize Hindus and Hindutva. This game of theirs, using Jemimah's talent as a cover and taking shelter behind her religion to run a vicious cycle of disinformation against Hindutva, is also one of them.

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# Floral Panache in Kashmiri Literature



Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee



In recent times Hon'ble CM Omar Abdullah was delighted to launch the book "Valleys of Jammu & Kashmir" by Mehmood A. Shah; a remarkable tribute to the breathtaking landscapes, rich culture, and timeless heritage of the region. He tweeted : The book beautifully captures the soul of Jammu & Kashmir, offering readers a journey through its serene valleys and vibrant traditions. In the literary landscape of Kashmiri poets and novelists the garden outside mirrors the garden within. To speak of flowers in Kashmiri literature is to enter a moral and emotional landscape shaped by beauty and impermanence. The almond blossoms that herald spring, the saffron flowers carpeting the autumn fields, the crimson chinar leaves that fall like slow fire—all of these have seeped into the literary imagination of the region. The Kashmiri poet or novelist does not merely describe flowers; they transform them into emblems of human emotion. The blooming and withering of petals becomes a story of love fulfilled and love betrayed, of spiritual awakening and worldly decay, of a paradise that withers under the frost of history. The flower, which in Lal Ded symbolized divine awakening, becomes in Habba Khatoon's world the fragile bloom of human love. The fallen flower is her heart itself—tender, transient, and bruised by destiny. The poignancy of her verse lies in its quiet recognition that beauty cannot be separated from sorrow, that every bloom carries the promise of decay. Nature and emotion are not separate entities in the valley of Kashmir which has always been imagined as a living poem, a stretch of land where nature and language breathe together. Among the many images that bloom in Kashmiri literature, none is as enduring or evocative as that of the flower. It is at once a mark of beauty and a symbol of suffering, a mirror to the valley's soul that has known both heavenly grace and human grief. The use of flowers in Kashmiri novels and poetry is never ornamental. It is deeply metaphorical, reflecting love and loss, purity and pain, transcendence and resistance.

In the early mystical poetry of Kashmir, especially in the verses of Lal Ded or Lalleshwari, flowers serve as symbols of spiritual revelation. The flower becomes the soul's own unfolding. Translated version of Poems of Lal Ded' ( Penguin ) explores themes of divine love, spiritual longing, personal humility, social critique, and the search for

enlightenment, often expressed through metaphorical and mystical language. When Lal Ded says, "Bloom within, O mind, before the garden fades," she invokes the image of the flower as the self-realized being—brief in life yet radiant in truth. The blooming flower marks the moment when the human spirit opens to divine understanding. The garden, so often referred to in her mystical vakhs, is not the physical garden of springtime Kashmir but the inner field of awareness that must be cultivated through love and detachment. The mystical tradition in Kashmir, drawing from both Shaivism and Sufism, transformed natural beauty into a language of transcendence. The poet's task was not to describe flowers but to become one. Through the centuries—from the mystical verses of Lal Ded and the romantic laments of Habba Khatoon to the modern fictions of Mirza Waheed and Shahnaz Bashir—flowers have remained the language through which Kashmir remembers itself.

As time flowed, this symbolic use of flowers shifted from the spiritual to the emotional. With Habba Khatoon in the sixteenth century, the flower became the emblem of romantic passion and loss. How can we forget her poetic lines : Forget-me-not the forest graces, / Iris and the lily spring will bring, / Gather violets, O Narcissus, / Winter's ashes from our door I fling !" Her songs, still sung across the valley, are perfumed with images of blossoms, meadows, and gardens. In her poetry, the garden is the space of love, and when love is lost, it becomes a deserted garden—its flowers fallen, its fragrance gone. "My heart is a garden of blossoms, but my beloved walks no more there," she sings, transforming a personal lament into a universal metaphor of absence. In 'Lol of the Wild Yellow Rose' she wrote: Wild, the vagrant yellow rose/Again has bloomed, / Beauty has in all that grows/ Rare forms assumed! In the Romantic imagination, the rose is a potent and complex symbol, primarily representing intense love, transient beauty, and the duality of pleasure and pain. It was a central motif also in Europe for expressing deep emotion, contrasting with the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Keats sang of the 'eglantine rose'. In English poetry, the rose especially is a recurring symbol of love, featuring prominently in the canonical work of Sappho, Shakespeare, and Shelley. In Shelley's 'Love's Rose' we get the picture of Rose : " Love's rose a host of thorns invests; / Cold, ungenial is the clime, / Where its honours blow, / Youth says, The purple flowers are mine, / Which die the while they glow..

In modern Kashmiri literature, particularly fiction written after the turmoil of the late twentieth century, the image of the flower returns with political urgency. The writers of this generation inherit a paradise bruised by violence, and their floral symbols bear the scent of both nostalgia and defiance. Agha Shahid Ali, perhaps the most international-

ally known voice of Kashmiri literature in English, carried the valley's flowers into the language of exile. In his celebrated collection The Country Without a Post Office, flowers appear as ghostly memories of a homeland lost to time and terror. "I see Kashmir from New Delhi at midnight," he writes, "one must wear jeweled ice in the heart." Even when the poem contains no direct mention of flowers, the floral sensibility permeates his lines—the sense of beauty caught in frost, of fragrance stilled by distance. His imagery fuses the natural and the emotional, creating a landscape where the flower has become a symbol of the homeland itself: radiant, delicate, and wounded.

In Mirza Waheed's The Book of Gold Leaves, flowers and gold leaves intertwine as metaphors of love under siege. The lovers in his novel move through a landscape of beauty threatened by brutality. The "gold leaves" of the title recall the golden chinar leaves of autumn, radiant yet falling, suggesting the fragility of both love and life. Nature in Waheed's work is not mere background—it is an active witness to human suffering, a participant in the drama of loss. When the chinar sheds its leaves, it seems to mourn with the people. Shahnaz Bashir, in his novel The Half Mother, uses the absence of flowers to signify despair. The mother who waits endlessly for her disappeared son lives in a world where the garden no longer blooms. The barren yard and the empty flowerpots in her courtyard are quiet metaphors of absence. The flower here is not just a symbol of beauty but of the very possibility of renewal, which has been denied. The death of flowers marks the death of hope. In both Waheed and Bashir, floral imagery functions as a memory of what the valley once was—a space of fragrance and serenity—and as a protest against what it has become.

In contemporary Kashmiri poetry written in both English and Kashmiri, younger poets like Nazia Nazir, Muneer Dar, and Zareef Ahmad Zareef continue this floral lineage. For them, naming a flower or describing its season is an act of resistance, a way to reclaim beauty from the shadow of violence. In a world of curfews and checkpoints, the simple act of writing about a tulip or a saffron blossom becomes political. The tulip, in particular, has emerged as a powerful metaphor in post-1990 Kashmiri writing. Its deep crimson hue, so close to the color of blood, transforms it into a double symbol—of life and of sacrifice. Each spring, when the tulip garden in Srinagar reopens to visitors, it seems to announce not just the return of a season but the persistence of hope. The flower thus becomes both memorial and renewal, the living face of resilience.

