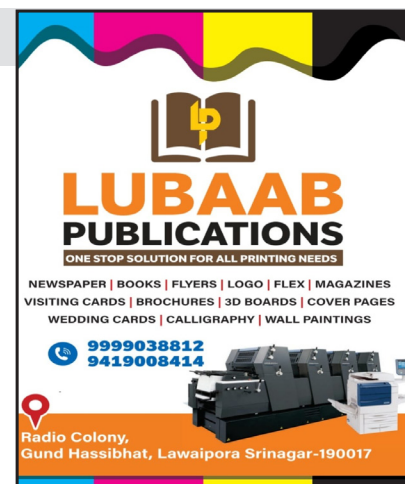


Srinagar
Tuesday
December 23 | 2025
03 Rajab1447 AH
Issue No: 301
Volume: 15
Pages: 12
Price: Rs 02/-

15TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

HEADLINES TODAY

Voice To The Voiceless



CM Omar Abdullah Unveils 'Samnvay', Showcasing J&K's Digital Governance Revolution

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, DEC 22: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Sunday released Samnvay, a coffee-table book capturing Jammu and Kashmir's transformative journey in digital governance and highlighting the technological initiatives implemented in collaboration with the Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics (BISAG-N).

The publication documents key technology-driven projects and innovations that have strengthened governance, enhanced administrative efficiency and improved public service

delivery across the Union Territory, particularly in its far-flung and geographically challenging regions.

The release ceremony was attended by Minister for Science & Technology and Information Technology Satish Sharma; Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani; Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo; Additional Chief Secretary, Higher Education Department Shantmanu; Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta; Commissioner Secretary, GAD and Information Department M. Raju; Secretary IT Piyush Singla; Special Director BISAG-N; Secretary School Education; CEO JKeGA, besides other senior officers.



Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister commended BISAG-N for developing practical and innovative solutions to complex governance challenges in Jammu and Kashmir, noting that several of these technological interventions hold relevance beyond the region.

Highlighting the significance of digitalisation in a territory marked by difficult terrain and extreme climatic conditions, CM Omar Abdullah said technology has become a vital tool in ensuring equitable access to government services. "Digital governance enables uniform and efficient service delivery, whether citizens reside in remote

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Terrorism, Drug Networks to Remain Under Constant Police Watch: DGP Nalin Prabhat

■ HT NEWS DESK / KNO

KATHUA, DEC 22: Reiterating the unwavering resolve of the Jammu and Kashmir Police to maintain peace and security, Director General of Police (DGP) Nalin Prabhat on Monday said that terrorism, drug trafficking and organised crime will remain under the constant and uncompromising watch of the force.

Addressing a gathering after inaugurating the 14th Police Martyrs Memorial T20 Cricket Tournament 2025-26 in Kathua, the DGP said that the Jammu and Kashmir Police is fully committed to eliminating all forms of anti-national and anti-social activities across the Union Territory. "Whether it is terrorism, drugs, gangsters or mafia networks, every such activity will remain firmly in our sights. Our objective is clear—to completely eradicate these threats from Jammu and Kashmir," he said, according to the news agency Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

Highlighting the sacrifices of police personnel, DGP Prabhat said that sporting events are being organised in the memory of 1,620 brave martyrs. In recognition of



● Turn on Page 2

Cabinet Clears 5-Marla Plots for Flood Victims, Pay Hike for VLW's

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

JAMMU, DEC 22: The Jammu and Kashmir Cabinet on Monday approved a series of welfare and administrative measures, including allotment of five-marla residential plots to families affected by floods and cloudbursts, and a significant enhancement in the salary structure of Village Level Workers (VLWs).

The decisions were taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and attended by all ministers, official sources said.

As part of relief measures for disaster-hit families, the Cabinet gave the green signal to a policy providing five marlas of land to people

● Turn on Page 2

First Major Snowfall Turns Gulmarg into Winter Wonderland, Sparks Tourism Optimism

■ HT NEWS DESK / KNO

GULMARG, DEC 22: The season's first significant snowfall has draped the renowned ski resort of Gulmarg in a glistening white blanket, reviv-

ing the Valley's winter charm and renewing hopes of a vibrant tourism season.

Visitors from different parts of the country were seen revelling in the fresh snow, capturing the scenic

beauty and praising the warmth and hospitality of the local people. Many tourists described the experience as unforgettable and urged others to visit Kashmir to witness

● Turn on Page 2

J&K gears up for year-long Mega Youth Engagement Programme

CS dedicates exclusive portal for UT-wide activities under this Programme

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, DEC 22: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today launched a dedicated portal for the implementation of a Mega Youth Engagement Programme across all districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

The launch took place in the presence of several Administrative Sec-

retaries, Deputy Commissioners and senior officers.

The programme will be steered by the Planning, Development & Monitoring Department (PD&MD) in coordination with multiple line departments to ensure large-scale, structured and meaningful engagement of youth across J&K.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief

Secretary emphasized the need for comprehensive, well-planned and youth-centric activities to channelize the energy, creativity and talent of young people in a productive direction.

He impressed upon departments such as Youth Services & Sports, Culture, Skill Development, School Education, Higher Education and DIPR to

● Turn on Page 2

CS Pushes PM-VBRY for Jobs in J&K

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, DEC 22: Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo today reviewed the implementation of the Prime Minister's

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HT EDITORIAL DESK

ABDUL AHAD FARHAAD

A Voice That Defined an Era Falls Silent

(1946 - 2025)

Legendary Broadcaster, Poet and Prolific Writer Abdul Ahad Farhaad Passes Away

Chief Patron Syed Sad-ud-Din Saidi, Editor-in-Chief Jahangir Bukhari Mourn Loss of Eminent Stalwart

SRINAGAR DEC 22: The world of broadcasting, literature and cultural expression plunged into deep mourning with the passing of legendary broadcaster, eminent poet and prolific writer Abdul Ahad Farhaad, whose resonant voice, thoughtful words and creative genius shaped generations and left an indelible imprint on the media landscape.

Team Headlines Today expressed profound grief over the demise of Abdul Ahad Farhaad, describing his passing as an irreparable loss not only to the field of broadcasting but also to the rich literary and cultural heritage of the region. Widely respected for his professionalism, intellectual depth and moral clarity, Farhaad Sahib was regarded as a towering figure whose contribution transcended time and medium.

In a condolence message, Chief Patron Syed Sad-ud-Din Saidi and Editor-in-Chief Jahangir Bukhari paid rich tributes to the departed stalwart, recalling his lifelong dedication to truthful communication, artistic excellence and human values. They said that Abdul Ahad Farhaad's distinctive voice, poetic sensibility and command over language made him a symbol of credibility and cultural pride.

"Abdul Ahad Farhaad was not merely a broadcaster; he was an institution in himself," Syed Sad-ud-Din Saidi said, adding that his work inspired countless young voices to pursue journalism, literature and broadcasting with integrity and purpose. "His words carried wisdom, his poetry carried soul, and his conduct reflected humility and grace."

Editor-in-Chief Jahangir Bukhari noted that Farhaad Sahib's legacy would continue to guide future generations. "His contributions to broadcasting, poetry and writing will remain a beacon for those who believe in the power of the spoken and written word," he said.

All members of Headlines Today expressed heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and relatives, praying for eternal peace to the departed soul and strength and patience to the family to endure this immense loss.

The demise of Abdul Ahad Farhaad has cast a pall of gloom over media, literary and cultural circles, with admirers and colleagues remembering him as a rare blend of artistic brilliance, professional excellence and noble humanity. Though his voice has fallen silent, his words, works and values will continue to resonate for generations to come.

Rain, snow ease chill; weather to stay cloudy in J&K

Wet weather improved air quality, further precipitation expected, partly cloudy conditions forecast till Dec 29

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, DEC 22: Cold conditions across Jammu and Kashmir showed some improvement on Monday following fresh snowfall in higher reaches and rainfall in the plains, which affected large parts of the region, even as the Meteorological Department has forecast further precipitation during the next 12 hours.
Popular hill stations and tourist destinations, including Gulmarg, Sonamarg and Pahalgam, received fresh snowfall ranging between about five and 18 inches, as per reports obtained by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).
The snowfall was keenly awaited by skiers, Christmas and New Year revellers, and stakeholders associated with the tourism sector.
Although cold conditions showed some improvement, minimum temperatures across the region remained below normal, with several towns in the Kashmir Valley recording sub-zero readings.
South Kashmir's Pulwama district recorded the coldest minimum at -3.2°C, followed by Shopian at -2.9°C and Anantnaga at -2.2°C.
Central Kashmir's Srinagar district registered -0.4°C, Qazigund and Pahalgam -1.0°C each, while Gulmarg and Kulgam recorded 2.0°C and 1.2°C respectively.
In Jammu division, Katra recorded the lowest at 10.0°C, Jammu Airport 11.0°C, while Banihal and Baderwah registered 3.8°C and 4.4°C, respectively.
In Ladakh, Leh recorded a minimum of -4.2°C. Some stations, including Zojila Pass, Kargil, Doda, and Zethan Rafiabad, did not report data. The figures were compiled by Kashmir Weather.
The Meteorological Department has forecast further precipitation during the next 12 hours till Monday night. From December 23 onwards, the weather across Jammu and Kashmir is expected to remain partly cloudy until December 29.
It has forecast the possibility of light rain or snowfall over higher reaches at isolated places from December 30 to January 1, while January 2 and 3 are likely to be partly cloudy.
It advised travellers and transporters to follow traffic and administrative advisories. Moderate to dense fog is expected to persist over the plains of Jammu division during the next seven days.
Meanwhile, the rainfall and snowfall had a positive impact on air quality across the Valley. The Meteorological Department said the Air Quality Index (AQI) showed significant improvement following the rain.
"There has been a clear improvement in air quality due to the rainfall. After this spell, the weather is expected to remain dry and cold from December 23 to December 30," another official said.
An advisory issued by the department warned that higher reaches of Kupwara, Bandipora and Ganderbal districts could receive moderate to heavy snowfall, especially during the night.
Travellers and transporters were advised to plan their journeys carefully and follow official advisories—(KNO)

Inclement weather disrupts traffic, closes roads; two flights cancelled

HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, DEC 22: Fresh snowfall and rain in the Kashmir on Monday disrupted air and vehicular movement, while traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway (NH-44) remained slow due to single-lane movement at several stretches.

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that cold conditions across J&K eased slightly following fresh snowfall in higher reaches and rainfall in the plains, even as the Meteorological Department forecast further precipitation over the next 12 hours.

The Traffic Police said movement on the National Highway has been regulated from 4 pm on December 22 and will continue till 4 pm on December 23 due to the breakdown of two heavy motor vehicles.

TRAVEL ONLY AFTER CONFIRMING HIGHWAY CONDITIONS

In view of inclement weather and a forecast of snowfall and rainfall over the next few days, commuters have been advised to



travel only after confirming road conditions through official channels.

Passenger light motor vehicles were advised to prefer daytime travel on the Jammu-Srinagar axis, while heavy motor vehicles were asked to avoid night travel due to congestion between the Nashri tunnel and NAVYUG tunnel.

"Subject to fair weather and improved road conditions, two-way traffic of light vehicles and regulated movement of heavy vehicles was planned on NH-44 in

coordination with the Traffic Control Unit Ramban," the officials added.

Meanwhile, the Kishtwar-Sintan-Anantnag road, Srinagar-Sonamarg-Gumri road and Mughal Road were closed for vehicular movement due to snow accumulation, while security forces convoy movement was allowed after clearance from traffic authorities.

The Gurez-Bandipora road was also closed following snowfall, while several interior roads in north Kashmir were cut off due to snow

accumulation, even as the administration initiated snow clearance operations.

Travellers were urged to follow lane discipline and avoid overtaking to prevent congestion.
2 FLIGHTS CANCELLED

IndiGo and SpiceJet airlines had to cancel two flights from Srinagar airport due to low visibility. In a post on X, the airport said, "Passengers are advised to check their flight status with the respective airline for the latest updates and alternate arrangements."—(KNO)

Surprise security checks held across Srinagar; shops, vehicles searched

Police, CRPF conduct intensified frisking drives at city's key markets, complexes

HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, DEC 22: In a surprise operation, Srinagar Police, assisted by Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel, intensified security checks across multiple areas of the city on Monday.

An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that joint teams conducted coordinated frisking drives and vehicle inspections at several busy locations. The operation brought shops, commercial complexes and vehicles under close scrutiny as part of heightened surveillance measures. "The exercise was aimed at maintaining vigilance and ensuring overall public safety," he added.

"The coordinated exercise, a preventive security measure, covered several zones including Magarmal Bagh, Maharaj Bazar, Hari Singh High Street, Sarai Bala, Old Secretariat, Tankipora and Jehangir Chowk," the official said, adding, "Moreover, teams from Shaheed Gunj, Shergarhi Police Station set up joint checkpoints to inspect vehicles, scanning passenger compartments, and verifying documents.

Parallel checks were also carried out



around business establishments and other high pedestrian-footfall areas. Commuters and traders reported increased movement of uniformed personnel through market corridors, with random bag and identity checks being conducted.

According to officials, the operation was part of a broader grid review across central Srinagar, aimed at strengthening the visibility and response readiness of ground units. Similar checks are likely to continue in the coming days depending on the security assessment of different zones—(KNO)

CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

CM Omar.....

villages or urban centres," he observed. Describing Samnvay as a comprehensive record of the evolving partnership between the Government of Jammu and Kashmir and BISAG-N, the Chief Minister said the book reflects how technology-led initiatives have supported transparency, efficiency and citizen-centric governance.

Expressing gratitude to the Director General of BISAG-N and his team for their sustained contributions, CM Omar Abdullah hoped that Samnvay would mark the beginning of a series of publications documenting future milestones, as the government continues to harness technology to strengthen governance and public service delivery in the years ahead.

Terrorism, Drug.....

exceptional valour, the Jammu and Kashmir Police has so far been awarded one Ashok Chakra, seven Kirti Chakras, 33 Shaurya Chakras, 1,866 gallantry medals and 2,347 other commendations.

He reaffirmed the force's commitment to the welfare of martyrs' families, stating that financial assistance is extended through the Police Welfare Fund to the best possible extent. Special Police Officers (SPOs) are also provided ex-gratia support, including ₹1 lakh for the marriage of daughters of martyrs, while education expenses of their children up to Class 12 are fully waived.

The DGP said that under the annual sports calendar, the Martyrs Memorial Football Tournament has already been held in Srinagar, while the Martyrs Memorial Cricket Tournament is currently underway in Kathua. He added that a cricket tournament in memory of Shaheed Aman is organised in Kishtwar and that the Martyrs Memorial Hockey Tournament will be held in Jammu early next year.

Emphasising youth engagement as a key pillar for peace and harmony, DGP Prabhat said that under the Civic Action Programme, the police is actively promoting sports and community activities. "Constructive engagement of youth through sports is essential for building a peaceful and harmonious society," he said.

He cited several recent initiatives, including the 'Jashn-e-Dal' event at Dal Lake featuring boating races, the 'Pedal for Peace' cycle

rally in Srinagar, and the 'Run for Peace' marathon that saw participation of 4,210 runners. He added that the 'Run for Unity' in Jammu will be organised on December 28, with participation expected to surpass last year's figure of 3,000.

The DGP said that police headquarters has allocated dedicated funds for 148 district-level sporting activities to ensure widespread participation.

On tackling drug abuse, DGP Prabhat said that the Jammu and Kashmir Police operates 10 drug de-addiction centres across the Union Territory, providing treatment and counselling. Around 3,000 individuals have received treatment at these centres during the current year, he added.

