

Srinagar

Saturday

November 22 | 2025

30 Jumada al-Awwal 1447 AH

Issue No: 275

Volume: 15

Pages: 12

Price: Rs 02/-

15TH
YEAR OF
PUBLICATIONHEADLINES
TODAY

Voice To The Voiceless

PULL OUT
LITSTREAM
INSIDE THIS
ISSUEOperation Sindoor Forced
Pakistan to Ceasefire :
Amit ShahHome Minister Hails BSF's Bravery, Says Nine Terror
Camps Reduced to Rubble During The Operation

■ HT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, NOV 21: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said Pakistan was compelled to announce a unilateral ceasefire earlier this year after India launched sharp and targeted strikes under Operation Sindoor in response to the April 22 Pahalgam attack.

Addressing the Border Security Force's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in Bhuj, Gujarat, Shah said the operation sent a powerful message that any attempt to challenge India's territorial integrity will invite a decisive response.

He said security forces destroyed nine major installations of Jaish-e-Mohammed, Hizbul Mujahideen, and Lashkar-e-Taiba, including key headquarters and training sites. According to Shah, even India's limited response was enough for Pakistan to react militarily, prompting BSF troops to deliver what he described as a "resounding reply."

Shah said the swift action by the BSF, Army and Air Force forced Pakistan to declare a ceasefire within days, demonstrating India's capability and resolve.



The Home Minister praised the BSF for its unwavering dedication, saying the force has stood as India's first line of defence since 1965, often operating in the harshest terrains and weather conditions. He said 2,013 BSF personnel have sacrificed their lives to ensure the nation's borders remain secure.

● Turn on Page 2

Not a Single Family Will Be Deprived of Their
Rights and Fundamental Needs: LG Sinha521 New Houses Sanctioned for
Poonch, Rajouri, Says PM Modi's
Govt Committed to Complete
Rehabilitation

■ MUKARAM ALI

JAMMU, NOV 21: In a major relief initiative for families devastated by recent natural calamities and unprovoked Pakistani shelling during Operation Sindoor, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday laid the foundation stone for 521 new houses in Poonch and Rajouri, declaring that "not a single family will be deprived of their rights and fundamental needs." The project, to be imple-



mented with the support of HRDS India, will rebuild 133 damaged houses in Poonch and 388 in Rajouri, all free of cost. The LG described the effort as a testament to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment to transforming the lives of border residents who have long lived under the shadow of conflict.

The LG said that the administration had earlier extended ex-gratia relief, government jobs to Next of Kin (NoKs) of the deceased, and compensation to families affected by flash floods and cross-border shelling. In Poonch, 13 NoKs were provided government jobs, 14 bereaved families received ex-gratia, and 160 kachcha as well as 425 pucca house owners were compensated. Over ₹10 crore in relief has also been provided under SRE and Central schemes. In Rajouri, one NoK of a civilian killed during Operation Sindoor

● Turn on Page 2

Kashmir sees outrage over
proposed 20% peak-hour tariff hike

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, NOV 21: As the Jammu & Kashmir Government came under fierce criticism from opposition parties over the Kashmir Power Development Corporation Limited's (KPDCL) proposal to levy a 20 per cent surcharge on power consumption during peak hours, the National Conference-led government on Friday said it will not allow the people of J&K to be burdened with any such "unfair" and "ill-timed" proposal.

In a post on X (formerly Twitter), as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), NC leader and MLA Zadibal Tanvir Sadiq said the

● Turn on Page 2

Two Newly Elected
MLA's Take Oath

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, NOV 21: Two newly elected MLAs were administered oath by Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather on Friday in Jammu.

As per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi (Budgam) and Devyani Rana were administered oath by the Speaker.

While Devyani Rana recited the oath in Dogri language, Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi chose Urdu for his pledge.

The swearing-in ceremony was attended by Rajya Sabha MP Sat Paul Sharma, Leader of Opposition Sunil Kumar Sharma, MLAs Sham Lal Sharma, Vikram Randhawa, Waheed-Ur-Rehman Para, and family members of the legislators.

As per section 24 of Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act-2019, every member of the Legislative Assembly shall, before taking his seat, make and subscribe before the Lieutenant Governor of the said Union territory, or some person appointed in that behalf by him, an oath or affirmation according to the form set out for the purpose in the Fourth Schedule of this Act.

While Mehdi was elected from the Budgam Assembly segment, Devyani Rana won from Nagrota -a constituency earlier represented twice by her late father, Devinder Singh Rana.

Post abrogation of Article 370 and repeal of J&K Constitution, all MLAs have to be administered oath under the Constitution of India. With the filling of these two vacancies, the strength of

● Turn on Page 2

A Long-Pending Prayer Answered: Pandit Community
Hails Pulwama Administration for Restoring Temple Courtyard

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, NOV 21: In a gesture that has touched hearts and revived hope, the Pandit community of Soura Nowshera has expressed profound gratitude to the Pulwama district administration for helping level the courtyard of their

local temple an act they describe as "nothing short of a blessing."

For years, the uneven and damaged courtyard had stood as a silent reminder of neglect. Community members said they had long wished to restore the sacred space, but strict restrictions on excavation and soil availability in the

district made the task feel nearly impossible.

That changed when District Development Commissioner Pulwama, Dr. Basharat Qayoom (IAS), and District Mining Officer Dr. Saleem Dar stepped in with timely empathy and decisive action. Understanding the cultural and

emotional importance of the site, the officers coordinated the required permissions, facilitated logistics, and ensured that the soil was arranged strictly within district regulations.

Locals described the officers' intervention as "compassion in action,"

● Turn on Page 2

PPP key to life-sciences innovation: Dr Jitendra Singh

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, NOV 21: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, and MoS in the Prime Minister's Office, Dr. Jitendra Singh, today said that public-private partnership (PPP) is crucial for advancing innovation and creating a strong research ecosystem in the field of life sciences.

Speaking at GISICON 2025 at ASCOMS,

Sidhra—a two-day conference of the Gastro Intestinal Infections Society of India themed "Brain-Gut Axis: Two Lane Expressway"—the Minister said that PPP models in medicine and life sciences will help build a sustainable environment for cutting-edge research and inclusive healthcare.

Dr. Singh praised the organizers for hosting a major scientific conference in Jammu through a non-government body, calling it a significant step toward promot-

ing a vibrant research culture in the Union Territory. He said the older distinction between public and private sectors is fading, and collaboration is becoming central to progress in life sciences and healthcare delivery.

Highlighting India's growing scientific capabilities, Dr. Singh said the private sector is now deeply involved in sectors such as space, atomic energy, and earth

● Turn on Page 2

J&K Moves To Secure Schools,
Hospitals From Stray Dogs

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, NOV 21: Facing an alarming rise in dog-bite cases and a stern warning from the Supreme Court, the Jammu and Kashmir administration

has rolled out a comprehensive drive to secure schools, hospitals and other public institutions from the growing stray dog menace.

The measures follow directions issued by the Supreme

Court in Suo Motu Writ Petition (C) No. 5 of 2025, titled "City Hounded by Strays, Kids Pay Price" vs State of Andhra Pradesh. Acting on these directions, the J&K administration

● Turn on Page 2

J&K Police intensify inspections
of shops, vehicles, hospitals

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, NOV 21: Jammu and Kashmir Police on Friday carried out coordinated inspections across Srinagar city targeting chemical and fertiliser shops, car dealerships, and hospital facilities, officials said.

Last week, Srinagar Police uncovered a sophisticated

● Turn on Page 2

Govt Ushers Reforms, Implements 4 Labour
Codes To Provide Social Security To All Workers

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI, NOV 21: In a landmark overhaul of labour laws, the government on Friday notified all four Labour Codes, ushering in major reforms, including universal social security coverage for gig workers,

mandatory appointment letters for all employees, and statutory minimum wages and timely payment across sectors.

The four Labour Codes—the Code of Wages (2019), Industrial Relations Code (2020), Code on Social Security (2020) and Occupational Safety,

Health and Working Conditions Code (2020)—effective Friday, replace 29 fragmented laws with a unified, modern framework.

The reforms include expanded rights and safety for women, including night-shift work, free annual

● Turn on Page 2

Upgraded
ILS to prevent winter
cancellations: Director

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, NOV 21: Director, Srinagar International Airport, Javid Anjum, on Friday said the flight cancellations due to weather are 'unlikely this winter' as the airport has been equipped with an upgraded Instrument Landing System (ILS) Category-II.

Speaking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Director said the upgraded system ensures safer and more reliable landings even under low-visibility conditions.

Anjuman said that Srinagar usually records around 1,000 metres of visibility during winters, which allows for comfortable landings. "Earlier, the threshold was 1,200 metres, but now the system is much improved. This year, we expect no flight cancellations," he said, adding that the upgraded ILS now allows landings with visibility as low as 400 metres.

The Director said the ILS upgrade was already functional last year and that no cancellations occurred due to weather conditions, marking a major improvement in airport reliability during foggy and snowy months.

● Turn on Page 2

HT ANCHOR; NEWS ANALYSIS...

Peak-Hour Power Surcharge Pushes Omar Abdullah Govt Further Into Controversy

*Already cornered over unfulfilled electricity promises, NC-led administration faces fresh
backlash as consumers question priorities and allege on-ground negligence*

■ ABU HASNAIN

SRINAGAR, NOV 21 : Omar Abdullah lead National Conference Government is once again under political and public fire, this time over a proposal to impose a 20 per cent surcharge on electricity consumption during morning and evening peak

hours in the Kashmir Valley.

The move, initiated by the Kashmir Power Development Corporation Limited (KPDCL) and now pending before the Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC), comes at a politically vulnerable moment for the government. Abdullah is already battling widespread criticism for

failing to deliver on the flagship campaign promise of providing 200 units of free electricity. The proposed peak-hour surcharge, critics say, only deepens the trust deficit and heightens public frustration as winter sets in.

A Policy That Risks Further Alienation ;

Electricity costs in winter are

a sensitive issue in Kashmir, where freezing temperatures force families to rely heavily on heating devices during mornings and late evenings. By proposing a surcharge precisely during these hours, the government risks appearing detached from ground realities at a time when economic distress is already

acute.

Political parties were quick to condemn the move. Apni Party president Syed Altaf Bukhari termed the proposal a "grave injustice," arguing that a population battered by downturns in tourism, horticulture, and trade cannot absorb

● Turn on Page 2

Landmark Workshop on PPV&FRA held at SKAUST-k, KVK Ganderbal

HT NEWS DESK

GANDERBAL, NOV 21: SKAUST-K, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Ganderbal, convened a State Level Workshop on the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act (PPV&FRA, 2001). The workshop served as a dynamic platform for scientists, policymakers, farmers, and civil society members to engage in meaningful dialogue on the Act's transformative role in safeguarding the interests of farmers and plant breeders while encouraging the development of new plant varieties.

The event was graced by Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganie, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor SKAUST-K, as Chief Guest, and Prof. Raihana H. Kanth, Director Extension SKAUST-K, as Guest of Honour. Heads and scientists from various KVKs of Kashmir, officials from line departments, farm women, and members of civil society enriched the deliberations with their presence.



Dr. Ajaz Ahmed Malik, Senior Scientist & Head KVK Ganderbal, emphasized PPV&FRA as a legal safeguard for farmers and highlighted the workshop as a pivotal step in bridging the gap between

scientific innovation and practical farm application. In his keynote address, Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganie underscored the Act's robust framework for protecting plant varieties, farmers' rights, and breeders' innovations, while lauding the dedicated efforts of KVK Ganderbal in advancing farmer empowerment. Prof. Raihana H. Kanth shared valuable insights on



the Act, congratulated the KVK team for their unwavering commitment to farmer welfare, and stressed the importance of equipping farming communities with knowledge of their rights. Prof. Asif B. Shikari, Chief Scientist GPB, FoA Wadura, provided a comprehensive overview of registration procedures and farmers' rights under PPV&FRA, further enriching the

discourse.

A major highlight of the day was the felicitation of Savior Farmers from various districts, for their outstanding contributions to agricultural innovation and preservation of local plant varieties. On the occasion, scientific publications authored by scientists of KVK Ganderbal, were also released.

Terror Hideout Busted Near LoC; Assault Rifles, Grenades Recovered

DR. AB QAYOOM

HANDWARA, NOV 21: In a significant counter-terror success, security forces on Friday recovered a major cache of weapons during a joint operation in the Neeriyam forest area along the LoC in the Nowgam sector. The operation was launched by Handwara Police in coordination with the Naugam Brigade of the Indian Army following specific intelligence inputs. During the intensive search, the joint team busted a major hideout and seized a large haul of arms and ammunition. The recovery includes two M-series assault rifles along with four magazines, two Chinese pistols with three magazines, two hand grenades, and several live rounds. Police have reg-



istered FIR No. 39/2025 at Police Station Qalamabad, and a thorough investigation has been initiated to trace the origin and intended use of the weapons. Security forces reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining peace, safeguarding public safety, and ensuring a terror-free and drug-free society in the region.

JKPC's Imran Ansari voices concern over 20% peak-hour surcharge

HT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, NOV 21: Jammu & Kashmir Peoples Conference, General Secretary and President of the All J&K Shia Association Molvi Imran Ansari today took strong exception to the proposed 20% peak-hour electricity surcharge being floated by the Kashmir Power Development Corporation Limited (KPDCL).

He said that such proposals raise serious questions about who is actually formulating and approving critical power-sector decisions in Jammu & Kashmir.

"Just wondering before we all get shocked with this proposed 20% peak-hour surcharge, can someone politely remind me who exactly is the Minister for the Power Development Department approving these magical midnight-thought tariff ideas in Kashmir?" he tweeted.

He added that from the pattern of communication, it appears as if KPDCL is tossing tariff proposals "into the sky" without clarity, ownership, or



accountability while the public continues to be told an entirely different story.

"By the way, wasn't someone loudly promising 200 units of free electricity not too long ago? Kashmir didn't get 200 units free... instead, we're getting 20% extra charge during the only hours when people are freezing and desperately need electricity," he remarked.

Ansari noted that the proposed surcharge has been strongly opposed across the board by trade bodies, houseboat owners, industrial units, and ordinary households yet consumers are being penalised instead of structural issues being addressed.

He stressed that the government must explain who exactly is steering J&K's power policy and why such proposals are surfacing without transparency.

"Until someone explains who is actually steering the ship of J&K's power policy, we'll keep watching these proposals float around like kites with no string attached," he said.

He urged the administration to reconsider the proposal, prioritise public interest, and ensure accountability within the power sector before placing any additional burden on the people of Jammu & Kashmir.

Pandit Community Expresses Gratitude to Pulwama Administration for Facilitating Temple Courtyard Leveling

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, NOV 21: The Pandit community in Soura Nowshera has extended deep appreciation to the Pulwama district administration for its timely and effective support in leveling the courtyard of a local temple—an initiative the community describes as both significant and long overdue.

Community members said the temple premises required urgent leveling, but the process demanded a substantial quantity of soil, which was difficult to obtain due to strict restrictions on excavation across the district. In this context, the proactive

intervention of District Development Commissioner Pulwama, Dr. Basharat Qayoom (IAS), and District Mining Officer Dr. Saleem Dar proved crucial. Both officers coordinated the necessary permissions and logistical support, ensuring the work could begin without delays.

Residents noted that despite the administrative challenges and regulatory limitations, the officers prioritized the matter, acknowledging its cultural and religious importance. Their assistance ensured that the required soil was arranged and delivered in accordance with district protocols, enabling the successful execution

tion of the leveling work.

The community also expressed gratitude to the local contractor who executed the task during night hours, overcoming logistical hurdles and what locals termed an "otherwise impossible task." His efforts played a vital role in completing the project efficiently and discreetly.

The successful leveling of the courtyard has brought a sense of relief and satisfaction to the Pandit families of the area. Community elders said the initiative reflects a positive example of administrative cooperation and strengthens communal harmony by supporting local religious institutions.

Seminar on World Heritage Week held at Govt BHSS Ganderbal

HT NEWS DESK

GANDERBAL, NOV 21: Under the visionary directives of the "District Administration", the Chief Education Office Ganderbal today organised a thought-provoking and "culturally enriching Seminar at BHSS Ganderbal" as part of the celebrations of "World Heritage Week 2025." The event was held in the school's beautifully adorned and aesthetically vibrant auditorium, which provided an inspiring ambience for intellectual discourse and cultural reflection.

Students from various educational institutions across the

district enthusiastically participated in the seminar, showcasing their deep interest in the themes of heritage conservation, local monuments, and the "cultural legacy of Ganderbal." Distinguished speakers delivered insightful deliberations on the historical, architectural, and civilisational significance of iconic local heritage sites—emphasising the collective responsibility of society in preserving these treasures for future generations.

As a gesture of encouragement and recognition, mementos and certificates were distributed among the participating and mer-



itorious students who demonstrated exceptional understanding, creativity, and passion during the event. The "Chief Education Officer Ganderbal, Mr. Oneel Kumar Bhat,"

delivered an inspiring and detailed address, highlighting the philosophical essence of heritage as a bridge between the past and the future, and urging students to

become custodians of cultural preservation. The "Deputy CEO" Ganderbal presented a warm and graceful Vote of Thanks, acknowledging the contributions of all participants, dignitaries, and organising teams.

Special appreciation was extended to the Principal of the host institution, BHSS Ganderbal, for the swift, dedicated, and commendable efforts in organising such a successful and meaningful programme within a short time.

The event concluded with a renewed commitment to safeguarding "heritage and nurturing cultural consciousness" among the youth of District Ganderbal.

5-Day "Jashn-e-Tiflaan" Theatre Festival Concludes Successfully At Tagore Hall Sgr

GULFAM BARJI

SRINAGAR, NOV 21: The 5-day Jashn-e-Tiflaan Theatre Festival, which had been underway at Tagore Hall Srinagar since 17 November, concluded successfully. On the final day of the festival, artists from Kashmir Kalamanch captivated the audience by performing the Kashmiri stage play "PHRETUOMUT" written by the late Shoukat Shehri and directed by Hakeem Javaid.

Students who displayed outstanding performances during the festival were honoured with awards and certificates. In the boys' category, Tanveer of New Genius Public High School received the Best Actor Award for the play "Tehqeeqat Chu Jaari", while in the girls' category, Hadiqa of New Carrier Convent School was awarded Best Actress for her performance in "Bu Chus Na Gunehgar". Likewise, Wisdom Public School received the Best Production Award for the play "Roove Kya Proove Kya", and Sheikh

Parvez was honoured as Best Director. Other participating students from various city schools were also presented with appreciation certificates.

During the festival's concluding ceremony, Yousuf Shehnaz was presented with the Late Farooq Mir Memorial Award, while Shoukat Shehri was posthumously honoured with the Late Tahir Hussain Bahadur Award. Additionally, Nisar Naseem, Gulzar Ahmad Ganaie, festival director Hakeem Javed, Kashmir Kalamanch, Cultural Academy, Reroute Foundation of India, Help Foundation, Tabrez Madni and Gulfam Barji (for media) were also felicitated for their contributions during the festival.

The concluding ceremony was graced by Ashok Kumar, Joint Director of the Education Department, as the chief guest. Among others present were Adeel Saleem, Additional Secretary of the Cultural Academy; Nighat Shafi, Chairperson of Help Foundation; former Director General Tourism Saleem

Beg; noted journalist Imdad Saqi; Bollywood actor Mir Sarwar; Sheikh Farooq, Meraj-ud-Din Wani, and several distinguished theatre personalities.

Expressing his views, Ashok Kumar said that along with academic education, it is essential to keep children engaged in sports and cultural activities, and the 5-day Jashn-e-Tiflaan Theatre Festival was an important step in that direction.

Festival director Hakeem Javaid thanked all guests, students, and theatre personalities who participated continuously over the five days, saying, "I express my deepest gratitude to all institutions and individuals who supported and encouraged us in various ways, helping us bring this festival to a successful conclusion."

It is noteworthy that the festival was organised by Kashmir Kalamanch, the Cultural Academy, and the Reroute Foundation of India, with support from the Help Foundation. The festival was hosted by Tabrez Madni.

Srinagar Police Continues Inspection Drive of Doctors' Lockers in Medical Institutions

HT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, NOV 21: In line with ongoing efforts to ensure transparency and accountability in health institutions and security protocols within the city, Srinagar Police, in coordination with medical officers from the Health Department, carried out inspections of lockers used by doctors and staff across district and private hospitals, medical colleges, PHCs and health facilities.

The inspections were aimed at preventing misuse of lockers for unauthorized storage of illegal or hazardous materials and strengthening the internal security within medical institutions.

All racks and lockers were thoroughly examined, and staff were reminded to maintain proper records and ensure that lockers are used strictly for official purposes.

Authorities have reiterated that such inspections will be conducted regularly as part of routine vigilance to maintain a safe and secure environment in hospitals.

Srinagar Police reiterates its commitment to ensuring safety of citizens and maintaining the security of the Nation.

J&K EDI Startups draw global attention at Bengaluru Tech Summit-2025

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BENGALURU, NOV 21: Startups supported by the Jammu & Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) participated in the prestigious Bengaluru Tech Summit (BTS) 2025, held in Bangalore from November 18 to 20, 2025.