Floral symbolism in Kashmiri literature is also deeply connected to the feminine. Women writers, from Habba Khatoon to Farah Bashir, have used flowers to express the textures of female experience. The woman, in much of

Kashmiri literature, is not simply compared to a flower—she is given the agency of one. She speaks as a flower does: softly but enduringly, fragrant yet bruised. In Farah Bashir's memoir Rumours of Spring, the flower becomes an image of constrained girlhood. She writes of young girls "shrinking like buds before a storm," a line that captures the way political fear invades intimate spaces. The spring that cannot bloom becomes the most haunting metaphor for interrupted childhood and stolen innocence. The floral imagery here moves beyond beauty to embody the emotional and psychological consequences of conflict on the everyday lives of women. Rumours of Spring is the unforgettable account of a girl in Kashmir is the account of Farah Bashir's adolescence spent in Srinagar in the 1990s. As Indian troops and militants battle across the cityscape and violence becomes the new normal, a young schoolgirl finds that ordinary tasks—studying for exams, walking to the bus stop, combing her hair, falling asleep—are riddled with anxiety and fear. With haunting simplicity, Farah Bashir captures moments of vitality and resilience from her girlhood amidst the increasing trauma and turmoil of passing years—secretly dancing to pop songs on banned radio stations; writing her first love letter; going to the cinema for the first time—with haunting simplicity. This deeply affecting coming-of-age memoir portrays how territorial conflict surreptitiously affects everyday lives in Kashmir. Her vision of Spring is inseparable from floral imagination.

Thus we see that flowers, in Kashmiri writing, are never merely passive. They are witnesses to history. They remember the past even when humans forget. When a poet recalls a saffron field or a grove of almond blossoms, they are also invoking the cultural identity of a people rooted in their land. The flower is an archive of memory. Its petals carry centuries of poetry and prayer, its scent evokes both joy and mourning. Through the act of describing a flower, the Kashmiri writer performs an act of cultural preservation, ensuring that the language of beauty survives even amid destruction. In this sense, the flower becomes an instrument of resistance—not through confrontation but through endurance. At a philosophical level, the symbolism of flowers in Kashmiri literature reflects the Buddhist and Shiva understanding of impermanence. Everything that blooms must fade; every spring leads inevitably to winter. Yet this transience is not tragic—it is the very condition of beauty. To the Kashmiri poet, the falling petal is as sacred as the blooming one. The recognition of ephemerality infuses Kashmiri writing with an uncommon grace. It accepts suffering not as defeat but as a necessary phase in the cycle of renewal. The valley's poets have long understood what modern readers are rediscovering—that fragility is not weakness but a profound truth

of existence. The flower teaches endurance through surrender.

Even the absence of flowers can be eloquent in Kashmiri literature. The empty garden, the withered stem, the leafless chinar—all become symbols of silence, of the unspeakable. In the long decades of political violence, the metaphor of the flower has carried grief when direct speech was impossible. Writers turned to nature because nature could say what human tongues could not. A meadow of fallen tulips could suggest the toll of lives lost; a frozen bud could hint at youth cut short. Thus, flowers became a secret language of mourning, one that was understood across divides of religion, class, and generation.

To understand Kashmir through its flowers is to realize that beauty in this literature is never innocent. It is always shadowed by awareness of time. The poet who describes a field of saffron knows that the next frost may destroy it. The novelist who writes of a chinar leaf falling knows that beneath its grace lies decay. Yet this very awareness deepens the beauty. It turns the flower into a symbol of human courage—the courage to bloom even when the world burns around us. Across centuries, the floral motif has united the mystical, romantic, and political strands of Kashmiri writing. In Lal Ded's lotus of enlightenment, in Habba Khatoon's mourning rose, in Waheed's golden leaves, in Shahid Ali's ghostly blossoms, the same essence returns: the search for meaning in the transient. The flower embodies what Kashmir itself has come to signify—a paradise constantly reborn from its own wounds. It is the image of a people who have suffered and yet have not lost their capacity for beauty. Every time a Kashmiri poet writes of a flower, they reaffirm this truth: that even amid ruin, the heart must bloom.

Thus we see that the flowers in Kashmiri novels and poems stand as the perfect metaphor for the valley's history and spirit. It carries fragrance and fragility, love and lament, life and loss. It teaches that no power can silence the renewal of spring. The garden may be trampled, the petals may fall, but the seed of beauty remains buried in the soil, waiting for light. The Kashmiri writer knows this and writes accordingly—with a tenderness that resists despair. To read Kashmiri literature is therefore to walk through a garden shadowed by sorrow yet radiant with hope. Every flower in that garden, real or imagined, is a testament to the enduring soul of the valley—a soul that continues to bloom in verse even when the world grows cold.

**International Tagore Awardee poet Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee, a formerly Affiliate Faculty Virginia Commonwealth University is now President of Kolkata Indian American Society, email prof.ratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com**

## AI Education from Primary Level: A Transformative Step



DR. PRIYANKA SAURABH

The Indian government's plan to introduce artificial intelligence (AI) education from the primary level is being seen as a turning point in the history of the Indian education system. This initiative not only aims to prepare children for the technological world of the future, but is also deeply aligned with the core objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020—holistic, multidisciplinary, skill-based, and innovation-oriented education. This move is poised to transform India's education ecosystem from traditional rote learning to one that embraces curiosity, creativity, and reasoning.

This Government of India initiative embodies the spirit of the

National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020, which envisions education not just as a means to employment but as a means to build citizens equipped with life skills, technical understanding, and human values. AI education, starting from the primary level, will provide children with the opportunity to develop logical thinking, analytical skills, and a responsible technological approach.

India's education system has long been based on traditional methods, where memorization of knowledge and scoring marks in examinations were considered the yardstick of success. But in the changing global economy, the digital age, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, this approach is no longer sufficient. Today, the goal of education is not just literacy, but the creation of "smart citizens"—those who can not only understand information but also use it creatively and ethically. In this context, the government's decision to provide children with a basic understanding of artificial intelligence from the primary level is a visionary and policy-

minded step.

The primary objective of the National Education Policy 2020 is to transform the education system to meet the needs of the twenty-first century. The policy states that education should foster curiosity, experimentation, and creativity. The primary focus of the NEP 2020 is to develop the "joy of learning" in children and to transform education into a process of reflection, understanding, and discovery rather than rote memorization. From this perspective, the introduction of AI education is an extension of this idea.

Artificial intelligence isn't just a technical subject, but rather a tool for developing the art of thinking, analyzing, and problem-solving. When children learn reasoning, pattern recognition, and the ability to understand data from an early age, they can make more informed decisions in every aspect of life. This is precisely the aim of the NEP 2020: an education that empowers children not just with knowledge, but with wisdom.

Another major benefit of incorporating AI at the primary level is

that it makes education multidisciplinary. For example, if children in a classroom are told stories with the help of a robot, they simultaneously learn language, mathematics, science, and ethics. Thus, the use of artificial intelligence transforms education from being "subject-centered" to "experience-centered." The NEP 2020 aims to ensure that education is based on children's experiences and interests, making learning a natural process.

The National Education Policy 2020 identifies "fundamental literacy and numeracy"—the ability to read, write, and count—as the highest priority for the primary stage. If children are taught basic AI concepts, such as reasoning, data recognition, pattern recognition, and decision-making, at this stage, their thinking and analytical abilities can be enhanced exponentially. This not only equips them for the digital age but also prepares them for future employment and innovation.

However, the implementation of this plan faces some challenges. The biggest challenge is digital

inequality. Many rural and underserved areas of India still lack adequate access to the internet, computers, and trained teachers. If AI education is not implemented equitably, it could create a new "digital divide" between rich and poor children. The National Education Policy emphasizes inclusivity and equal opportunity, so the government must pay special attention to ensuring that every child, regardless of background, can benefit from AI education.

Teacher training is another major requirement of this initiative. Successful AI education requires not only textbooks, but also competent and trained teachers. The NEP 2020 envisions teachers as "learning facilitators" who inspire, guide, and nurture children's curiosity. This requires developing specialized training programs for teachers, providing them with a basic understanding of AI, ethical considerations, and methods for using technology in teaching.