Highlighting initiatives for youth exposure and national integration, he said that under the Bharat Darshan programme, over 1,000 youths were sent to various parts of the country this year.

The DGP also noted with pride that two police personnel, who are accomplished wrestlers, won gold medals at the World Games held in Birmingham, USA, bringing laurels to the force and the Union Territory.

First Major.....

its natural splendour first-hand.

A group of tourists from Assam, among the earliest to experience the snowfall, expressed awe at the landscape and the welcoming atmosphere. "Gulmarg feels like heaven on earth. The serenity, beauty and kindness of the people are beyond words. Kashmir is safe, peaceful and far more beautiful than what is often portrayed online," they said.

First-time visitors echoed similar sentiments. A tourist from Varanasi lauded the arrangements and security, saying the courteous behaviour of hoteliers, guides and locals made their stay comfortable and memorable. "It truly feels like home," he remarked.

Several returning visitors also noted a marked change in the overall ambience. One tourist, revisiting the Valley after nearly two decades, said the peaceful environment and vibrant public spaces, including Srinagar's Lal Chowk, reflected stability and development. "There is a sense of confidence and calm everywhere," he said.

Tourism stakeholders in Gulmarg welcomed the snowfall with relief and optimism.

Local guide Tufail Ahmad termed it a blessing for the region. "We were anxiously waiting for snow, and thankfully it has arrived. This will significantly boost tourism and skiing activities. We are hopeful of more snowfall in the days ahead," he said.

After weeks of dry weather, around 10 inches of fresh snow covered Gulmarg overnight, transforming its meadows into a postcard-perfect winter destination. The snowfall has ended a prolonged dry spell that had raised concerns among tourism operators ahead of the peak winter season, bringing renewed confidence to the sector.

Cabinet Clears.....

affected by floods and cloudbursts earlier this year, aimed at ensuring rehabilitation and housing security.

In a key administrative reform, the Cabinet also approved the designation of District Panchayat Officers posted in Assistant Commissioner Panchayat Offices as Block Development Officers (BDOs), a move expected to streamline rural governance.

Further, the Cabinet sanctioned an upgrade in the pay scale of Village Level Workers (VLWs) and Multipurpose Workers (MPWs), enhancing their salary from Level-2 to Level-4, offering long-awaited financial relief to grassroots workers.

Additionally, to strengthen the cooperative banking sector, the Cabinet approved a capital infusion of ₹118 crore into the Anantnag Central Cooperative Bank and the Jammu Central Cooperative Bank to improve their financial health.

All approved proposals will now be forwarded to the Lieutenant Governor for final approval.

J&K gears up.....

design a wide range of activities with clearly defined timelines, focus areas and identifiable target groups.

The Chief Secretary underlined that the programme calendar should clearly reflect village-wise and block-wise schedules, with specific dates earmarked for each activity. He stressed that all initiatives must be aligned to the interests and aspirations of the youth, ensuring inclusivity and maximum outreach.

He further directed the concerned departments and Deputy Commissioners to conceptualize district-specific programmes,

extending down to the Panchayat level, so that youth from even the remotest areas get an opportunity to participate. Emphasizing the importance of ownership and participation, he said the events should provide a ready platform for young people to showcase their talent, sharpen their skills and pursue their interests.

Highlighting the diversity of engagement envisioned under the programme, the Chief Secretary called for inclusion of activities spanning sports, education, skill development, art and craft, folk traditions, culture and other creative and constructive youth-centric domains.

The Chief Secretary also stressed the need to make the newly launched portal more dynamic and interactive by integrating it with the 'My Bharat' portal. He advised that photographs and videos of completed events be uploaded regularly to generate wider interest and participation, along with details of attendance, beneficiaries and outcomes.

Earlier, Additional Chief Secretary, Planning, Ashish Chander Verma, while highlighting the progress made so far, informed that Steering Committee meetings are being held regularly to provide direction and momentum to the programme. He expressed confidence that the initiative would successfully engage a large segment of youth across the UT through one or more activities.

He further informed that the portal would become more illustrative and impactful once the year-long Mega Youth Engagement Programme formally begins from February 2026.

Meanwhile, Special Secretary, PD&MD, Owais Ahmed, presented a detailed overview of the portal and briefed the meeting on the activities uploaded so far. He shared the status of actions taken following the previous review meeting held in November and informed that 522 events have already been uploaded by various departments.

He added that hundreds of additional activities are in the pipeline, which will be uploaded after passing through a three-tier maker-checker-approver process to ensure quality, relevance and alignment with the objectives of the Youth Engagement Programme.

CS Pushes.....

Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PM-VBRY) in

Jammu and Kashmir and emphasized the need for employers across the Union Territory to fully leverage the scheme to address unemployment and promote inclusive economic growth.

Those who attended this meeting besides the ACS, APD; Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD and Secretary, L&E includes Labour Commissioner; Regional Provident Fund Commissioner, Jammu; Director, Employment and other concerned officers.

Chairing a meeting in this regard, the Chief Secretary described the initiative as a significant opportunity for both employers and employees, urging stakeholders to maximize its benefits in line with the scheme's objectives. He noted that effective utilization of the scheme would not only incentivize job creation but also help youth secure sustainable employment across various sectors.

He maintained that the scheme offers tangible financial benefits to employers while ensuring meaningful employment opportunities for the youth. Employers in J&K must come forward to make optimal use of this initiative for mutual benefit and broader socio-economic development here, he remarked.

Providing an overview of the scheme, Regional Provident Fund Commissioner, Jammu, Sumeet Singh informed the meeting that PM-VBRY is a flagship Central Government initiative aimed at generating over 3.5 crore jobs nationwide during the period 2025-2027. He stated that the scheme provides financial incentives of up to ₹3,000 per month to employers for hiring additional employees registered with the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).

In addition, the scheme includes a one-time cash incentive of ₹15,000 for first-time job seekers, thereby encouraging formal employment and enhancing social security coverage. The initiative is being implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Employment through the EPFO.

The meeting underscored the importance of awareness generation among employers and eligible beneficiaries to ensure widespread adoption of the scheme and effective realization of its employment-generation goals across Jammu and Kashmir.

DC Srinagar reviews developmental scenario of district; takes stock of District Capex & CDF Works

Calls for strict adherence to timelines & Quality Standards in execution of works

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, DEC 22: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo today chaired a comprehensive meeting with concerned departments at Meeting Hall of the DC Office to review the progress of ongoing development works being executed under the District Capex Budget 2025-26 and Constituency Development Fund (CDF).

Besides, Additional District Development Commissioner, Rifat Aftab Qureshi; Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar, the meeting was attended by District Statistics & Evaluation Officer, Executive Engineers of R&B, Jal Shakti, KPDC, SMC, Assistant Commissioner Panchayats, Block Development Officers, all District/Sectoral Officers, Engineers and other concerned.



At the outset, the Deputy Commissioner took a sector wise review of ongoing works taken up as well as new works taken under District Capex Budget and CDF for the financial year 2025-26.

The DC emphasized the need for time-bound completion of all pending works and directed departments to accelerate the execution of works approved for the current financial year, ensuring corresponding financial progress alongside physical achievements.

The DC directed departments to accelerate execution of approved/allotted works and ensure that physical progress is matched with corresponding

financial progress and instructed all departments to strictly adhere to the prescribed timelines for completion of sanctioned projects.

The DC underlined that timely completion is essential for the effective utilization of public funds and for ensuring that developmental benefits reach the people without delay.

The District Statistics and Evaluation Officer was directed to conduct time-bound physical verification of all ongoing and completed works to ensure quality, transparency, and accuracy in reporting.

The DC emphasized that coordinated efforts, strict monitoring and accountability at every level are crucial for the successful implementation of developmental projects across the district.

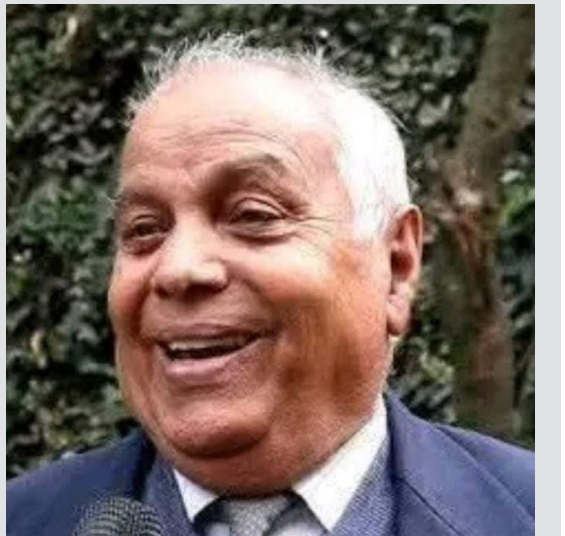
JKAACL Mourns the Passing of Eminent Kashmiri Literary and Cultural Figure, Abdul Ahad Farhad

Irreparable Loss to Kashmir's Literary and Cultural Heritage

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, DEC 22: The Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages expresses profound grief over the passing away of Abdul Ahad Farhad, a renowned Kashmiri literary and cultural personality whose demise has created an irreparable void in Kashmir's literary and cultural landscape.

Smt. Harvinder Kour, Secretary, JKAACL and Mr.



Ideel Saleem, Additional Secretary, JKAACL, have extended their heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul.

Smt. Harvinder Kour described Abdul Ahad Farhad as a real hero of Kashmiri literature and poetry and a rare and unique voice, whose literary depth and cultural wisdom greatly enriched Kashmiri thought. His remarkable contributions to broadcasting and literature, along with his steadfast dedication to the Kashmiri language, cultural heritage and Sufi traditions, will remain a lasting source of inspiration for generations to come.

Mr. Ideel Saleem stated that Abdul Ahad Farhad will be remembered not merely for his outstanding creative excellence, but equally for his rare humility, his generous spirit of mentorship and his lifelong dedication to nurturing and strengthening Kashmiri cultural and literary discourse. He observed that Farhad consistently guided and encouraged younger writers and remained deeply committed to preserving and enriching the literary and cultural traditions of Kashmir.

Manzoor Hashmi Cultural Forum Mourns Passing of Abdul Ahad Farhaad

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR DEC 22: Manzoor Hashmi Cultural Forum, Watergam, has expressed profound grief over the demise of renowned broadcaster Abdul Ahad Farhaad. President of the forum, Syed Sarwar Hussain Hashmi, paid glowing tributes to the departed, recalling his outstanding contribution to broadcasting and cultural discourse. He extended heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul.

DIPR Mourns Loss of Legendary Voice of Kashmir

JD Information Kashmir Syed Shahnawaz Bukhari Expresses Profound Grief

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, DEC 24: The Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) today condoled the demise of renowned poet, writer and veteran broadcaster Abdul Ahad Farhad, terming his passing an irreparable loss to Kashmir's literary and cultural heritage.

Joint Director Information Kashmir, Syed Shahnawaz Bukhari, expressed deep sorrow over the demise and chaired a condolence meeting at his office, attended by officers and officials of the department. The participants paid rich tributes to Farhad's invaluable contribu-



utions to Kashmiri language, literature and culture.

They recalled his gentle and melodious voice that resonated for decades on Radio Kashmir and All India Radio, touching countless households and generations of listeners. Remembered as a mentor and fatherly figure to many journalists and media professionals, Abdul Ahad Farhad was admired for his humility, wisdom and lifelong commitment to Kashmiri and Sufi traditions.

The Joint Director conveyed heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul.

Inder Cultural Forum Condoles the Demise of Noted Broadcaster Abdul Ahad Farhaad

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, DEC 22: The world of literature today has been left without a voice that endowed

words with meaning and thoughts with dignity. The creative works of the late Abdul Ahad Farhad inspired generations to think, to feel, and to become better human

beings. His services to literature will always be remembered, and the lamp of his art will continue to illuminate the times to come.

These views were expressed

at a condolence meeting convened by the Inder Cultural Forum, Inder Kot, Sambal, under the chairmanship of the Forum's President, Saleem Yusuf, in mem-

ory of Abdul Ahad Farhad—one of the Valley of Kashmir's most respected literary and broadcasting figures, a renowned broadcaster, writer, and poet.

Department of Bioresources, University of Kashmir Organizes 2nd J&K International Conference on Breast and Allied Cancers

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, DEC 22: The Department of Bioresources, University of Kashmir, today organized the 2nd J&K International Conference on Breast and Allied Cancers at Gandhi Bhawan, University of Kashmir, marking a significant step toward strengthening cancer awareness, research collaboration, and multidisciplinary approaches to cancer management. The three-day international conference is sponsored by ANRF-DST, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, and has attracted participation from eminent oncologists, clinicians, researchers, academicians, and young scholars from across the country and abroad.

The inaugural session witnessed the presence of several distinguished dignitaries. Dr. Manzoor Ahmad Mir, Organizing Secretary of the conference and faculty, Department of Bioresources, formally welcomed the gathering and outlined the objectives of the conference. He highlighted the rising incidence of breast and allied cancers in the region and emphasized the urgent need to integrate basic research with clinical practice, early detection, and community awareness. On the occasion, the abstract book (souvenir) of the conference was formally released by the dignitaries, showcasing cutting-edge research contributions from participants.



Addressing the gathering, Prof. Nilofer Khan, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, University of Kashmir, stressed that cancer research must be multidisciplinary, involving life sciences, clinical medicine, engineering, artificial intelligence, and public health. She emphasized that awareness initiatives should not remain limited to conference halls but must be taken across institutions, communities, and even beyond national boundaries, to make a global impact.

Prof. Naseer Iqbal, Registrar, University of Kashmir, reaffirmed the university's full support for research collaborations and innovation, particularly in health-related domains. He highlighted the importance of encouraging women scientists and urged that the deliberations and outcomes of the conference be disseminated widely to academic institutions, healthcare systems, and society at large.

Prof. Iffat Hassan Shah, Principal/Dean, Government Medical College Srinagar, highlighted the availability of advanced diagnostic technologies and specialized facilities at GMC Srinagar, and noted that trained female medical professionals are available to ensure patient-friendly breast cancer screening and care. She appreciated the collaborative efforts between the University of Kashmir and medical institutions in addressing cancer challenges.

Dr. Younus Iftikhar Munshi, Deputy Director General, CCRUM, New Delhi, emphasized the role of natural resources in healthcare, stating that nearly 70 percent of therapeutic raw materials are derived from plants. He assured financial and institutional support for research and informed that CCRUM offers multiple funding windows to promote interdisciplinary and translational research in cancer.

Delivering the keynote address,

Prof. Sameer Koul, Senior Consultant Oncologist, Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi, stressed the need to involve external experts and institutions in cancer research and awareness programs. He particularly emphasized extending such initiatives to remote and underserved areas of Jammu and Kashmir, ensuring equitable access to cancer awareness and early diagnosis.

Earlier, Dr. Riaz-ul-Rehman, Head, Department of Bioresources, University of Kashmir, highlighted the department's sustained efforts in advancing cancer-oriented basic and translational research. He emphasized the importance of institutional collaboration and capacity building to translate laboratory findings into clinical and societal benefits.

On the occasion, a book authored by Dr. Manzoor Ahmad Mir on retinoids was also formally released by the dignitaries, highlighting the therapeutic potential of retinoids in cancer biology and treatment.

The inaugural session concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Manzoor Ahmad Mir, who expressed gratitude to the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, distinguished guests, speakers, sponsors, organizing team, and participants for their valuable contributions. He reiterated the conference's commitment to fostering meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and awareness aimed at combating breast and allied cancers.