This year's edition was one of the largest ever, with organisers reporting participation from more than 10,000 startups representing 60 countries. The J&K startups began their showcase with a high-energy Day 1, marked by strong engagement with industry leaders, potential partners and sector experts.

The summit, featuring international exhibitors from Italy, Russia, Israel, Germany, Australia and Korea, offered unmatched exposure, learning and global networking opportunities for the participating entrepreneurs from J&K. The J&K pavilion attracted a huge crowd,

drawing praise, curiosity and appreciation from the visitors and global participants.

Seven J&K startups supported by JKEDI participated in the 3-day long Tech Summit.

A key highlight was the visit of Ari Gargir, CEO and Founder of RED CBiotech, who interacted with the J&K startup founders and showed keen interest in their innovative solutions. Besides, interactions with the Industry Leaders was the spotlight of the event where Sheenmart E-Com, a JKEDI-sponsored startup, held promising discussions with AutoL Korea, a global leader in compact long-range LiDAR technology. The dialogue focused on exploring collaborative opportunities in advanced sensing and smart mobility solutions.

Entrepreneur Sheikh Yameen of Curv Electric (Heaventure Adventures Limited) engaged with Micheal Nenner, CEO of



Charge, on technology the efficiency and performance Technologies, a promising integration aimed at improving of electric vehicles. SCANIMO startup from J&K established

a technical connect with Jio Mart Retail Stores who evinced interest to integrate the former's technology in their stores.

Throughout the summit, the startups from J&K attracted the visitors and potential partners, establishing meaningful connections and working to translate these engagements into tangible collaborations. Parallel meetings and networking sessions took place as the J&K delegation proactively explored opportunities for growth and strategic partnerships.

Officials from the Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Business Modelling (CIIBM) a program vertical of JKEDI including Faheem ul Din Malik, Associate Project Manager (APM), JKEDI and Sorab Mengi, Assistant Manager (F&A), JKEDI attended the summit, facilitating the interaction between startups and the industry leaders, under the overall supervision of the

Secretary Industries and Commerce Department and Director, JKEDI, Khalid Jahangir. They also discussed the prospective knowledge sharing and collaborations with the counterparts like Startup Tamil Nadu in the future.

The startups, supported by Jammu and Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI) shared their experiences and key takeaways. They applauded the role of JKEDI for being the prospective enabler between the vast startup market place and the aspiring entrepreneurs of the UT of J&K.

The presence of JKEDI-supported startups at BTS 2025 reflects the growing innovation capability and entrepreneurial drive emerging from Jammu & Kashmir.

The JKEDI remains committed towards empowering startups and helping them compete, collaborate and grow on national and global platforms.

GDC Hajin organizes Wildlife Conservation Outreach Program

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BANDIPORA, NOV 21: Government Degree College Hajin, in collaboration with Wildlife SOS, on Thursday organized a Wildlife Conservation Outreach Program.

The initiative aimed to sensitize students about the significance of biodiversity with a special focus on wildlife conservation, rising man-animal conflicts, and the preventive measures essential for maintaining ecological balance.

The program was presided over by the Principal GDC Hajin, Prof. (Dr.) Gazala Firdous, who

encouraged students to actively participate in conservation activities.

Resource person from Wildlife SOS delivered a detailed and insightful presentation on wildlife conservation, explaining the ecological importance of various species and the threats they face due to habitat loss, poaching, climate change, and increasing human encroachments. His session included visual aids and case studies that helped students understand the gravity of the situation.

Resource person presented an extensive lecture focusing primarily on man-animal conflicts,



their causes, and practical measures that communities and authorities can adopt to mitigate these conflicts. The importance of

coexistence, proper waste management, early warning systems, and community-based conservation practices were stressed.

The outreach program concluded with an engaging question-and-answer session, during which students discussed various wildlife-related concerns relevant to the region.

The program proved to be highly informative, enriching, and impactful, successfully achieving its objective of raising awareness about biodiversity protection and fostering responsible environmental attitudes among the students.

Audit Diwas 2025

Observed at IASE Srinagar

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 21: As part of the ongoing 11-day Audit Diwas celebrations, the Office of the Principal Accountant General (Audit), J&K, organised a comprehensive awareness programme titled "Leveraging e-Office, OIOS Toolkits, and Data Analytics for Efficiency" at the auditorium of the Government College of Education (IASE), M.A. Road, Srinagar.

The programme was aimed to enhance coordination between Drawing and Disbursing Officers (DDOs), Treasury officials, and Pension authorities. A special focus was laid on equipping employees, particularly those nearing superannuation, with the knowledge required for digital submission and processing of pension papers, ensuring transparency, accuracy, and ease of workflow.

The event was presided over by Principal of the institution, Prof. (Dr.) Seema Naaz, as the Chief Guest, and Deputy Accountant General, Pawan Kumar Rath, as the Special Guest.

In her address, Prof. (Dr.) Seema Naaz emphasized the importance of such initiatives in strengthening employee preparedness in an era of rapidly evolving digital governance systems. She stated that awareness programmes of this nature significantly contribute to enhancing institutional efficiency and employee welfare.

Pawan Kumar Rath, in his remarks, appreciated the initiative, highlighting its role in improving financial literacy, streamlining administrative processes, and promoting digitally empowered treasury and pension operations.

A large number of DDOs and prospective retirees attended the event, making the session highly interactive and informative.

Technical experts delivered an in-depth session on Pension Procedures, digitization, transition to e-office systems and paperless, latest practices in Accounts Reconciliation, digital submission and verification mechanisms.

The programme concluded with an interactive session, providing participants with clarity on key financial, treasury, and pension-related digital processes, thereby contributing to a more efficient and digitally aligned administrative framework.

Workshop on PPV&FRA held at KVK Ganderbal

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

GANDERBAL, NOVEMBER 21: SKUAST-K, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Ganderbal, convened a State Level Workshop on the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act (PPV&FRA, 2001).

The workshop served as a dynamic platform for scientists, policymakers, farmers, and civil society members to engage in meaningful dialogue on the Act's transformative role in safeguarding the interests of farmers and plant breeders while encouraging the development of new plant varieties.



The event was graced by Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganie, Vice Chancellor SKUAST-K, as Chief Guest, and Prof. Raihana H. Kanth, Director Extension SKUAST-K, as Guest of Honour. Heads and scientists from various KVKs of Kashmir, officials from line departments, farm women, and members of civil society were also present. Vice Chancellor SKUAST-K, in his address underscored the Act's robust framework for protecting plant varieties, farmers' rights, and breeders' innovations, while lauding the dedicated efforts of KVK Ganderbal in advancing farmer empowerment.

Director Extension SKUAST-K, shared valuable insights on the Act, congratulated the KVK team for their unwavering commitment to farmer welfare, and stressed the importance of equipping farming communities with knowledge of their rights.

Senior Scientist & Head KVK Ganderbal, Dr. Ajaz Ahmed Malik, emphasized PPV&FRA as a legal safeguard for farmers and highlighted the workshop as a pivotal step in bridging the gap between scientific innovation and practical farm application.

Chief Scientist GPB, FoA Wadura, provided a comprehensive overview of registration procedures and farmers' rights under PPV&FRA, further enriching the discourse. On the occasion, Savor Farmers from various districts were felicitated, for their outstanding contributions to agricultural innovation and preservation of local plant varieties,

DC Budgam Distributes PMAY-U 2.0 Sanction Letters Among Beneficiaries of Budgam & Chadoora Municipalities

Calls for timely start of all newly approved houses

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BUDGAM, NOVEMBER 21: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat today distributed sanction letters to newly approved beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-Urban) 2.0, at a function held in the New Conference Hall of the DC Office Complex Budgam. During the event, the DC handed over 16 sanction letters to beneficiaries of Municipal Committee Chadoora and 14 sanction letters to beneficiaries of Municipal Committee Budgam, formally enabling them to begin the construction of their houses under the flagship housing scheme.

Congratulating the beneficiaries, the DC reiterated the District Administration's commitment to ensuring dignified housing for all eligible urban households. He directed the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to ensure



immediate grounding of all sanctioned houses, timely issuance of permissions, and continuous handholding support to beneficiaries. He instructed officers to maintain close coordination with beneficiaries, resolve field-level issues on priority, and regularly monitor progress for seamless implementation of PMAY-U 2.0, adding that no delay

in initiating construction work will be tolerated. On the occasion, CPO Budgam, CEO MC Budgam, EO MC Chadoora, and other concerned officers were present.

The beneficiaries expressed gratitude to the District Administration for the transparent and timely issuance of sanction letters.

MLA Gulmarg, DC Baramulla jointly inaugurate Mega Sports Festival at Mini Stadium Kunzer

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BARAMULLA, NOVEMBER 21: A Mega Sports Festival was inaugurated at the Mini Stadium Kunzer by MLA Gulmarg, Farooq Ahmad Shah and Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa.

As part of the programme, the District Administration inaugurated the new floodlight facility at the stadium, allowing sports activities to be conducted during evening hours as well. The installation of floodlights fulfills a long-pending demand of local sportspersons and represents an important step in improving sports facilities in the area.

A cricket match was organised under the newly installed lights, which drew a large number of people from the surrounding areas. Residents and sportspersons expressed their appreciation to the MLA and the DC for making this facility available.

Later, the MLA and DC distributed Cricket kits among different participating teams on the occasion.



DC Baramulla Chairs NRLM Review Meeting on SHG's Bank Linkage Targets

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BARAMULLA, NOVEMBER 21: Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, today chaired a review meeting to assess the progress of the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), with a special focus on Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and their bank linkage achievements.

During the meeting, banks were directed to clear all pending SHGs credit cases within 15 days, while NRLM officials were instructed to sponsor additional cases to further strengthen financial inclusion and livelihood support.

Enhanced coordination between banks and NRLM teams was emphasized to ensure seamless SHGs credit linkages and achievement of targets. All concerned officers were also directed to submit weekly progress reports to monitor timely implementation.

The DC stressed the importance of collective effort in empowering SHGs and accelerating the district's progress under the NRLM initiative.



DC Ramban finalises arrangements for District-level Padyatra

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

RAMBAN, NOVEMBER 21: Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alyas Khan today chaired a meeting and finalized the arrangements for the forthcoming District level Padyatra to be organized on November 25, 2025 as part of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Rashtriya Ekta Diwas Celebrations.

The meeting was attended by ACD, Shokat Hayat Mattoo; Deputy Director MY Bharat Doda/ Ramban, Khushal Gupta; Tehsildar, Deep Kumar; Dy SP Headquarter, Waqar Butt; CMO, Executive Engineer JPDCL, PWD, CEO, MC Ramban and other concerned officers. The meeting discussed in detail the necessary preparations, logistical requirements, route plan,



security arrangements and coordination among the stakeholder

departments to ensure the smooth conduct of the event. The Deputy

Commissioner emphasized the importance of seamless inter-

departmental coordination for smooth conduct of Padyatra being held as a tribute to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and promoting the message of national unity and integrity.

The DC issued instructions to concerned departments for making adequate arrangements for traffic management, medical facilities, participation of youth and students, stage, seating plan and publicity besides overall event management. He stressed timely execution of all assigned responsibilities and directed officers to remain in close coordination throughout the event. The Deputy Commissioner called upon all departments to work in full synergy to ensure the successful and meaningful observance of Rashtriya Ekta Diwas in the district.

Colorful cultural-cum-awareness event organized at Gudhar- Udhampur

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

UDHAMPUR, NOVEMBER 21: The Integrated Watershed Management Programme Udhampur organized an awareness programme at village Gudhar as part of month-long Watershed Mahotsav 2025 being observed from November 17 to December 16, 2025.



The programme, presided over by Project Manager IWMP, Dr. Ashwani Hansa, witnessed active participation from stakeholder departments and community representatives. The event aimed to increase public awareness and encourage community-driven initiatives to protect natural resources, a key objective of Watershed Mahotsav-2025.

The celebration at Gudhar included a cultural programme, song competition, prize distribution ceremony and an awareness camp. The event saw the participation of former PRI members, students and teachers from 11 schools, prominent citizens and staff from IWMP and the Rural Development Department.

The Watershed Mahotsav-2025 has emerged as an effective platform to engage the community and raise awareness about the importance of watershed management and natural resource conservation, said Dr. Ashwani Hansa. "We are pleased to see the enthusiastic participation of all stakeholders in this event, which is a testament to the community's commitment to sustainable development," he added.

The event aims to foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among the local community towards the protection and preservation of their natural resources.

RHPCL aids Govt Schools in Rattle Power project affected area with computers

DC hands over 91 PCs to Heads of Institutions

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

KISHTWAR, NOVEMBER 21: In a significant push to ICT enabled educational facilities in the district, Deputy Commissioner Pankaj Kumar Sharma today handed over 91 all-in-one personal computers to project-affected educational institutions in Kishtwar district.

The funds for the PCs were provided by the Rattle Hydroelectric Power Corporation Limited (RHPCL) under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative.

The high-end computers, costing 51.87 lakh, were handed over by the DC to HOIs (Head of Institutions) of the schools affected identified in the project region.

The PCs are aimed at strengthening ICT-enabled learning, improving digital accessibility for students, and uplifting the overall academic environment in government educational institutions.

The Deputy Commissioner reiterated the commitment of the District



Administration to improve quality of education and ensure modern learning tools reach every corner of Kishtwar. CEO Kishtwar, Sanjay Dogra, Dy.

CEO Kishtwar, Masood Ahmed Qazi, ZEO Kishtwar, Ashok Kumar, ZEO Nagseni, Riyaz-Ul-Haq and other concerned officers were present.

HADP beneficiary sets up Rural Business Service Hub at Magerkote

DC Ramban inaugurates innovative venture

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

RAMBAN, NOV 21: Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alyas Khan today inaugurated the Rural Business Service Hub (RBSH) established at Magerkote, Ramsoo by a young entrepreneur Ajaz Ahmed under the HADP project "Strengthening Agriculture Marketing," being implemented by the Horticulture Planning and Marketing Department.

Accompanied by Senior Superintendent of Police, Arun Gupta, the Deputy Commissioner

inspected the facilities created under the project and appreciated the initiative for bringing essential agricultural services closer to farmers in this remote region. He emphasized that such centres will greatly benefit the farming community by providing access to modern agricultural machinery, tools and timely services, thereby enhancing productivity and reducing input costs.

He directed the Area Marketing Officer to extend proper technical guidance to the entrepreneur and ensure that the centre makes



available the complete range of agricultural machinery, farm tools and other necessary inputs required by farmers. The DC was informed that the

unit is also providing on-site machinery services, enabling farmers to easily hire equipment as per their requirement. The DC encouraged local

growers to take full advantage of the newly established Hub and integrate modern techniques into their farming practices for better outcomes.

Area Marketing Officer Ramban, Tehsil Iqbal Chib, Senior Scientist KVK Ramban, Raj Kumar, Sub-Divisional Agriculture Officer, Ajaz Ahmed Rishi, Horticulture Development Officer Ramsoo, Amer, Assistant Grading & Marketing Officer Batote, Raju Zutshi, Grading & Marketing Inspector and various farmers were present on the occasion.

DC Bandipora reviews functioning of OSC, Stresses accountability & service quality

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BANDIPORA, NOVEMBER 21: Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, today chaired a meeting of the District Level Committee (DLC) to review the functioning of the One Stop Centre (OSC) at the Mini Secretariat, Bandipora.

District Social Welfare Officer Bandipora presented a detailed report on the OSC's performance, staff structure, and services being provided under Mission Shakti, including Sambal, Samarthyaa, Women's Helpline, Nari Adalats, DHEW activities, BBBP, PMMVY, and creche facilities.

The Deputy Commissioner reviewed the functioning of SAKHI services, including legal support, counselling, and shelter facilities, and discussed pending salary issues for both MOU and non-MOU periods.



The DC directed that fresh police verification of all staff be completed prior to salary release and that eligibility criteria including age, be strictly examined. She instructed the department to submit complete details of cases handled during the one-year non-MOU period and said that case files will be thoroughly

scrutinised during the next review. She emphasised the need for transparency and stressed that legal assistance must be provided immediately to affected persons.

The DC further directed the department to conduct a comprehensive physical verification of the OSC within two weeks, covering infrastructure, furnishings, fixtures, and overall functionality. She underscored that women should not suffer due to administrative inefficiency and called for strengthened coordination among all stakeholders.

The meeting was attended by Senior Superintendent of Police Bandipora, Ajaz Ahmad Zargar; District Programme Officer ICDS, Yaar Ali Khan; Secretary, District Legal Services Authority; Chairperson, District Bar Council; Chief Medical Officer Bandipora and other concerned officers.

DC Kulgam Hands over sanction letters to PMAY-U 2.0 beneficiaries

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

KULGAM, NOVEMBER 21: Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan today distributed sanction Letters to eligible beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U) 2.0, BLC category, within the jurisdiction of Municipal Council Kulgam, Municipal Committees Devsar & Yaripora.

The DC encouraged the beneficiaries to start construction work without delay and assured all necessary support from the district administration.

These beneficiaries were proposed by the District Level Monitoring Committee (DLMC) and subsequently approved by the Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee (CS&MC).

As per the scheme's guidelines, each beneficiary is given a sanction for the construction of a dwelling unit with a maximum carpet area of 45



square meters.

The construction is to be completed in three phases viz. Plinth level, Lintel level, and Roof/Completion, and must be finalized within one year from the receipt of the sanction letter.

The scheme provides financial support to beneficiaries in three installments based on the progress of

construction. The total amount sanctioned for each beneficiary is Rs. 2.5 lakh, which is disbursed progressively as the construction advances through each phase.

Present on the occasion were ADC, Viqar Ahmed Giri; ACR, Riyaz Ahmad Shah, CEO MC Kulgam, Mohammad Irfan Wani; tehsildars and other officers.

HT EDITORIAL

KPDCL's proposal to charge more dues during peak hours comes in for sharp criticism

The Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL) proposal to charge more electricity charges from the consumers in the peak hours has come in for sharp criticism from the common masses and the politicians. The people as a whole believe that the proposal would place more burden on the common masses that are already facing the heat. They have demanded immediate roll back of the proposal so that there is no burden on the customers.

The KPDCL has proposed to charge 20 percent more electricity duties on the consumers for eight hours in a day that come under the peak hours of the usage. The Corporation has submitted the proposal with the Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC) and the Commission has yet to take a decision about the same. Most of the people have castigated the Corporation over the proposal and said that charging more electricity dues in the peak hours is uncalled for and unwanted.

It would be in place to mention here that the economic condition of the people of the union territory of Jammu & Kashmir is not so good and most of the people are going through a phase of economic distress. In such a situation if the people are charged with extra electricity dues then it is bound to cause ripples among the common masses and they are bound to protest over the same. Natural reaction is quite natural and it is quite expected from the common masses.

Politicians cutting across the party lines have condemned the KPDCL proposal and said the Corporation should immediately withdraw the proposal before it is too late. The condemnation from the politicians is welcome and it shows that these people are very much concerned about the problems being confronted by the masses. A legislator belonging to the ruling National Conference has in fact said that the government is not aware about the proposal submitted by the KPDCL.

It is high time that the government headed by chief minister Omar Abdullah clears the confusion about the proposal mooted by the KPDCL. Since the power ministry is headed by the chief minister himself the onus is more on him than the other ministers of the cabinet. If the government is not aware about the proposal then how come the KPDCL mooted the same? The same warrants action against the officer of the KPDCL since the officer has by-passed the ultimate boss.

Chief Patron Of Lubaab Publications Group:
Syed Sad Ud Din Bukhari (Saidi),
Printer Publisher, Owner And Editor:
Syed Jahangir Bukhari,
Printed At: Lubaab Publications, Radio
Colony Gund Hassibhat Lawaipora
Srinagar -190017,
Gen. Manager: Sheikh Mushtaq Ahmad
Cell No - 9697071471,
Editorial Section: 7006846797,
Multimedia Section: 9419008414,
Advertisement Section: 9697071471
RNI No: Jkeng/2011/39231
dailyheadlinestoday@gmail.com
headlinestoday2024@gmail.com

WHEN LEARNING GOES ON SALE:

THE QUIET COMMERCE REARRANGING OUR CLASSROOMS



BY NAWAZZ IBN AHAD

Teachers, who once stood as the pillars of intellectual formation, face their own challenges. Previously regarded as guides shaping the future, many now navigate a landscape thick with bureaucratic demands. In several institutions, the role of the teacher has shifted from mentor to manager responsible not only for teaching but for maintaining records, meeting targets and complying with administrative protocols that leave little room for creativity or personal connection

The idea of education as a sacred space—where young minds once blossomed without restraint is slowly losing ground to a more transactional reality. Across the country, parents, teachers and students are grappling with a systemic shift: the transformation of schooling from a public good into a priced commodity.

For generations, classrooms were imagined as gardens of growth, where a child's curiosity was encouraged to stretch beyond the limits of textbooks. Today, however, many parents describe education as a burden both financial and emotional. Fee receipts, installment plans and administrative charges now dictate the rhythm of a child's academic journey. What was once a joyful pursuit of knowledge is increasingly framed as an expensive obligation.