Another important aspect of AI education is ethics. If children are taught only technology without inculcating human sensibilities,

responsibility, and a sense of coexistence, this education will be incomplete. The NEP 2020 has declared "moral and human values" as an integral part of education. Therefore, it should be mandatory to teach the concept of "ethical AI" along with AI, so that children understand how technology can be used for the welfare of society and humanity.

To make this plan successful, innovation in curriculum is also needed. AI education should be integrated into children's daily lives, rather than making it a burden. For example, by explaining machine thinking through games, teaching data analysis through pictures, or explaining the meaning of mechanisms through stories—such approaches will help children absorb it naturally. AI can be integrated into children's experiential and discovery-based learning.

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# Hair Care During Pregnancy



■ SHAHNAZ HUSAIN

Pregnancy is the time when the body of a woman goes through a lot of changes physically and on the hormone level. For instance, the gestation period when the body is invested in nurturing the foetus all the nutrition is supplemented or rather re-directed there. At this time if the woman is not taking proper diet and her dietary requirements are not fulfilled it leads to deficiencies and hormonal fluctuations that directly impact hair growth.

Reduced hair growth accompanied with hair fall.

After pregnancy it takes a lot of time for the body to return to normal, thus due to heavy hair fall women experience hair thinning. Physical stress and emotional adjustment to new life after delivery is a huge change for her to get used to, with this disrupts hair growth. Additionally, the body is breastfeeding and it needs more nutrition, when essential Vitamins, such as Vitamin B and iron and zinc are lacking in diet it leads to heavy hair fall.

Some women who suffer massive blood loss post-pregnancy are low in iron that leads to hair fall. Thyroid imbalances too is one of the major reasons for reduced hair growth that is noticeable by hair thinning.

It is essential to plan a proper diet that would supplement you with Omega-3, Vitamins D, C and B12, Calcium and supplement you with iron and protein. When your body receives ample nutrition then you can expect healthy hair. However, I always suggest in obtaining supplements through natural sources instead of pill popping until it is the suggested course of



action by your doctor.

The right time when you should begin your hair treatment or hair care regime should be at the time of your second trimester, it is relatively safer. It specially goes for the time when you are getting your hair dye done but it should be chemical free, opting for a vegetable-based colour or organic henna.

You can easily indulge in a gentle hair massage to relax yourself, getting your hair trim appointments, and using natural treatments with precautions are some of the safer options. However, you should be cautious about certain hair treatments like hair straightening, keratin, and certain products for removing dandruff, these contain harmful ingredients and very strong chemicals that when inhaled are detrimental to your health and the health of foetus. It

is essential to first consult your dermatologist, check the ingredients of your hair products and let your doctor know of any such procedure that you may undertake for your hair care.

These days it is hard to define what is safe if we are looking for specific products. However, choosing products that are based on natural ingredients that contain plant extracts, botanical blends and essential oils. Organic and herbal extracts all based in nature, without the use of harsh chemical formulation.

For instance, it is safe for pregnant and postpartum women to use herbal shampoos, herb infused hair oils, conditioners that are free of harsh chemicals and products that are gentle on scalp and hair.

Hair care during pregnancy requires a

robust routine that is supportive of hormonal health and manage your natural hair cycle. Therefore, it becomes essential to have a proper understanding of what needs to be done and what should be avoided.

Let your hair remain natural rather than dyeing your hair or getting it permed or highlighted. As whatever you put on your scalp gets absorbed in your blood stream too.

Avoid any hair treatments that consist of chemicals similar to or exactly like, minoxidil.

If you feel like getting your hair some highlights then only get the tips of hair done that is safe option.

Be cautious of using shampoo or conditioner with harsh or harmful chemicals. Avoid combing your hair when it's wet

as it is prone to breakage.

DIY home remedy to strengthen hair follicles and for shine is boiling handful of curry leaves with coconut oil. Let it cool and use this mix as a hair mask an hour prior to shampoo.

Mixing sesame oil with few drops of lavender essential oil for hair growth or rosemary essential oil will help achieve thick hair.

Healthy hair is the result of a balanced diet that should comprise of proteins that can be supplemented through eggs, tofu, pulses and cheese. Iron is essential to provide strength to your hair so, include beetroot, legumes, jaggedy, dates and spinach. Vitamin D and calcium are essential part of hair growth therefore I suggest including milk, sesame seeds and ragi, of course sunlight exposure too is one way of supplementing your body with ample of Vitamin D. Include all kinds of nuts and seeds in your diet and remember to supplement your diet with Vitamin C with citrus fruits and Amla.

Different hair types have different requirements, but a healthy diet is always the key to keep your hair healthy. However, for different hair types, you can opt for some simple solutions:

- If you have fine hair then volumizing shampoos and conditioners are the best.
- For wavy hair consider using anti-frizz products and ensure that your hair ends are ample hydrated.
- For thick hair moisturizing shampoos and conditioners work best.
- Curly hair requires deep conditioning and leave-in conditioners.
- Oily hair need scalp clarifying shampoos to help get rid of buildup but remember to choose lightweight conditioners.

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

## Laughter: The Universal Medicine Of Life



Surinderpal Singh

Laughter is one of the most fundamental and spontaneous human expressions, recognized across cultures, languages and societies. It is often described as the universal language, laughter transcends socio-economic, racial and linguistic boundaries, effectively connecting individuals in shared emotional experiences. While it is commonly associated with humour and joy, contemporary scientific research affirms that laughter holds substantial psychological, physiological and social value. The concept of laughter as medicine has been discussed since ancient times, with traditional healers, philosophers and therapists considering it a natural healing mechanism. Today, evidence-based studies in neuropsychology, behavioral science and public health provide support that laughter is more than just an emotional reaction—it is an important contributor to mental well-being and overall health.

### PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGY OF LAUGHTER

Laughter involves complex interactions among the brain, endocrine system, respiratory system and musculoskeletal structures. The neural circuits responsible for laughter primarily involve the limbic system—especially the amygdala and hippocampus—which regulates emotional processing. When a person laughs, neurotransmitters such as dopamine, serotonin and endorphins are released. These biochemical substances are associated with pleasure, relaxation and reduced perception of pain.

Physiologically, laughter stimulates the vagus nerve, promoting parasympathetic nervous system activity, which reduces stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline. Studies across the globe have indicated that laughter enhances vasodilation, supports cardiovascular health and improves oxygen intake, thereby benefiting heart and lung function. Thus, laughter is not merely a symbolic expression, but a measurable physiological response with tangible health benefits.



### PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF LAUGHTER ON PERSONALITY

Laughter contributes significantly to the shaping and maintenance of psychological resilience and emotional well-being. Individuals who laugh frequently are often found to exhibit:

- Improved Emotional Regulation: Laughter helps diffuse intense emotional states such as anger, anxiety and sadness. It shifts the cognitive focus from threat-oriented thinking toward more balanced perspectives.
- Enhanced Social Bonding: Shared laughter strengthens interpersonal relationships by fostering trust, empathy and cooperation. Groups that laugh together develop stronger social cohesion and reduced conflict.
- Reduced Symptoms of Depression and Anxiety: Clinical studies in psychoneuroimmunology demonstrate that laughter therapy can reduce symptoms of mild-to-moderate depression, enhance self-esteem and improve sleep quality.

Strengthening of Personality Traits: Positive personality characteristics such as optimism, adaptability and sociability are more pronounced in individuals who engage in regular laughter. Such individuals often display charismatic and approachable social behavior.