BJP J&K Launches 'Swadeshi Sankalp Abhiyan' at Lal Chowk, Srinagar

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, DEC 22: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Jammu & Kashmir organized an Awareness Camp and Oath Ceremony under the banner of "Swadeshi Sankalp Abhiyan" at the iconic Clock Tower, Lal Chowk, Srinagar, to promote Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

The programme was held with the theme "Ghar Ghar Swadeshi - Har Ghar Swadeshi", reaffirming the party's commitment to economic self-reliance and indigenous growth. The event was graced by State General Secretaries Sanjita Dogra (programme in-charge) and Anwar Khan.

Bilal Parry, co-in-charge All Cells J&K and Programme co-in-charge, DDC Er. Aijaz Hussain, Adv. Sheikh Salman, District President Srinagar, Sunita Raina, Javed Ahmed and Umer Rather, and others were present in the programme, which witnessed enthusiastic participation from BJP workers, local residents and citizens from diverse sections of society, who gathered in large numbers to take a collective pledge to promote Swadeshi



products.

Addressing the gathering, Sunita Dogra highlighted the vital role of Swadeshi in strengthening local industries, creating employment opportunities and accelerating India's journey towards becoming an Atmanirbhar nation.

Anwar Khan, urged citizens to consciously prioritize indigenous products over foreign alternatives, stressing that collective participation at the household level can bring about a transformative change in the national economy.

During the oath ceremony, participants pledged to adopt Swadeshi products in their daily lives and committed themselves to spreading awareness about the economic, social and strategic benefits of supporting local manufacturers, artisans and entrepreneurs. The speakers emphasised that economic self-reliance is not merely a policy objective but a patriotic duty and a shared responsibility of every citizen.

BJP reiterated its unwavering commitment to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and assured that such awareness-driven initiatives will continue across Jammu & Kashmir. The party reaffirmed its determination to promote Swadeshi products and indigenous industries, thereby contributing to India's economic self-reliance and global competitiveness.



Deputy CM meets delegations; emphasizes prompt redress of public grievances

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

JAMMU, DECEMBER 22: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today asserted on ensuring amicable redress of public grievances and seamless delivery of services across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Deputy Chief Minister, while interacting with various public delegations at the Civil Secretariat, Jammu, assured them that all their issues and concerns would be looked into for speedy redress at the appropriate forum.

He instructed the officers to address the public issues on priority while ensuring prompt service delivery at people's doorstep.



During the interaction, the Deputy Chief Minister met the

delegations from different districts of J&K, including students, job aspirants, aspiring entrepreneurs, representatives of business associations, civil society organisations and scores of individuals. The delegations apprised him of their concerns, demands and other pressing issues.

He reiterated the need for timely service delivery and maximum coverage of beneficiaries under various welfare and developmental schemes of the government. He emphasised on ensuring timely completion and quality work execution of developmental activities undertaken across J&K.

DC Budgam Chairs 93rd DLRC Meeting; Reviews Banking Performance Calls for Accelerated Credit Flow for Inclusive Growth of the District

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BUDGAM, DECEMBER 22: The 93rd District Level Review Committee cum District Consultative Committee (DLRC/DCC) meeting of District Budgam was held today at the Conference Hall of the DC Office Budgam under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat.

The meeting undertook a comprehensive review of the performance of banks in the district with regard to deposits, advances and overall credit delivery as on 30 September 2025, including a year-on-year comparison.

The Lead District Manager, Mohammad Muzaffar, presented a detailed overview of the district's banking performance.

It was informed that during the second quarter of FY 2025-26, substantial progress has been achieved under Priority Sector Lending (PSL), reflecting focused efforts towards inclusive credit flow. Against an annual priority sector lending target of 2263.6 crore, banks have so far achieved 1168 crore, registering an overall achievement of 51.65 percent.

The meeting was further informed that total deposits in Budgam district increased from 5050.13 crore as on 30 September 2024 to 5138.11 crore as on 30 September 2025, registering a growth of 87.98 crore (1.74%).

Similarly, total advances rose from 5346.98 crore to 5467.82 crore, reflecting an increase of 120.84 crore (2.25%). The overall Credit Deposit (CD) ratio of the district stood at around 106 percent, indicating a robust and healthy flow of credit. At present, 11 banks are operating in Budgam through a network of 101 branches.

Senior officials of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) participated in the meeting through video conferencing and provided valuable guidance on strengthening banking performance, improving credit outreach and enhancing financial inclusion.

Representatives of major banks including J&K Bank, State Bank of India, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Punjab National Bank, Union Bank of India, J&K Grameen Bank, J&K State Cooperative Bank, Canara Bank, Axis Bank and UCO Bank actively participated in the deliberations.

Officers from various line departments such as Agriculture, Horticulture, KVIC, KVIB, District Industries Centre (DIC), Employment, NRLM, Handicrafts and Handloom also attended the meeting and reviewed progress under various government-sponsored schemes including Kisan Credit Card (KCC), Animal Husbandry and Sheep Husbandry sectors.

While chairing the meeting, the DC emphasized the need for greater coordination between banks and line departments to ensure timely sanction and disbursement of loans under priority sector and government-sponsored schemes. He stressed the need to reduce pendency of cases, improve credit absorption capacity, and reach out to uncovered and marginalized sections to further strengthen financial inclusion in the district.

The DC impressed upon banks to adopt sector-wise credit planning, support livelihood generation initiatives, and extend adequate credit to agriculture, MSMEs, self-help groups and other priority sectors to accelerate socio-economic development in Budgam.

The DC directed banks and all concerned departments to work in mission mode to enhance credit delivery, improve banking services and ensure inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the district.

Besides, CPO Budgam, Lead Bank Manager, representatives from the RBI, DAO, Animal Husbandry Officer, District Employment Officer, NRLM District Coordinator, Officers from Handicrafts and Handloom, other concerned officers and managers from various banks of the district were present in the meeting.

DLRC meeting of 2nd Quarter held at Kupwara

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

KUPWARA, DECEMBER 22: The 2nd District Level Review Committee (DLRC) meeting was held today under the chairmanship of Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Kupwara, Mufti Fareed ud Din, at the Meeting Hall of the D.C. Office, Kupwara.

The meeting reviewed the performance of banks and line departments with regard to implementation of various government-sponsored schemes and development programmes in the district. Emphasis was laid on improving credit flow, timely disposal of cases, and strengthening coordination among stakeholders to ensure effective delivery of services to the public.

During the meeting, the ADDC stressed upon concerned departments and financial institutions to work in close coordination to achieve set targets and address bottlenecks, if any, in the implementation of developmental initiatives. He also underscored the importance of monitoring progress regularly to ensure inclusive and sustainable development in the district.

Earlier, LDM Kupwara briefed the meeting about the progress and achievements made by the banks during the 2nd quarter of the ongoing Financial Year 2025-26. It was informed that Rs.124.72 crore has been disbursed among 7953 beneficiaries by the banks under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana during the second quarter. Besides, 1149 cases were sanctioned under PM Vishwakarma, 158 cases disbursed under PMEGP during the same period.

Regarding PM Surya Ghar- Muft Bijli Yojana, an amount of Rs. 1330 lakh has been disbursed among 805 cases. Under Kissan Credit Card Scheme, it was informed that Rs.6.93 crore have been disbursed among 759 cases till ending September 2025.

It was also informed that Rs.2472.1 crore advances have been given under priority sector till ending 2nd quarter.

The ADDC stressed upon all the bankers and line departments to maximize their outreach in the district especially in far flung areas so that large number of people could take benefit under various centrally sponsored schemes.

The meeting was attended by Chief Planning Officer Kupwara, Chief Agriculture Officer; Lead District Manager; LDO RBI, Cluster Head, along with officers from various line departments.

DLCC Review Meeting on COTPA Act Implementation Held in Baramulla

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BARAMULLA, DECEMBER 22: A quarterly review meeting of the District Level Coordination Committee (DLCC) on the implementation of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003, under the National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP), was held under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa.

During the meeting, the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Baramulla apprised the chair of the achievements recorded under the Tobacco Youth Campaign. It was informed that extensive Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities were conducted across the district, training was imparted to field staff, and sustained enforcement drives were carried out. As a result, 227 challans were issued for violations of COTPA provisions.

It was further informed that the Chief



Education Officer (CEO), Baramulla has achieved nearly 70 percent compliance of educational institutions under the Tobacco-Free Educational Institutions (ToFEI) norms, reflecting significant progress in safeguarding students from exposure to tobacco.

The Deputy Commissioner appreciated the coordinated efforts of all stakeholder departments and stressed the need for continued inter-departmental convergence, effective enforcement, and community participation to further strengthen tobacco control initiatives across the district.

DC Budgam Visits Pandit Colony Sheikhpora; Addresses Community Concerns Also Inspects Development Works of the area

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BUDGAM, DECEMBER 22: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat, today visited Pandit Colony, Sheikhpora Budgam.

Various issues related to essential services were raised by members of Pandit colony Sheikhpora, the DC gave a patient hearing to the issues raised by the Pandit community.

Interacting with the members of Sheikhpora Transit-Camp Welfare Committee, the DC was apprised of various civic, safety and infrastructure-related concerns including repair and replacement of damaged trench manholes and covers, augmentation of street lighting with new low tension

electric lines, construction of a proper drainage system to address water logging, repair and resurfacing of internal roads, landscaping and beautification of the colony, and installation of covered metal dustbins for improved sanitation.

The DC on-spot, redressed some of the grievances and assured the residents that all genuine issues raised would be addressed on priority.

Later, the DC inspected the construction work of the Multipurpose Community Hall at Pandit Colony, Sheikhpora. The project, being executed at a sanctioned cost of 63.11 lakh, involves construction of an RCC-framed double-storey building comprising two halls and two



washrooms. About 80 percent of the work has been completed and

the project is targeted for completion by March 2026.

The DC directed the concerned engineers and executing agencies to ensure quality workmanship, strict adherence to construction norms and timely completion of the project. He emphasized that the facility will serve as an important social and community infrastructure for PM Package employees and their families residing in the Transit Accommodation.

During the visit, the DC was accompanied by the Chief Planning Officer Budgam, Chief Medical Officer, NRLM District Coordinator, Officers from Handicrafts and Handloom, other concerned officers and managers from various banks of the district were present in the meeting.

Declamation Competition on Drug Abuse held at HKM GDC Bandipora

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BANDIPORA, DECEMBER 22: The NCORD Cell and NSS Unit of the College, in collaboration with the District Police Bandipora, organized a Declamation Competition on Monday on the theme "Drug Abuse: Causes, Consequences, and the Way Forward" in the College Auditorium.

The programme was aimed at sensitizing students about the growing menace of drug abuse and its serious social, psychological, and health-related consequences.

In his address, the Principal, Dr. Mubashir Hamid Mir, emphasized the importance of collective institutional and social efforts in combating drug abuse, especially among the youth.

Students from various semesters participated in the competition and delivered powerful, thought-provoking, and well-researched speeches highlighting the causes, consequences, and preventive measures related to drug abuse. The participants eloquently expressed their concerns over the alarming rise of substance abuse and called for awareness, education, and community responsibility.

On the occasion, SHO Bandipora, Peerzada Wasim Ahmad delivered a detailed and insightful lecture on the hazards, root causes, and the present situation of the drug menace, particularly in the district. His address proved highly informative and motivating for the students, encouraging them to stay



vigilant and contribute actively to creating a drug-free society.

Based on the performance, Muzamil Manzoor (3rd Semester) secured the First Position, Rafia Bint Mohammad (1st Semester) bagged the Second Position, while the Third Position was awarded to Aksar Shafi (1st Semester).

Good Governance Week "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" Continues with Vigour on Fourth Day in Budgam

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BUDGAM, DECEMBER 22: The observance of the nationwide Good Governance Week "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" continued with renewed momentum on its fourth day in Budgam, as the District Administration reinforced its outreach efforts to bring governance closer to the people and strengthen grassroots service delivery.

Marking the fourth day, a series of public facilitation and grievance redressal camps were organised across blocks and panchayat halqas of the district. The camps provided a platform for citizens to directly interact with officers of various departments, enabling swift redressal of both fresh and long-pending grievances received through online and offline channels. Many public issues were addressed on the spot, reflecting the administration's proactive and responsive approach.

The day also witnessed focused efforts towards achieving saturation of key welfare and social security schemes. Special assistance was extended to eligible beneficiaries for enrolment and availing benefits under various government programmes, ensuring that no deserving citizen is left out.

Officers from line departments held interactive and informative sessions with the public, disseminating details about Mission YUVA, PM Shram Yogi Maandhan Yojana, social welfare initiatives, employment and livelihood schemes, besides other flagship



programmes. Emphasis was also laid on sensitising citizens about the use of online public service delivery platforms for transparent and efficient access to government services.

The District Administration Budgam reaffirmed its resolve to uphold the principles of good governance through transparency, accountability and citizen participation, stating that the initiatives under Good Governance Week "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" will continue to strengthen public trust and improve service delivery across the district.

District Admin Kulgam organizes Multiple Citizen-Centric Activities under "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" campaign

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

KULGAM, DECEMBER 22: As part of Good Governance Week 2025 and under the Sushasan Sapta initiative, the "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" campaign continued across District Kulgam with the objective of taking governance to the doorsteps of the people.

Grievance redressal camps were organised at the block, tehsil and panchayat levels, where district and sectoral officers listened to public grievances and ensured their prompt redressal. The camps witnessed active participation from the public, who raised issues related to various departments.

Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan, also visited several areas of the district, interacted with the people, and personally listened to their demands and concerns, with several issues resolved on the spot.

He also visited District Hospital Kulgam, where he took stock of patient care and the availability of facilities, and instructed the concerned authorities to ensure the best possible patient care.

Meanwhile, issuance of certificates to beneficiaries such as RBA, Legal Heir, Income, Character and Blood Relation Certificates was also carried out.

Additionally, awareness and registration camps were held to educate citizens about various government schemes and facilitate on-the-spot registrations.



Commissioner SMC Reviews Street-lighting Project with EESL

Stresses on Efficient, Reliable Urban Lighting

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 22: Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), today chaired a high-level review meeting with Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) to assess the status and performance of street-lighting and other energy efficiency initiatives being implemented across the city.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the functioning of energy-efficient LED street lights, with particular emphasis on improving illumination levels, reducing power consumption, and ensuring uninterrupted lighting in residential areas, commercial hubs, and major traffic corridors. The Commissioner underscored that efficient street lighting is a critical civic service, directly contributing to public safety, pedestrian comfort, night-time mobility, and overall urban aesthetics.

Reviewing project milestones, the Commissioner stressed the need for strict adherence to quality standards, timely completion of pending works, and robust maintenance mechanisms. He highlighted that prompt repair and replacement of faulty street lights, especially in densely populated and vulnerable areas, must remain a top priority to ensure public convenience and



safety. Challenges related to maintenance, fault reporting, and response time were examined in detail. The Commissioner directed EESL to further

strengthen on-ground monitoring and ensure that the Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) is implemented effectively, with clear accountability of vendors. The importance of coordinated action between SMC field wings and EESL teams was also emphasized to enable faster resolution of issues.

The meeting also discussed the future roadmap for expanding energy-efficient street lighting, including the adoption of smart lighting systems, centralized monitoring, and advanced technologies aimed at improving operational efficiency and reducing long-term costs.

It was decided that EESL will submit a detailed progress report along with revised timelines, while SMC will enhance inter-departmental coordination to expedite clearances and facilitate smooth implementation. Joint inspection teams will conduct regular field verifications to ensure optimal performance of installations.