Parents, often exhausted by economic pressures, find themselves calculating the cost of every stage of their child's learning. Their aspirations, built on sacrifice and hope, are filtered through a system that prioritizes paperwork, fees and formalities. The laughter of discovery, which once filled school corridors, now competes with reminders of payments due and schedules to be met.

Teachers, who once stood as the pillars of intellectual formation, face their own challenges. Previously regarded as guides shaping the future, many now navigate a landscape thick with bureaucratic demands. In several institutions, the role of the teacher has shifted from mentor to manager responsible not only for teaching but for maintaining records, meeting targets and complying with administrative protocols that leave little room for creativity or personal connection.

"It sometimes feels as if teaching has been pushed aside by paperwork," says one educator who has seen classroom priorities change over the last decade. "The time we could have spent understanding students is spent fulfilling require-



ments."

The commercialization of education has also reshaped the expectations placed on children. Classrooms increasingly resemble competitive training grounds where learning is measured through test scores and performance charts. Students march through a regimented environment where the pressure to excel can overshadow the desire to understand. Curiosity, once encouraged to roam freely, is now often confined within the boundaries of exam syllabi and career calculations.

This shift mirrors a larger trend: the rise of schooling as a marketplace. Parents sometimes knowingly, sometimes reluctantly enter this marketplace in search of the "best" for their children, comparing academic results the way one compares products. Schools advertise their achievements, infrastructure and successes, crafting an image that appeals to aspirational families seeking assurance that their investment will yield returns.

Yet beneath the surface lies an uncomfortable question: What happens when knowledge is packaged and priced like a commodity? The consequences may extend far beyond individual families. A society risks undermining its own intellectual foundations if education becomes accessible primarily to

those who can afford it. Creativity and innovation, essential to national progress, cannot thrive in an environment where learning is rationed and imagination is overshadowed by commercial concerns.

As the debate around rising educational expenses intensifies, policymakers, educators and parents are increasingly called upon to rethink the direction in which the system is heading. Is the purpose of schooling to nurture informed, empathetic citizens or to produce measurable outcomes that fuel institutional revenue? Can a nation truly advance when its classrooms are shaped more by commerce than by curiosity?

The answers may not be simple, but the need to ask these questions has never been more urgent. Education remains the foundation upon which societies build their future. If that foundation is weakened by inequality or shaped by profit alone, the consequences will echo far beyond school gates.

For now, the transformation continues quietly—one fee receipt at a time, one overstretched teacher at a time, one anxious student at a time. And as learning increasingly goes on sale, the nation must decide whether it is willing to pay the price not just in money, but in imagination, opportunity and the spirit of discovery itself.

The Price of Pollution: Does India Need a Comprehensive 'Pollution Tax'?



■ DR. SATYAVAN SAURABH

India is among those countries in the world where air, water, and soil pollution has become a serious health crisis. Several Indian cities are included in the World Health Organization's list of most polluted cities. Water pollution causes illness to millions of people every year. Meanwhile, the government lacks sufficient financial resources for clean energy, green infrastructure, and pollution control. At this time, a "pollution tax"—that is, a financial penalty for polluting—is being seen as a suitable solution, as it can both reduce pollution and generate sustainable revenue for environmental protection.

India today stands at a juncture where striking a balance between rapid economic growth and a worsening environmental crisis has become a daunting challenge. The air in cities is becoming increasingly toxic, rivers are choking with industrial waste, groundwater levels are declining, mountains of solid waste are becoming the hallmark of metropolitan areas, while the impact of climate change is becoming evident on agriculture, health, and the economy. In such a situation, it's natural to ask whether India now needs to impose direct financial penalties on polluters—that is, implement a comprehensive "pollution tax"?

The idea of a pollution tax isn't new, but it's needed today more than ever. Economics recognizes that when an industry, vehicle, or activity pollutes, the consequences are borne by society as

a whole, not just the polluter. This is a serious market failure known as "external cost"—that is, society suffers losses, but the cost is neither added to the price of the product nor borne by the polluter. A "pollution tax" attempts to correct this imbalance, where the more pollution one causes, the greater the economic cost one pays.

In India, the "clean energy cess" imposed on coal was an early example of this. However, today, the country faces such a complex crisis of air, water, noise, solid waste, and industrial emissions that taxing just one sector is insufficient. What is needed is a comprehensive and scientifically designed pollution tax that helps reduce pollution and promote cleaner alternatives.

The biggest advantage of a pollution tax is that it makes pollution expensive and cleanup cheap. When an industry is required to pay a tax per unit of emissions, it will naturally be inclined to adopt technologies that pollute less. This trend is evident in regions like Europe, where carbon-based penalties have led to a significant increase in energy conservation and green technology. This change is also possible in India, provided the policy is long-term, transparent, and goal-oriented.

Another important aspect is that India will need massive investments in environmental protection and clean energy in the coming years. River cleaning, clean transportation, renewable energy, pollution control equipment, scientific management of solid waste, and the development of green buildings will require significant financial resources. In this context, pollution taxes can become a sustainable and predictable revenue source, which can be spent solely on environmental protection through an independent "green fund."

Pollution taxes are also gaining importance globally. Many developed countries are now imposing additional duties on imported goods that are produced from more polluting sources. If India implements appropriate pollution taxes domesti-

cally, Indian exporters could be relieved of these additional duties in foreign markets. Thus, pollution taxes could prove to be not only environmentally beneficial but also helpful in protecting India's export competitiveness.

But the biggest question that arises is whether pollution taxes will burden the poor? This concern is quite real. If fuel and electricity costs rise, so too will the prices of transportation, food, and essential commodities. This directly impacts lower-income groups, whose options are limited. Therefore, to make pollution taxes fair, it will be essential to provide relief to low-income families through direct cash assistance, energy subsidies, and necessities like cooking gas.

The concerns of the industry are no less. Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, in particular, are energy-intensive, and any additional tax impacts their costs. Therefore, pollution taxes should be implemented in a phased manner—first on large industries, then gradually expanding to smaller ones, with technical and financial support. Subsidies on green machinery, interest-free loans, and guidance on technological upgrading can facilitate this transition.

India's administrative capacity is also a key factor. Accurate pollution measurement, data reliability, and transparency of monitoring systems will be crucial. Monitoring small industries and uncertified sources remains challenging. If emission measurements themselves are not reliable, the tax system cannot be trusted. Therefore, India must strengthen modern sensor technology, artificial intelligence-based monitoring, digital emission registration, and real-time monitoring systems.

The author is a Poet, freelance journalist and columnist, All India Radio and TV panelist, 333, Fairy Garden, Kaushalya Bhawan, Barwa (Siwani) Bhiwani, Haryana - 127045

Sundertop: Khari's Rising Crown of Nature, Culture and Kashmiri Literature

Bumbrun Bagh emerges as Ramban's newest jewel of scenic beauty and creative revival



BY MOHD YOUSUF BUMBOOR

High in the rugged mountains of Tehsil Khari, where the Pir Panjal range opens into rolling meadows and cloud-laden ridges, lies Bumbrun Bagh — a breathtaking highland better known as Sundertop. Once a quiet pastoral stretch known only to locals, it is now drawing attention as a growing centre of natural splendour and Kashmiri literary revival.

Where Every Direction Leads to Beauty

Perched like a crown above the valleys, Bumbrun Bagh is surrounded by some of the region's most enchanting landscapes:

East — Nawan: lush green pastures that bloom in spring and cradle shepherd routes.

North — Kund Qazigund: forested slopes, icy streams and misty ridgelines.

South — Mahoo: a culturally rich village known for its hospitality and literary spirit.

West — Gulzarabad (Kulgam): a gateway to several emerging tourist sites.

The highland also connects naturally with Nowgam, Banihal, blending heritage routes with scenic trekking paths.

Sundertop: The Celestial Balcony of Khari

At the heart of Bumbrun Bagh rises



Sundertop — a serene peak famous for its golden sunrise and sweeping 360-degree panoramas. Locals say its name comes from "Sunder," meaning beautiful, and the view more than justifies the title.

Here, clouds drift like white boats across the valleys, alpine winds carry the scent of wild herbs, and silence settles like a soft

blanket of poetry. No wonder writers and artists describe it as a "natural retreat for the soul."

Birthplace of a Literary Movement

Beyond its scenic charm, Bumbrun Bagh has earned a distinguished place in the cultural landscape of Khari. It is home to the region's first literary forum — Bumbrun

Bagh Kashur Bazm-e-Adab Mahoo.

Founded by noted writer Mr. Mohd Yousuf Bumboor, the forum has given new life to Kashmiri literature in the area. Through mushairas, literary seminars, storytelling sessions and workshops, the Bazm has nurtured young talent and built a strong cultural bridge between Khari,

Mahoo, Banihal and beyond.

At a time when regional languages face constant challenges, the forum's contribution in preserving Kashmiri literary identity has become both vital and inspiring.

Where Nature Inspires Literature

Visitors often describe Bumbrun Bagh as a place where nature itself seems to speak in metaphors. The meadows flow like green verses, the winds whistle in poetic rhythms, and streams seem to hum old Kashmiri melodies.

It is this fusion of landscape and literature that continues to attract writers, artists and students from across Jammu & Kashmir.

A Sleeping Giant of Tourism

Despite its beauty, Sundertop remains relatively unexplored. Locals believe that with improved connectivity, eco-friendly shelters and guided trekking routes, the area could emerge as:

a major nature-tourism attraction, a cultural and heritage hub, a writers' and artists' retreat, and a seasonal adventure destination.

A Symbol of Khari's Growing Cultural Identity

More than a scenic meadow, Bumbrun Bagh stands today as:

a sanctuary for nature lovers, a cradle of Kashmiri literary revival, a cultural asset of Tehsil Khari, and a testament to the dedication of

writer Mohd Yousuf Bumboor, who has championed its literary identity.

As Khari continues to evolve, Sundertop remains its shining emblem — a place where wildflowers, words and winds weave the story of a region rich in beauty and creativity.

Repairing blurred images is the most wonderful skill in the world



BY M S NAZKI

To really change the world, we have to help people change the way they see things. Global betterment is a mental process, not one that requires huge sums of money or a high level of authority. Change has to be psychological. So if you want to see real change, stay persistent in educating humanity on how similar we all are than different!.....Lt. General Pratik Sharma ...Goc-in-C Northern Command!

GOC-in-C Northern Command inaugurated a special Cataract Eye Surgery Camp for the local population of Jammu and Kashmir at Command Hospital Udhampur - "Op Drishti".

What is Operation Drishti:

A four-day mega cataract surgery camp in Udhampur, J&K, offering free screening and surgery to people from remote areas.

Goal: To combat preventable blindness and provide critical healthcare services as part of Operation Sadbhavna.

Partners: Organized by the Command Hospital Northern Command in collaboration with the Army Hospital Research and Referral, New Delhi.

Don't only strive to be the change you want to see in the world, but also help all those around you see the world through commonalities of the heart so that they would want to change with you.

This is how humanity will evolve to become better. This is how you can change the world. The language of the heart is mankind's main common language.

A mega cataract surgery eye camp from 19 to 22 Nov 2025 is being organised at Udhampur by Command Hospital Northern Command in collaboration with the surgical team of Army Hospital Research and Referral, New Delhi. The event is being conducted under the aegis of Headquarter Northern Command and Directorate General of Armed Forces Medical Services.

The event was inaugurated by Lt Gen Pratik Sharma, SYSM, PVSM, AVSM, SM, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Northern Command. Operation Drishti is being conducted as part of Operation Sadbhavna and is another step towards benefitting the people of J&K in the most critical sector of healthcare. The event shall further strengthen the bond between the people and Army.

Operation Sadbhavna : Goodwill Initiative Continues...

Operation Sadbhavna is an Indian Army initiative launched in Jammu and Kashmir in 1998 to promote development and win the trust of the local population.

Also known as Operation Goodwill, it focuses on

"winning the hearts and minds" (WHAM) of the people by implementing various civic action programs in areas like education, healthcare, and infrastructure development. Activities include running Army Goodwill Schools, providing healthcare, building roads and bridges, and empowering women and youth.

Objective: To build goodwill and foster peace by addressing the socio-economic needs of the people, particularly in remote and conflict-affected areas.

Initiation: Launched in 1998 when civil services were struggling to function in the face of terrorism and insurgency.

Education: Operating Army Goodwill Schools, providing quality education, and organizing educational tours to promote national integration.

Healthcare: Offering free medical services and improving access to healthcare.

Infrastructure: Constructing roads, bridges, and providing amenities like hand pumps and electricity in villages.

Youth engagement: Conducting skill development programs, sports tournaments, and tours to help youth find employment and stay engaged in positive activities.

As usual we will tell you a short story:

In a verdant valley, Aisha studied at the Army Goodwill School, where the crisp mountain air fueled her dreams, much like the school's dedicated teachers who pushed her toward excellence. Her school days were filled with lessons, debates, and the camaraderie of her classmates, all while she saw the quiet strength of the Army personnel who were instrumental in creating this haven of learning. After graduation, a scholarship secured her a spot at a prestigious medical college in Jammu, where she learned to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with her peers from across the country, a testament to the foundation her school provided.

Beyond the classroom, the school's influence extended to her village. A local girl named Farah, inspired by the confidence and skills she gained from the school's programs, started a small tailoring business that employed other women in her community, demonstrating how the school's impact rippled outwards to create economic empowerment.

The path wasn't always easy. The school's presence was met with opposition from some, but for Aisha and many others, the goodwill school provided a much-needed platform for opportunity, helping them to break through barriers of poverty and remoteness and realize their full potential. The school provided them with a crucial foundation, instilling in them the resilience and determination to pursue their dreams, making them leaders for a new generation in their community and country.

Funding: The Ministry of Defence provides funds for the projects through the Army's Northern Command.

Motto: The operation's motto is "Jawan aur Awam, Aman Hai Muqaam," which translates to "Soldier and the Public, Peace is the Place".

Army Hospital Research and Referral:

History: Construction started Late 1980s

Army Hospital (Research And Referral), also known as Army Hospital (R&R), AH (R&R) and RR Hospital, is

the apex flagship medical care centre for the Indian Armed Forces. Completed in the mid 1990s, the hospital, which includes a teaching hospital and nursing college, is located in Delhi Cantonment, New Delhi.

It is the only Armed Forces Medical Services hospital to be commanded by a Lieutenant General rank officer and provides for 27 sub-specialties. The hospital is also meant to cater to the President of India and the chiefs of the military.

The construction of the hospital was undertaken by the Military Engineer Services and private contractors. The work started in the late 1980s and was completed in the next few years. The hospital is one of the largest military hospitals in Asia, initially constructed with over 600 beds. Notably, the hospital treats the President of India and the chiefs of the military.

In an interview in 2018, Lt. General U.K. Sharma, commandant of Army Hospital (R&R) said that, "We treat SAARC nation's armed forces' patients here too. There is a quota for each country.

MEA gives a sanction and payment comes from MEA. Exchange programme with CIS nations for doctors and paramedics.

There are two missions going to Uzbekistan and one to Egypt. Return visits are a MEA-MOD joint decision".

The first patient simulator in India was acquired by the hospital. The first cervical disc replacement and bi-level cervical disc replacement in Asia was carried out in the hospital's neurosurgery department in 2002 and 2003 respectively. The assisted reproductive technology facility at the hospital undertook 500 test tube pregnancies in 2012 itself.

The Army Organ and Retrieval Transplantation Organisation (AORTA), formed in 2006, handles organ donations at RR Hospital. In 2018, an entire unit of the Territorial Army submitted applications pledging their organs.

The conversion rate for organ donations at RR Hospital is among the best worldwide. Brigadier YP Bakshi was shot in Meerut; following his death, RR Hospital harvested his organs, liver, kidneys, eyes and heart valves.

Patients have included Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, and Sonia Gandhi.

Notable people who have died at the hospital include: former President Pranab Mukherjee; Marshal Arjan Singh, the only five-star rank officer of the Indian Air Force; former Navy Chief Admiral Sushil Kumar; Lt. General Sagat Singh; and Colonel Narendra "Bull" Kumar. Lance Naik Hanumanthappa Koppad, who was found alive after being buried under snow for six days in the Siachen Glacier, was shifted to RR Hospital, where he died two days later.

Naik Raj Kishor Singh, who was injured in the 2016 Uri attack, underwent treatment at RR Hospital, but soon after died due to injuries sustained during the attack.

Let us reach out to the people and show them an abundance of goodwill. We must, however, learn to identify manipulations as well and uncover maneuvers in the dark if we do not want to be tricked by lying eyes.

("With confidence")!"!.....MD!

College of Nursing

Nursing students from College of Nursing, Army Hospital (R&R) are commissioned into the Military Nursing Service (MNS) as lieutenants. After being posted into the MNS, the lieutenants would go on to be posted across the nation in various Armed Forces Hospitals.

The first batch graduated on 24 August 2018 with a B Sc (H) Nursing degree, while the second batch of 27 nursing students were commissioned on 25 September 2019. In 2017, the 58th batch of Probationer Nurses consisting of 28 nurses were commissioned into the MNS.

What is cataract?

A cataract is a clouding of the eye's normally clear lens, which causes blurred or hazy vision. This happens as proteins in the lens clump together over time, making it difficult for light to pass through to the retina. Cataracts are most commonly associated with aging, but can also be caused by eye injury, medical conditions like diabetes, or prolonged use of certain medications.

Symptoms

Blurred, dim, or hazy vision

Faded or yellowed colors

Difficulty seeing at night

Sensitivity to light and glare

Seeing halos around lights

Double vision in one eye

Changes in eyeglass or contact lens prescriptions

Causes

Aging: The most common cause, as proteins in the lens break down over time.

Eye injury: Trauma to the eye can lead to cataract formation.

Medical conditions: Diseases such as diabetes increase the risk.

Medications: Prolonged use of corticosteroids is a known risk factor.

Other factors: Genetics, smoking, prolonged UV exposure, and previous eye inflammation can also contribute.

Treatment

Early stages: Corrective glasses can help at earlier stages.

Later stages: If cataracts interfere with daily activities, surgery is a very effective treatment option to remove the cloudy lens and replace it.....(Information provided by Dr. TS Didwal my brother-in law)

The four days camp, scheduled from November 19 to 22, will see a large number of beneficiaries from far flung areas of Jammu and Kashmir, including remote villages in Udhampur, Doda, Rajouri, Poonch, Bhatnagar, Ramban etc. being provided with quality cataract screening and advanced surgery under a team of highly qualified specialists.

And thus we arrive at the final lines: At this very moment enormous numbers of intelligent men and women of goodwill are trying to build a better world. But problems are born faster than they can be solved.....The Indian Army knows it.....(MD)!

Views, Opinions, facts etc Expressed by the Authors are their Own and Headlines Today doesn't acknowledge the viewpoint in any manner. And the claims made by the advertisers, promoters through their write-ups need to be ascertained by the readers and Headlines Today Shall not be held responsible for any misleading information in any manner...

Ultra-processed foods can increase the risk of multiple chronic health conditions, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes

A new study found that a diet heavy in ultra-processed foods can harm male reproductive health and reduce sperm quality

The researchers say that ultra processed foods may contain molecules found in plastics that are known to disrupt hormonal systems in the body

Ultra-Processed Foods May Harm Male Reproductive, Metabolic Health

A new study reports that ultra-processed foods may be linked to a decline in male reproductive health, including sperm quality.

The research, published on August 28 in Cell Metabolism, states that regular consumption of ultra-processed foods has several effects on a person's health.

These include higher cholesterol levels and increased body weight. They noted that participants in their study gained more than a kilogram of weight when they ate ultra-processed foods. The amount of fat mass in their bodies also increased.

The researchers added that "sperm quality trended toward impairment" when participants were on an ultra-processed diet. The researchers pointed out that these health effects occurred even when a person on an ultra-processed diet consumed the same number of calories as a person on another type of diet.

"This study provides evidence that consumption of ultra-processed food is detrimental for cardiometabolic and reproductive outcomes, regardless of excessive caloric intake," the study authors wrote.

Philip Werthman, MD, a urologist and director of the Center for Male Reproductive Medicine and Vasectomy Reversal in Los Angeles, says the study is proof that what you eat can be more important than how much you eat.

"It's not the calories you're getting. It's the type of calories you're getting," Werthman told Healthline.

Effects of an ultra-processed diet on sperm quality

For their study, researchers recruited 43 males ages 20–35. Each participant spent three weeks on both a diet primarily of ultra-processed foods and a diet of unprocessed foods, with a 3-month "washing out" period between the two diets.

Half of the participants started on the unprocessed diet while the other half began with the ultra-processed diet. Half of the men from each group were also put on a diet that included 500 extra calories per day.

Researchers noted that subjects on the ultra-processed diet experienced an increase in the phthalate cMINP, a substance



found in plastics that can disrupt hormones.

Those on the ultra-processed diet also saw decreases in their testosterone levels and follicle-stimulating hormones, which are crucial for sperm production.

The researchers said some of the endocrine-disrupting substances may come from the plastic packaging used for ultra-processed foods.