### LAUGHTER AS MEDICINE: MYTH OR REALITY?

The idea of laughter as medicine may seem metaphorical, yet mounting scientific evidence confirms its therapeutic value. Hospitals and rehabilitation centers globally now employ laughter therapy, humor-based counseling and community laughter yoga as complementary treatments. While laughter cannot replace medical treatment for serious illness, it is recognized as a supportive non-pharmacological intervention that enhances recovery by reducing stress and strengthening immune function.

Laughter increases the production of Immunoglobulin A (IgA), which enhances immune resistance. Researches across the world has emphasized and proved that even anticipating laughter can reduce stress hormones. Laughter therapy has proven especially beneficial in geriatric care, oncology wards, and mental health rehabilitation. Therefore, laughter as medicine is not a myth and it is a scientifically grounded, supportive health practice that works alongside conventional treatment.

### LAUGHTER AND CONFIDENCE

Confidence is fundamentally linked to one's sense of self-worth and emotional security. Laughter contributes to confidence-building in several impactful ways:

- Social Ease: Laughter reduces social tension, enabling individuals to communicate comfortably and assertively.
- Positive Self-Perception: A laughing individual feels lighter, less burdened and more accepting of their imperfections.
- Stress Reduction: Reduced anxiety allows clearer thinking and improved decision-making.
- Enhanced Public Presence: People who can laugh at themselves are perceived as more relaxed, balanced and self-assured.

Thus, laughter not only boosts mood but also reinforces psychological foundations of self-confidence.

Laughter which was often considered as a simple emotional reaction, is in reality a profound physiological and psychological tool that contributes to health, social connection and personality development. While it should not be misconstrued as a replacement for medical treatment, its therapeutic benefits are undeniable and well-documented. In a world increasingly affected by stress, emotional fatigue and social fragmentation, laughter stands as a universally accessible, cost-free and natural medicine.

It is very important to encourage laughter in daily life and it may be done through social interaction, humour, shared experiences, or dedicated laughter practices. All this can significantly improve mental well-being and personal confidence. As research continues to unfold, the long-held belief that laughter is the best medicine stands not as a poetic myth, but as a scientifically supported reality.

The Author is a Faculty in Science Department Sri Amritsar Sahib Pubjab

## Bird flu virus spreading in UK could be worst yet, expert warns farmers

### ■ MALCOLM PRIOR

LONDON: The bird flu virus infecting farm flocks across the UK could be the most infectious yet, the government's former top expert in avian virology has warned.

The Pirbright Institute's Professor Ian Brown, formerly director of science at the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), said farmers should be "prepared for the worst".

With a national mandatory housing order brought into force in England on Thursday, one free-range egg producer in Wiltshire told the BBC she felt "terrible" bringing her 32,000 hens inside but an outbreak would be "disastrous".

The government said the mandatory housing order would "bring the rates of infection down from the high we are currently experiencing". So far this season - which began in October - there have been 26 cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 on farms across the UK, with 22 in England alone. Whole flocks have to be culled when an outbreak occurs.

Professor Brown told the BBC that the current virus was "as super-infectious as any high pathogenicity avian influenza we've ever seen".

He added that farmers should now "prepare for the worst, I'm afraid". "We had a very, very serious epidemic between 2021 and 2023 - in excess of 350 outbreaks in the UK. That's off the scale," he explained.

"Now, it's really, really difficult to state what the final size of this outbreak would be, but the early signals are not great."

He added that the threat level meant the poultry industry needed to "batten the hatches down, review their biosecurity and redouble their efforts".

Sarah Godwin Sarah, wearing an outdoor jacket and green shirt, stares down the lens, in a selfie-style picture taken in front of a traditional stone wall, with fields in the distance. Sarah Godwin Sarah Godwin runs a mixed egg, arable and dairy family farm near North Wraxall, in Wiltshire, with her husband and brother-in-law.

Her 32,000-laying hens would normally be outdoors for most of the day. They now have to be kept in their barns around the clock.

"It is terrible. We would love to see them out but it is just a necessary evil because the risk of them catching avian influenza is so high and the consequences are so disastrous for a producer, and for the hens as well," she explained.

But despite bringing the hens inside and putting in place strict biosecurity measures, Mrs Godwin remains "very nervous".



She said: "It only takes a tiny, tiny bit of contaminated muck from a wild bird or something that's been brought into the shed on somebody's boots."

"It's literally grammes that can infect the whole flock. And at that point, the whole flock has to be culled."

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) still says the risk to the general public's health is "very low" while the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has said bird flu poses a very low food safety risk and that properly-cooked poultry and eggs are safe to eat.

But Professor Brown warned that the virus needed to be continually monitored for mutation.

"The good news is, basically, these viruses are still bird viruses. They don't want to be in a human," he said.

"We have to continually monitor the virus, because it's an influenza virus and influenza viruses change."

"Even when they're happy in a species such as birds they still undergo changes. They make mistakes and errors when they replicate."

"So that could always spew out a variant that might be more infectious for humans."

The UK's chief veterinary officer Christine Middlemiss urged all bird keepers to comply with the new housing measures and to continue to exercise "robust biosecurity measures, remain alert for any signs of disease and report suspected disease immediately to the Animal and Plant Health Agency".

"I appreciate the impact these measures have on industry and am extremely grateful for the continued cooperation of the poultry sector," she said.

"We know from previous years that housing birds will bring the rates of infection down from the high we are currently experiencing."

The British Poultry Council's chief executive, Richard Griffiths, said the housing order was "the right move at the right time" while Gary Ford, from the British Free Range Egg Producers Association, said it gave "the clarity and consistency that producers have been calling for".

Courtesy BBC





## Div Com Kashmir chairs Multi-Disciplinary Committee meeting on Traffic Management

Reviews measures to Decongest City Roads and improve Traffic Flow

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 06:** Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Thursday chaired a comprehensive meeting of the Multi-Disciplinary Committee on Traffic Management to review and strengthen ongoing measures aimed at streamlining traffic movement and decongesting city roads.

The meeting was attended by the Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Commissioner SMC, RTO Kashmir, Chief Engineer R&B, and officers from Traffic Police and SSC.

During the meeting, the Divisional Commissioner took a detailed review of the improvements witnessed in downtown areas following the implementation of one-way traffic plans on several routes. It was informed that the initiative has yielded positive results by significantly reducing traffic congestion.

The committee also discussed the introduction of colour-coded passes for mini-buses to restrict them from operating beyond their



designated zones. Further, the meeting proposed declaring MA Road as a "No E-Rickshaw Zone" from Jahangir Chowk to Dalgate, while allowing their movement only through Residency Road. It was also decided to impose a cap on the number of E-Rickshaws operating on saturated routes to prevent further congestion. The Divisional Commissioner reviewed the progress on the Smart Parking Management System, being developed at three key locations in the city, as well as the establishment of E-Rickshaw charging stations at Hazratbal, Zoonimar, and Batamaloo. Discussions were also held on the development of surface parking facilities at JVC, Children's Hospital, Karan Nagar, Sanatnagar, Batamaloo, and Harwan. Several other issues including HLC matters, SSC projects, and concerns related to the Regional Transport Authority (RTA) were also deliberated upon. The Divisional Commissioner issued specific directions to concerned departments for timely action and resolution.

## DC Kishtwar finalises arrangements for Urs Shah Asrar-ud-Din Sahib (RA)



■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**KISHTWAR, NOVEMBER 6:** Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar, Pankaj Kumar Sharma today convened a meeting with officers from various line departments and representatives from religious organisations to finalize preparations for Urs Shah Asrar-ud-Din Sahib (RA), scheduled on November 10, 2025.