The Commissioner reaffirmed SMC's commitment to sustainable and energy-efficient urban infrastructure, stating that reliable and well-maintained street lighting remains central to improving the quality of life and ensuring a safer, well-lit Srinagar for all its residents.

IBPR, SKUAST-K, Holds Interaction-cum-Awareness Programme on Tribal Livelihood Security at Ganderbal

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

GANDERBAL, DECEMBER 22: A One-Day Interaction-cum-Awareness Programme was held today at Fraw Haknar, Kangan, under the DST-SEED funded project titled "Inclusion of Indigenous Survival Skills in Livelihood Security of Tribal Community in Kashmir".

The programme was aimed to assess the ground-level socio-economic conditions of the tribal population while sensitising the community about structured, sustainable and cluster-based livelihood development opportunities.

The programme was led by Dr. Omar Fayaz Khan, Principal Investigator (PI) of the DST-SEED Project, along with the project staff and students, under the aegis of the Institute of Business & Policy Research (IBPR), SKUAST-Kashmir.



On the occasion, Community interactions revealed that agriculture and livestock rearing form the backbone of livelihoods in Fraw Haknar, with nearly 70-80 percent of households actively engaged in agriculture and allied activities. The IBPR team assured the community of sustained engagement through regular follow-ups, capacity building and continuous technical guidance in the forthcoming phases of the project.

The programme concluded with enthusiastic participation from the tribal local community, with a significant number of tribal households expressing willingness to collaborate in groups and clusters for scaling up livelihood activities.

SCERT organise Day-long Orientation program on ECCE for Cluster Heads, HOIs at Srinagar

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 22: In a bid to strengthen the implementation of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in schools, the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), in collaboration with Jammu and Kashmir Association of Social Workers (JKASW) and support of UNICEF, organised one-day orientation programme for 100 selected Heads of Institutions (HOIs) and Cluster Heads from 10 districts of the Kashmir division at SCERT, Srinagar.

The orientation workshop was facilitated by Senior Academic Officer, Sheikh Gulzar Ahmad and JKASW team.

The JKASW team edified the participants on the finer aspects of ECCE and the critical role of AAYAs (ECCE Helpers) in education.

The workshop, a first of its kind, witnessed participation of 10 cluster heads/HOIs from each district on the role of AAYAs (ECCE Helpers) in education. The workshop was expected to enhance understanding of the Cluster Heads on the effective implementation of ECCE with the defined role of AAYAs.

The workshop was presided by Joint Director SCERT, Syed Shabir who emphasized the critical role of AAYAs in education and the need to incorporate innovation in education. Furthermore, he extended appreciation to JKASW for facilitating training of 3000 AAYAs and stressed on such collaborative partnerships in the future in this direction.

Executive Director JKASW, Ashfaq Ahmed Mattoo highlighted the key role of NGOs in the initiatives for ECCE and hoped for support and cooperation from SCERT in the future.

AYUSH, Mission Shakti organise health Camps under BBBP initiative at Doda

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

DODA, DECEMBER 22: The Sankalp Hub for Empowerment of Women (SHEW)-Mission Shakti in collaboration with the AYUSH Department, organized twin health camps at Parisha and Palash Doda under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative.

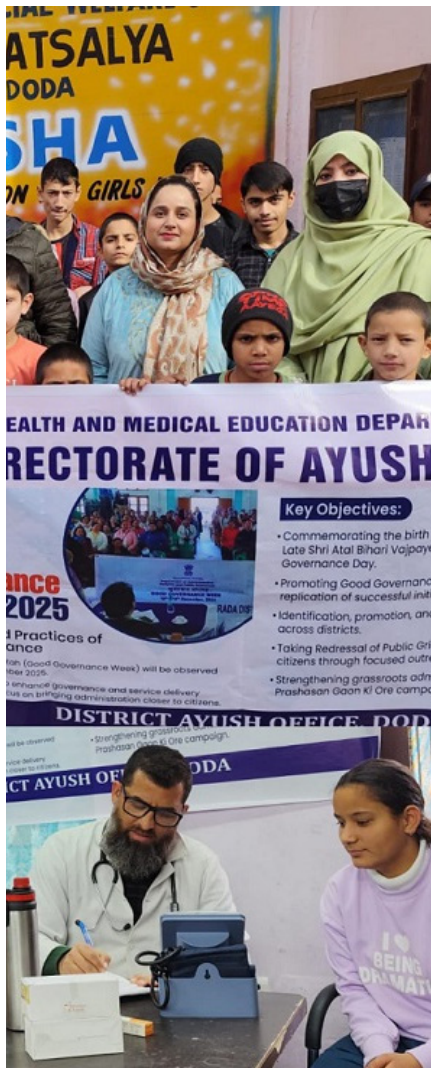
The camps aimed at strengthening preventive healthcare among students, with a special emphasis on early screening and timely intervention. Qualified medical professionals conducted systematic health examinations of students to assess general health parameters and rule out potential ailments.

The students were also educated about disease prevention, adolescent health concerns and the importance of maintaining overall physical and mental well-being.

Free medicines were provided to the students strictly as per medical advice. The medical team also sensitised students on the importance of personal hygiene, balanced nutrition and adopting healthy lifestyle practices from an early age.

The programme was attended by Gender Specialist, Humerah Balwan (Mission Shakti), Dr. Vikas Ahmed and Junior Pharmacist, Nighat Parveen from the AYUSH Department.

The speakers highlighted the significance of regular health check-ups, awareness about common health concerns and the crucial role of preventive care in ensuring the holistic development and well-being of children and adolescents.



Good Governance Week – Day 04:

“Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore” strengthens grassroots governance in District Kishtwar

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

KISHTWAR, DECEMBER 22: The flagship outreach initiative “Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore,” being observed as part of the 5th Good Governance Week, was successfully implemented across all 13 blocks of District Kishtwar on day 4 of the campaign.

The initiative aims to proactively address public grievances, improve last-mile service delivery and ensure effective implementation of government welfare schemes at the village level. Under the directions of the Deputy Commissioner, Pankaj Kumar Sharma, officers from the line departments conducted extensive field visits across all blocks in accordance with the schedule issued by the District Administration.

During the outreach programmes, officers engaged directly with local residents, listened to their concerns and facilitated on-the-spot redressal of a significant number of grievances, thereby strengthening public trust in governance mechanisms.

The public was sensitized to major flagship welfare schemes, including Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, PM Shram Yogi Maandhan, PM Kisan Maandhan, Mission YUVA, the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), and other government initiatives. Several services, particularly revenue-related services, were delivered on the spot to ensure timely benefits to eligible beneficiaries. At Block Headquarters Inderwal, officers and representatives from



the multiple departments actively interacted with residents, addressed public grievances, disseminated information on government schemes. Key services delivered included issuance of Labour Cards and Birth/Death Certificates. Awareness regarding Handloom and Handicrafts schemes was also imparted to the people. Plant saplings were distributed in Atholi, Forest Range Padder to promote environmental conservation, enhance green cover and encourage community participation in sustainable development.

Deputy Registrar Cooperatives Mirza Muntaz Iqbal presided over public outreach camp at Panchayat Ghar Kewa-Block Bounjwah; Assistant Director Handicrafts Pradeep Shan at Block Headquarters Inderwal and Divisional Forest Officer Mahesh Thakur at Panchayat Ghar Drubeel-Block Mughal Maidan. Executive Engineer JPDCL, Latif Wani presided over the programme at Panchayat Karool B-Block Drabshalla. Several other officers supervised similar activities at the remaining block headquarters across the district.

MLA Udhampur East flags off exposure visit of farmers to SKUAST-JAMMU

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

UDHAMPUR, DECEMBER 22: Member Legislative Assembly Udhampur East, Ranbir Singh Pathania today flagged off a group of 77 farmers from Sub Division Udhampur on a one day exposure visit to Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agriculture Sciences and Technology (SKUAST-JAMMU). The visit was organised under the "Promotion of Oil Seed" project of HADP as part of the ongoing good governance week.

During the tour, the farmers will learn about modern innovations and technical interventions in the field of Agriculture with emphasis on increasing Oil seed production in the District.

The MLA encouraged the farmers to take full advantage of the exposure visit by learning best practices and disseminating the acquired knowledge among fellow farmers in their areas.



The farmers will learn new practices by seeing demonstrations of farm experiments, plant varieties and trials being conducted by SKUAST in Oil seed Crop cultivation, Floriculture, Cereals and Vegetables, etc.

The farmers will also interact with SKUAST Scientists, Extension staff to have exposure to the latest crops technologies. They will also gain knowledge about cultivation, production and extraction of oil from Oil Seed Crop.

Kathua: DLTC approves 22 loan proposals under JKREGP

DC emphasises timely bank linkage of approved cases

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

KATHUA, DECEMBER 22: The District Level Task Force Committee (DLTC) under Jammu and Kashmir Rural Employment Generation Programme (JKREGP) was today convened under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Rajesh Sharma here at Conference Hall of the DC Office Complex.

The meeting was held to reflect on and facilitate self-employment and income generation opportunities for unemployed youth of the district under JKREGP. The scheme is being implemented by the J&K Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVIB).

A total of 38 cases were placed before the Committee, of which, the Committee approved 22



applications after detailed scrutiny and interaction with the applicants. The approved cases were recommended for sponsorship to

banks for further necessary action. 14 applicants were absent while two cases were rejected.

The Deputy Commissioner stressed the need for effective coordination among line departments and banking institutions to ensure timely credit linkage and successful implementation of the programme.

Among others, the meeting was attended by GMC DIC Mushtaq Chaudhary; Lead District Manager SBI; Director SBI RSETI; representatives from J&K Bank, J&K Grameen Bank and Government ITI Kathua.

The proceedings were convened by District Officer J&K KVIB Surinder Paul Sharma, who also serves as Convener of the DLTC.

HT EDITORIAL

Sit together and resolve glaring civic issue as soon as possible

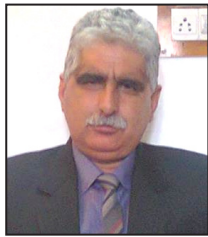
Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) Fazlul Haseeb on Monday chaired a high-level review meeting with Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) to assess the status and performance of street-lighting and other energy efficiency initiatives being implemented across the city. During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the functioning of energy-efficient LED street lights, with particular emphasis on improving illumination levels, reducing power consumption and ensuring uninterrupted lighting in residential areas, commercial hubs and major traffic corridors.

Since the issue of uninterrupted lighting was discussed during the meeting it is important to mention here that some of the areas of Srinagar are plunged into pitch darkness as the street lights are not working in such areas. The basic reason for the non-operation of these street lights is the lack of coordination between SMC and Kashmir Power Distribution Corporation Limited (KPDCL). Both the SMC and KPDCL officials are tossing the ball in each other's court over an important civic issue related to street lighting.

Since the KPDCL is busy in installing smart meters and laying insulated cables across the Kashmir valley including Srinagar city thousands of street lights have not been connected with the new system. Media reports suggest that more than 50,000 street lights are defunct across the Srinagar district. While the SMC has installed these street lights, their shifting from old system to insulated cable system has come up as a major headache for the residents of the district.

Even though an order has been issued directing the KPDCL officials to do the needful in this regard the concerned people are not doing so. Their contention is that the street lights system is not their baby and as such they are not going to reconnect the street lights across Srinagar. As a result of this the common people are suffering and they are at a loss as to whom to contact and redress this glaring civic issue. At some places scuffle broke out between people and KPDCL officials but fortunately the situation didn't go out of hand.

It is important that the higher ups of KPDCL and SMC sit together and tackle the issue at the earliest. Necessary directions should be issued to the field staff in this regard and it should be ensured that all the street lights in the Srinagar district become functional as early as possible. Once the directions are issued then the confusion would be cleared and people would heave a sigh of relief.



■ SHEIKH GH. MUHAMMAD

Chilla-i-Kalan is a term used to describe the breathtaking winter season in Kashmir, renowned for its picturesque landscapes adorned with snow and icy breezes. Traditionally, Kashmir's winter begins with the famous Chilla-i-Kalan.

Chilla-i-Kalan (Khad-o-Khaal)

Name: Chilla-i-Kalan

Pen name: Poh Maagh

Physical appearance:

Abstract

Age / Life span: 70 days (21st December to end of February)

"Body Parts" of Chilla-i-Kalan

1. Chilla-i-Kalan (also called Shishurmass)

Duration: 40 days

Period: 21st December to end of January

Marker: Jamber or timber in air at the end of January marks its end.

2. Chilla-i-Kharud

Duration: 20 days

Period: 1st February to 20th February

Marker: Jamber or timber on water on 20th February marks its end.

3. Chilla-i-Bachas

Duration: 10 days

Period: 21st February to end of February

Marker: Jamber or timber on earth at the end of February marks its end.

A. Wearing Ornamentals

- Snow
- Cold
- Cold waves
- Freezing temperatures
- Fog
- Frost

B. Gifts

- Common cold
- Cough
- Fever
- Headache
- Body ache
- Neck pain
- Shoulder pain
- Spine pain
- Limb pain
- Joint pain

C. Dress Code

■ Woollen pheranPage 3 of 5

- Woollen tchader
- Woollen muffler
- Warm kurta-pyjama
- Woollen socks
- Plastic/rubber boots
- Khraw
- Pulhoor

D. Shelter

- Muddy houses with wooden windows and doors, and thatched roofs.

E. Room Furnishing

- Wagov
- Patij

■ Tchaengij

■ Katibasti

F. Menu

- Nun chai
- Dalicheen kahwah
- Harissa (breakfast)
- Fish with muji or tomato
- Anchaar
- Waganhachi
- Rowaganhachi
- Aliehachi
- Daalbati

G. Relations

- A friend to the rich, as they enjoy the period.
- An enemy to the poor, as they suffer the most.

Aaw Ha! Aaw Ha!
Aaw Ha! Aaw Ha!

Paadar Seh – “Chilla-i-Kalan”



H. Heating Gadgets
■ Kangri (fire pot)

The most popular heating gadget in Kashmir, still widely used despite the arrival of hi-tech alternatives.

Before earlier decades, Kashmiris faced extremely severe Chilla-i-Kalan periods, with heavy snowfall and snow accumulation of 5–6 feet even in plains, accompanied by unbearable freezing temperatures. This caused freezing of several water bodies, including the famous Dal Lake. It is said that the then Prime Minister of J&K State, Jinab Ghulam Muhammad Bakhshi, enjoyed jeep rides on the deeply frozen Dal Lake in the mid-1950s. Residents around Dal Lake also enjoyed foot marches across its frozen surface.

I. Concerns

There are no heavy snowfalls now, no freezing temperatures that would freeze water bodies and water supply pipes, and no icicles—once an important feature of Chilla-i-Kalan. Chilla-i-Kalan has taken an unusual turn. There is little or no snow. Kashmir remains cold, but the lack of snow and abnormal weather patterns have raised serious concerns, badly affecting tourism, agriculture, horticulture, and thereby our livelihood.

J. Responsibility

We ourselves are responsible for these unusual weather changes due to the tremendous destruction of our ecosystem through deforestation and pollution, ultimately leading to global warming.

Bottom Line

Let all of us come forward for joint efforts in afforestation, preservation and protection of water bodies, prevention of air, water and soil pollution, and lastly, doing our utmost to prevent value erosion. This will help us develop a balanced ecosystem, which is vital for our survival. Our survival depends on the survival of a balanced environment.