They note that the introduction of ultra-processed foods in the 1970s seems to fall in line with a 60% decline worldwide in sperm count.

Kristin Kirkpatrick, president of KAK Consulting and a dietitian at Cleveland Clinic's Department of Wellness & Preventive Medicine, said the research sends a clear message. "The study found that endocrine disruptors and other components altered hormone levels in men, even if the men were healthy," she told Healthline. "This means, even if you're healthy based on other parameters, yet consume a diet higher in ultra-processed foods, you still are at risk for increases in

chronic conditions."

Werthman added that a man's general health can also affect their reproductive system. For example, a person who has gained weight, developed type 2 diabetes, or experienced a rise in cholesterol levels may see a decline in reproductive health measures such as sperm quality.

"The reproductive system is a function of your overall health," Werthman explained. "The reproductive system is quite sensitive."

Michael Eisenberg, MD, a professor of urology at Stanford University, had one caution about the study's conclusions.

"While none reached statistical significance, there does appear to be a decline in semen quality when examining the summative data," he told Healthline. "However, it's important to note that the intervention was for three weeks, and a cycle of sperm production typically takes between two to three months."

Health impacts of ultra-processed foods

The Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention (CDC) reports Trusted Source that ultra-processed foods account for an average of 55% of total calories consumed by people in the United States.

It notes that people under 19 years of age tend to eat slightly more ultra-processed foods than adults 19 years and older. The agency states there is little difference in ultra-processed food consumption between men and women.

The CDC says ultra-processed foods tend to be "hyperpalatable, energy-dense, low in dietary fiber, and contain little or no whole foods, while having high amounts of salt, sweeteners, and unhealthy fats."

It states that sandwiches (including burgers), sweet bakery products, sweetened beverages, and savory snacks are among the top sources of calories from ultra-processed foods.

A July 2025 study reported that ultra-processed foods are a major contributing factor to obesity as well as increasing a person's risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and sleep apnea.

An April 2025 study estimated that

ultra-processed foods were linked to 124,000 preventable deaths in the United States during a two-year period.

A May 2024 study revealed that ultra-processed foods may also increase the risk of stroke and cognitive decline.

Kirkpatrick said there are a number of reasons for these impacts, including what a person is not eating.

"Consuming ultra-processed foods means that other foods, which are found to help in the prevention of heart disease (like fresh fruit and vegetables, healthy fats, and fiber) are not being consumed," she said. "Further, excess sugar and sodium consumption has been found in multiple studies to pose a significant risk to heart health. Sugar and sodium are common ingredients in ultra-processed foods."

Werthman said the pattern is clear. "This study is another confirmation that the food industry has been poisoning us for the past 20 to 30 years," he noted. "We see the effects of that now."

Tips to improve male reproductive health

Experts say there are lifestyle habits that can help improve and maintain male reproductive health. "In general, good diet (whole grains, fruits, vegetables), exercise, and maintaining a good body weight will help overall and reproductive health," said Eisenberg. Werthman says a healthy diet is "a big component" of that equation, but noted that men, especially those in the process of trying to have children, should exercise regularly as well as avoid alcohol and tobacco.

Kirkpatrick agreed. "Eating a diet high in nutrient density, such as the Mediterranean diet, as well as regular exercise, adequate sleep, stress management, maintaining a healthy weight, and abstaining from tobacco and alcohol, may all play a role in better reproductive health," she said.

Werthman noted that heat sources such as saunas and hot tubs can temporarily impact sperm quality and quantity.

"All these things affect the reproductive system," he said. "The body is an integrated system."

Courtesy Healthline

Blood cancer symptoms on skin that you should never ignore

The skin is the largest organ in the body and can often reveal signs of underlying health conditions, including blood cancers such as leukemia and lymphoma. According to The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, changes in the skin, rashes, or unusual lesions may sometimes be the first indications of these cancers. While many skin changes are harmless or caused by infections or medications, certain patterns may signal blood cancer. Recognising these symptoms early can lead to timely diagnosis and treatment, making awareness critical. Understanding which skin changes to monitor can help patients and caregivers seek medical attention before complications escalate.

Common skin symptoms of blood cancer
Blood cancers can produce visible skin symptoms including:

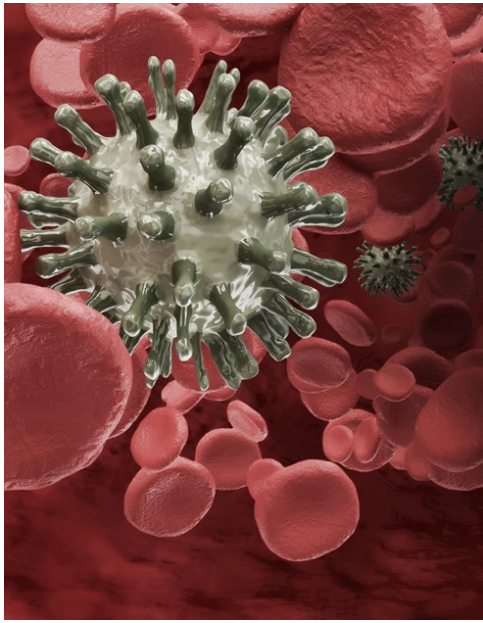
- **Petechiae:** Tiny red, brown, or purple spots caused by broken capillaries due to low platelet counts.
- **Purpura:** Larger blotchy bruises or discolorations that do not fade when pressed.
- **Rashes:** Patches on the skin that may be itchy or scaly.
- **Easy bruising and bleeding due to impaired clotting is common.**

These symptoms often result from blood abnormalities caused by leukemia or lymphoma rather than dermatological conditions alone.

Leukemia and skin signs

Sometimes, leukemia cells can leave the blood and bone marrow and settle in the skin. This is called leukemia cutis. When this happens, it can cause raised bumps, patches, nodules, or sores on the skin.

Another common sign of leukemia is petechiae, which are tiny red or purple spots that usually appear on the arms, legs, or torso. These spots don't turn white when pressed, which helps distinguish them from ordinary rashes.



Other skin changes, such as larger bruises (purpura) or unusual rashes, may appear early in leukemia or indicate the disease is progressing. These happen because leukemia affects the blood, making it harder for the body to clot properly or fight infections.

Cutaneous T-cell lymphoma (CTCL) and other blood lymphomas

Blood cancers like CTCL, a type of skin lymphoma, can show up as dry, scaly, itchy patches or plaques. These often appear on parts of the body that don't get much sun.

Other changes may include:

- Red, pink, brown, or grey patches
- Lumps or bumps that can sometimes break open
- Thickened skin on the palms or soles
- Hair loss in affected areas and swollen lymph nodes

Widespread redness of the skin (erythroderma) in more advanced cases

These symptoms happen because lymphoma affects the immune system and the lymphatic system, which can cause the skin to react in these ways. Early recognition is important because these signs can easily be mistaken for eczema, infections, or other skin problems.

Petechiae: the "hidden" rash

- **Petechiae are not a typical rash. They are tiny red or purple spots caused by small blood vessels (capillaries) breaking under the skin.**
- **They often appear on the feet, legs, arms, or hands**
- **They are caused by low platelet counts, a common effect of leukemia, which makes the blood less able to clot**

Even though they may look like harmless spots, petechiae can be an early warning sign of blood cancer, so noticing them and checking with a doctor is important.

Blood cancers can present with noticeable skin symptoms such as petechiae, purpura, rashes, nodules, plaques, or itching. The type and severity vary depending on the blood cancer subtype and disease stage. Early recognition of these signs is crucial for timely diagnosis and treatment. Periodic skin examinations, awareness of unusual changes, and prompt consultation with a healthcare provider can improve outcomes. According to The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, understanding these symptoms and seeking medical attention without delay is an essential step in managing blood cancers effectively. Raising public awareness about these warning signs can play a vital role in saving lives through earlier detection and intervention. Ultimately, vigilance and education remain the strongest tools in reducing the burden of blood cancers worldwide.

TOI Lifestyle Desk

Scrolling on toilet increases your risk of haemorrhoids, new study shows

Many of us are guilty of scrolling our smartphones on the toilet. But a new study from the United States, published today, has found this habit may increase your risk of developing haemorrhoids by up to 46 per cent. So, what's the link? How can time on your phone lead to these painful lumps in and around your anus? Here's what we know.

What are haemorrhoids?

Every healthy person has haemorrhoids, sometimes called piles. They are columns of cushioned tissue and blood vessels found close to the opening of the anus.

Haemorrhoids have a really important role in maintaining bowel continence or, to put it simply, keeping your poo in.

When all is well, we don't notice them. But haemorrhoids can get swollen and this can lead to symptoms such as pain, bleeding or feeling a lump just inside your anus (internal haemorrhoids) or protruding outside (external haemorrhoids).

So when someone "has haemorrhoids", it means they have become inflamed or symptomatic. This is extremely common: more than one in two of us will experience symptomatic haemorrhoids at some point in our lives.

You are more likely to get haemorrhoids if you:

- are older (over 45)
- are pregnant
- are overweight
- have persistent constipation or diarrhoea
- regularly lift heavy objects
- spend a lot of time on the toilet.

The link between toilet time and haemorrhoids

Prolonged sitting in general has not been



linked to developing haemorrhoids.

However, a standard toilet seat – unlike a chair or couch – has a large internal opening that provides no support for the pelvic floor (the group of muscles and ligaments that support the bladder, bowel and uterus). Prolonged sitting on a toilet seat is believed to increase pressure inside the pelvic floor and lead to blood pooling in the vascular cushions of the anus. This makes haemorrhoids more likely to develop.

What the new study looked at

The new US study recruited 125 adults, aged 45 and older, who were undergoing a colonoscopy at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Centre.

Researchers surveyed them about their smartphone habits while using the toilet, including how often they checked their phone and for how long. Participants also reported on other behaviours such as straining, their fibre intake, and how much physical activity they did.

The researchers recorded whether they had haemorrhoids. Since the participants were all having a colonoscopy, the presence of internal haemorrhoids could be directly confirmed visually.

Courtesy The Conversation

Semi Finale of 92.7 BIG FM’s BIG Jammu Talent Highlights Remarkable Performances by Young Artists Across Jammu

HT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, NOV 21: The semi finale round of BIG Jammu Talent, organized by 92.7 BIG FM at Jammu Club, unfolded with tremendous energy and showcased the immense artistic potential of students from various schools across Jammu. Supported by Cambridge Blanket as the Title Partner, Campus Daddy as the Presenting Partner, Surjit Hospital and Kushal Shah Amarnath Jewellers as the Co Powered partners, Imprimis IVF as the Associate Partner and State Times as the Print Partner, the event brought together a vibrant gathering of young perform-

ers, educators and parents. The occasion was graced by Mr. Vivek Shekhar, SP North Jammu, who attended as the Special Guest. In his address, he applauded the initiative for providing a constructive and creative platform for the youth and highlighted the significance of arts in building confidence, discipline and expression among students. His motivating words resonated with the participants and added a distinguished touch to the event. With three competitive categories including Solo Singing, Group Dance and Short Play, the semi finale witnessed a spirited display of talent. The judging panel featured respected names



from their respective fields. Sanjeev Gupta evaluated the Short Plays, Ravi Raghuvanshi judged the Singing category and

Dr. Priya Dutta assessed the Group Dance performances. Students presented soulful vocals, energetic dance

sequences and compelling theatrical acts that captured the attention of the audience. Each performance reflected dedica-

tion, preparation and the passion of young artists who were eager to shine on stage. The judges, impressed with the level of talent, had a challenging task as they evaluated participants on presentation, creativity, expression and overall stage impact. Representing the BIG FM team, RJ Juhie expressed heartfelt gratitude to the participating schools, principals, teachers and parents. She acknowledged their continuous support, which has helped the event grow stronger each year. She also noted that the overwhelming participation reflects the community's commitment to encouraging young

talent and promoting performing arts. Over the years, BIG Jammu Talent has emerged as one of the most awaited interschool cultural events in Jammu. The platform continues to inspire students to explore their artistic interests, enhance their skills and gain confidence through meaningful exposure. The shortlisted teams from the semi finale will now prepare for the Grand Finale on 22 November 2025. The finale promises a spectacular celebration of creativity, passion and youthful brilliance as Jammu eagerly awaits the announcement of this year's champions.

Kashmiri Kahwa Attracting Visitors At International Gita Mahotsav In Kurukshetra

HT NEWS NETWORK

KURUKSHETRA, NOV 21: At the sacred banks of Brahmasarovar, where the International Gita Mahotsav-2025 is showcasing India's diverse cultural heritage, flavours from across the country are drawing sizable crowds. Among popular attractions is the traditional Kashmiri Kahwa, whose fragrant aroma pulls visitors straight to its stall. Mohammad Maqbool Sufi and his family, who have travelled all the way from Pattan in Baramulla district of Jammu & Kashmir, have brought with them not just a beverage, but a piece of Kashmir's heritage.

Accompanied by his family members, Sufi is serving authentic Kashmiri Kahwa along with nearly 30 varieties of dry fruits and spices. Speaking about their long association with the Gita Mahotsav here, Majhabi Begum, who is among the family members accompanying Sufi, said, "Kashmiri Kahwa is much more than a drink. It represents the history, culture and traditions of Kashmir. When people sip it here, they are getting a taste of our identity." Majhabi, who prepares the Kahwa at the stall, has become a centre of attraction for visitors delighted by the warm hospitality of her family. The stall, part of the family's traditional business, also offers dry fruits. Visitors can choose from a wide range, including almonds, figs, saffron, walnuts, and more. The family said they have been participating in the Gita Mahotsav for the past several years, adding that the response this year has been especially encouraging. "The administration has made excellent arrangements, and both tourists and locals have been very supportive," said Sufi.

The International Gita Mahotsav is being held from November 15 to December 5. The 21-day festival has emerged as a grand platform to preserve, promote, and celebrate the country's fading folk heritage, captivating thousands of visitors each day. The folk artists in colourful turbans strike the rhythm of the 'Been, Dhol and Nagadas'. Folk artists from across states, including Rajasthan's 'kachhi ghodi' troupes, 'bansuri' players, and traditional drummers, have infused the festival atmosphere with unmatched energy. Their performances have left the visitors mesmerised. (Agencies)

NCC Cadets Salute Martyrs' Kin in Moving Tribute at Bhaderwah

AMIR IQBAL KHAN

BHADERWAH, NOV 21: In a deeply moving ceremony marked by emotion and patriotism, cadets of the 10 J&K Battalion, National Cadet Corps (NCC) Bhaderwah paid glowing tributes to the families of brave martyrs who laid down their lives in the line of duty. The event, organised under the theme "Veer Naris/Matas" on the eve of NCC Day celebrations, was jointly hosted by PM Shri Government Higher Secondary School Bhalra and Government Higher Secondary School Sartin-

gal. Cadets had the honour of interacting with the wife of Shaheed Hawaldar Abdul Qayoom of 088 Battalion CRPF who attained martyrdom on March 26, 2001 in Kashmir and Miss Dazy Akhtar daughter of Shaheed Hawaldar Mohd Shafi of 10 JAKLI a native of Village Basti Bhaderwah who sacrificed his life during Operation Rhino in Assam on September 24, 1991. Led by Major (Dr) Vineet Kumar Sharma, Associate NCC Officer and Dr Sanjeev Kumar Koul II/O and Associate NCC Officer, the programme sought



to reconnect young cadets with the ideals of valour, duty and sacrifice upheld by the armed

forces. Cadets listened with deep reverence as the family members

of the martyrs recounted their experiences and shared memories of courage and resilience. The gathering resonated with patriotic zeal as participants reiterated their commitment to uphold the nation's honour and support the kin of fallen heroes. Major (Dr) Sharma lauded the cadets for their disciplined participation saying that such events instill in youth a strong sense of responsibility towards the country's defenders. The event concluded with a solemn pledge to carry forward the martyrs' legacy through service and dedication.

Docs advise people to stay active, exercise regularly even in harsh winter

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, NOV 21: As temperatures plunge across Kashmir, doctors have advised people not to abandon physical activity during the winter months, warning that a sedentary lifestyle can aggravate a range of health problems including heart disease, diabetes, obesity and joint ailments. Health experts in the Valley said that while cold weather and frequent fog or snow discourage people from going outdoors, residents must adopt indoor exercise routines to maintain their physical and mental wellbeing. "Winters in Kashmir are long and harsh, but that should not be an excuse to stop exercising," Dr Mohammad Shafi, a physician, told news agency Kashmir Indepth News Service (KINS). "We see a rise in cases of high blood pressure, heart issues, weight gain and even depression during the cold season, largely because people become inactive

and stay confined indoors for weeks," he said. Doctors said even light and moderate activities done regularly can significantly help. They recommend brisk indoor walking, stretching, cycling on static bikes, and simple strength exercises that can be done at home without equipment. A cardiologist at SKIMS Soura said that the risk of heart attacks is known to increase in winter due to blood vessel constriction and changes in blood pressure. "Those who already have hypertension, diabetes or heart disease should be extra cautious. Regular exercise, even for 20-30 minutes a day, helps improve blood circulation, keeps weight under control and stabilises blood pressure," he said. Orthopaedic specialists also cautioned that lack of physical activity in winter can worsen joint stiffness and back pain, especially among the elderly. "We advise senior citizens and arthritis patients to perform mild, supervised exercises at home.

Remaining inactive for long hours under heavy blankets may give warmth but it is not good for bones and joints," an orthopaedic doctor at Bone and Joint Hospital Barzulla said. Doctors further underlined that winter exercise has mental health benefits as well. "Due to fewer sunlight hours, many people feel low, anxious or irritable during 'Chillai Kalan'. Physical activity releases feel-good hormones and can combat stress and seasonal depression," said a psychiatrist at Government Psychiatric Diseases Hospital, Srinagar. Appealing to the public, doctors said that along with a balanced diet and adequate sleep, regular physical activity should be treated as a "winter necessity" rather than an option. "Even if it is snowing outside, you can walk inside your room, climb stairs, stretch or do simple yoga," said Dr Shafi. "What matters is consistency. Taking care of your health in winter will prevent serious complications later." (KINS)

Laptop Care House

Wholesale Dealer Of New And Pre Used Laptops
DEALS IN ALL KINDS OF LAPTOPS AND ACCESSORIES
REPAIRING OF: ALL TYPES OF LAPTOPS & DESKTOPS
SERVICE FOR ALL LAPTOPS
7006083461

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR, ACHABAL

It is hereby informed that Zahid Ubaid Farooq, S/o Farooq Ahmad Bhat, R/o Kawari Gam, Tehsil & District Anantnag, has applied for the issuance of an RBA Certificate in this office. As per the Patwari's report, the family income of the applicant is recorded as:
₹6000 per month from primary occupation
₹30000 from other sources
Total annual income: ₹1,20,000
Total family members: 05
Anybody having any objection regarding the issuance of the said certificate may file the same in writing in the Office of the Naib Tehsildar, Achabal, within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice. Objections submitted after the due date will not be entertained.
Applicant: Zahid Ubaid Farooq
S/o: Farooq Ahmad Bhat
R/o: Kawari Gam, Anantnag

Jammu Municipal Corporation Launches "Wall of Shame" Initiative to Curb Public Littering and open urination

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, NOV 21: In a decisive move to tackle the growing problem of litter and uncleanliness across the city, the Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) has announced the launch of the "Wall of Shame" initiative—an effort aimed at discouraging individuals from spreading filth in public places. Despite continuous efforts by the Municipal Corporation to maintain cleanliness and properly dispose of waste, garbage dumping in open areas remains a widespread issue. The Corporation regularly conducts awareness programs involving school children, college and university students, various government departments, and social organizations. How-



ever, cooperation from certain sections of society continues to fall short, leading to the accumulation of garbage in numerous localities. To review the situation on the ground, Dr. Devansh Yadav, Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation, personally conducted inspections at various locations. During his visit, he appealed to residents to refrain from littering and to support the Corporation's efforts in keep-

ing the city clean. Highlighting the lack of awareness among certain individuals regarding the city's sanitation system, Commissioner Dr. Yadav has issued strict instructions to sanitation officials. He directed them to capture photos and videos of anyone seen throwing garbage in the open or engaging in open defecation. These visuals will be displayed prominently on the Wall of Shame to make citizens aware of the conse-

quences of irresponsible behavior and to encourage others to maintain cleanliness. The Wall of Shame will publicly display images of those violating cleanliness norms, sending a strong message across the city. The Commissioner also warned that strict action will be taken against individuals polluting water sources by dumping waste. Dr. Yadav emphasized that the time for leniency is over. The Municipal Corporation is fully prepared to take firm steps to ensure a clean and hygienic Jammu. Those who choose to ignore cleanliness norms will face strict consequences. The Jammu Municipal Corporation urges all residents to join hands in this mission and contribute to making Jammu a cleaner, healthier, and more responsible city.

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ANANTNAG

Ph:01932-222337 (o), 01932-223164 (Fax): email: dc-anantnag@gov.in

READVERTISEMENT PUBLIC NOTICE

Join Mission YUVA – Build the Future of Entrepreneurship in J&K

Mission Directorate, Mission YUVA, invites applications for **empanelment of Motivators** under Mission YUVA. Retired Government officials, NGO workers, Lakhpati Didis, Pashu Sakhis, Bank Sakhis, other community resource persons, and local community members are encouraged to apply.