The DC issued necessary directions to the concerned departments to complete assigned arrangements well in time. The arrangements discussed included accommodation for visiting devotees, medical care services, transportation facilities, sanitation and drinking water. Stress was laid on making available firewood, adequate stocks of rations and LPG.

The Police Department was asked to put in place comprehensive security arrangements with adequate deployment at key locations, besides chalking out an effective traffic management plan.

The Jal Shakti Department was asked to provide adequate drinking water for devotees at the Shrines and at Chowgan Ground, with additional water tankers as per requirement.

The JPDCL and Municipal Council Kishtwar were directed to repair and replace street lights in the town, around the shrines and at Chowgan Ground for safe movement of devotees.

The DC also emphasized maintaining cleanliness and properly marking the roads leading to the Shrines.

The ARTO, DTI and Police Department were directed to make available transport

facilities, including additional buses for pilgrims and regulation of traffic and parking spaces.

The JPDCL authorities were directed to ensure an uninterrupted power supply at the shrines and accommodation sites for devotees and to arrange generators as a backup.

The Tehsildar and Information Department were directed to establish a joint Information Centre at Chowgan Ground for the convenience of devotees, with assistance from the Police Authorities.

The departments of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA), was asked to ensure efficient arrangements.

The Fire and Emergency Services Incharge was asked to inspect and test the existing fire hydrants installed in the different municipal wards of the town, to ensure preparedness for effectively combating any fire-related incident.

Members of the Sajada-e-Nasheen (Darbar Shah Asrar-ud-Din Sahib and Darbar Shah Farid-ud-Din Sahib) and the representative of EO Auqaf Kishtwar apprised the DC of various issues and demands, to which the DC gave a patient hearing and assured every possible support from the District Administration.

The meeting was attended by ADC, Pawan Kotwal; CEO KDA, Kaiser Bhanu; ACR, Idrees Lone; EO Municipal Council, Mirza Mumtaz Iqbal and other government functionaries from stakeholder departments.

## Rationalization of Patwar Halqas, Girdawari circles, underway in Udhampur

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**UDHAMPUR, NOVEMBER 06:** Deputy Commissioner Udhampur Saloni Rai today chaired a meeting of the Revenue Department to review the progress of rationalization of Patwar Halqas and Girdawari Circles. She also discussed the preparation and revision of stamp duty rates for 2026.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Prem Singh; Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Dr Umesh Shan and other officers participated through virtual mode.

The DC conducted a Sub-Division-wise detailed review of the ongoing rationalization exercise and the revision of stamp duty rates. She directed the concerned officers to expedite the process and submit complete report by November 10, 2025.



Emphasizing the importance of adhering to prescribed criteria, the DC instructed officers to ensure a thorough and transparent review for fair and accurate finalization of stamp duty rates.

The DC also reviewed the registration status of pensioners of the District, including the progress of online registration and the DLC generation by the respective banking correspondents.

Stressing on timely public services delivery, the DC directed the concerned officers to clear all pending grievances and ensure prompt, citizen-friendly services across all Revenue offices in the district.

## DIET organises Cyber Security awareness programme at Udhampur

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**UDHAMPUR, NOVEMBER 06:** District Institute of Education and Training today organised an awareness programme on cyber security and safety. Deputy Commissioner Udhampur Saloni Rai inaugurated the event as the Chief Guest and addressed the gathering of teachers and officials. The programme aimed to sensitise participants about the growing importance of digital safety, responsible online behaviour and protection against emerging cyber threats. The DC underscored the critical need for adopting

safe digital practices and maintaining cyber hygiene. She highlighted the rising risks associated with cybercrime and urged all officials to stay vigilant, follow secure online protocols and promote awareness among students and the wider community. She further stressed the importance of conducting regular cyber security awareness initiatives to ensure safer and more responsible digital future for citizens. Earlier, the Principal of DIET extended a warm welcome to the chief guest and conveyed heartfelt greetings to all participants and guests present at the event.

## Awareness Programme on Natural Farming, Marketing Linkage Held at Dharmoon-Batote

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**BATOTE, NOVEMBER 6:** The Area Marketing Officer, Horticulture Planning and Marketing Department Ramban, in collaboration with the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Ramban and the Agriculture Department, today organized a one-day Awareness Programme at Dharmoon-Batote.

The programme aimed to educate farmers about Natural Farming, Marketing Linkages, the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), Jammu and Kashmir Comprehensive Investment Plan (JKCIP), PMFME, and other key agricultural development schemes designed to enhance productivity and ensure sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Speaking on the occasion, Area Marketing Officer, Tehsin Iqbal

Chib, elaborated in detail on the departmental initiatives launched to strengthen the market infrastructure, develop better supply chains, and ensure remunerative returns to the farming community. He emphasized that the Horticulture Planning and Marketing Department is committed to empowering farmers through awareness, capacity building, and improved market access.

Dr. Parveen Kumar, Scientist, KVK Ramban, delivered an informative lecture on Natural Farming, explaining the preparation and use of microbial formulations such as Jeevamrit, Beejamrit, and Panchgavya for soil health management. He highlighted how adopting organic and sustainable practices can reduce input costs, enhance soil fertility, and ensure long-term agricultural productivity.

Officers from the Agriculture



Department also briefed participants about various farmer welfare schemes, technological interventions, and support mechanisms available under HADP and centrally sponsored programmes. They encouraged farmers to diversify their crops, adopt integrated farming models, and avail the benefits of credit and subsidy-based schemes for better economic returns.

The experts further discussed

marketing linkages and value chain development, guiding farmers on grading, packaging, branding, and direct market connectivity through Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and e-marketing platforms. They also highlighted opportunities under PMFME (Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises) for small-scale entrepreneurs engaged in food processing and

value addition.

A large number of progressive farmers, orchardists, and local youth attended the programme and actively interacted with the experts. They sought guidance on adopting natural inputs, certification processes, and access to institutional markets for their produce.

The participants appreciated the efforts of the departments for conducting such informative sessions and requested that similar awareness camps be organized at the panchayat and village levels to benefit a wider farming community.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by the Area Marketing Officer, who acknowledged the collaboration of KVK Ramban, Agriculture Department officials, and the participating farmers for making the event successful and impactful.

## DC Ramban chairs District Level Screening-cum-Coordination Committee meeting; Reviews progress of mandatory biometric updation, Digital Life Certificate Generation

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**RAMBAN, NOVEMBER 06:** Deputy Commissioner Ramban, Mohammad Alyas Khan today chaired a series of meetings in his office chamber to review the progress of key administrative and public welfare initiatives, including the meeting of District Level Screening-cum-Coordination Committee on Militancy-Related SRO-43 cases, status of Mandatory Biometric and generation of Digital Life Certificates (DLCs) for pensioners. The meetings were attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Varunjeet Singh Charak; ACR Shokat Hayat Mattoo; Chief Medical Officer, Chief Education Officer, Cluster Head J&K Bank, Second-in-Command 84 BN CRPF, Second-in-Command 120(TA), Dy.SP Headquarters, BDOs and officers from other concerned departments.

During the Screening-cum-Coordination Committee meeting, the DC reviewed SRO-43 cases pertaining to the next of kin of deceased



persons. Several cases were cleared at the district level.