Note: The original content was prepared by Sheikh Ghulam Mohammad. The text was edited, structured, and formatted into a PDF by Sheikh Fareed. The images shown at the beginning of this document, depicting the period of Chilla-i-Kalan and the regions most affected, are AI-generated.

The author from Retired DIET Principal and Ex-Principal, Sainik School. From Hajin (Bandipora)

Strength of SILENCE



■ IQRA MOHIUDIN

Silence: A person suddenly becomes silent not because they are weak, but because they have already exhausted all their strength trying to stay happy. They laughed even when their heart felt heavy, they comforted others while silently fighting their own battles, and they kept moving forward despite the cracks forming inside them. They believed that if they remained patient, honest, and kind, life would eventually return the same kindness. But instead, life tested them in ways they never imagined. They were hurt at the very place where they had planted hope. The hands they trusted for support were the ones that let go. The words that once felt safe slowly turned hollow. The world they believed would stand beside them proved to be nothing more than a fragile illusion. What hurt the most was not the pain itself, but the realization that sincerity is not

always valued, and loyalty is not always returned.

Still, they tried to live properly. They chose silence over arguments, patience over anger, and understanding over hatred. They kept telling themselves that every hardship had a reason, that every tear would one day make sense. But then came an incident—sudden and deeply painful—that shattered their inner balance. It changed the way they saw people, relationships, and even themselves. From that moment, their heart stopped trusting easily, and their soul became tired of hoping.

Silence then became their safest place. In that silence, they hid their broken dreams, their unspoken fears, and their endless questions. They stopped explaining their pain because explanations brought no relief. They stopped expecting because expectations only led to disappointment. Their eyes learned how to smile, but their heart quietly carried a weight no one could see.

Life continued, but it felt empty, colorless, and hopeless. Days passed, and loneliness became familiar. Nights grew heavier with memories and regrets. They often wondered where they went wrong, why their honesty became their weakness, and why love cost them so much. Yet, even in this darkness, something within them refused to completely give up.

Slowly, silence began to transform them. It

taught them the value of self-respect, the importance of boundaries, and the strength of letting go. They realized that not everyone deserves access to their heart, and not everyone who stays is truly loyal. They learned that walking alone is sometimes better than being surrounded by people who make you feel invisible.

With time, their pain turned into wisdom. Their tears turned into strength. Their broken trust turned into awareness. They stopped seeking validation from the world and started finding peace within themselves. They understood that their worth was never defined by how others treated them, but by how they chose to rise after being broken.

And one day, without making any noise, this silent person healed. They didn't announce their recovery or prove anything to anyone. They simply learned to breathe freely again. They learned to smile genuinely, to dream carefully, and to love themselves deeply. Their silence no longer carried pain—it carried peace.

In the end, silence did not destroy them. It rebuilt them. It turned their wounds into lessons and their loneliness into strength. And in that quiet rebirth, they found a new beginning—stronger, wiser, and finally at peace with who they are.

The columnist is reading in class 11th.

A Critical Review of 'Jalta Gulab' by Dr. Abdul Majid Bhaderwahi



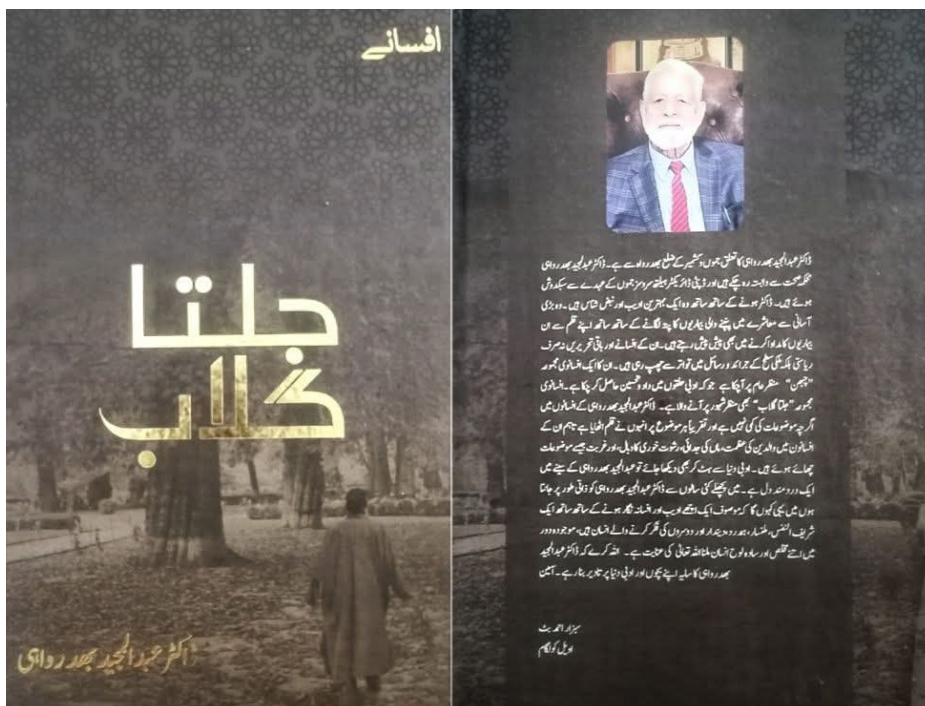
■ MOHAMMAD ARFAT WANI

In the diverse landscape of Urdu literature, short story writing holds a prominent place for its masterful depiction of the complexities of life, social contradictions, and the intricacies of human psychology. Kashmir, with its cultural and literary background, has produced writers who reflect social realities with clarity and subtlety, capturing human emotions in their most delicate and profound forms. Among such literary figures stands Dr. Abdul Majid Bhaderwahi, a man known as much for his resonant voice and work as an authority on Urdu fiction. Born on 3rd May 1942 in District Bhaderwah, Jammu & Kashmir, Dr. Bhaderwahi pursued his early education locally, went on to AIPS, and completed his BA and graduation from Punjab. Professionally, he gave decades of service to the Health Department, serving humanity with veracity and compassion with professional candor, culminating in his stint as Deputy Director of Health. It was through his experiences as a physician that he encountered unbearable human suffering, double standards, and moral dilemmas, experiences which profoundly shaped his literary vision and laid the foundation for his writings.

Unlike the majority of the literary figures whose literary inclination is transmitted as an endowment, Dr. Bhaderwahi's engagement with Urdu fiction stems from intrinsic passion and intellectual dedication. He started writing short stories seriously after 1990 and attained recognition in Urdu literature within no time. His writings have been published in almost all prestigious journals and magazines in reputed collections like "Sulgra Shehar," "Tapish," and "Jalta Gulab" among more than eight publications. His prose is marked by elegance, flow, and richness of intellect while depicting human psychology, social injustice, ethical dilemma, and the ever-multidimensional realities of life. His latest

collection titled "Jalta Gulab," published in 2025, is another milestone on this path of artistic mastery and profound observation of life, which molds his narrations into a long-lasting impact on its readers. This book was compiled by Wali Mohammad Asir Kashtawari, published by Pixel Media, Srinagar, and printed in 500 copies by Fawzia Computer Center, Jammu. It will soon be accessible to a wider readership. This will ensure its reach among the serious readers of Urdu fiction.

According to literary critic Shamshad Kralwari, Dr. Abdul Majid Bhaderwahi's short stories present a true picture of the dark realities of social life, broken relationships, and domestic conflicts, with a particularly subtle yet powerful portrayal of women's oppression, exploitation, and social constraints. Wali Mohammad Asir Kishitwari describes him as a physician by profession but cheerful in temperament and a unique short story writer by pen, who, despite being engaged in the demanding medical field, has earned a respected place in literature through hard work, fluency, and intellectual depth. Mohammad Yousif Tang believes that Dr. Bhaderwahi never loses hope in the face of the darker sides of human nature; instead, he draws goodness from the depths of evil and turns his stories into symbols of positive transformation, while his writing reflects a doctor's compassion and reveals rare aspects of human psychology. Noor Shah points out that Dr. Bhaderwahi's personal decency, refined speech, and reformative vision are also reflected in his fictional characters, who pass through life's bitterness to offer the reader a sense of love, peace, and mental awareness. Bashir Ahmad Khateeb considers him an artist with strong social and religious awareness and finds in his writings a boldness, irony, and brevity reminiscent of Saadat Hasan Manto, while Dr. Mushtaq Ahmad Wani sees his stories as a source of enlightening knowledge that promotes self-awareness, culture, and justice. According to Dr. Reyaz Tawheedi, his pen works both as a reformer and a critic, and Parvez Manooos believes that his stories bring together Kashmir's cultural beauty and social bitterness in a single frame. Thus, Jalta Gulab is not merely a collection of short stories but a comprehensive picture of human life, its many colors, psychological complexities,



moral struggles, and social inequalities, where each story turns the reader from a simple listener into a conscious witness of life's realities.

The individual stories of "Jalta Gulab" show remarkable thematic depth and narrative sophistication. "Mere Mehboob" explores love, confession, and repentance. It shows when the walls of ego fall, forgiveness in the court of conscience becomes the greatest virtue. "Mehboob Ka Intizar" has wrought love into worship through patience and yearning, and "Keechar Mein Khila Kanwal" has challenged class prejudice, going to the extent of asserting that true purity is independent of social background. "Aakhri Tamanna" is about existential anguish through desires awakened in life's last moments, while the title story, "Jalta Gulab," shows sacrifice as an eternal fragrance, though a burnt one. "Maqdur" links up destiny with bravery and options, rather than considering it a preordained fate. "Asliyat" provokes much thought on the gulf between appearance and reality. "Jagti Aankhon Ka Khwab" mourns the dreams trapped by social constraints, while "Bhool Kisi Ki, Saza Kisi Ko" portrays the pungent outcome of social injustice. And "Khamoshi Ki Zuban" symbolizes the death of conscience. "Ikhlag Ki Qeemat" reminds

the readers that our true inheritance lies not in wealth but in character.

The rest of these stories elaborates on these insights: whereas "Badgumani" draws upon suspicion within the four walls of homes, "Jhoota Intiqal" is a satire on the societal obsession with the dead, and "Zindagi Ke Daire" reflects tension between superstition and reality. "Sharab Aur Jhoot" delineates the simultaneous physical and spiritual ruin, while "Tabadlay Ke Baad" examines the difference of rank and temperament. "Tuije Zameen Pe Utara Gaya Mere Liye" presents love as a fiat of heaven, while "Tilawat Ka Inaam" and "Mukhlis Dost" have accentuated spirituality and humanity across the social and religious divide. Social apathy and the system's indifference have come up in "Dost Aur Bhabhi" and "Interview," and the bond between mother and child is beautifully drawn in "Khabab Aur Maa," "Dastak" and "Aahon Ka Asar" awaken conscience and illustrate the karmas that catch up with man, while "Ah-e Sahar Gahi" portrays a situation where repentance transforms a character.

Stories like "Kachay Aam" draw upon human empathy, "Ajnabi Hum Dono" looks at socially constructed relationships, and "Pehanchi Wahi Pe Khak Jahan Ka Khamir

Tha" celebrates our unbreakable bond with the roots.

"Yunhi Koi Mil Gaya" depicts the unsought beauty of chance, while "Tuhfa-e-Mohabbat" reflects generosity in abasement, and "Dam-e-Sayaad" uplifts hope to healing. "Nazar-e-Inayat" symbolizes patience and trust, and "Bhadda Mazaq" elaborates on the destructive power of petty puny acts in the modern age. "Khud Sipardagi" is a question directed against human dignity, "Sifarish" points out the murder of merit, "Ye Aansoo Mere Dil Ki Zuban Hain" conveys the language of emotions that is universally comprehensible, whereas "Tameer-e-Masjid Ke Liye" weighs sincerity against intention. The concluding section comprising "Rehmat-e-Elahi," "Daftari Tawaalat," "Baramadgi," "Khudai Girift," and "Kafara" addresses hope, despondency, karmic justice, and self-reform. Stories like "Ehsaas," "Bhook," "Ghaao," "Sargoshi," "Tamanna," "Majrooh Roohain," and "Rishton Ki Tazleel" are comprehensively depicting social obligation, intergenerational trauma, women's helplessness, unfulfilled dreams, class-based oppression, and erosion of sanctity in personal relationships.

Ultimately, "Jalta Gulab" is a deep and an essential contribution to Urdu fiction, demonstrating Dr. Abdul Majid Bhaderwahi's prowess over human conscience, ethics, social justice, and many shades of love and relationships. Each story plays the role of a mirror to life, reflecting emotions, moral dilemmas, and intellectual stirrings hidden in every human being. This collection crosses all regional and linguistic barriers and provides the readers with an opportunity to not only read but to visualize, reflect, and feel the realistic aspects of human civilization. "Jalta Gulab" is much more than a book; it is a literary journey, a mirror to society, and a celebration of human emotions, hence a timeless treasure and a masterpiece in the annals of Urdu short stories.

The author is a passionate writer, social activist, and nursing student from Kuchmulla Tral, is also a B.Sc. Nursing student at Ramzaan College of Nursing & Paramedical Sciences, Galander Pampore, Email: wania6817@gmail.com

GREAT PEOPLE CONTRIBUTE TO THE WHOLE OF HUMANITY WITHOUT ANY PERSONAL GAIN



■ SAHIL MANZOOR BHATTI

Education means becoming civilized and achieving life goals for a better standard of living. Education never means getting government jobs and earning illegal assets. Education is class apart, and it truly opens the doors for the blind to a visionary world. Education always offers a helping hand to helpless people.

It is unfortunate that we have developed the mindset that education only means getting government jobs, earning illegal assets, and living a comfortable life without dedication or sacrifice for the nation. There are developed countries where people willingly engage in research with the sole aim of uplifting the entire world.

Who are visionary people?

Visionary scholars are never selfish; they sacrifice their great work for the benefit of humanity. An educationally qualified person is one who dedicates his or her research to humanity and has no intention of personal gain.

We have exemplary personalities who have given their best to the world without any person-

al benefit. Their names are written in golden letters, and people remember them for their great contributions to humanity.

The education system should be based on curiosity. The greater the curiosity towards educational goals, the more assistance should be provided, including full-fledged scholarships. Education should offer fair opportunities to apply and sit for entrance examinations. Proper counselling at different levels should be provided so that we can identify those who are more curious and inclined towards research. Such follow-up with researchers can help the nation feel proud after producing great scholars.

Today's era demands extraordinary talent to lead the nation forward in technology. Technology plays an immense role in uplifting the country and generating employment.

Every country in the world is emphasizing the strengthening of its education sector. Where education is well developed, other sectors grow automatically. Sensible people always give their hundred percent effort to any task assigned to them by their seniors. Achieving success in a very short span of time is never possible unless we have educated and well-trained staff.

Today, we are witnessing a bizarre world that seems to be completely run by machines. Machines are made of materials like iron, plastic, and other elements. All types of machines are



created by well-educated youth, and ultimately, machines are controlled by humans.

There are many tasks we perform daily, such as using photocopies, smartphones, vehicles, etc., all of which are human inventions. The Almighty has blessed us with a powerful brain that has potential beyond imagination. Only a few people utilize their brains to a certain extent and bring revolutions to the world by inventing things beyond our thinking. According to studies, even scientists utilize only about 30 percent of their brain power and still make

great inventions. Therefore, we can say that a normal individual may use only 8 to 10 percent of his or her brain throughout life, while the rest remains unused.

Some people aim to become good teachers. We should always support the interests of learners and never force them against their will. Every individual has immense potential in different ways. Some are interested in the medical field and should never be pushed into other fields unwillingly. Today, the government has initiated various schemes so that everyone can achieve their dreams.