Remuneration Structure for Motivators	
Fixed Pay	Rs. 2000/- per month (including allowances to cover local travel and communication.
Variable Pay (Performance Incentive)	Based on the number of sanctioned loan applications (up to a maximum of Rs. 3000/- per month

Eligibility

- 21 years of age and above on the date of notification.
- Minimum 10th (Matric) Class pass qualification
- Must be a domicile of J&K
- Apply via this form: <https://forms.gle/ZcsHEJ82Jc28PQeN9>
- The Conceptual Framework for Motivators (detailed selection process, role description) can be accessed through the same link.
- The last date for applying is **5.12.2025**.

(Note: This is a public service advertisement. No fee is required for the application process.)

Issued by: District Administration, Anantnag.

No: ADDCA/2025-26/1188-89 | Dated: 21.11.2025

Sd/- Additional District Development Commissioner, Anantnag.

DIPK: 8330/25 | Dated: 21-11-2025

Satish Sharma meets delegations; reviews development issues, public grievances

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

SRINAGAR, NOV 21: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA), Transport, Youth Services & Sports, Information Technology, ARI & Trainings, Satish Sharma, today met several public delegations at the Civil Secretariat.

The Minister had detailed discussion on various sector-specific challenges, policy gaps and public demands for administrative support during interaction with the delegations.

The Minister assured all groups that their issues will be examined and resolved in a time-bound manner.

A deputation of Western Union Transport Delegation raised issues related to transport permits, streamlining of fare revision mechanisms,

strengthening of enforcement to curb unauthorized transport operations, addressing delays in vehicle fitness and renewal processes.

The delegation requested the Minister's intervention to ensure smoother, transparent and industry-friendly transport regulations.

Association of Rehbar-e-Khel (REK) employees raised several issues like regularisation of their services and timely release of pending honorarium. They appealed to the Minister to safeguard the future of hundreds of youth serving in sports development at the grassroots level.

Another deputation of Kerosene Dealers Association highlighted challenges in the FCS&CA supply chain, including irregular and insufficient kerosene allocations and need



for transparent distribution mechanisms. They requested a streamlined policy support to ensure uninterrupted public supply.

Deputation of Mini Bus Operators Association raised issues regarding Traffic regulation issues and lack of designated stops and need for

rationalisation of routes to prevent overcrowding on certain corridors, financial stress due to rising operational costs, expedited clearance of pend-

ing subsidy and assistance cases.

They urged the Minister to implement reforms that would ensure the viability and sus-

tainability of small transport operators.

Several other delegations also met the Minister, presenting their demands related to public welfare, infrastructure gaps and departmental service delivery.

Satish Sharma directed the concerned officers to look into the issues and concerns raised by the deputations for speedy redress. He assured time bound action on genuine demands, department-wise review of projected key issues, policy-level interventions, wherever required, continued government commitment to transparent, efficient and citizen-centric administration

He reiterated that such interactions are crucial for improving service delivery and bridging gaps between the public and the administration.

Rashtriya Poshan Maah 2025 observed with awareness programmes at Thathri

■ HT NEWS DESK

DODA, NOV 21: Rashtriya Poshan Maah 2025 was observed in Thathri with an awareness programme, promoting nutrition, health care and early childhood development.

The event was inaugurated by District Programme Officer, Akhter Hussain Qazi in the presence of Tehsildar Satish Rana, health officials and Poshan Project staff.

Anganwadi workers, women, children and local residents actively participated in cultural performances and theme-based activities highlighting balanced diets, hygiene and child growth-monitoring.

Addressing the gathering, the District Programme Officer explained the objectives of the Poshan scheme.



He said the main focus of the scheme is on improving nutrition for pregnant women, lactating mothers, adolescent girls and children through supplementary nutrition. He said health check-up, counselling and awareness drives are also envisaged under the scheme. "Early childhood care, immunisation and healthy lifestyles are a key to combat malnutrition," he added.

The programme also featured nutrition demonstrations, anaemia awareness talks, IEC material distribution and interactive sessions with mothers groups. The event concluded with an appeal to stakeholders to support Poshan Abhiyan in building a healthier, well-nourished community.

Army Conducts Awareness Lecture on Child Rights Day in Batsiyala, Reasi

■ HT NEWS DESK

REASI, NOV 21: As part of Universal Children's Day, the Indian Army organised an awareness lecture on Child Rights Day at the remote location of Batsiyala, District, Reasi on 21 November 2025. The initiative aimed to educate children, parents and community members about essential child rights, welfare measures and avenues for protection against exploitation and abuse. During the lecture, Army officials highlighted key aspects of child rights including right to education, right to protection, right to health/nutrition and right to participation. Special emphasis was laid on safeguarding children from child labour, early marriage, domestic violence and online threats. The audience was also made aware of government schemes, helplines and legal provisions available to ensure children's safety and development. Local villagers, school children, teachers and community leaders actively participated in the event. Interactive sessions, discussions and question-answer segments helped in enhancing understanding and encouraging community involvement in safeguarding children's rights. The Indian Army continues to remain committed to fostering awareness, education and empowerment in remote regions, ensuring holistic development and protection of children as responsible future citizens of the nation.

Director Panchayati Raj reviews progress of PGs, People's Plan Campaign, MWFGP

Assesses readiness for Constitution Day celebrations

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

JAMMU, NOV 21: Director of Panchayati Raj, Sham Lal on Friday chaired a review meeting to assess the progress of Panchayat infrastructure works taken up across Jammu and Kashmir in the financial year 2025-26.

The meeting focused on the physical progress of Panchayat Ghars (PGs), land identification for new constructions, fund disbursement through the SNA SPARSH portal via BEAMS and the operational status of Panchayat Learning Centres (PLCs).

Progress under the People's Plan Campaign (PPC), Model Women Friendly Gram Panchayats, DARPG Awards and preparations for Constitution Day (Sam-

vidhan Diwas) (November 26) was also reviewed.

It was informed that the department has set a target of constructing 640 Panchayat Ghars across the Union Territory. "Of these, land has been identified for 549 and 530 estimates have been submitted", Sham Lal directed the departmental functionaries to resolve all pending issues related to Panchayat Ghars on priority. He asked the stakeholders to immediately formulate estimation reports for the Panchayats where land identification has already been completed.

While appreciating the overall performance of districts, he urged officials to accelerate efforts to achieve all assigned targets within the stipulated time frame.



The Director further clarified that all billing will now be processed through the BEAMS system, while fund disbursement will be carried out via the SNA SPARSH platform.

Regarding the People's Plan Campaign, Sham Lal instructed Assistant Commissioners Panchayat to intensify efforts and ensure that the data is uploaded only after proper verification. He also emphasized the installation of Public Information Boards for developmental works and the organization of Gram Sabhas on designated days as part of the campaign.

Speaking about Model Women-Friendly Panchayats, he called for timely uploading of relevant data along with DCF forms. He

also stressed the need to identify and nominate Panchayats with exemplary developmental performance for the DARPG Awards.

The meeting also discussed preparations for the observance of Constitution Day on November 26. Listing Constitution day activities, he asked for organizing wall painting events, Constitution marathon and filming of preamble recitation videos. He added that while these activities are to be conducted across all Panchayats, these must be organized as live programs in the PLCs.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioners Panchayat, Executive Engineers of the Rural Engineering Wing, Block Development Officers and SPRC/DPRC team.

DC Budgam reviews Status of Power Transmission Towers Affected by Land Acquisition for Semi Ring Road in District

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BUDGAM, NOV 21: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat, today convened a meeting to review the status of power transmission towers coming in the alignment of the upcoming Semi Ring Road project in district budgam and requiring acquisition of land across different parts of the district.

Besides Executive Engineer KPDCL, officials from Revenue Department, JKPTCL, PGCIL and other concerned agencies attended the meeting and presented a detailed overview of the towers affected, land requirement, associated compensation and the progress on indent placements.

During the meeting, it was informed that a total of 28 towers along with one tower leg from five major transmission lines fall

within the Semi Ring Road alignment and require land acquisition under the provisions of the Central Act 2013.

The collective land requirement for these locations amounts to 302.58 marlas.

The concerned Officials provided a line-wise status of the affected areas, covering tehsils including Budgam, B, K, Pora and Chadoora, with villages such as Rakhearth, Narbal, Gudsathoo, Ichgam, Rakshalina, Chattergam, Zoharipora, Wathoora and Chadoora being directly impacted.

In most cases, the executing agencies have already placed indents with the concerned authorities, while a few locations, especially under PGCIL, are still in the process of indent submission.

The DC directed all departments to accelerate the land acquisition process and avoid any delays that could hinder the

timely execution of the Semi Ring Road project.

He stressed the need for close coordination between Revenue teams, JKPTCL and PGCIL to ensure accurate field verification, transparent communication with affected landowners, and timely processing of compensation as per the norms of the Central Act.

The DC further instructed the executing agencies to immediately submit any pending indents and asked for weekly progress reports to monitor the advancement of all related activities.

The DC emphasised that its timely completion depends on swift action and cooperation among all stakeholders.

He said the district administration is committed towards facilitating the process and ensuring that all statutory requirements are fulfilled efficiently and transparently.

Transport Department Reasi holds awareness camp in Katra; Enforcement drive conducted in Reasi

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

REASI, NOV 21: Transport Department Reasi headed by Assistant Regional Transport Officer, Nasir A. Khan today chaired a special awareness camp at the PWD Guest House Katra, attended by representatives of various transport unions. He listened to the issues raised by transporters, assured resolution of genuine concerns and stressed the need to address traffic congestion and improve traffic management in Katra town.

The ARTO urged hotel owners, drivers and transport union members to strictly follow transport rules to ensure smooth and safe traffic movement in the region.

As per directions of the Transport Commissioner J&K, Vishesh Paul Mahajan, an enforcement drive was also carried out in Simbal Chua and Sulla areas. Led by ARTO Reasi along with AMVI Surinder, MVTA Sikander and supporting staff, the team checked over 130 vehicles.

A total of 25 vehicles were e-challaned, 5 seized, 1 driving licence recommended for disqualification and fines amounting to ₹57,500 were imposed on violators.

AHD Rajouri facilitates setting up of Milk Value Addition Unit at Village Kalali-Manjakote

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

RAJOURI, NOV 21: In a significant step towards strengthening dairy sector and improving rural livelihood, the Animal Husbandry Department Rajouri, under the guidance of the Deputy Commissioner Abhishek Sharma has successfully mobilized and sponsored the establishment of a Milk Value Addition Unit in the District. As part of this initiative, farmers of Village Kalali, Manjakote

were sensitized and made fully aware of the vast scope and economic opportunities available in the domain of milk value addition. Through continuous counselling and field-level motivation by departmental officers, the farmers have successfully formed and registered a cooperative society titled "The Hill Fresh Dairy Cooperative Ltd."

The cooperative society has formally submitted its proposal under the Holistic Agriculture Development

Programme (HADP) for the activity "Assistance to Milk Value Addition Startups". Under HADP, the applicant cooperative is eligible for financial assistance up to ₹25.00 lakh, enabling them to establish and operationalize a modern milk value addition unit that benefits the farming community of Manjakote and nearby areas.

Additionally, the Hill Fresh Dairy Cooperative has been encouraged and guided to apply for the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Develop-

ment Fund (AHIDF). Under AHIDF, beneficiaries can avail 3% interest subvention on bank loans for establishing milk processing and value addition units.

The initiative is an important intervention aimed at ensuring the availability of quality milk and milk products in the district; providing a structured and remunerative market to dairy farmers; enhancing income and promoting rural entrepreneurship; reducing wast-

age and improving the value chain efficiency in the dairy sector. Speaking on the development, the Deputy Commissioner appreciated the proactive efforts of the Animal Husbandry Department and emphasized that the initiative would serve as a model for farmer-led enterprises in the district. He further stated that strengthening the dairy sector is central to ensuring food security and enhancing economic resilience of rural households.



India's flash PMI falls to 59.9 in November, weakest since May

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, NOV 21 : The combined performance of India's manufacturing and services sectors reported a slower rate of expansion as the HSBC Flash India Composite Purchasing Managers' Index fell to 59.9 in November from 60.4 in October.

According to data released by S&P Global, the index, which tracks month-on-month changes in the combined output of the two sectors, indicated a slower rate of expansion.

The growth slowed in November mainly because factory production grew more slowly, the weakest since May.

Some manufacturers got fewer new orders, while service sector activity grew faster than in the previous month, S&P Global said.

Speaking on the development, Chief India Economist at HSBC, Pranjul Bhandari said, "The HSBC



flash manufacturing PMI eased, though the improvement in operating conditions remained

healthy. The rise in new export orders matched that seen in October."

"However, overall new orders came in soft, indicating that the GST-led boost may have

peaked. Cost pressures eased considerably, and so did prices charged."

The report added that the export orders for goods stayed steady, but services saw a slight slowdown. International demand rose, but at the weakest rate since March due to tough global competition and cheaper alternatives abroad.

The report noted that a combination of slower sales growth and falling backlogs reportedly stymied job creation across India's private sector midway through the third financial quarter.

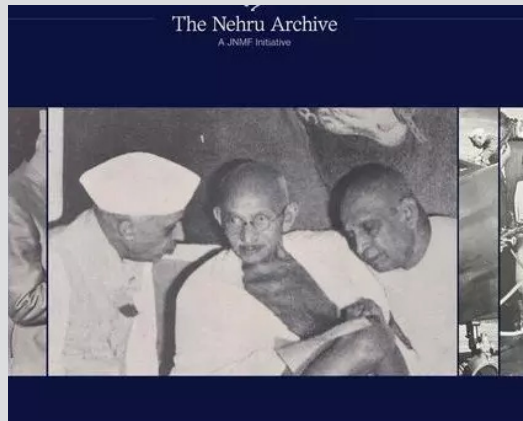
"Input costs and selling prices rose again, but inflation was mild and the weakest in over five years. Businesses still expect output to grow in the coming year, supported by pricing and expansion efforts, but overall confidence was the lowest since mid-2022," the report highlighted.UNI

Congress Leaders Welcome Launch of Digital Nehru Archive

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, NOV 21 : Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge have welcomed the launch of the digital Nehru Archive, a comprehensive online repository of Jawaharlal Nehru's writings, speeches, and letters.

The archive, available at nehruarchive.in, features over 75,000 pages and 3,000 illustrations, covering Nehru's life from 1903 to 1964.



The Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, run from the Teen Murti campus in New Delhi, had on Thursday launched the Nehru Archive, marking the first Prime Minister's 136th birth anniversary this year.

"This legacy is now open, searchable, and free for all," Rahul Gandhi said in a post on X, highlighting the significance of Nehru's writings as a record of India's evolving conscience. Mallikarjun Kharge emphasized the importance of digitizing Nehru's works amid deliberate distortion and misinformation, saying, "Facts are facts and will not disappear on account of your likes."

The archive includes correspondence, speeches, interviews, administrative notes, and even doodles, providing valuable insights into India's freedom struggle and early years of independence. The Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund plans to expand the archive, incorporating photographs, audio and video recordings.

"This online version would be of immense benefit to anybody who wishes to study any aspect of Indian history from the 1920s to the 1960s," said JNMF Secretary Madhavan Palat.UNI

Govt announces major bureaucratic reshuffle

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, NOV 21 : The Government has announced a significant secretary-level bureaucratic reshuffle, aiming to inject experienced officers into key ministries, including Petroleum, Telecommunications, Pharmaceuticals, and Agriculture.

This realignment is expected to bring deep sector knowledge and policy expertise to these ministries as they prepare for the next financial year and navigate critical regulatory landscapes.

Neeraj Mittal (IAS, 1992, TN cadre) is appointed Secretary of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, marking his return to the ministry where he previously worked on energy reforms.



Amit Agrawal (IAS, 1993, CG cadre) takes over as the new Telecom Secretary, bringing expertise in digital governance and experience as the head of UIDAI.

Manoj Joshi (IAS, 1989, KL cadre) heads the Department of Pharmaceuticals, leveraging his background in land management, urban affairs, and regulatory coordination.

Atish Chandra (IAS, 1994, BH cadre) is named Officer on Special Duty in the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, set to assume the role of Agriculture Secretary from February 1st.

Sunil Paliwal (IAS, 1993, TN cadre) is appointed Chairman of the Inland Waterways Authority of India, utilizing his maritime infrastructure experience.

V Vidyavathi is shifted to the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, while Srivatsa Krishna (IAS, 1994) takes over as the new Tourism Secretary.

Anju Rathi Rana is appointed Member Secretary of the 23rd Law Commission of India, and Rajiv Mani's tenure as Secretary of the Legislative Department is extended until July 2028.UNI

ED conducts raids linked to former Kerala MLA P V Anvar over alleged money laundering

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, NOV 21 : The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday launched extensive searches at multiple locations connected to former Independent MLA P.V. Anvar and his associates. The operation began early in the morning. "The raids are part of a money laundering probe stemming from alleged fraudulent loans sanctioned by the Kerala Financial



Corporation (KFC) back in 2015," said the ED official. The probe is examining the generation of proceeds of crime, which are estimated to have caused

a loss of 22.31 crore to the financial institution, the officials said. The investigation focuses on allegations of disproportionate assets, suspected benami holdings, and the diversion of funds into real estate projects as the agency traces the money trail. Anvar, who served as the Nilambur MLA from 2016 to 2021 with LDF/CPM support, was reportedly present during the searches, which officials described as proceeding peacefully.UNI

Real time dust control surveillance in Delhi, Rs 2.36 cr fines imposed so far: Sirsa

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, NOV 21 : Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Sirsa today said that with the real time surveillance of dust control in city, fines of over Rs 2 crore, 200 show cause notices and 48 closure reports have been filed, with the inspection of 1,262 construction sites.

According to Sirsa, with the strict actions underway regarding pollution control, Rs 2.36 crore 'Environmental Compensation' has been imposed on the projects that were found to be not complying with the prescribed norms.

He shared that since October 15, over 1,262 construction projects of with area of more than 500 square meters have been inspected for dust pollution, and 747 construction sites are registered with real-time video fencing, along with air quality monitoring on the Delhi Pollution Control Committee's portal.

Amid the bad air scenario, the minister said that continuous inspections and remote monitoring is underway, across 4,881 localities in the national capital, while 467 of them have



been surveyed, with detection of 32 new violations.

Diesel generator sets & high-emission industries are under strict compliance checks, and shift to PNG has also been initiated.

Sirsa also inspected key spots in South West Delhi's Palam, Dwarka and Mahipalpur to review dust mitigation measures.

He said that Delhi is deploying science-backed enforcement to tackle pollution relentlessly, with every project under live scrutiny, every source addressed at its root,

and every violation resulting in real consequences.

He claimed that unlike previous policies of more promises and less action, the present government under CM Rekha Gupta is determined to deliver measurable results on the ground.

"We are working relentlessly to bring some systemic change in the system to effectively keep a check on harmful emissions that pollute the air of Delhi throughout the year, especially during winter season. Every project is being remotely

monitored round-the-clock for compliance," he said.

Remote monitoring infrastructure—including 360-degree video fencing and live-linked PM2.5 and PM10 sensors—ensure ongoing enforcement and transparency, the minister said, adding that public display boards with the DPCC Portal registration ID has been made mandatory at construction sites to keep every project's compliance status visible to citizens and stakeholders.

Beyond construction sites, he

said that DPCC's teams are inspecting diesel generator (DG) sets and those industries that contribute to air-pollution, mandating the installation of retrofitted emission control devices or conversion to clean fuel modes, and pushing all industries to transition to cleaner piped natural gas (PNG) as per CAQM directives.

Sirsa informed that Delhi's winter action plan, dust-control protocols, construction compliance norms, road sprinkling schedules, mechanical sweeping deployment and waste-management systems have been active for several months.

DPCC has informed that over 1,800 enforcement personnel, alongside 35 specialised DPCC teams, are active across Delhi, representing agencies such as the MCD, DDA, PWD, NDMC, Revenue, agriculture department and the Traffic Police.

During the review, the Minister also noted that DPCC and MCD have intensified their efforts at more than 62 identified traffic-prone hotspots, where dust suppression, sweeping and waste-lifting operations have been expanded.UNI

Nuclear arms race intensifies amid global conflicts and rising tensions

■ ARTI BALI

NEW DELHI, NOV 21 : As conflicts deepen and global power centers shift, the international system is entering one of its most volatile periods in decades. The war in Ukraine is grinding into its third year with no end in sight, while Israel's conflict with Hamas has thrown the Middle East into renewed turmoil. Across Europe, governments are scrambling to fortify their defenses, and Russia is signaling a return to Cold War-era military competition with tests of new strategic weapons.

Against this backdrop, the United States is revisiting debates that once seemed relegated to history. President Donald Trump has directed the Department of War to prepare for the possibility of resuming U.S. nuclear testing—a step that would overturn a three-decade moratorium and

reintroduce a level of nuclear brinkmanship not seen since the late 20th century.