Reviewing the progress of Mandatory Biometric Authentication of Aadhaar being carried out under Samagra Shiksha, the Deputy Commissioner directed the Chief Education Officer to ensure 100% biometric coverage of students in all government and private schools

across the district within the stipulated timeframe. He instructed officers to deploy adequate manpower and necessary equipment at the institutional level to facilitate smooth and error-free biometric authentication. The DC also called for close coordination between the Education Department and the UIDAI/Aadhaar au-

thorities to address technical issues, if any, to ensure saturation of Aadhaar enrollment among students.

While reviewing the generation of Digital Life Certificates (DLCs) for pensioners, the DC directed the concerned officers to ensure early completion of the process to guarantee uninterrupted pension disbursement. He emphasized coordinated efforts among all departments for prompt service delivery and timely resolution of public issues, reaffirming the administration's commitment to transparent and efficient governance.

The Deputy Commissioner also directed the J&K Bank authorities to coordinate district-level training sessions for all Banking Correspondents (BCs) to ensure smooth facilitation of pensioners in generating their Digital Life Certificates (DLCs). He further instructed the Bank to closely monitor and track the progress of BCs in assisting pensioners with DLC generation.

## RC, Route Permit of Involved Mini Bus Cancelled for Violation of Motor Vehicles Act

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

**RAJOURI, NOVEMBER 6:** In a stern action against traffic violations and negligent driving, the Office of the Assistant Regional Transport Officer (ARTO) Rajouri has ordered the cancellation of the Registration Certificate (RC) and Route Permit of the mini bus involved in the recent tragic road accident near Thandi Kassi.

The action has been taken in compliance with the directions of Deputy Commissioner Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma, and Transport Commissioner J&K, Vishesh Paul Mahajan, as part of the ongoing drive to ensure strict enforcement of the Motor Vehicles Act (MVA), 1988 and to promote road safety and accountability among vehicle operators.

The ill-fated vehicle, bearing Registration No. JK02AM-8074 (Model 2010) and registered in the name of Anil Kumar of Thandi Kassi, was found to be plying in violation of the provisions of the MVA and the conditions of its route permit. The bus, which was authorized to operate only on the Ghambir-Palma route, had diverted from the approved route and was carrying 28 passengers—12 more than the prescribed seating capacity—at the time of the accident, leading to a tragic incident that resulted in fatalities and multiple injuries.

The inquiry conducted by the Transport Department revealed that the vehicle was being operated in a rash and negligent manner, disregarding safety norms, and had compromised passenger security. The order issued under Section 55(3) of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 stated that the continued operation of such a vehicle poses a serious threat to public safety.

Exercising powers as the Registering Authority, the ARTO Rajouri has, therefore, cancelled both the RC and the Route Permit of the said vehicle with immediate effect. The registered owner has been directed to surrender the original Registration Certificate and Route Permit to the ARTO Office within seven days from the issuance of the order.

Failure to comply within the stipulated period will attract further legal action under the provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act, which may include the imposition of penalties and disqualification from holding or obtaining permits in future.

The Deputy Commissioner Rajouri has reiterated that no leniency will be shown to those found violating transport and safety regulations. He emphasized that strict and exemplary action is essential to deter overloading, route violations, and unsafe driving practices, which endanger the lives of commuters.



# Consumption demand remains robust across durables, FMCG, auto fuelled by GST2.0: BoB Economists

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**NEW DELHI, NOV 6 :** India's consumption demand continues to hold firm, with strong momentum visible across both the production and sales indicators in September 2025, even as consumers temporarily deferred purchases ahead of GST rate cuts, according to an analysis by Bank of Baroda.

As per the analysis by Bank of Baroda Economists Dipanwita Mazumdar and Jahnvi Prabhakar, production of consumer durables, especially white goods like televisions and refrigerators, recorded double-digit growth, while daily consumables and mobility-related items also showed healthy upticks despite a period of abstinence in the month due to tax transition.

The report highlighted that the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) disaggregated data pointed to robust performance in consumer durables. Production of televisions grew 11.4 percent year-on-year in September 2025, building on a high base of 10.1 percent, while refrigerator output surged 15.8 percent after a contraction last year. Air conditioners posted a seasonally adjusted 11.3 percent sequential jump, reflecting sustained discretionary spending despite a high base effect.



emember 2025, building on a high base of 10.1 percent, while refrigerator output surged 15.8 percent after a contraction last year. Air conditioners posted a seasonally adjusted 11.3 percent sequential jump, reflecting sustained discretionary spending despite a high base effect.

The report attributed this resilience to favorable pricing and optimism following GST 2.0 reforms, which lowered tax slabs for several consumer goods categories. Retail auto sales data from the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA)

showed a 5.2 percent year-on-year rise in September 2025, reversing an 8.6 percent decline a year earlier. Passenger vehicle and two-wheeler sales grew 5.8 percent and 6.5 percent, respectively, aided by GST rate rationalisation and festive demand. "More than 60 percent of total auto

sales were recorded during the Navaratri period, with passenger vehicles and two-wheelers contributing 73 percent and 65 percent of total monthly sales, respectively," the report highlighted. The report mentioned that an analysis of 43 companies across auto, FMCG, retail, hotels, and durables showed encouraging sales and profitability trends in Q2FY26. Auto firms recorded a 22.8 percent rise in net sales, while retail and restaurant sectors grew 14.6 percent and 15.6 percent, respectively. FMCG companies posted an 8.1 percent increase in sales, though some reported temporary disruptions due to inventory adjustments post-GST changes.

"Most companies expect the full benefit of tax reforms and deferred purchases to reflect in Q3 results," the economists said in the report. The report projects that demand revival will strengthen further in the coming months, supported by rural recovery following a good monsoon and rising urban consumption driven by tax-related reliefs. UNI

## Transguard Group signs MoU with myTVS

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**CHENNAI, NOV 6 :** Business solutions provider Transguard Group today announced that it has signed a strategic agreement with myTVS, India's largest digital automotive aftermarket platform.

Building on their extensive expertise, the two parties have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at transforming the automotive, aviation and supply chain sectors in the UAE.



according to a press release.

This strategic collaboration is designed to introduce innovative solutions, drive industry-wide efficiencies, and set new benchmarks for growth and competitiveness across these key sectors.

"By providing complete end-to-end solutions, the collaboration between Transguard and myTVS will target logistics, fleet, enterprise and individual consumers across all industries in the country," Rabie Atieh, Chief Executive Officer, Transguard Group, said.

G Srinivasa Raghavan, Managing Director, myTVS, added, "The myTVS digital platform will seamlessly integrate the ecosystem

while supporting diagnostics, inventory management, parts management, service management and tracking. We are confident this robust system will accelerate client growth and profitability in the UAE market."

By working together to deliver integrated automotive aftermarket digital solutions for fleets and enterprises for multiple regional industries, Transguard and myTVS intend to build a new, technology-driven platform across multiple sectors. Beyond the automotive aftermarket, the MOU also aims to drive technology adoption across various industries, enhancing efficiency, profitability and sustainability. By leveraging on myTVS' experience and technology, the focus will be on introducing innovation in key operational

areas in the UAE, including inventory management, parts and service, diagnostics, network connectivity and uptime management solutions. UNI

## 17th Poultry India Expo in Hyderabad from Nov 26 onwards

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**HYDERABAD, NOV 6 :** The 17th edition of Poultry India Expo, South Asia's largest poultry exhibition, will be held at Hitec Exhibition Centre, Madhapur, from November 26 to 28. The event will see the participation of more than 500 exhibitors from more than 50 countries while 45,000 visitors are expected to attend it.