Some individuals are interested in the engineering field. Support their interests, and they will become great engineers, develop the nation, and contribute to the economy.

The world is full of opportunities. If you believe in yourself, your talent will never go in vain. You can change the world and become an influencer. Every individual has different skills, abilities, and talents, and each talent has great scope worldwide.

Today, we are connected through social media. Never remain idle, as idleness rusts abil-

ities. Always engage yourself productively and try to understand your strengths. The day you recognize your talent is the day you achieve real success in life.

Today, we have great opportunities to become what we want to be, but we need patience, perseverance, consistency, and hard work. In the past, learning resources were limited, but today everything is at our fingertips. We have unlimited resources to learn, stay updated, and acquire knowledge in various fields.

In this article, I am going to explore how we can score good marks in examinations.

Handwriting

Handwriting plays an important role in examinations. Always keep your handwriting neat and legible, and avoid cutting and overwriting. First, attempt the questions you are confident about. Prepare yourself from the very first day of a new class. "Do not put off until tomorrow." Procrastination makes tasks difficult and creates problems.

Always write to the point and avoid unnecessary or irrelevant details. Use a ruler and leave proper space between answers to keep your answer sheet neat. Write your roll number and other required particulars carefully before submitting the answer sheet.

sahilmanzoor411990@gmail.com

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Why Eating Potato Chips, Chocolates May Harm Your Kidneys

Love to binge on potato chips, bread, bakery products and chocolate? Then beware, as a new rodent-based study revealed that eating processed foods can cause leaky gut syndrome, which in turn increases the risk of kidney disease.

The study, led by researchers at Monash University in Australia, showed that heat-treated or

processed foods are rich in harmful chemical compounds called Advanced Glycation End Products (AGEs). These chemicals give the browned, roasted, fried, grilled and baked foods their flavour and aroma.

The AGEs trigger a process called the Maillard reaction and switch on the body's danger

signals leading to an inflammatory response and chronic kidney disease.

However, eating foods that contain high resistant starch fibre such as oats, cooked and cooled rice, barley, bean and legumes such as black beans and peas, raw potato starch (as a supplement), cooked and cooled

potatoes, can help restore gut health and improve kidney health, revealed the study published in the journal 'Science Advances'.

"These foods are important as they get down into your lower gut and basically serve as food for your gut bacteria. The gut bacteria ferment these food-producing metabolites that are

anti-inflammatory," said lead author Melinda Coughlan, Associate Professor at Monash Central Clinical School's Department of Diabetes.

Globally, 10 per cent people are affected with chronic kidney disease. Consumption of processed food is also associated with the risk of all-cause mortality, diabetes,

hypertension, obesity, cancer and gastrointestinal diseases.

"Dietary change, as with most behaviour change, can be difficult to maintain long term, but by adding more foods high in resistant starch fibre and steaming and stewing cooking practices we can help dampen the harmful effects," Coughlan said. IANS

Courtesy Healthline

Low-calorie diet, exercise may improve survival for leukemia adolescents: Study

According to a new study, overweight children and adolescents receiving chemotherapy for treatment of leukemia are less successful battling the disease compared to their lean peers. In some cancers, including leukemia in children and adolescents, obesity can negatively affect survival outcomes. Obese young people with leukemia are 50 per cent more likely to relapse after treatment than their lean counterparts.

Now, a study led by researchers at UCLA and Children's Hospital Los Angeles has shown that a combination of modest dietary changes and exercise can dramatically improve survival outcomes for those with acute lymphoblastic leukemia, the most common childhood cancer.

The findings of the study were published in the American Society of Hematology's journal Blood Advances.

The researchers found that patients who reduced their calorie intake by 10 per cent or more and adopted a moderate exercise program immediately after their diagnosis had, on average, 70 per cent less chance of having lingering leukemia cells after a month of chemotherapy than those who did not go on the diet-and-exercise regimen.

While it has already been established that those with Type II diabetes and a high body mass



index (BMI) are at greater risk of experiencing hospitalizations.

Lingering cancer cells in the bone marrow, which are more likely to be found in overweight individuals, are associated with worse survival and a higher risk of relapse, often leading to more intense treatments like bone marrow transplants and immunotherapy.

"We tested a very mild diet because this was our first time trying it, and the first month of treatment is already so difficult for patients and families," said senior author Dr Steven Mittelman, chief of pediatric endocrinology at UCLA Mattel Children's Hospital and a member of the UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center. Mittelman added, "But even

with these mild changes in diet and exercise, the intervention was extremely effective in reducing the chance of having detectable leukemia in the bone marrow."

As part of the clinical trial, which took place at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, researchers worked with registered dietitians and physical therapists to create personalized 28-day interventions for 40 young people between the ages of 10 and 21 who were newly diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

The intervention was designed to cut participants' calorie intake by a minimum of 10 per cent in order to reduce both fat gain and lean muscle loss. The physical activity component included a target level of 200 minutes per week

of moderate exercise.

The results showed a decrease in fat gain among those who were overweight and obese, as well as an improved insulin sensitivity and an increase in the beneficial hormone adiponectin, which is involved in regulating glucose and breaking down fatty acids. Most importantly, the researchers found a 70 per cent decrease in the chance of having lingering leukemia cells in the bone marrow -- known medically as a minimal residual disease -- when compared with a historical control group.

"We hoped the intervention would improve outcomes, but we had no idea it would be so effective," Mittelman said. Mittelman noted, "We can't really add more toxic chemotherapies to the intense initial treatment

phase, but this is an intervention that likely has no negative side effects. In fact, we hope it may even reduce toxicities caused by chemotherapy."

"This is the first trial to test a diet-and-exercise intervention to improve treatment outcomes from a childhood cancer," said principal investigator and lead author Dr Etan Orgel, Director of the Medical Supportive Care Service in the Cancer and Blood Disease Institute at Children's Hospital Los Angeles. "This is an exciting proof-of-concept, which may have great implications for other cancers as well," added Orgel.

Next steps include further testing of the approach in a multicenter randomised trial, which will be launched later this year, the researchers said.

Study finds new risk factors linked to increased risk of Covid-19 infection

As Covid-19 runs rampant across the world, a team of researchers have found associations between certain lifestyle factors and a person's risk of getting infected. While it has already been established that those with Type II diabetes and a high body mass index (BMI) are at greater risk of experiencing hospitalizations and other severe complications related to Covid-19, they are also at greater risk of getting the symptomatic infection in the first place.

This is the finding of a recent study conducted by researchers at the University of Maryland School of Medicine that was published today in the journal PLoS ONE.

Using data from the UK Biobank of 500,000 British volunteers over age 40, the researchers examined health factors in those who tested positive for Covid-19 and compared them to those who tested negative. They found that those who had positive Covid-19 test results were more likely to be obese or have Type II diabetes. Those who tested negative were more likely to have high levels of "good" HDL cholesterol and be at a healthy weight with a normal body mass index (BMI).

In some cancers, including leukemia in children and adolescents, obesity can negatively affect survival outcomes. "Certain baseline cardiometabolic factors appear to either protect a person from Covid-19 infection while others make a person more vulnerable to infection," said study author Charles Hong, MD, PhD, professor of medicine and director of cardiology research at the University of Medicine School of Medicine.

Dr Hong added, "But this study wasn't designed to determine what factors actually cause Covid-19 infections. These are statistical associations that point to the importance of a healthy functioning immune system for protecting against Covid-19 infection."

He and his colleagues controlled potential confounding factors like socioeconomic status, age, gender, and ethnicity.

Courtesy Healthline

Here's how a sugary diet early in life could cause memory trouble later

A new research has shown how drinking sugary beverages early in life may lead to impaired memory in adulthood. The findings of the study were published in the journal 'Translational Psychiatry'. The study is the first to show how a specific change to the gut microbiome -- the bacteria and other microorganisms growing in the stomach and intestines -- can alter the function of a particular region of the brain.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, sugar-sweetened beverages are a leading source of added sugars in Americans' diets. Nearly two-thirds of young people in the United States consume at least one sugary drink each day.

Neuroscientist Scott Kanoski, associate professor of biological sciences at the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, has studied the link between diet and brain function for years. His research has shown that consumption of sugary beverages impairs memory function in rats and that those same drinks change the gut

microbiome.

In the current study, Kanoski and researchers at UCLA and the University of Georgia, Athens, sought to find out if a direct link exists between changes to the microbiome and memory function.

While it has already been established that those with Type II diabetes and a high body mass index (BMI) are at greater risk of experiencing hospitalizations.

In some cancers, including leukemia in children and adolescents, obesity can negatively affect survival outcomes.

When the rats grew to be adults after about a month, the researchers tested their memories using two different methods. One method tested memory associated with a region of the brain called the hippocampus. The other method tested memory function controlled by a region called the perirhinal cortex.

The researchers found that, compared to rats that drank just water, the rats that consumed high levels of sugary



drink had more difficulty with memory that uses the hippocampus. Sugar consumption did not affect memories made by the perirhinal cortex.

"Early life sugar consumption seems to selectively impair their hippocampal learning and memory," said study lead author Emily Noble, assistant professor

in the UGA College of Family and Consumer Sciences and a former postdoctoral fellow at USC Dornsife.

The scientists then checked the rats' gut microbiomes and found differences between those that drank the sweet beverage and those that drank water. The sugar drinkers had larger populations of two particular

species of gut bacteria: Parabacteroides distasonis and Parabacteroides johnsonii.

The researchers then asked if the Parabacteroides bacteria could, without the help of sugar, affect the rats' memory function. They transplanted Parabacteroides bacteria that were grown in the lab into the guts of adolescent rats that drank

just water. The rats receiving the bacteria showed memory impairment in the hippocampus when they grew to adulthood much the same as the sugar-drinking rats.

The scientists also found that, unlike the sugar-drinking rats, the transplanted rats also showed memory impairment in the perirhinal cortex. This difference provides further evidence that altered brain function associated with diet may actually be rooted in changes to the gut microbiome.

Previous studies have transplanted the entire gut microbiome from one group of animals to another, producing similar changes to brain function. However, this study is among the first to do so with just two specific species.

"It was surprising to us that we were able to essentially replicate the memory impairments associated with sugar consumption not by transferring the whole microbiome, but simply by enriching a single bacterial population in the gut," said

Kanoski, who is a corresponding author on the study.

Finally, the scientists examined the activity of genes in the hippocampus, comparing rats that drank the sugary beverage to those that drank just water and comparing water drinkers to those transplanted with Parabacteroides.

Gene activity did, in fact, change in both the rats that consumed the sugar-sweetened beverages and the rats transplanted with Parabacteroides. The genes that were affected control how nerve cells transmit electrical signals to other nerve cells and how they send molecular signals internally. The results of this study confirm a direct link, on a molecular level, between the gut microbiome and brain function.

In future studies, Kanoski and the researchers hope to determine if changing habits, such as eating a healthier diet or increasing exercise, can reverse the harm to memory caused by elevated sugar consumption earlier in life.

Courtesy Healthline

Nukkad Natak Held Under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao at New Bus Stand Budgam

HT NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM, DEC 22: A vibrant and impactful Nukkad Natak (street play) was successfully organized at the New Bus Stand, Budgam, under the flagship Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative to spread awareness about the importance of saving and educating the girl child.

The programme was organized by the SANKALP Hub for Empowerment of Women, Mission Shakti, Budgam, with the objective of sensitizing the general public on key social issues including gender equality, prevention of child marriage, promotion of girls' education, and the collective responsibility of society towards the empowerment of women and girls.

Through powerful dialogues, expressive performances, and relatable real-life situations, the street play effectively conveyed strong messages against gender discrimination and other social evils. It highlighted the crucial role of education and empowerment of girls in building a



progressive and inclusive society.

The performance drew a large audience comprising commuters, local residents, and shopkeepers, who keenly watched the play and appreciated the initiative. Many members of the public actively engaged with the messages conveyed during the programme.

Officials and staff of the SANKALP Hub stated that such awareness activities play a vital role in reaching the masses in an interactive and

impactful manner. They reiterated Mission Shakti's commitment to strengthening community participation and promoting positive behavioral change at the grassroots level.

The event concluded with an appeal to the public to support government initiatives aimed at women empowerment and to become active stakeholders in ensuring a safe, equal, and dignified environment for girls and women.

The Literary Horizon Loses a Distinguished Star

Condolence Meeting by ICF in Memory of Abdul Ahad Farhad

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, DEC 22: The world of literature today has been left without a voice that endowed words with meaning and thoughts with dignity. The creative works of the late Abdul Ahad Farhad inspired generations to think, to feel, and to become better human beings. His services to literature will always be remembered, and the lamp of his art will continue to illuminate the times to come.

These views were expressed at a condolence meeting convened by the Inder Cultural Forum, Inder Kot, Sambal, under the chairmanship of the Forum's President, Saleem Yusuf, in memory of Abdul Ahad Farhad—one of the Valley of Kashmir's most respected literary and broadcasting figures, a renowned broadcaster, writer, and poet.

Abdul Ahad Farhad passed away in Jammu, and as soon as the news of his demise spread, a wave of deep sorrow swept through the literary, journalistic, cultural, and broadcasting circles of the Kashmir Valley. Speakers at the condolence meeting organized by the Forum paid rich tributes to the departed soul, stating that Abdul Ahad Farhad was a versatile, serious, and dignified personality. For a long time, he served the field of literature with intellectual honesty, cultural awareness, and sincerity.

Depth of thought in his writings, elegance in style, and dignity in conversation were the hallmarks of his personality.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Forum President Saleem Yusuf said that in this hour of grief, all members of the Forum stand shoulder to shoulder with the bereaved family. Prayers were offered to the Almighty to grant the departed soul a high place in Paradise and to bestow patience and fortitude upon the family.

TSWOOI, AIPWS join hands with Forest Dept for Green Earth drive in Baderwah

AMIR IQBAL KHAN

BHADERWAH, DEC 22: A delegation of "The Social Welfare Organisation of India" (TSWOOI) and the "All India Peoples Welfare Society" (AIPWS) on Monday met the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Bhaderwah Sanjay Sharma to discuss joint measures for the upcoming plantation drive in the Bhalra area under the nationwide campaign 'Plantation for Green Earth'.

Led by TSWOOI President Zafar Hussain Wani, the delegation included General Secretary Umar Tak, Organiser Ankit Sharma, Secretary Badri Nath, and Treasurer



Mohd Salim Butt. They underscored the need for active community participation in afforestation efforts and sought logistical as well as technical support from the Forest Department to make the drive a success.

The DFO assured full cooperation and reiterated the department's commitment to environmental protection and sustainable forest management.

The plantation programme aims to involve volunteers and local residents in large numbers to promote ecological balance and strengthen climate resilience.

Officials said the collaboration between civil society groups and the Forest Department marks a key step towards spreading environmental awareness at the grassroots level and tackling climate change through collective action.

Public Notice

It is hereby notified for the information of the general public that my Date of Birth record contains certain inadvertent errors, which are required to be corrected as per official records.

Father's Name has been incorrectly recorded as Bashart Nabi Peer, whereas the correct name is Bashart Nabi.

Address has been incorrectly mentioned as Peer Manzil, Raiepora, whereas the correct address is House No. 39, Palhallan, Baramulla, near Jamia Masjid, Pattan, Baramulla.

All concerned authorities and the general public are requested to take note of the above corrections. This notice is issued to avoid any confusion in future.

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Government Of Jammu & Kashmir Office of the Naib Tehsildar, Achabal

PUBLIC NOTICE

Subject: Application of Nawreena Yousef and Muntaza Yousef, D/o Mohammad Yousuf Hajam, R/o Kawari Gam, Tehsil Achabal, District Anantnag for issuance of RBA / OBC Certificate.