The move followed Russian President Vladimir Putin's announcement of a successful test of the Poseidon nuclear-powered underwater drone, designed to inundate coastal regions with radioactive tsunamis, along with continued progress on Russia's Burevestnik nuclear-powered cruise missile.

If the US re-starts nuclear testing, this would end the three-decade-long American moratorium on nuclear test explosions, bringing with it an increasingly unstable nuclear era. The Kremlin has reacted by saying it would "act accordingly" if the Cold War-era moratorium on nuclear weapons testing were broken. Trump's move is also provoked by China's growing array of nuclear warheads.

China's arsenal, according to Pentagon projections, is expected to reach 700 deliverable warheads by 2027 and 1,000 by 2030. Meanwhile, the United States remains bound by the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or New START, which caps US and Russian deployed warheads at 1,550. Russia suspended its participation last year, yet Putin has signaled a willingness to observe the treaty's limits for another year—an overture Trump has cautiously welcomed. But with the treaty set to expire in February 2026, and Russia showcasing new weapons programs even as the war in Ukraine grinds on, the future of arms control is highly uncertain.

In 2023, a 12-member bipartisan Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States reported on a "looming two-



nuclear-peer threat environment" and recommended that the U.S. urgently prepare for this new reality.

The Strategic Posture Commission (SPC) outlines the evolving nuclear postures of Russia and China during 2027–2035 and proposes over 80 recommendations for U.S. defense policy, nuclear and conventional weapon capabilities, the U.S. nuclear weapons complex, and

nuclear arms control.

Ahead of Trump's recent summit with Putin in Alaska, the National Security Council met with nuclear experts to assess the U.S. deterrent and explore whether Washington should seek a new agreement that includes China alongside Russia. Trump has said future negotiations may need to wait until the conflict in Ukraine is resolved. Putin, for his part, has echoed interest in

what he described as "long-term conditions for peace," including potential follow-on agreements on offensive strategic arms—though he offered few specifics.

The Alaska meeting concluded without a breakthrough, but both sides indicated they are open to continuing discussions based on provisional understandings reached during talks involving senior advisers.

The shifting nuclear landscape is not limited to the great powers. Former Indian ambassador Anil Trigunayat points to increasingly volatile rhetoric from Pakistan, including nuclear threats issued during the 2019 crisis following the Pulwama attack.

India maintains a No First Use policy, but Trigunayat argues that New Delhi may eventually need to reassess its doctrine as it faces growing pressure from both Pakistan and China. "Every

country is tweaking its nuclear posture," he said, adding, "The threshold for nuclear use is becoming lower by the day."

Across Europe, governments are responding with their checkbooks. Defense spending among EU member states is expected to rise to €381 billion in 2025, up from €343 billion in 2024—a nearly 20 percent jump driven largely by concerns over Russia and the erosion of traditional security arrangements.

With nuclear-armed states modernizing their arsenals, arms-control agreements expiring, and global crises multiplying, the prospect of renewed nuclear testing threatens to accelerate an emerging arms race. The world is edging toward a more dangerous era—one defined less by restraint than by rivalry, mistrust and the unsettling return of Cold War logic.UNI





Gill Out Of Guwahati Test; Pant To Captain

India's Test captain advised rest to prevent neck spasms

■ **KARTHIK KRISHNASWAMY**

KOLKATA: Shubman Gill is set to miss India's second Test against South Africa starting on Saturday after failing to recover sufficiently from the neck injury he suffered last week. Vice captain Rishabh Pant will stand in as captain in Guwahati.

It is understood that, according to medical advice, Gill is at risk of further neck spasms if he plays so soon. He has been advised more rest. The development could also impact his selection in the ODI squad for the three matches against South Africa starting on November 30. The squad for that series is expected to be picked on November 23.

With Gill set to miss out, India may have to choose one of B Sai Sudharsan, Devdutt Padikkal and Nitish Kumar Reddy as his replacement.

Gill was admitted to hospital after the second day of the Kolkata Test, following the decision to retire hurt after facing only three balls in India's first innings. On the morning of the third day, the BCCI said he would take no further part in the Test. India went on to lose the match by 30 runs, after getting dismissed for 93 in a chase of 124 on a pitch with uneven bounce. Gill had missed a Test against New Zealand in October 2024 due to a neck spasm too.

On Thursday, before ESPNcricinfo learned that Gill is set to miss the match, India batting coach Sitanshu Kotak had said in a press conference that the team would not risk playing him if there was any chance of the spasm recurring.

"He is definitely recovering really well,"

Kotak said. "Now, the decision [whether to play him or not] will be taken tomorrow evening. The physios, doctors, they will have to take a call that, [even] if he is fully recovered, [during the] game, he should not get that spasm again."

"[...] If we have a, guarantee that, very likely, he won't have this issue again, then he will play. If there is a doubt, then I am sure, he will take rest [for] one more game, because it won't be helpful to the team [if he plays]."

One of the concerns for India as they figure out Gill's replacement is the surfeit of left-hand batters in their squad. They had six in their XI in Kolkata - five in their top eight - and Sai Sudharsan and Padikkal, the two specialist batters vying to come into the line-up, also bat left-handed. The left-hander-heavy nature of India's line-up had advantaged offspinner Simon Harmer, the Player of the Match in Kolkata, significantly.

Kotak suggested there had been undue focus on the offspinner-vs-left-hander match-up, and pointed out that South Africa also played Keshav Maharaj, a left-arm spinner, at Eden Gardens, which should have advantaged India's line-up.

"You tell me one thing, they had a left-arm spinner also. If we had seven right-handed batsmen, then? They had a left-arm spinner also, and an offspinner also. I believe that you have to play well. Offspinner bowling to left-hander does not mean left-hander has to get out. We had two left-arm spinners [in the first Test], they had nine right-handers; did they get out? So maybe that thing is a little overrated."

Overrated or not, India will still likely mull over the match-ups even as they prepare for

a Guwahati track that is set to be more forgiving to the batters than Kolkata was.

India's mandatory practice session two days out from the match gave some indication of who might come in for Gill. The first four batters who came out to bat in the nets were Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul, Washington Sundar and Dhruv Jurel. The first three had been India's top three in Kolkata, and Jurel had batted at No. 4 in the second innings, in Gill's absence. Sai Sudharsan was next into the nets.

Padikkal, meanwhile, did not bat in the early part of the practice session, but was seen bowling part-time offspin in the spinners' net.

Seam-bowling allrounder Reddy, who was released from the squad in Kolkata so he could play in India A's limited-overs series against South Africa A, was back in training, and bowled alongside Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj and Akash Deep in the fast bowlers' net.

Axar did not bowl initially, and only joined his team-mates some 45 minutes or so into the session.

None of this necessarily points to India's possible selection. Players have their own individual preferences for what kind of training they do, and how much, leading into games.

But with a more balanced pitch than Kolkata expected on Saturday, India may not feel the need for a fourth spin bowler and a second left-arm orthodox spinner. If Sai Sudharsan replaces Gill, Reddy coming in for Axar would help India maintain the same balance of left- and right-hand batters they had in Kolkata. With a decent amount of grass on the pitch two days out from the Test, there is a chance Reddy could be a useful option with the ball too.

ESPNcricinfo

MEET THE EMINENT WRITER

جول اینڈ کشمیر اکاڈمی آف آرٹس، کچھ اینڈ لینگویجز

چچے
بہو پاپیہ کارنن تو

ملاقات

پرو فیسر شاد رمضان

تاریخ: 22 نومبر 2025
وقت: 11:00 بجے

جائے: کانفرنس ہال، نیو ریل سیرنٹر
توہمہ چھتہ تھری سینٹر شریک کرچہ و ڈیو واپس دعوت

پاپیہ اقبال (ڈیپارٹمنٹ)
ڈاکٹر محمد ارمینہ راتھ (اسٹنڈنڈ)
مہیال ماحید (اسٹنڈنڈ)
بانی قوری - سبیل انصاری

ہرونر گور (JKAS)
سیکرٹری

عدیل سلیم (JKAS)
(پیشہ سیکریٹری)

www.jkasi.gov.in
twitter.com/jkasiofficial
facebook.com/jkasiofficialpage
instagram.com/jk.asi

نور دین شریوادیو، نور گوڈ
لویا کمان (ڈاکٹر) گوڈ (ڈاکٹر) ماسا کمان

دیار ادب بانگل

تقریب رسم رونمائی

کاتر شریوادیو

ارزتھ

شاعر: مرحوم غلام محمد غنی

مقام: گورنمنٹ ڈگری کالج پٹن
زمانہ: 22 نومبر 2025
وقت: 11:00 بجے

توہمہ چھتہ تھری سینٹر شریک کرچہ و ڈیو واپس دعوت

انعام: مندر: ریاض الدن غنی / عبدالجلیل شمس

3RD CRPF CUP T20 CRICKET TOURNAMENT KICKS OFF IN SRINAGAR, AIMS TO EMPOWER KASHMIRI YOUTH

■ **FAROOQ RATHER**

SRINAGAR, NOV 22: The 3rd edition of the CRPF Cup T20 Cricket Tournament is set to begin today at the Sher-e-Kashmir Stadium in Srinagar, drawing enthusiastic response from the youth across the Kashmir Valley. The tournament, organised by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), aims to empower local youth through sports and provide a platform for emerging cricketing talent. DIG CRPF Sudhir Ku-

mar said the initiative is part of the force's efforts to engage positively with young people and promote unity through sports. "Sports bring people together and foster a sense of community. The CRPF Cup is our way of connecting with the youth and encouraging them to use their potential in a constructive direction," he said.

A senior CRPF officer shared that the tournament will feature 16 teams from different districts. This includes six teams from Srinagar, three

each from Budgam and Ganderbal, along with last year's winner and runner-up teams. Additionally, teams from the Jammu & Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA) and Kashmir University will also compete. The tournament will follow a nine-day league-cum-knock-out format across multiple venues in Srinagar. Highlighting the growing popularity of the event, the officer said the CRPF Cup has become one of the most awaited cricket tournaments in the Valley. This

year's prize money has been increased, with the winners set to receive ₹2 lakh and the runners-up ₹1.7 lakh. Awards such as Man of the Match for each game and Man of the Series have also been enhanced.

To promote youth participation, only 16 registered players from each team will be allowed to compete, and each squad must include at least three under-19 and two under-23 players.

Local players and youth expressed excitement and appre-

ciation for the tournament. Many said the CRPF has been providing valuable opportunities for young athletes in Kashmir. They praised the transparency in team selection through live draws and welcomed the increase in prize money, seeing it as a sign of the CRPF's commitment to the welfare of Kashmiri youth. The participants thanked the CRPF and hoped the force would continue to organize such platforms that inspire and uplift young talent in the region.

LUBAAB PUBLICATIONS

ONE STOP SOLUTION FOR ALL PRINTING NEEDS

NEWSPAPER | BOOKS | FLYERS | LOGO | FLEX | MAGAZINES
VISITING CARDS | BROCHURES | 3D BOARDS | COVER PAGES
WEDDING CARDS | CALLIGRAPHY | WALL PAINTINGS

9999038812
9419008414

Radio Colony,
Gund Hassibhat, Lawaipora Srinagar-190017

HEADLINES TODAY INVITES CONTRIBUTIONS

Are you a writer, poet, storyteller, columnist, or feature writer with a passion for literature or health writings? Headlines Today offers a platform to share:

Literature Section: Well-crafted essays, literary articles, reflections, and creative writings.

Health Section: Well-researched articles, expert columns, and in-depth feature reports from professionals and specialists.

Send your contributions to:
Dr Basharat Khan
Honorary Editor: Literature & Health
Sections (HT) at
chogalwriter76@gmail.com

YOUR WORDS CAN INSPIRE, INFORM, AND IGNITE; LET THEM BE HEARD.

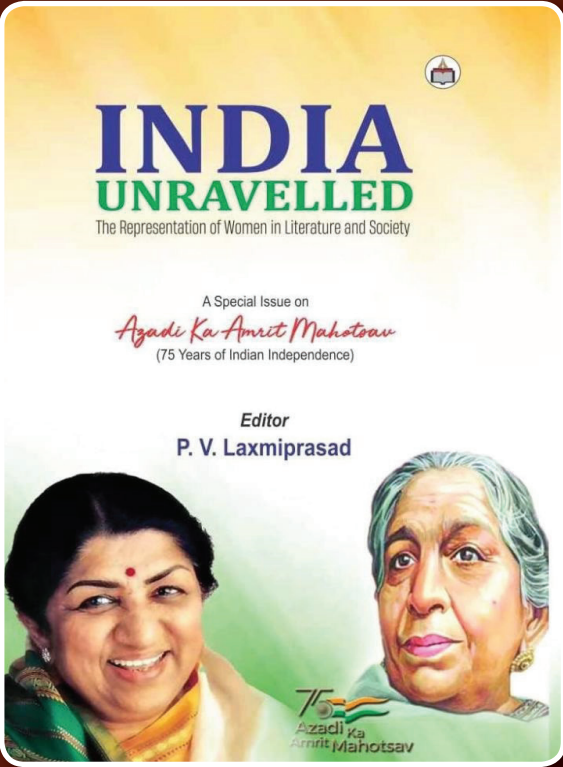


HT Saturday

LitStream

WEEKLY SUPPLEMENT OF DAILY HEADLINES TODAY

Srinagar • Saturday, November 22, 2025 • Issue No: 14 • Volume: 1 • Pages: 12



Representation of Women in Literature

4



Habba Khatoon: Through a Poetic Lens

7



SWEET HOME

2



Sweet Home

2



Rereading Mujtaba Farooq's "The Last Cigarette"

3

Representation of Women in Literature



4



Faith as a Force for Harmony

6

Habba Khatoon: Through a Poetic Lens

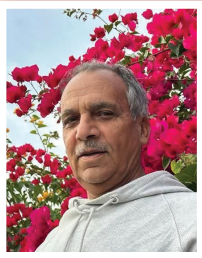


7

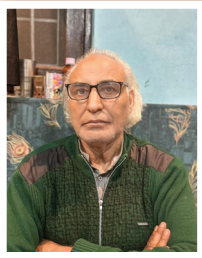
POETRY CORNER



Maria Kolovou Roumelioti



Majrooh Rashid



Ali Shaida



Elpiola Lluka



Akram Sidiqui



Subhrasankar Das

5

SWEET HOME



Naveema Ahmad Mahioor

Be it politics, technology, or human values, everything from innovations to experiments to attitudes has mostly reached my home from the developed world.

We in the Eastern bloc do accept them blindfolded, though always blaming the West for its onslaught on our value system or robbing us of our cultural traditions.

I never bought this story. They, my family, call me rebel. It was after the Second World War, the family system in the West underwent tremendous change where every human, irrespective of gender, colour, or status began to be treated as equal, with the same choices and opportunities.

This was especially the woman who made her place in every forbidden territory including Church and Parliament. And, it took ages to reach my home. Living in the West for many years made me realize that capitalism has cost the West its comfort zone of life, "the home" to some extent.

Society and the governments have found their way of dealing with the issues, springing out of liberal movements and the digital revolution. This has made life a little easier not only for the vulnerable generations of society but sounded more pragmatic and dignified, keeping in view the pressures and responsibilities of the modern lifestyle in a competitive world.

I can curse the West for its openness, promiscuity, or breakdown of the family, but I admire it also for the solutions it provided to safeguard every section of society.

Old, women or kids, etc...even
now animals.

Bad or good system, it is working and it is a big relief too. Maybe my mother, my aunt, or my sisters will ridicule this good or bad system, I don't care. What I care to see a smile on eighty-year-old Martha, the handholding of dying Peter, or

the homecoming of dying itself, or the homely atmosphere created for Stacy. I know ultra-liberalism has serious repercussions for society and the basic institution of the home has reached over the edge.

Are we, in the East, not also having the crude form of social evils now, or is the 'concept of relationship' still intact despite our mad race to reach beyond the boundary the West has stopped now to take look back at it?

Admit it; we tend to put every evil under the carpet until it becomes the volcano to break families, mar-



riages, and relations. Look around, my joint family system has died ages ago.

Looking after old parents has become a burden for many, do we care for them the way they cared for us? I often ask those who lecture me on eastern values and home comforts. I cannot tolerate this hypocrisy...

Many in my hometown do often accuse me of bringing in discourse the new concepts of family relations as if I am forcing them to get out of the rotten relations.

"Bear it until you kill each other. Keep up the appearance of caring old parents until you find them dead in their solitary confinement situations". I told my students in one of the classes when parents the next day prevented their daughters from seeing me.

I lost additional income from extra classes but did try my luck at some other places. Nobody seemed ready to realize the reality of our society.

The miseries of old parents who had to live a life of destitution were again a forbidden subject in my community. Is it because society's harshness and crudeness demand them to keep their mouth shut or they have become brutalized by the growing demands of modern life?

A recent visit to a few “old people’s homes” in the suburban of London opened my eyes and thought to share this experience back home with my elder sister. She didn’t listen to me and hung the phone in the middle of the conversation.

The old home had elderly people who prefer to stay there despite having children or another family they have raised earlier. In one of the old homes, there were thirty elders, mostly women in the age group of sixty to ninety. They were all gathered in a big hall, decorated

ed and furnished with small coffee tables around, coffee machines, and trays of biscuits nicely kept in one corner for them.

My earlier perception was quite different. I was expecting old, bitter, and haggard women in a very pitiable condition and thinking how I will give them hope or make them laugh for some time. Because I had the experience of meeting my old people back home in a very horrible situation. They only wait for death.

Well, while seeing oldies in London home laughing and conversing with each other in ease and a calm atmosphere, it was, in fact, me who needed some comfort and encouragement. They needed to push me to laugh with them.

I learned that every person in this home has paid twenty to thirty thousand pounds for the living and care costs which have been paid either by their savings or earnings after giving a share of inheritance to their children who are enjoying their own life and responsibilities away from them.

In Britain only, there are thousands of such homes and more coming every day due to the increasing population of older people. This has become a lucrative business but the homes have to follow strict rules and regulations on hygiene, health, and care of every individual professionally.

Old people were having a story session, sharing the best moments of their life and boasting about the achievements in their careers or upbringing of children or prefer to live in an old home away from relations and friends.

The stories were different from those I have heard in the Women's Commission of Jammu and Kashmir where as old as eighty-year women came for help to get back their confidence, self-esteem, and dignity.

Most of the women own nothing, not a share in the property, and had no control over their earnings. Every single penny was spent on the education of children, house building, and marriages and even, the transferred title of the property to them.

We might have this impression that we live in a value-based society, look after our old parents and relations but the story is half glass empty. Many oldies are suffering silently due to societal pressures, stigma, or the fear of losing the shelter at the last stage of their life.

After the story session in this English old home was over, I spoke to a few women who have been living there for quite a long time. One could feel the dignity and confidence in them despite age, tremor, and poor health. Something seemed different. I felt so contented by their attire, attitude, and etiquette. I wished I could have found these attributes in Fazi of Kupwara whose property was taken by her brother-in-law after her husband's death even though her husband had transferred all land and house in her name. Her fault was that she was a woman, old and widowed, and couldn't find one human to help her.

Watching their elegance was like watching Jane Austen's Ball in "Pride and Prejudice" which gives you a feel of English aristocracy, grandeur, and aesthetics. They spoke about their families and relations in this retirement home; there was no mention of deceit, loot, exploitation, or abuse by children. It was their choice to stay in an old home and feel dignified. "We don't want to live on the pity of relations who have their own life to take care of". Barlow told me.

Though, Barlow, eldest in this group, spoke to me with a little pain in her voice, "Having families and relations is not enough, having someone around with care and love is different. That is not possible when your children have their own families to look after and you don't want to become one of the packages in the family. If we can afford the cost of our living in a retirement home what is the harm in enjoying it too. One must not compromise with self-esteem".

I was thinking, "Why is Barlow different from Safia who lives in the remote village of Sepdan in Kashmir who has five sons with dozens of grandchildren? She had a huge property that got divided among five sons leaving the mother only choice to stay with any son she likes. She made this asset with unpaid labour for seventy years, even now she is rearing livestock or caring for grandkids but nothing is left in her name. At times, when there is an argument with any son, she has to take refuge in a neighbour's house that then comes and begs sons to take her back in this old age.

I have met many families where the mother, wife, or daughter has

Rereading Mujtaba Farooq's "The Last Cigarette"



Dr Rosie Patangia

Mujtaba Farooq's short story "The Last Cigarette" a fantastic short story was featured in the 13th issue of LitStream, the literary weekly supplement of The Daily Headlines Today, published from Srinagar, J&K. LitStream has earned a global readership for its consistent publication of fiction, short stories, and poetry of exceptional intellectual depth and emotional resonance.

I have been following this distinguished literary supplement regularly through its LitStream Facebook page, e-paper, and LitStream book.