The event is being organised by the Indian Poultry Equipment Manufacturers Association (IPEMA), with a Poultry Knowledge Day scheduled for November 25 at HICC Novotel. Announcing the details at a press conference here on Wednesday, IPEMA President Uday Singh Bayas said this year's edition will be "the biggest and most comprehensive yet," showcasing innovations in breeding, hatchery automation, feed milling, housing, and egg farming solutions.

"Last year, we had 42,000 visitors. This year, we expect more than 45,000 participants from across 50 countries. Poultry India has become a single national platform - one nation, one expo - for everyone connected with the poultry ecosystem," Bayas said.

He emphasised that the poultry industry continues to grow at 7-8 per cent annually, contributing significantly to rural employment and nutrition. "We aim to deliver the best quality products at affordable prices so that sustainability is maintained for the farmers and by the farmers," he added. The three-day event, spread across 35,000 square metres with seven halls at Hitec, will feature 40 national and 20 international poultry associations, 16 global poultry magazines, and 18 Indian publications. Over 200 traffic marshals will be deployed to ensure smooth conduct of the mega event.

The Poultry Knowledge Day on November 25 will feature seven eminent speakers addressing topics such as disease management, sustainability, and emerging challenges in the poultry sector.

The expo also focuses on policy advocacy and education, with IPEMA supporting research initiatives, veterinary education, and policy discussions on animal husbandry and export growth. "Poultry India is not just an expo - it's a movement contributing to the nation's health, economy, and rural empowerment," Bayas said. Chitturi Suresh Rayudu, Managing Director of Srinivasa Farms, said India's poultry industry, currently valued at about Rs 4 lakh crore, is poised to grow fivefold in the next two decades, generating millions of rural jobs. "Every additional egg consumed creates nearly 25,000 rural jobs. Poultry has been and will continue to be a transformational force in rural India," he said. KG Anand, General Manager of Venkateshwara Hatcheries Limited., highlighted the industry's vital role in combating malnutrition and promoting health. "Eggs and chicken are the best sources of affordable protein. UNI

## AI to play defining role in India's journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047: MeitY

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**NEW DELHI, NOV 6 :** Artificial Intelligence is set to become a cornerstone of India's transformation into a developed nation by 2047, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) said at the Emerging Science, Technology & Innovation Conclave (ESTIC) 2025 here today.

Speaking at the event, MeitY Secretary S Krishnan said AI must be seen not as an isolated technology but as a "cross-cutting force" that touches every sector of the economy.

He emphasised that the true value of technology lies in how it improves people's lives and enhances social welfare. "The critical aspect of all technology is the impact it has on society and the quality of life it offers to citizens," he noted. High-

lighting the government's efforts to create a robust AI ecosystem, Abhishek Singh, Additional Secretary at MeitY and CEO of the IndiaAI Mission, elaborated on the seven pillars of the national strategy. These include affordable computing infrastructure, high-quality datasets, indigenous large-language models, startup enablement, and frameworks for safe and trustworthy AI. Singh said these initiatives are aimed at closing existing gaps and positioning India as a global leader in AI development and deployment. Industry participation at the conclave reflected growing private sector engagement with India's AI ambitions. Sridhar Vembu, Co-Founder and Chief Scientist of Zoho Corporation, said resource limitations often inspire greater innovation. "When you don't have all

the resources available, those constraints push you to come up with better solutions," he remarked, underscoring the need for ingenuity and frugal innovation in India's AI journey.

The ESTIC 2025 conclave served as a key platform to deliberate on the evolving role of AI in national development. It also set the stage for the upcoming India-AI Impact Summit 2026, where India is expected to showcase its advancements in digital infrastructure, indigenous AI models, and governance frameworks promoting responsible innovation. With technology at the heart of economic and social transformation, MeitY's vision reflects a strong commitment to making AI an integral force in shaping Viksit Bharat 2047—a technologically advanced, inclusive, and self-reliant India. UNI

## World Spice Conference to be held in chilly city Guntur

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**CHENNAI, NOV 6 :** About 400 participants are expected to participate in the '4th National Spice Conference' to be held in the 'chilly city' Guntur in Andhra Pradesh on November 14-15, informed World Spice Organisation on Wednesday.

The conference themed, 'The Spice Route Ahead: Safe, Sustainable and Scalable', will bring together leading voices from government, industry and academia to deliberate on the evolving dynamics of India's spice sector.

The two-day event will feature focused business sessions, a curated exhibition showcasing the latest technologies and indigenous agri-products, and a dedicated buyer-seller interface, said World Spice Organisation.

Last year's edition witnessed participation from over 350 delegates, including processors, exporters, traders, laboratories, agri-input companies, technology firms, and farmer representatives.

The 2025 edition is expected to surpass 400 participants, with a strong representation from farmers attending under the National Sustainable Spice Program (NSSP). Over the years, the National Spice Conference has hosted eminent speakers from the Spices Board of India, Ministry of Agriculture and other organisations, enriching discussions with their expertise and experience.

The conference will host insightful business sessions across two days. Business sessions on Day 1 will explore Ensuring Food Safety in the Spice Supply Chain: Farm to Fork, Sustainability and Inclusive Growth through Communities of Practice, AgriTech and Farming Innovations, Introduction



to FPOs, and Government Schemes for the spice sector.

Day two will include an Interaction with Farmers, a session on Balancing Growth with Responsibility, and conclude with a Buyer-Seller Meet designed to strengthen market linkages and foster trade

relationships.

Speaking about the upcoming edition, Ramkumar Menon, Chairman, World Spice Organization, said "The National Spice Conference has evolved into a crucial platform shaping the future of India's spice industry. The 2025 theme, 'The

Spice Route Ahead: Safe, Sustainable and Scalable,' reflects our commitment to fostering an ecosystem that prioritizes food safety, environmental responsibility, and inclusive growth. By connecting farmers, policymakers, and industry leaders, NSC aims to create a collaborative roadmap that ensures India's continued leadership in the global spice trade."

The 2025 edition will build upon the learnings of previous conferences, advancing dialogue on quality, sustainability, and market linkages. As the spice industry stands at a pivotal juncture navigating growing global demand, evolving consumer expectations, and rapid technological advancements the discussions at National Spice Conference 2025 will be instrumental in defining the future of a safe, sustainable, and scalable spice ecosystem. World Spice Organisation said. UNI

# NALCO observes vigilance awareness week-2025

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

**BHUBANESHWAR, NOV 6 :** National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO), the Navratna Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSE) under union Ministry of Mines, joined the nation in observing Vigilance Awareness Week 2025 with the central theme "Vigilance: Our Shared Responsibility." A series of awareness activities and competitions were organized across all units and regional offices to promote the values of integrity, transparency, and accountability in public life.

As part of the campaign, an Eloution Competition was held at the Corporate Office, witnessing enthusiastic participation from over 250 students represent-

senting around 70 schools and colleges from the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.

Various competitions were also organized among NALCO employees to reinforce the message of ethical conduct and vigilance in the workplace.

At the valedictory ceremony held on November 4, at the Corporate Office auditorium in Bhubaneswar, Hemant Sharma, Additional Chief Secretary, graced the occasion as the chief guest, while Brijendra Pratap Singh, CMD, Pankaj Kumar Sharma, Director (Production), Sagdish Arora, Director (P&T), Dr. Tapas Kumar Pattanayak, Director (HR), Abhay Kumar Behuria, Director (Finance) and Pranabjyoti Nath, Chief Vigilance Officer, NALCO, graced the occasion as the distinguished guests and handed over the awards to the winners of various competitions.



Pranabjyoti Nath, CVO, NALCO, outlined the various awareness activities undertaken during the week-long celebrations and appreciated the active participation and enthusiasm of employees, students, and stake-

holders during the Vigilance Awareness Week.