Whereas the above named applicants have applied in this office for issuance of RBA / OBC Certificate in their favour. In this connection, a report from the Patwari Halqa concerned has been sought, which reveals that the applicants are residents of village Kawari Gam, Tehsil Achabal, District Anantnag and belong to Hajam community.

The annual income of the family as per records is within the prescribed limits and the family details stand verified.

Now, therefore, any person having any objection with regard to the issuance of the said certificate in favour of the applicants may present his/her objection along with documentary proof in this office within 07 (seven) days from the date of publication of this notice. After the expiry of the stipulated period, no objection shall be entertained.

Issued under my hand and seal of this office.

Naib Tehsildar
Achabal

Public Notice

This is to inform the general public that I, Villayat Ali S/O-Jaffar Ali R/O- Chulichan (Batalik) has sold my vehicle Alto K10 bearing registration number JK07 6071, Model May 2018 to Mohd Irfan S/O- Mohd Kazim R/O-Bhinbat, Drass. If anyone has any objections may contact ARTO Kargil within the period of seven days of this notice.

Government of Jammu and Kashmir Office of the Executive Engineer Irrigation Division Pulwama NOTICE INVITING TENDER

E- NIT NO. (18) OF 2025-26 (e-Tendering)

For and on behalf of Lt. Governor of J&K U.T, e-Tenders are invited on percentage basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K Govt. for the following works.

S. No.	Name of work	Adv. Cost in Lakhs	Cost of Tender Doc. in Rs.	Earnest Money (Rs)	Time of completion	Class of Contract	Head of Account
1.	Permanent Restoration of LIS Wasoora from RD 0 to 34 mts.	4.30	400	8600	15 days	DEE	2702 M&R
2.	Construction of Lining wall on Koil Canal downstream RD 2316m at Chandgam Pulwama.	4.56	400	9120	15 days	DEE	2701 M&R
3.	Widening and Deepening of Parigam Nallah at Urwan	3.00	300	6000	15 days	DEE	2702 M&R
4.	Arresting of leakages by way of providing cement concrete haunch on Koil canal at spots	0.89	200	1780	12 days	DEE	2701 M&R

Position of Funds: Budgetary Provision.

Position of AAA: Accorded vide Superintending Engineer, Hydraulic circle Pulwama's order No. SE/HYD/SPN/DB/50 of 12/2025-26 dated: 09-12-2025 and SE/HYD/SPN/DB/51 of 12/2025-26 dated: 09-12-2025 and

Position of T/S: Sanctioned vide Superintending Engineer, Hydraulic circle Pulwama's T.S. No.'s 28 of 12/2025 dated: 15-12-2025 and 29 of 12/2025 dated: 15-12-2025.

The Bidding document consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Drawings, set of terms and conditions and other details can be seen/ downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:

01	Date of issue of Tender Notice	20-12-2025 (06:00 pm)
02	Date of start of downloading	20-12-2025 (06:00 pm)
03	Bid submission start date Technical/ Financial.	20-12-2025 (06:00 pm)
04	Bid submission end date	27-12-2025 (06:00 pm)
05	Date & Time of opening of Bids (online)	29-12-2025 (10:00 am)

Terms and Conditions: -

- Bids must be accompanied with proof of cost of tender document in shape of Treasury receipt/e-challan under (MH: 0702-PWD Remittance) in favour of Executive Engineer Irrigation Division Pulwama (tender inviting authority), and Earnest Money/ Bid Security in shape of CDR/ FDR from any schedule or nationalized bank pledged to Executive Engineer Irrigation Division Pulwama (Tender Receiving Authority).
- The date and time of opening of Technical Bids shall be notified on departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through an e-mail message on their e-mail address. The Financial Bids of responsive bidders shall be opened online on same web site in the office of the Executive Engineer Irrigation Division Pulwama (Tender Receiving Authority).
- The bid for the work shall remain valid for period of 90 days from the date of opening of bid.
- Bidders are advised to use the (My Documents) area in their user on www.j&ktenders.gov.in portal to store, the required documents as given below:
 - GST, Adhaar Card, 16- Digit Bank Account No. GST linked and PAN No.
 - Registration card with the latest renewal.
 - Treasury challan (0702)
 - Scanned copy of EMD.
 - Card verification letter.
 - Registered mobile number and E-mail ID in the shape of Bidders address form.
 - BOQ.
 - Acknowledgment/ certificate w.r.t. filing of GST returns of previous quarter.
 - Acknowledgment/ certificate w.r.t. filing of Income Tax returns of Previous financial year.
 - The successful bidder is bound to register himself with Assistant Labour Commissioner, Pulwama for CESS Registration after issuance of allotment.
- The earnest money shall be forfeited if: -
 - Any bidder/ tenderer withdraws his bid/ tender during the period of bid validity or makes any modification in terms and conditions of the bid.
 - Failure of successful bidder to execute the agreement within 07 Days after fixation of contract.
- Instruction to bidders regarding e-Tendering process: -
 - Bidders are advised to download bid submission manual from the "Downloads" option as well as from "Bidders Manual Kit" on web site www.jktenders.gov.in acquaint bid submission process.
 - To participate in bidding process, bidders have to get "Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)" as per information Technology Act, 2000. Bidders can get Digital Certificate from any approved vendor.
 - The bidders have to submit their bids online in electronic format with Digital Signature. No financial bid will be accepted in physical form.
 - Bids will be opened online as per time schedule mentioned in Para- 3.
 - Bidders must ensure to upload scanned copy of all necessary documents with bid.

Note: Scan all the documents on 100dpi with black & white option.

No.: PID/CS/ 3581-91 | Dated: 20/12/2025

Sd/- Executive Engineer
Irrigation Division Pulwama

DIPK: 9216/25 | Dated: 22-12-2025

GOVERNMENT OF (U.T) JAMMU & KASHMIR Office Of The Executive Engineer Jal Shakti (PHE) Deptt. Ground Water Division Srinagar Baghi-Ali-Mardan, Nowshara Srinagar.

Extension Notice 1st Of Re-tender Corrigendum 1st.

Subject: Construction of Machine Drilled Hand Pump Operated Bore Well at Ajas Bandipora Near House Of Zahoor Ahmad and Tariq habib and Others in District Bandipora. (Sl. No. 18) Tender ID 2025_PHE_286817_19.

- Reference: 1. This office Re-Tender Corrigendum 1st issued vide endorsement No: JS- PHE GWDS/25-26/Camp./ 15803-12, dated: 11-12-2025. Bearing Tender ID No. 2025_PHE_286817_18.
2. This office e-NIT No. 41-JS-PHE/GWDS/Mech. of 2025-26, issued vide endorsement No: JS-PHE/GWDS/25-26/Camp./ 6291-6304, dated: 02-09-2025. Bearing Tender ID No. No. 2025_PHE_286817_18.

Due to "NO Response" for the above mentioned works advertised vide e-NIT No. and Tender ID No's under reference. Which was scheduled to be downloaded till 19-12-2025 Up-to 03:00 PM are extended as per the details given below: -

S. No.	Item	Fresh Date
1.	Period of submission of bids	30-12-2025 Up-to 03:00 PM
2.	Date of opening of tenders	31-12-2025 01.00 PM

NOTE: All other terms and conditions shall remain same as laid down in the aforesaid e-NIT issued vide above referred endst: nos. No: -JS-PHE/GWDS/25-26/Camp./16212-222

Dated: 19-12-2025

Sd/- Executive Engineer
Jal Shakti (PHE) Deptt. Ground Water Division Srinagar

DIPK: 9232/25 | Dated: 22-12-2025

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Forest Minister meets GCC delegation; advocates collective efforts towards environment preservation

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

JAMMU, DECEMBER 22: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, today reiterated that protection of the environment is a shared responsibility and called for a collective approach towards preserving the natural resources for the posterity.

The Minister was speaking during an interaction with a delegation of the Group of Concerned Citizens (GCC), led by its Chairman Khurshid Ahmad Ganie, former Advisor to the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir.

The delegation raised a range of issues pertaining to environmental degradation and urged the government to adopt robust conservation and preservation measures across Jammu and Kashmir.

Acknowledging the concerns raised, Rana said that while environmental challenges are being faced globally, Jammu and Kashmir is no exception. "Our ecosystem is under stress and there is an urgent need for collective and coordinated efforts to address the environmental challenges confronting our region," he said.

"We must identify areas where the government, civil society and



communities can work together to improve the overall environmental health of Jammu and Kashmir."

The Minister assured that the issues and suggestions put forth by GCC would be considered for better management of environmental issues. The department will assess the feasibility of the proposals, identify areas for improvement and take appropriate steps for their effective implementation, he said.

Emphasising the need for unity, he added that safeguarding the environment that sustains us all has become imperative now more than ever.

Earlier, Khurshid Ahmad Ganie and other members of GCC stressed that the government must take

concrete steps to deal with the growing threats of environmental degradation and climate change in Jammu and Kashmir. They cautioned that failure to preserve and protect the natural resources could lead to severe consequences, including an increased frequency of natural calamities.

The GCC members drew attention to the alarming retreat of glaciers, which serve as a lifeline for drinking water and irrigation in the region and urged the government to formulate long-term strategies for their protection.

They also highlighted the sharp rise in vehicular pollution due to the increasing number of private vehicles and stressed the need to strengthen the public transport

system and explore innovative, out-of-the-box solutions to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

Expressing concern over the deteriorating condition of wetlands in Kashmir, the delegation underlined the urgent need for their protection. They noted that wetlands act as natural sponges that help prevent floods and must be safeguarded against encroachment and other forms of environmental degradation.

The GCC members brought to the Minister's notice the recurring incidents of tree felling saying that the elements of nature are deeply interconnected, with disturbances in one area having far-reaching consequences for human survival.

They also emphasised that Environmental Impact Assessments

(EIAs) should be made mandatory for all developmental projects in Jammu and Kashmir prior to their execution.

Other key issues raised included regeneration of forest cover, rejuvenation of degraded forests, compensatory afforestation, protection of wetlands and revival and restoration of springs.

The delegation also highlighted the concerns related to the Jal Shakti Department, calling for continuous monitoring of water quality. They pointed out that turbidity in piped water often increases during rainfall near source areas and stressed the need for timely intervention.

Additionally, the GCC discussed flood protection measures for the Jhelum and Tawi rivers and urged the government to ensure urgent execution of flood mitigation plans to protect vulnerable areas from future flood events.

The meeting was attended by the Commissioner Secretary, Forests, Ecology and Environment; Chairman, Pollution Control Committee; Chief Wildlife Warden; Chief Engineer, Jal Shakti Kashmir; Chief Engineer, Irrigation and Flood Control Kashmir; CEO, WUCMA; Chief Conservator of Forests, Kashmir; Chief Conservator of Forests, Jammu and Director, Planning and Statistics, Jal Shakti Department.

Agriculture Minister inaugurates zonal workshop of Krishi Vigyan Kendras at SKUAST Jammu

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

JAMMU, DECEMBER 22: The annual zonal workshop of Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) of ICAR-ATARI, Zone-I for the year 2024-25 began today at the Baba Jitto Auditorium, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Jammu (SKUAST-J), Chatha.

The workshop was inaugurated by Minister for Agriculture Production Department, Rural Development Department and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Departments, Javid Ahmad Dar.

The three day workshop, to be held from December 22 to 24, has brought together the key stakeholders of agricultural research and extension from across northern India to review performance, share best practices and chart future strategies for strengthening the farmer-centric extension services.

The inaugural function was held in presence of Dr. Rajbir Singh, Deputy Director General (Agricultural Extension), ICAR, New Delhi, as the guest of honour; Professor B. N. Tripathi, Vice-Chancellor, SKUAST-Jammu; Dr. Parvender Sheoran, Director, ICAR-ATARI, Ludhiana and statutory officers of the University.

Dr. Amrisha Vaid, Director Extension, SKUAST-Jammu, highlighted the pivotal role of KVKs as frontline extension institutions. He emphasized the importance of convergence between the research, extension and development departments for effective technology dissemination and farmer empowerment.

In his inaugural address, Javid Ahmad Dar lauded the contribution of KVKs in transforming agriculture at the grassroots level. He stressed the need to strengthen farmer-centric extension services, promote diversification, value addition and agri-entrepreneurship and ensure timely dissemination of scientific innovations to farmers. He also appreciated the role of SKUAST-Jammu and ICAR-ATARI in fostering sustainable and inclusive agricultural development in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Minister emphasized the urgent need to educate and sensitize the farmers about climate-related challenges and equip them with knowledge and skills to adopt climate-resilient agricultural practices.

The Minister underscored that awareness, capacity building and timely advisory services through institutions like Krishi Vigyan Kendras are essential to help the farmers adapt to changing climatic conditions and ensure sustainable agricultural growth.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Rajbir Singh highlighted the evolving role of KVKs in promoting climate-resilient agriculture, agri-entrepreneurship, digital extension and skill development. He underscored the importance of outcome-oriented extension approaches and accountability mechanisms for achieving sustainable agricultural growth.

In his presidential address, Vice-Chancellor Prof. B. N. Tripathi stated that SKUAST-Jammu has been consistently strengthening research-extension linkages through frontline demonstrations, on-farm trials and diagnostic services. He informed that the University has significantly expanded its national and international collaborations through MoUs. The University has recorded a steady increase in its Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) portfolio over the past three years, reflecting a strong emphasis on innovation and technology commercialization, he added. He also highlighted the University's active role in flagship programmes such as HADP and JKIP, particularly in agri-niche crops, horticulture promotion, startup development and handholding of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs).

Outlining the objectives of the workshop, Dr. Parvender Sheoran stated that ICAR-ATARI, Ludhiana coordinates and supports 72 Krishi Vigyan Kendras across Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. S. K. Gupta, Director Research, SKUAST-Jammu, emphasized the need for strong integration between research and extension to address location-specific agricultural challenges, adding that farmer-centric and problem-oriented research guided by KVK feedback is essential for enhancing technology adoption.

During the inaugural function, seven publications were released and five FPOs/entrepreneurs were felicitated for their exemplary contributions to agricultural development.

The workshop is being attended by Directors of Extension of State Agricultural Universities, Programme Coordinators of KVKs, scientists and extension professionals from Zone-I states and Union Territories. Deliberations during the three day event will focus on reviewing KVK performance, approving action plans for the coming year and formulating region-specific strategies to strengthen agricultural extension and improve farmer livelihoods.

PAC reviews audit paras of Rural Development Department

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

JAMMU, DECEMBER 22: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Monday held a meeting at Assembly Complex Jammu to review and discuss the Audit Paras related to the Rural Development Department (RDD).

The meeting was chaired by PAC Chairman, Sham Lal Sharma and attended by members of the Committee, Mubarik Gul, Nazir Ahmad Khan (Gurez), Qaysar Jamshaid Lone, Altaf Ahmed Wani (Kalo), Javid Hassan Baig, Dr. Devinder Kumar Manyal, Sajad Shaheen and Muzaffar Iqbal Khan.

Threadbare discussions were held on various issues raised in CAG's Audit Paras 3.12 (2001-02), 3.25 and 3.26 (2016-17) pertaining to the Rural Development Department.

Accountant General, Tsewang Tharchin, briefed the Committee and pointed out the issues highlighted in the audit reports pertaining to RDD.

Secretary, Rural Development Department, Mohammed Aijaz, briefed the Committee about the working of the Rural Development Department and steps being taken on the observations and to make further improvement in working of the department.