The story "The Last Cigarette" is a haunting vignette that dramatizes the act of smoking not as a casual indulgence but as a metaphor for grief, alienation, and existential decay. The story unfolds in a public setting where a man, scarred and broken, smokes under the gaze of a judgmental crowd. The narrator—revealed at the end to be a dog—observes the scene with piercing detail, transforming a mundane act into a meditation on human suffering, social hypocrisy, and identity. Farooq's narrative is not linear but impressionistic, layering sensory images, social commentary, and psychological insight. The story's power lies in its ability to turn a cigarette into a symbol of mortality, memory, and rebirth. Yet, it also raises questions about narrative excess, ambiguity, and the balance between metaphor and realism. The central figure is not merely a smoker but a man ostracized by society. The crowd around him—mothers shielding children, businessmen flaunting Rolexes, college girls recoiling, teenagers calculating status—embodies collective judgment. Each group projects its anxieties and prejudices onto him, reducing him to a symbol of immorality. The mother's whispering frames him as a cautionary tale. The businessmen's pity is tinged with smugness, reinforcing class superiority. The girls' disgust equates him with rot, while the boys commodify his cigarette brand as a marker of class.

Farooq critiques how society dehumanizes individuals, turning personal grief into public spectacle. The smoker becomes a scapegoat for collective fears. The man's smoking is described as "grief finding its way



through the nostrils." His coughs, scars, and red eyes suggest a war within—a life devastated by trauma. The cigarette is not pleasure but ritualized mourning. Each puff is both a cry and a wound.

Farooq portrays him as a living corpse, inhaling smoke in exchange for memories. This paradox—alive yet dead, present yet absent—captures existential collapse. The act of smoking becomes a metaphor for consuming oneself, for burning identity into ashes. The climax centers on the "last cigarette." It is not merely tobacco but a symbol of rebirth. The man smiles at the thought of finishing his grief, of killing an identity judged by others. By saving the last puff, he postpones transformation. This gesture suggests agency: he refuses to let society dictate his end. The last cigarette becomes a threshold between death and renewal, between being "a bad man" and becoming "someone else—unjudged, unknown." The crowd's reactions expose hypocrisy. Those who judge him—businessmen, mothers, students—are themselves complicit in other forms of decay: materialism, classism, moral policing. Farooq suggests that society condemns visible vices (smoking) while ignoring invisible ones (greed, vanity, cruelty). The Rolexes tick "silently, but still could be heard"—a metaphor for time wasted in superficial pursuits. The girls' scarves symbolize purity, yet their disgust masks fear of contamination. The boys' obsession with brands reflects consumer-

ist indoctrination. Farooq's story is saturated with symbols, sometimes overwhelming but undeniably powerful.

Cigarette symbolises grief, memory, mortality, identity. Each puff is a wound, each ash a memory. Ashtray (steel bowl) refers to containment of grief, ritual burial of memories. Boots with loose laces symbolise instability, repeated falls, scars of life. The umbrella without rain suggests misplaced protection; the sunflower in black paper suggests beauty suffocated by grief.

Biscuits left on the floor can be seen as a gesture of kindness or futility, perhaps a dog's reward, linking to the narrator's identity. The dog narrator sees without judgment, embodying innocence and loyalty. Its perspective critiques human hypocrisy.

The revelation that the narrator is a dog reframes the entire story. Until the final line, the voice seems human, empathetic yet detached. The twist destabilizes the reader: the dog's gaze is purer, untainted by human prejudice.

This choice is both brilliant and problematic. Brilliant, because it exposes human cruelty through non-human eyes. Problematic, because it risks undermining the narrative's gravitas—some readers may find the twist gimmicky. Yet, the dog's perspective emphasizes that true compassion often lies outside human society.

Farooq's prose is rich in sensory detail: the smell of smoke, the sight

The Last Cigarette



When I saw him pouring the ash from the tip of his cigarette into a small steel bowl — fair enough to call an ashtray — my mind didn't just see a mere act.

I could see his index finger pointing the ash from the tip of his cigarette into a small steel bowl — fair enough to call an ashtray — my mind didn't just see a mere act.

I stared into his good eye — the one that didn't stare back.

From this distance, I could just see that it wasn't him who was sitting and smoking, but rather a corpse — still breathing, still inhaling smoke in exchange for memories that had devastated his comestiousness.

Everyone around him was staring too, some had already built their first impressions — cruel, judgmental — they must have associated his character and labeled him immoral.

I was sure this was happening. I could see it in their eyes.

A mother was making sure her son wouldn't catch the odour of smoke, whispering warnings in his ear — perhaps guiding him on what not to do, or simply, what a bad man looks like.

Some men, seated on chairs, wore navy-blue suits and dark-brown shoes pointed enough to dig the earth — yet not grounded. Their suits held buttons that tickled slightly, but still could be heard. Their eyes revealed something glib mixed with satisfaction. Somewhere, they were happy they weren't him.

College girls held their scarves close to their nostrils, as if there were rotten meat near their feet.

I must say — a silent man is nothing but rotten; his dreams gulped by insomnia, his desires trapped in the throne of loneliness, his strength betrayed. The colour was not him — it was the essence of a man evaporating in unconscious puffs.

There were schoolboys too, different ages, mostly teenagers, staring at the cigarette held between his fingers — just to catch the faintest of breaths. Perhaps these kids were already victims of modern classism, and would calculate how much respect they could reap from their decency.

He took puffs with his eyes closed, lips pressed — his breath would be proof finding its way through the nostrils. I want to say if he heard the whistles, but if he had, he would have pretended the cigarette against anything he saw on his own skin — just to silence them.

He was, however, hardly caring for his own existence. He barely knew where he was sitting — or perhaps he wasn't sitting anywhere. I must say — he was the ghost he was only thinking.

He choked several times, dry coughs, but his eyes were not dry — they were dark red, as if a war was

being fought inside them, with bodies lying everywhere, drenched in blood, without hope of anyone coming to take them away.

On his face were marks — scars — imprints of slaps, the slaps of life, breaths that did more damage than the smoke itself.

What could have been the tragedy with him? Or was he the tragedy himself? I could do nothing except stare.

I wanted to look away — to see anything but him — but the odour kept hitting my reflexes. This time, I looked away from his hands and towards his feet.

He wore black boots with wired laces, tied in a hurry — or simply with carelessness. A few drops would unlace them, and he might fall. I guess he already did — his knees were covered in sand-dust area. I was sure he was bleeding beneath the pants. Yet he was committing the same mistake again — he must fall again.

His ignorance to everything was attractive. I'm sure he was bleeding beneath the skin, but all he did was take another puff — no other gesture, no other cry. This was the only cry.

There was mud around his boots, as if he had travelled across wet graves and slipped there several times. But I couldn't bet on it — even in a grave full of dead bodies, he would have been the most dead. Maybe he came after burying him.

On his right side was an umbrella. On his left, a small dog wrapped in black paper. And outside — it wasn't raining. Was he mad? or was he seeing something we couldn't — a hope?

His cigarette was nearly finished. He crushed it in the ashtray softly, as if he wanted to be kind to the memories that were now ashes.

I could see a sense of relief on every face around, but his wrinkles stayed the same. He reached for his chest pocket, took out the cigarette

box. When he opened it — there was just one last cigarette left. He smiled — perhaps because it was the last of his grief. A bad man was about to die — a man judged for his wounds, his courage, his grief.

He didn't pull it out. He saved this rebirth for another moment, for different people — perhaps for himself. The last cigarette would kill an identity he was not.

After it, he would be someone else — unjudged, unknown.

He got up and left five biscuits on the floor. He was staring at one too. I don't know where we were, or who he was, or who all those people were. But I knew something — not the man.

I'm glad I was a dog.

(Disclaimer: The act of smoking in this short story serves as a literary metaphor for compulsion and happiness. It does not promote or romanticize smoking.)

This intensity creates atmosphere but sometimes veers into melodrama. The repetition of death imagery risks desensitizing the reader. Yet, the cumulative effect is haunting.

The story relies on repetition—of odour, grief, judgment. This reinforces monotony, mirroring the smoker's ritual. However, it occasionally feels excessive, diluting impact.

Farooq avoids clear exposition. We never know the man's backstory, the setting, or the narrator's identity until the end. This ambiguity invites interpretation but may frustrate readers seeking clarity.

The lack of narrative resolution—what happens after the last cigarette?—is deliberate. The story is about the moment, not the plot. The tone oscillates between empathy and condemnation. The narrator sympathizes with the smoker yet critiques society. The dog's neutrality adds irony: humans judge, animals observe. Symbolic richness of the story is mention-worthy. The cigarette as grief is a powerful metaphor.

The story exposes hypocrisy of class, morality, and consumerism. Narrative twist is interesting. The dog narrator reframes the story, adding depth. Vivid imagery creates a haunting mood.

Overuse of death imagery risks

CONT. ON PAGE 06

Representation of Women in Literature



Dr Rupali Sethi

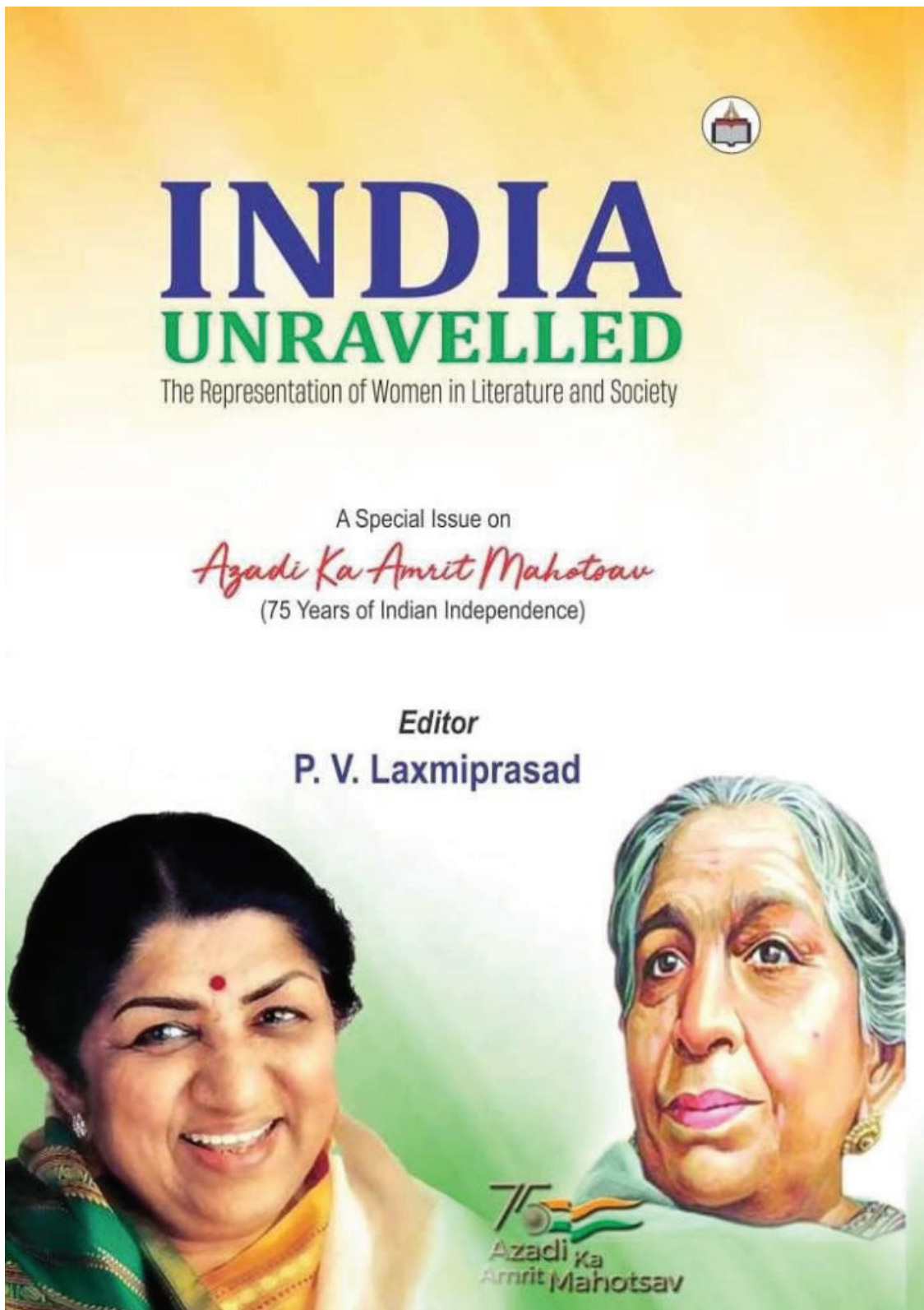
The book entitled “India Unrav-
elled: The Representation of
Women in Literature and
Society” emerges as a remarkable
compendium that intertwines the
literary, historical, and cultural
trajectories of Indian womanhood.
Published as a special issue com-
memorating Azadi Ka Amrit Mahot-
sav, this volume, edited by Dr. P.V.
Laxmiprasad, is both a scholarly
tribute and a critical reflection on
seventy-five years of women’s rep-
resentation in Indian life and letters.

The book's Preface, penned by Dr. Laxmiprasad himself, sets the tone for the collection. It moves from the Vedic to the contemporary, presenting a sweeping survey of women's evolution in Indian society. The editor's deeply personal engagement—shaped by his reverence for his mother and inspired by iconic figures such as M.S. Subbulakshmi, Indira Gandhi, and Kalpana Chawla—frames the collection as both intellectual inquiry and emotional homage. His reflections combine historical insight with personal conviction, making the preface a mini-treatise on the resilience and creativity of Indian women.

Comprising thirty-seven essays by eminent academics, the volume explores a rich diversity of themes—from mythic heroines like Sita, Draupadi, and Akkamahadevi to modern exemplars such as Sudha Murthy, Kamala Das, and Justice R. Banumathi. The essays collectively illuminate how women's roles, voices, and images have been shaped, silenced, or celebrated in Indian literature and culture.

Among the standout contributions are Basavaraj Naikar's essays, which blend literary criticism with social commentary. His readings of historical and religious figures—Rani of Jhansi and Akkamahadevi—revive the intersection between gender and patriotism. Tamali Neogi's comparative study of Mahasweta Devi and Mahesh Dattani unearths the politics of the body, while P.C.K. Prem's mythological essays explore divine femininity through figures like Parvati and Devahuti. The essays on contemporary figures such as Sudha Murthy and Githa Hariharan link feminist expression to social reform, bridging academic discourse with lived experience.

What makes *India Unravell'd* compelling is its interdisciplinary breadth. The book does not confine itself to literary studies alone but expands into music, law, politics, and social activism. Essays on figures like M.S. Subbulakshmi, Kiran Bedi, and Mallu Swarajyam celebrate women as creators, adminis-



trators, and reformers, underscoring the idea that literature mirrors the evolving social landscape of India.

Critically, the book balances celebration with interrogation. While it honours the achievements of women across eras, it also exposes the enduring patriarchal structures that constrain them. The essays vary in style—some academic, others biographical—but together they create a mosaic of female representation in India's moral and cultural imagination.

However, the volume's expan-

siveness is also its limitation. The essays, though individually strong, occasionally lack thematic cohesion. A tighter editorial framework and a more rigorous critical lens might have sharpened its analytical depth. Yet, its strength lies in inclusivity—embracing both classical and contemporary voices, urban intellectuals and rural reformers, historical figures and literary creations.

Ultimately, *India Unravelled* stands as a sincere and substantial contribution to feminist literary studies in India. It invites readers to revisit the Indian woman not as

a passive symbol of tradition but as a dynamic force of continuity and change. As the nation celebrates its seventy-fifth year of independence, this volume reminds us that the story of India's freedom and progress is incomplete without acknowledging the women who shaped its soul.

(Dr Rupali Sethi is a scholar of English and Hindi Literature. She is a regular columnist and book reviewer with several Newspapers of great repute. Her forte is feminist studies in literature.)

THIS SUNDAY - I WANT TO WRITE A SONG



I want to write a song
to be a mirror of the source
To speak of eyes that speak
only the language of beauty!
May its words be acts
of love, that lift you from
the hell of Hades
emptying the injustice!

I want to write a song
that praises your secret passages,
from ancient places
that were once yours!

Its words, like wine and nectar,
to flow through the grooves of the heart

Along with rhymes of Orpheus
Which were sung with a harp!

In a deserted crossroads
with my lantern extinguished
I walk and all the time I beg:
A spark, a burning coal!

And I wait, word by word,
to build the old Gate

With all that memory to carry on
the estrus of remembrance!

Quietude



After a long wait,
the patient moon slept
along with the stars and sky fairies
wearing a quilt of quietude.
But there, someone resembling a nymph
is leaning on the sill of a window
of the last house on the top
left ajar by the winds of a bygone age,
and watching the dance of silence.
Who is she?
And how can I interact with her
as there is no ladder with me
that I would climb and listen to her yarn?
I am not Yeats, who lost everything
and returned to his heart,
though turned into a bone shop,
to start afresh.
I have no earth under my feet,
but I too have a dream waking on my eye-
lashes.

(An Ode To My Myna ... The Mahi)



There wasn't a Solomon
In the realm of my heart
To listen to her songs—
The songs, heard since the ears' first thought.
The festival spread over a week, so
Landed only to be lost.
The dust was blown away by the wind,
Occurred in the midst of the rhythm.
The small pieces of bread
She picked up from the page of my hand,
Rewriting the lines never destined for my wish.
Whispered in my ear while resting on my heart
A take-off, a flight, a dream broken.
I searched for her in the lands;
I have been wondering for ages.
In the skies, I kept gazing since the First KUN.
I penned down the silence of her company,
though short-lived,
My Myna, the Mahi, whom I called
For the habitats of Solomon's realm of coexistence.

"The Influence Of Art"



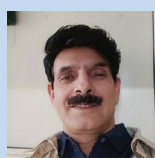
Art is the air we can breathe,
the oxygen are the melodical notes...
While singing a song the sadness stays
beneath,
and an innocent smile in our chest votes...

Art influences our soul to grow,
and paint our mind with colours...
A million dreams the nights glow,
while our morning are blooming flowers...

Art makes all the thoughts golden,
the happiness walks without price...
We never know how the love is holden,
when creating art, we melt the ice...

(Elpiola Lluka is a poetess, writer, singer, songwriter and wrote some rock & metal songs and ballads for different albanian artist in english and albanian language and released some cover songs. Her poems are published globally.)

Monkey.....



Oh you, the monkey,
You have two eyes, two ears, two legs, two
arms, and so on.
You eat to live, sleep to leap into ecstasy,
You run helter-skelter for the sake of simple
joy.
A heart of gold you carry , no prejudice, no
preoccupations,
No ill perceptions, no hedonism, no hypoc-
risy.
You imitate only to affirm your innocence
A physical tail is the only exception you pos-
sess.
I, too, have all the physical features you do
But I live to eat, slip into sleeplessness,
Run amok to crush emotions and sever rela-
tionships.
I imitate only to establish a dominion of false-
hood,
A facade of fakery and frivolity.
...And the tale of my tell -tale, deceitful and
turncoat nature
Spans beyond what you could ever imagine
A grotesque, cacophonous theater of betrayal,
Built on arrogance, manipulation, and dis-
cord.
You are the real human face.
I am the real monkey
Darwin's proverbial monkey.

THE SAINT



Curling the fingers,
I raise the middle one to the vault of heaven—
The dear city has stored
the tempest's dread in its pocket,
A rare, dazed umbrella hidden in the denim fold.
In the very heart of that daze,
driving a barb in deep,
I rush to banish the Spring
In the trance of sleep,
the colour of all banners is black.
and the blind dove senses the hunter
Under the shade of a gargantuan shameplant,
stand face to face
Ifrit & the fairy
In any shadowed corner of the manifesto,
Was it inscribed that the frozen retina
must be consumed daily?
The postage stamp is lost.
Seated in a flying palanquin,
the son of a boar shakes the reins
Throwing the apple skyward,
ballot box in hand,
Newton scampers towards nowhere...

Faith as a Force for Harmony



Mohammad Abas
abheylone@yahoo.com

Man, the crown of creation and the appointed steward of the earth, is expected to act with reason, responsibility, and restraint so as to preserve order and ensure the general well-being of the planet. Endowed with the inherent capacities for both construction and destruction, he stands in constant need of moral discipline. To temper his destructive inclinations, God has sent religion as an ethical guide and a moral force.

Religions and prophets serve as divine channels meant to cultivate God-centric humane values—faithfulness, honesty, truthfulness, justice, equality, empathy, brotherhood, and meritocracy. It must be noted that these God-rooted values are distinct from the often ambiguous and secular buzzword of “humanism.”



Whether it is the ethical principles of Hinduism—Ahimsa (non-violence as the supreme dharma), Satya (truthfulness), D na (generosity), compassion, empathy, respect for elders, forgiveness, self-control, and contentment; or the Christian core values of divine and human love, compassion, forgiveness, humility, integrity, faithfulness, and justice; or the Judaic ideals of human dignity, justice, compassion, repairing the world, and imitating divine attributes; or the Islamic emphasis on honouring the children of Adam and delivering justice impartially to friend and foe alike—each faith tradition accords the highest value

to human life, dignity, and honour.

Yet man has often taken these very religions and their sacred texts and used them against humanity. By misquoting, distorting, and wrenching divine commandments out of context, he has weaponised religion to promote fear, hatred, extremism, violence, intolerance, inequality, deceit, and bloodshed.