He highlighted the importance of collective responsibility in fostering ethical conduct

holders during the Vigilance Awareness Week.

He highlighted the importance of collective responsibility in fostering ethical conduct

and organizational integrity.

Additional Chief Secretary Hemant Sharma appreciated NALCO's contribution and said that NALCO stands as a shining example of how resources, when managed with integrity and efficiency, can drive sustainable national progress.

He lauded NALCO for optimally utilizing its resources for the benefit of communities, the State of Odisha, and the nation, while reinforcing values from within. Credibility, he noted, is a premium built internally by any successful organization.

"Empowering employees fosters vigilance, and an organization that functions with integrity, transparency, and quality naturally paves the way for profitability," he said.

Brijendra Pratap Singh, CMD, in his address, emphasized that vigilance must be a continuous practice, not a periodic observance. "Vigilance is not merely about preventing wrongdoing; it is about fostering a culture where honesty and fairness guide every action and decision," he said. He underlined that vigilance strengthens systems, promotes ethical practices, and builds organizational credibility, thereby reinforcing stakeholder trust.

Worth mentioning that in line with the Vigilance Awareness Week theme, NALCO is also observing a three-month-long awareness campaign beginning August 18, 2025, aimed at fostering an organizational culture of vigilance and ethical behavior. UNI



# Labuschagne Returns to Australia's Ashes Squad

■ ASSOCIATED PRESS

GOLD COAST: Marcus Labuschagne is back in Australia's squad to start the Ashes series, with selectors including the veteran batter Wednesday in a 15-man group for the first cricket test against England.

Labuschagne missed Australia's three-test series win over the West Indies in the Caribbean in July after a lean run of form but has regained confidence with some big scores in first-class cricket. The 58-test veteran hasn't scored a test century since the 2023 Ashes in England.

Opening batter Jake Weatherald could make his debut in the Nov. 21-25 match in Perth after being selected ahead of Matt Renshaw and 20-year-old Sam Konstas, although that depends on who is chosen to open with Usman Khawaja.

The 31-year-old Weatherald was the leading scorer in the Sheffield Shield tournament last summer with 906 runs at an average of 50.33.

Steve Smith will lead the Australian lineup in the series-opener in the absence of regular skipper Pat Cummins, who is still recovering from a lower back problem.

Scott Boland is expected to join Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood in the pace attack, with uncapped Brendan Doggett and Sean Abbott also in the squad as fast bowling options.

Allrounders Beau Webster and Cameron

Green have also both been included in the squad.

The Australian players have either been involved in first-class cricket with their states to prepare for the Ashes or playing against India in a series of one-day internationals and Twenty20 internationals.

Green's condition and ability to bowl spells as part of a pace attack will be one of the things selectors will be monitoring in next week's round of the domestic first-class competition.

"We've got 14 out of our 15-man squad playing a round of the Sheffield Shield, still some information to gather from that — Cameron Green returning to the bowling crease being one of them," selector George Bailey said Wednesday. "We'll get through these 14 guys playing, get the information and then work on the XI."

Bailey said selectors would like to see Green, who at 26 is considerably younger than the rest of the bowling group, bowl between 15 and 20 overs for West Australia against Queensland in Perth to assess his recovery from side soreness.

"That's pretty close to what you need from your allrounder," Bailey said. "We're still 2 1/2 weeks from that first test, so we will build up from there." The squad was announced after Australian cricket great Stephen Waugh suggested selectors would soon need to make some tough calls to manage the impact of player retirements. Most of the players in the test squad are in their 30s.



## 53kg could be a tough ask for Mirabai by the time LA Games begins

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

CHENNAI: With the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) dropping 48kg from the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, India's star lifter Mirabai Chanu has been forced to change her weight category twice in a year to stay in contention for the Games. Mirabai, who won a silver at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics in the 49kg, had dropped down to 48kg after the IWF axed her pet category from the Olympics. She won a silver medal in the new weight division at the World Championships last month. Now, she has to shift to 53kg if she wants to compete in the quadrennial event.

Despite the latest development, head coach Vijay Sharma claimed the change will be a blessing in disguise for the Manipuri weightlifter but it could also turn out to be a difficult proposition for her as she could face



stiff competition not only from the 53kg regulars but also those who switch to it from 48kg to keep their Olympic dreams alive. Given the fact that Mirabai will be 34 in 2028 could also work against her if she qualifies for the Games.

"It's a very good thing for Mira," head coach Sharma told this daily. Explaining the benefits, Sharma said, "Mira has been consistently competing in the 48kg and 49kg since 2012 and this has been making it difficult for her to maintain the weight. Bulking up will only help her improve muscle mass, which in turn will strengthen her muscles thus making her less injury prone."

The head coach said his ward will continue to compete in the 48kg till the 2026 Asian Games. The new categories will also come into effect from August 1, 2026. "She recently dropped down to 48kg and this was turning out to be difficult for her. After the Asian Games, we will have two years to prepare and qualify for the Olympics. In my opinion, two years will be enough time for us to adjust to the new weight division," added the coach. The women's Olympic categories now include 53kg, 61kg, 69kg, 77kg, 86kg, +86kg while the men will compete in the 65kg, 75kg, 85kg, 95kg, 110kg, +110kg weight classes.

## Steve Waugh sees his own career in Sam Konstas' early challenges

■ ANDREW MCGLASHAN

WALES: Chair of Australia's selectors George Bailey has expressed sympathy with Sam Konstas after his Test omission, while former captain Steve Waugh drew parallels with his own career as a young player trying to find his way.

After a tough tour of the West Indies, where he made just 50 runs in six innings, Konstas' fate was sealed by an indifferent start to the Sheffield Shield season, where he has got one half-century in six innings. Prior to that, though, he hit a hundred for Australia A in India. Konstas, who recently turned 20, was handed his debut last summer against India at the MCG, where he took on Jasprit Bumrah in thrilling fashion but was then left out in



Sri Lanka before being recalled in tough batting conditions in the Caribbean. "I feel for Sammy [Konstas] because at the moment, if he farts, it's a headline," Bailey said at the announcement of Australia's squad for the first Ashes

Test. "There's a handful of young guys his age playing Shield cricket around the country, and they are all learning and are all going through the journey of becoming the best cricketer they can be, and Sammy is no different - he just

happen to doing it under immense scrutiny."

"We really like him... he's been in and around the Boxing Day Test, he's been on subcontinent tours, [and] he's been on Aussie A tours. So we like the skillset, and [are] confident over the long run, it will continue to build out. It's not going to be linear - no one's passage through their career is linear - [but] the message is just to keep it simple: score runs and bat for as long as he can for New South Wales."

Speaking at a subsequent press conference, Bailey added: "He's got a great outlook on life. He remains incredibly upbeat. The scrutiny on him is almost unprecedented on some levels."

Waugh, who spoke alongside the Waterford Crystal Ashes trophy, which is starting a tour

of Australia, made his Test debut aged 20, also against India on Boxing Day at the MCG. He didn't make a century until his 27th appearance, against England at the start of the 1989 Ashes. Eighteen months later, he was dropped in favour of his brother, Mark, but once recalled, went on to become one of Australia's greatest batters with 32 Test centuries.

"I feel a little bit sorry for Sam Konstas," Waugh said shortly before the squad was confirmed. "He's been in and out of the side a bit, and it actually reminds me a bit of myself when I first started playing for Australia. Not fully confident of being in the side, and up and down, and form not quite there. So he's probably lacking a bit of confidence."

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