Rabindranath Tagore lamented this tragic inversion with timeless clarity:

The bigot insults his own religion
When he slays a man of another
faith.

Conduct he judges not in the light of reason.

In the temple he raises the blood-
stained banner

And worships the devil in the
name of God.

That which should make man
free,

They turn into fetters.

That which should unite,
That which should unite,

They turn into a sword.

That which should bring love

From the fountain of the Eternal,
They turn into a prison.

The principal cause of such misuse lies in the fact that religion, for many, is an emotional inheritance—an attachment, a sense of belonging—rather than a consciously examined discipline. As a result, teachings attributed to religion are seldom verified, questioned, or cross-checked, allowing destructive interpretations to take root and harm both humanity and its moral foundations.

What is urgently required today is the courage to pause, reflect, question, and critically examine any teaching claimed in the name of religion that promotes fatalism, hatred, or harm. Only then can religion reclaim its true role as a force for harmony and the elevation of the human spirit.

FROM PAGE 2...

SWEET HOME...

been left skin off despite the fact she is entitled to her share in every property family owns according to Muslim personal law.

We live in a fantasy world and leave relations to get rotten but never talk or accept the fact that we are encountering all those issues the West has faced during the process of its forward mobility. The West accepted and recognized the issue and found practical ways to sort it out so that the relations are not rotten to the point of no return.

Barlow tells me, "Human relations should be pragmatic, open, and honest and based on justice and equality. When it is considered a liability, it loses its sheen".

The “concept of relationship” has changed everywhere including in our society. Yet, we are in constant denial. My friend Saira would often remind me in college, “the relations need to understand each other’s problems and pressures rather than indulging in emotional compromise which sometimes befits this saying

in Kashmiri “hatukh wandeï rath natuch dimeini tresh ti”(you can take my blood but no water from my pitcher)’.

I would laugh then and never took it seriously.

She knew that I was a staunch supporter of a strong home in our close-knit society.

But, my family has lost its character as it has in every developing world. I am against those who ignore the current turmoil in our family system that has become so rotten

inside that impact heavily the old population whose dignity gets easily exploited at the altar of keeping up appearances.

I was fighting to open the first old home for women because they need love, compassion, and breathe in the fresh air. I will not let them die in suffocation and solitary confinement or wait for death to come.

Declare me a rebel, I don't care.

FROM PAGE 3...

Rereading Mujtaba...

melodrama. Ambiguity overloads. Lack of context may alienate readers. The story is more tableau than plot, relying on description rather than action. As to Dog twist, some may find it contrived, reducing seriousness.

Farooq's story resonates with existential literature—Camus' *The Stranger*, Kafka's "The Trial" where alienation and judgment dominate. Yet, unlike Camus' detached prose, Farooq's style is lyrical, almost poetic. His imagery recalls Bengali and Urdu literary traditions of metaphorical intensity. The cigarette motif echoes works like Julio Ramón

Ribeyro's *Only for Smokers*, where smoking symbolizes identity and rebellion. Farooq, however, infuses it with grief and social critique, making it uniquely his. At its core, "The Cigarette Puff" asks: what defines identity? Is it society's judgment or personal grief? The man's refusal to smoke the last cigarette suggests resistance to finality. He chooses to delay transformation, asserting agency amid collapse. The dog's perspective implies that human identity is fragile, easily destroyed by judgment. True understanding requires innocence—seeing without prejudice.

Mujtaba Farooq's "The Last Cigarette" is a powerful, if imperfect, meditation on grief, alienation, and identity. Through vivid imagery and symbolic layering, he transforms a cigarette into a metaphor for mortality and rebirth. The story critiques social hypocrisy, exposing how society condemns visible vices while ignoring deeper decay.

Its strengths lie in atmosphere, symbolism, and philosophical depth. Its weaknesses lie in excess and ambiguity. Yet, these flaws are part of its raw power. The final twist—that the narrator is a dog—forces readers to confront their own judg-

ments, reminding us that compassion often lies outside human.

About the reviewer

Dr. Rosie Patangia, Assistant Professor and Head of English at Naran-gi Anchalik Mahavidyalaya, Guwaha-ti, is a bilingual poet and co-author of several anthologies. Author of 200 Life Changing Quotes, she has received the ZIIET Teacher Innovation Award (2019), Knight Riders Creative Writing Award (2022), and AIM Out-standing Education Award (2025). She is a lifelong member of AIAER, INTACH, and Assam Sahitya Sabha.

Habba Khatoon: Through a Poetic Lens

Professor Muhammad Aslam

This essay will attempt to analyse the poems which are attributed to Zoon, aka Habba Khatoon, and see if they, in any way, tell us about who she really was. Scholars have used this poetry as an indicator of her marital failures and as a proof that she was either Zoon from Chandahar or Habba Khatoon of Srinagar. Was Zoon a peasant girl married to an illiterate and ill-tempered Aziz Lone, or was she Habba Khatoon from a noble family and married to her cousin in Srinagar? These questions will be the focal point of our discussion. We will use her poetry as a lens for minutely detailing whether her poems help us solve the riddle of her being the Chandahar Zoon or the Srinagarite Habba Khatoon. Later on, we will analyze the poems stylistically and see whether the language used is really that of a 16th-century poet or a modern poet of the last century.

Zoon or Habba Khatoon's Poetry?

As said earlier, there are three personas that have emerged out of our discussion of the historical accounts: Zoon from Chandahar, Habeeba, a pious court singer, and Habba Khatoon of Srinagar, belonging to a noble family. Since Habeeba's name occurs only in one Persian chronicle and is described only as a singer with a melodious voice, we have no reason to believe that she was the Habba Khatoon whose songs Kashmiris have been admiring and singing for centuries. I have also pointed out earlier that THE Zoon from Gurez is only a figment of imagination. We are left with THE Zoon from Chandahar and THE Habba Khatoon of Srinagar. Even if the former had been there, there is no proof, except the folklore, about her being from Chandahar and in a farmer's family. Assuming that she was a poet too, according to Wakhlu, she destroyed all her work before she died at Pandrethar where her supposed grave is. So, we are left with one Habba Khatoon from Shehr-e-Khas (Downtown) Srinagar. We will be looking at these poems critically to identify who this person was.

What kind of poems are they?

Habba's poems are basically lyrics, deeply personal, reflecting pain and the highest emotional stress. In common parlance, they are called *vaakh*, three-line stanzas with a refrain as the fourth line. To my mind, *Vaakh* in Kashmiri is *vedaakh* or *baakh* (wailing), the former meaning 'wailing' and the latter denoting 'wailing and crying in pain.' Both these expressions are still used in Kashmiri dialects. In South Kashmir, 'baakh tshataen' (to wail) is used when a female weeps



bitterly over the loss of her dear ones or if she is facing any great problems (like poverty) that she cannot solve. Veddakh din' means to mourn the death by crying and relating one's association with the deceased. Lal Ded wrote vaakhs, four-line lyrics, while Habba Khatoon used three-line stanzas whose rhyme scheme is ABA with a refrain, which is normally the second line of the beginning couplet. For illustrations, I am using Kamil's Habba Khatoon: Select Poems (1959; there are 12 poems in the anthology) and Kuliyaat-e-Habba Khatoon (1995), both published by J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, and Kuliyaat-e-Habba Khatoon (224), published by M/S Sheikh Mohammad Usman (hereafter Usman only). The former has used the traditional three-stanza with a refrain format, whereas the latter calls all poems 'ghazals,' which they are NOT. The ghazal consists of syntactically and grammatically complete couplets following an intricate rhyme scheme. Each couplet ends on the same radeef (word or phrase) and is preceded by the qafia (a rhyming word), appearing twice in the first couplet. This is called matla' in Urdu; the last couplet, where the poet uses his/her nom de plume (takhalus), is known as maqta'. Therefore, the pattern given in the Kamil collection is appropriate and in keeping with the poetic tradition in Kashmir. Also, in the Usman collection, there are 16 poems without takhalus, whereas in Kamil, there are 13. Some poems are very short (one or two stanzas). Kamil's anthology contains 50 poems, and the Usman collection consists of 53.

Vedaakh

Habba Khatoon's poems are vedaakh/vaakh (wailing) in nature, as they manifest her agony and suffering through carefully chosen words, as in:

chon fīraaq chum lalavunye

a
son kun te lagihi naav

b
vanta kath kvuth myon aasunve

madun kor kunye gov
refrain

**Your absence burns through
me with a restless ache.**

**If only the drifting boat would
turn once more toward our shore.**

**Tell me, what worth has this
life of mine now?**

In which direction has my beloved gone?

Lal Ded would say:

leka ta thokka peth sheri hetsam
nyanda sapanim path bronth
taani

*lalla ches kal zanh no tshenim
ada yali sapanim vepihe kyah*

I bore the weight of taunts and bitter tongues.

Rumours rose like storms from every corner of my past and present.

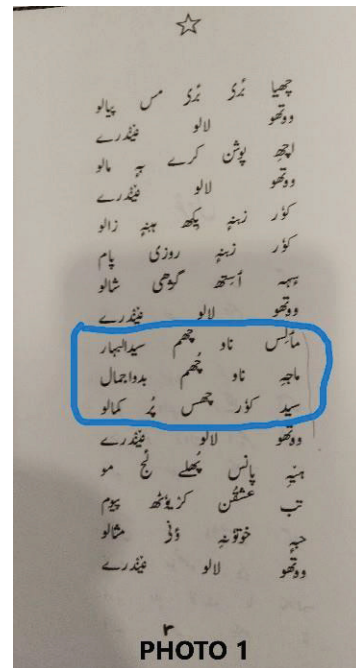
Yet I remained Lalla, faithful
to the ache within my heart.

And when I finally reached the goal I longed for,

No whisper, no wound, no
darkness could touch me.

Vatsun is also a lyrical composition with a deep emotional outburst, as we find in the poems attributed to Habba Khatoon. In a way, both *vaakh* and *vatsun* mean the same—lyrical poems that manifest deep anguish and emotional distress. Both Lal Ded and Habba Khatoon express their personal grief, as both are believed to have suffered at the hands of their respective in-laws. However, Lala went into mysticism, while Habba Khatoon used the lyrical form, *vedaakh/vaakh*, as a painful cry for the sufferings that she had to undergo.

I have maintained earlier that the Habba songs are as confusing as her historical accounts. I would try to demonstrate how folk songs have been mixed up with some lyrics to show that they belong to Habba Khatoon, the one present through her poems. While going through these songs, I felt that unless Wakhlu's (1994) claim is rebutted, there is no scope for any doubt that Zoon of Chandahar, even if she had existed, had burnt her work before she died.



who our own historian, Dr Abdul Ahad, and Professor Shad Ramzan claim belonged to a noble family. I would like to make it clear that all the poems cited below are, to me, autobiographical. Here is the poem in which Habba Khatoon talks about her lineage (PHOTO 1). In the three marked lines, Habba Khatoon tells us the names of her father, mother, and her familial background. She says (I am providing photos of original texts with English transliteration and translation):

maelis naav chum sayidul bahar
maaji naav chum badval jamal
sayid kur ches pur kamalo

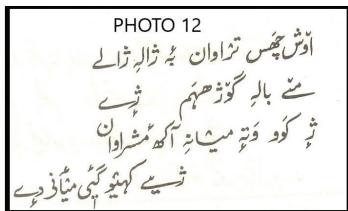
My father bears the noble name Savvidul-Bahar.

My mother's name is Badwal-Jamal.

And I — a daughter of the
Savvids — am grace refined.

Habba Khatoon was a ‘Sayyid,’ a prefix that was used by a large number of missionaries who came to Kashmir with Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani, popularly known as Amir-e-Kabeer, in whose name there are khanqahs (shrines) in almost all parts of Kashmir; the most revered one is in Downtown Srinagar at Kalashpora. Sayyids/Syeds claim a direct lineage with Prophet Mohammad (SAW). They claim to be on top of the social hierarchy, or “caste” system, among Muslims. It was later also adopted by many locals who claim to be descendants of the Persian Sayyids. Habba’s parents’ names also sound quite alien to local names.

As we can see, in the encircled lines, the first two lines do not match the rest of the poem in rhyme. They have “i” and “l” sounds at the end, and the last line has the usual rhyme “lo”–“kamalo.” Have they been interpolated? Kamil (1995) doesn’t contain these three lines. However, in Footnote 4 (pp. 17-18), Kamil says that this stanza was sung on Radio Kashmir by Mohammad Akbar and his chorus on 5 April



kiho gayi myaen' diy (Why are you cross with me?). She says:

osh ches traavan ba tsaale tsaale
meha baali gotshaham tsaey
tsa kovo vata myani aakh mae-
ravaan

tse kiho gayi myaen' diy

I am shedding tears as thick as hailstones.

All this wretched heart desires
is you.

Why do you keep forgetting the path that leads to me?

Why are you cross with me?

In another poem (PHOTO 12A) consisting of only six lines, the beginning couplet and a three-line stanza with a refrain. There is no maqta:

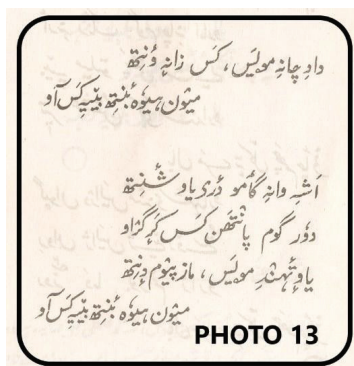
In this song, she is complaining about her lover having drifted away from her. Her parental home being far away ("door malyun chu"), it seems she is living alone and longing for her companion.

Earlier, we saw that Kamal of Jamalata was implored to come once and make Habba's life comfortable again. This imploring recurs in many poems, but we don't know who was angry with her—Kamal or someone else. As we know, Kamal was from Srinagar, but Habba was wedded away in some distant village—when, where, and how, that is not known. But the point is that Habba Khatoon did have a lover other than her husband, who seems to have come into the picture later. Whether it was Kamal from Srinagar or somebody else from the village where Habba Khatoon (of the poems)

Why this hatred towards me?

The poet has used 'sonn' (co-wife), translated here as 'rival', and her deluding the man, which has caused hatred in him towards his 'first wife'. 'Sonn' doesn't necessarily mean that the man had a fellow-wife. However, the lines do indicate that there was something wrong in the relationship between the couple.

In a poem (PHOTO 13) with a refrain, *myon hyu banith beyiy kas aav* (Who else has calamity fallen so fierce as on me?), the narrator is complaining to her lover that she



was dying in his love. She laments:
daadi chyani moyas kas zana
vanith

myon hyu banith beyiy kas aav
ashi vani gaemo daer'yaav
shanith

door gom panthan kas kara graav
yada taenhdi moyas maaz pyom
daezith

myon hyu banith beyiy kas aav
I am dying in your love, but
whom can I tell?

Who else has calamity fallen so fierce as on me?

My tears have filled up the
river

He has gone away from me;
who to complain?

Dying in his longing, I've
grown frail

Who else has calamity fallen so fierce as on me?

Habba Khatoon's Songs—A Case of Disputed Authorship and Poetic Merit

The above discussion ultimately underscores the textual and historical instability surrounding the songs attributed to Habba Khatoon. Their heterogeneous character—the absence of a *maqta* in many songs and the sudden, often contradictory autobiographical interpolations—collectively makes us believe that these songs do not have a single authorial voice. The scattered references to lineage, social status, and romantic cobwebs raise more contradictions than coherence. Especially when we look at a suffering wife (God knows whether that of Kamal or the village guy) and/or the passionate beloved longing for her lover, we feel that there is a lot of confusion in what is being said and how history has treated this figure. The way divergent narratives are given in some songs, it is difficult to get a convincing biographical sketch of this much-hyped ‘classical’ poet. Their inconsistencies cast doubt on long-standing assumptions about Habba Khatoon’s life and identity—such as the names of her parents (Sayyid al Bahar and Badwal Jamal) and her beloved (Kamal)—that are internally inconsistent with the persona presented in the majority of the verses. For instance, the figure of ‘Sayyid koor’ (a high-caste daughter) doesn’t align with the more prevalent persona of a mistreated daughter-in-law in a distant village, pining for her lost love. The three most significant stanzas, where the narrator is talking about her lineage, social status, love affair, and Kamal, appear, to me, as later interpolations due to their divergent rhyme schemes. The poems raise compelling questions about the poet’s life:

- Why was she married far away in a town or village?
- What happened to her suitor who loitered around her and whom she couldn't confide in her mother about?
- What happened to Kamal, her 'yaar', for whom she continues to wait—*āki latti yiyi ham na* (If only you came once)?
- How come a "Sayyid Koor" worked on a spinning wheel and fetched water in a pitcher?

- Are we right in our assumption that the Sayyid woman and the village lady are two different personas?

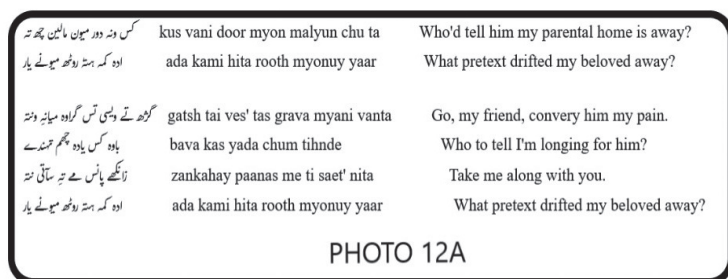
To these and many more questions, no answers are provided, resulting in a collection of unresolved emotional vignettes. This leads to the conclusion that the songs function more as simple, commonplace folk songs (rof or vanvun) than as well-crafted poems.

Just as important is the question of the literary merit of these songs. As mentioned above, most of them sound more like folk songs that we have been hearing for generations in weddings and/or Eid celebrations by womenfolk. They are formulaic and lack any philosophical depth.

We will look at the stylistic merit of the poems later. The simplicity of diction, repetitive phrases, and the absence of any serious themes give us the idea that the writer wasn't an accomplished poet but an insipid versifier.

However, a minority of songs display structural refinement and thematic gravity, pointing to the possibility that multiple hands were involved in composing songs and attributing them to Habba Khatoon, for some unknown reasons. For instance, a song whose refrain is *chumai baali tamana* (I have a longing) is attributed to a saint, Mirza Kamal-ud-din Badakhshi (whose shrine is at Hawal, Srinagar), even though Mirza Kamal wasn't a Kashmiri and couldn't write Kashmiri (see Abdul Ahad Azad, *History of Kashmiri Poetry and Literature*, vol 2, p. 220; Kamil 1995, Endnote 2, p. 95). Also, I couldn't find the poem whose one stanza Mr Taing had recited to my friend in support of Biswak being the last resting place of Habba Khatoon. The stanza goes like this: (Photo 14)

In short, Habba Khatoon, under investigation, who has been popularized for centuries as the most sung poet, is less a historical figure and more an enigmatic character produced by oral tradition and later insertions. A close study of the poems would enable us to figure out if the popular belief that Habba Khatoon really belonged to the 16th century is true, and whether her poetry is really that of a seasoned artist. We will therefore look at her diction linguistically and try to find out whether or not her songs are that old and stylistically elegant.



undergoes immense sufferings, none of the poems tells us that. In a very popular poem with a refrain, tse kihyo gayiy myaen' daey (Why this hatred towards me?), Habba tells her lover/husband:

tsae kamyu soni myani brm dit
nyunakho
tsekihiyo gayiy myaen' daey
tsak trav daey malala vonda chuy
no vivan

tsekihiyo gayiy myaen' daey
Which rival of mine deluded
you and took you away?

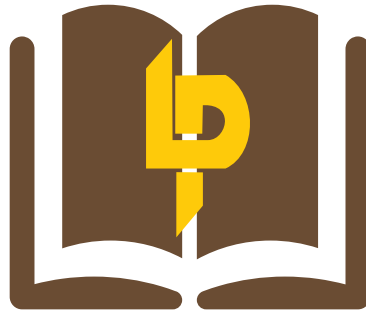
Why this hatred towards me?

Does your heart take pleasure in holding on to anger and disdain?

دوہ اکہ گریس گرژندہ بارہ زایس
وقت بنائوس پادشاہ بائے
شہ شایہ منزتہ کھوژس خودایس
پاونہ رایس چھنہ میانی مائے

*doh aki grees gari tsandahara zayas
waqtan banaevis padshah baay
tath shaehi manz ti khootsaes khodayas
yavana rayas chenna myaen' maay*
**Born in a farmer's home in Chandahar.
Fate made me queen.
Even in that splendour, I feared God.
My beloved—ah, he loves me not.**

(Photo 14)



LUBAAB
PUBLICATIONS

ONE STOP SOLUTION FOR ALL PRINTING NEEDS

NEWSPAPER | BOOKS | FLYERS | LOGO | FLEX | MAGAZINES
VISITING CARDS | BROCHURES | 3D BOARDS | COVER PAGES
WEDDING CARDS | CALLIGRAPHY | WALL PAINTINGS



9999038812
9419008414



**Radio Colony,
Gund Hassibhat, Lawaipora Srinagar-190017**