MD, JKRLM J&K Dr Shubra Sharma also briefed the Committee about issues highlighted in the meeting.



The Committee also discussed various other issues regarding implementation of different centrally sponsored schemes launched for welfare of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and stressed to provide maximum benefits of the schemes to the local people.

The Chairman directed the concerned officers to prepare a comprehensive detailed report regarding the action taken so far by the department to settle CAGs Audit Paras of 3.25 and 3.26 and submit to the Committee as early as possible.

After thorough examining, the Committee decided to drop Audit Para no 3.12 (2001-02) pertaining to the Rural Development Department with the directions to remain conscious in future in this regard.

Among others, DG, Accounts & Treasuries, F A Lone; Directors, RDD, Kashmir/Jammu; Additional Secretary, RDD; GM/J&K Bank besides senior officers of concerned departments and Assembly Secretariat attended the meeting.

Day-4 witnesses extensive outreach, public welfare activities across Bandipora District

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BANDIPORA, DECEMBER 22 : As part of Good Governance Week-"Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore", the Department of Animal Husbandry, Bandipora, organized awareness programmes and grievance redressal camps at Panchayat Chandergair (Block Sumbal), Panchayat Halqa Arin and Chittibandi (Block Bandipora) and Panchayat Halqa Badugam (Block Tulail).

Farmers and livestock rearers were sensitized about various animal husbandry schemes, eligibility and service delivery mechanisms, while their grievances were addressed on the spot to promote transparency and citizen-centric governance.

During the outreach activities, participants received guidance for availing departmental benefits, and several issues were resolved promptly. The department also distributed culled birds among poultry farmers as a livelihood support measure. The initiatives reflected the department's continued commitment to responsive governance and strengthening trust at the grassroots level.

Under Good Governance Week, "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore", the Sheep Husbandry Department Bandipora today conducted FMD vaccination drives and awareness camps across the district. The vaccination drives were held at various locations, including Village Braripora of Sheep Development Block Mantrigam.

Awareness programmes were organized at Sheep Extension Centre Amchikundal, SDO Offices Hajin and Kunan, and Sheep Development Block



Naidkhai, focusing on animal health management, vaccination and departmental schemes, reaffirming the department's outreach to farmers at the grassroots.

Similarly, Horticulture Department Bandipora organized grievance redressal camps at Hajin, Aloosa, Arin, Bandipora, Sumbal (including Irrigation Colony) and Nesbal Horticulture Zone, Sumbal. The programmes aimed to address farmers' grievances, provide on-spot assistance, and spread awareness about horticulture schemes.

"Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" was also celebrated across educational institutions in Bandipora today, including HSS Nadihal, GHS Nadihal, HS Zalpura, MS Guzerbal, MS Gundpora, PS Sathri Chuntimulla, PS Kunzpora, PS Gada Hanji Mohalla, GHS SK Payeen, MS Nowgam Payeen and MS Bathipora Zalpura. Staff and students highlighted progressive initiatives, with special focus on

advancements in the education sector. The Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD), Bandipora, along with the Assistant Commissioner Panchayats (ACP), Bandipora, participated in a public outreach camp organized at Panchayat Halqa Ayathmulla, Block Bandipora, under the initiative Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore.

During the camp, the officers interacted with local residents and listened to their grievances. The public was assured that all genuine issues raised would be addressed on a priority basis. Likewise, department of Fisheries, Bandipora, conducted awareness programmes at Banyari and Gurez to sensitise fishermen and the general public about various fisheries-related schemes and initiatives. During the programmes, participants were informed about sustainable fishing practices, available departmental support, and livelihood opportunities under the fisheries sector.

DC Pulwama Chairs Preparatory Meeting for Republic Day 2026 Celebrations

Emphasis laid on coordinated arrangements, security preparedness and cultural activities

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

PULWAMA, DECEMBER 22: Deputy Commissioner Pulwama, Dr. Basharat Qayoom, today chaired a preliminary meeting here at circuit house Pulwama to review the arrangements for the upcoming Republic Day 2026 celebrations in the district.

At the outset, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted that the past celebrations had set a strong benchmark in terms of coordination, discipline and public participation. He expressed appreciation for the collective efforts of all stakeholders in successful celebration of past national events and emphasised that the forthcoming Republic Day 2026 celebrations be organised by carrying forward these positive practices, with emphasis on orderly

planning, broad-based participation and timely execution.

During the meeting, Dr. Qayoom directed all departments to work in close coordination for the seamless execution of the celebrations. Special focus was laid on venue preparedness, including arrangements for seating, sound systems, illumination, transport and overall logistical management of the event.

The Health Department was instructed to ensure adequate medical preparedness at the venue, including the availability of medical professionals, first aid facilities and ambulance services, particularly in view of prevailing winter conditions.

Emphasising the significance of Republic Day, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted the importance of organising vibrant



and culturally enriching programmes, showcasing local traditions alongside national spirit. He also reiterated strict compliance

with the National Anthem protocol and Flag Code to ensure respectful hoisting and handling of the National Flag. In addition, the

Deputy Commissioner directed the concerned departments to organise activities and programmes in accordance with the phase 2 of the year-long Action Plan for the commemoration of 150 years of "Vande Mataram", so as to further strengthen the spirit of patriotism and national integration among the masses. Dr. Qayoom also instructed officers to compile a comprehensive list of government officials, social workers, agricultural entrepreneurs, sports personalities and other individuals who have rendered exemplary services in their respective fields, for due recognition & felicitation during the Republic Day celebrations.

The meeting was attended by senior officers of district administration, Police and CRPF along with all district and sectoral officers.

India seals FTA with New Zealand, opens duty-free access for exports

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, DEC 22: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Monday said the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) represents a new-generation trade partnership and a major step towards building a globally competitive, inclusive and resilient Indian economy in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

He noted that this is the "third FTA concluded by India this year under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, underscoring the country's accelerated push for deeper global economic integration.

India and New Zealand have concluded a comprehensive, balanced and forward-looking FTA, marking a significant economic and strategic milestone in India's engagement with the Indo-Pacific region.

The negotiations were formally launched on March 16, 2025, during talks between Piyush Goyal and New Zealand's Minister for Trade and Investment Todd McClay, and were concluded after five intensive negotiation rounds along with several in-person and virtual intersessional meetings.

The agreement stands out as one of India's fastest-concluded FTAs and establishes a high-quality economic partnership focused on employment generation, skill mobility, innovation, MSME participation and long-term economic resilience.

Under the agreement, "New Zealand will eliminate tariffs on 100 per cent of its tariff lines, providing duty-free market access for all Indian exports."

This is expected to significantly boost India's labour-intensive



sectors such as textiles, apparel, leather, footwear, marine products, gems and jewellery, handicrafts, engineering goods and automobiles directly supporting Indian workers, artisans, women, youth and MSMEs and integrating them deeper into global value chains.

India, in turn, has offered "tariff liberalisation on about 70 per cent of tariff lines, covering nearly 95 per cent of bilateral trade, while protecting sensitive sectors including dairy, coffee, edible oils, sugar, spices and key agricultural products."

The FTA also delivers New Zealand's most ambitious services offer to India, covering 118 services sectors and around 139 sub-sectors, including IT and IT-enabled services, professional services, education, financial services, telecommunications, construction, tourism and audiovisual services.

A future-ready mobility

framework will enhance opportunities for Indian students and professionals through post-study work visas of up to three years for STEM graduates and up to four years for doctoral scholars, along with dedicated quotas for 5,000 skilled professionals and 1,000 work and holiday visas.

In addition, New Zealand has committed to facilitating investments worth USD 20 billion in India over the next 15 years, supporting manufacturing, infrastructure, services and innovation under the Make in India initiative.

The agreement also promotes agricultural productivity through Centres of Excellence for apples, kiwifruit and honey, alongside safeguards for domestic farmers, and provides duty-free access for key manufacturing inputs such as wooden logs, coking coal and metal scrap. With bilateral trade

in goods and services already touching around USD 2.4 billion, the FTA is expected to unlock the full potential of India-New Zealand economic ties and deepen people-to-people connections.

The FTA will provide boost to Pharma and Medical Devices through faster regulatory Access by enabling acceptance of GMP and GCP inspection reports from comparable regulators, including approvals by the US FDA, EMA, UK MHRA, and other comparable regulators.

"This will reduce duplicative inspections, lower compliance costs, and expedite product approvals, thereby facilitating the growth of India's pharmaceutical and medical devices exports to New Zealand," Piyush Goyal said.

Commitment has been extended on Geographical Indications, including amendment of its law to facilitate the registration of

India's wines, spirits and 'other goods', a benefit that was accorded to the EU by New Zealand - to be completed under defined timelines.

Cooperation has been agreed in AYUSH, culture, fisheries, audio visual tourism, forestry, horticulture and traditional knowledge systems. The FTA promotes India's AYUSH systems internationally, encourages medical value travel, and positions India as a global wellness hub.

Apart from tariff liberalisation, the FTA includes provisions to address non-tariff barriers through enhanced regulatory cooperation, transparency, and streamlined customs, Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary (SPS) measures and Technical Barriers to Trade disciplines. All systemic facilitations and fast-track mechanisms for imports that serve as inputs for our manufactured exports ensure that tariff concessions translate into effective and meaningful market access.

India-New Zealand economic engagement has shown steady momentum. Bilateral merchandise trade reached USD 1.3 billion in 2024-25, while total trade in goods and services stood at approximately USD 2.4 billion in 2024, with services trade alone reaching USD 1.24 billion, led by travel, IT, and business services. The FTA provides a stable and predictable framework to unlock the full potential of this relationship.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal described the pact as "a new-generation trade agreement built on tariffs, agricultural productivity, investment, and talent." He noted that the agreement aligns with India's Viksit Bharat 2047 development vision and is the third FTA concluded by the country this year. UNI

SC stays NCP leader Manikrao Kokate's conviction, escapes disqualification

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, DEC 22 : The Supreme Court on Monday stayed the conviction of senior Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader from the Ajit Pawar faction, Manikrao Kokate, in a 1995 cheating case, to the limited extent that it would not result in his disqualification as a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA).

A Bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi passed the order while issuing notice on Kokate's plea challenging a Bombay High Court order which had suspended his sentence but declined to stay his conviction.

While granting partial relief, the Bench clarified that the stay on conviction would not entitle Kokate to hold any office of profit.

During the hearing, Justice Bagchi observed that "false declaration does not make a document forgery," adding that there appeared to be a "fundamental error in the conviction."

The case pertains to allegations that Kokate and his brother Vijay fraudulently availed benefits under a government housing scheme introduced between 1989 and 1992 for economically weaker sections.

Under the scheme, eligibility was restricted to applicants with an annual income of up to Rs 30,000. It was alleged that the brothers submitted false affidavits declaring their income below the prescribed



limit and were consequently allotted two government flats.

The prosecution claimed that at the relevant time, Kokate was earning substantially more than the eligibility threshold, both from his legal practice and agricultural activities.

It was alleged that his father owned about 25 acres of agricultural land and that Kokate earned significant income by supplying sugarcane from the land to local factories. Facts which, according to the prosecution, were not disclosed in the affidavits submitted for the housing scheme.

Kokate was convicted by a trial court in February this year. The conviction and a sentence of two years' imprisonment were upheld by a Sessions Court in Nashik on December 16.

Following the sentencing, Kokate resigned from his ministerial post, which was reportedly accepted by the State Government. On December 12, a single judge of the Bombay High Court suspended the sentence but refused to stay the conviction.

Before the Supreme Court, Kokate sought a stay on his conviction, contending that he faced imminent disqualification as an MLA, which would cause him irreparable harm and constituted an exceptional circumstance warranting relief.

The High Court, however, had rejected this argument, observing that holders of constitutional office are required to discharge their duties with unwavering fidelity to public interest.

The High Court had further held that permitting convicted persons to continue in constitutional office merely because their sentence was suspended would undermine public confidence in democratic institutions and erode constitutional values.

Senior Advocates Mukul Rohatgi and Maninder Singh appeared on behalf of Manikrao Kokate in the matter. UNI

Congress leader Ajoy Kumar demands railway safety reforms, minister's resignation amid fare hike controversy

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, DEC 22 : Congress leader Ajoy Kumar on Monday demanded that safety fareshields (Kavach) be installed across all railway lines in the country to protect passengers. He also called for the reinstatement of senior citizen concessions in the railways and urged Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw to resign, blaming him for the deteriorating condition of the Indian Railways.

Kumar launched a scathing critique of the Modi government, accusing it of treating the railways as a "tool for extortion" rather than a public service. Speaking at a press briefing following recent announcements of fare hikes, he described the move as a "cynical New Year's gift" to the common man.

He highlighted the government's repeated fare increases since the 2024 elections, noting that the cost per kilometer has more than doubled from 32 paise in 2014 to 67 paise today. Kumar criticized the government's communication style, pointing out that Railway Minister Vaishnaw chose to inform journalists through a circular instead of an official announcement.

Kumar drew attention to poor passenger experiences, citing a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report that labeled railway food "unfit for human consumption" despite meal prices rising from Rs 30 to Rs 120 since 2014. He condemned the removal of senior citizen concessions as an "Rs 8,600 crore robbery," emphasizing that these discounts enabled elderly citizens to visit family and go on pilgrimages.

Taking a direct jab at the Railway Minister, Kumar dubbed him the "Reel Minister," criticizing his focus on social media promotion over operational safety. While the government allocates over Rs 1 lakh crore to the Bullet Train project, Kumar pointed out that the "Kavach" anti-collision safety system remains installed on only 3% of railway lines, leaving 97% vulnerable.

"Since 2014, there have been 712 train accidents and 768 deaths. Our demand is straightforward: halt the Bullet Train project and prioritize the safety of millions who travel daily," Kumar asserted.

He further accused the government and its ideological affiliates of distracting the public with communal rhetoric to divert attention from pressing issues such as unemployment, inflation, and inadequate public safety. Kumar criticized recent remarks by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat as "perennial diversionary topics" designed to dominate news cycles and sideline economic concerns. UNI

Over 2.12 lakh PUC certificates issued after 'No PUC, No Fuel' directive: Environment Minister

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, DEC 22 : Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa on Monday said that the national capital is witnessing the impact of a western disturbance, resulting in adverse weather conditions, while stringent pollution control measures have begun to show positive results.

Addressing a press conference on pollution, Sirsa said the implementation of Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) Stage-IV restrictions, along with other curbs, has contributed to visible improvement in air quality.

He said that following the enforcement of the "No PUC, No Fuel" rule, as many as 2,12,132 Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificates have been issued across Delhi.

Around 10,000 vehicles failed the PUC test initially, after which vehicle owners got their vehicles repaired and retested, he added.

The minister said action against



polluting factories has been intensified. "If any factory is found causing pollution, it will be sealed immediately. No notices will be issued anymore," he said, stressing that the government has adopted a zero-tolerance approach.

Sirsa also pointed out that complaints have been received about some private institutions not following work-from-home norms. He said strict action would be taken against private companies if violations are reported.

From Monday onwards, all deputy commissioners of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), in

coordination with the District Pollution Control Committee (DPCC), have started the process of sealing unauthorised industries. The minister said Delhi has three categories of industries authorised, regularised and illegal. Illegal industries will be shut down under all circumstances.

Sharing a weather update, Sirsa said that according to information received from the Meteorological Department, weather conditions are expected to improve after Tuesday, which could lead to better AQI levels.

He also said that the Delhi government, in coordination with the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and the Revenue Department, is working at a fast pace to revive water bodies across the city.

The government aims to restore 50 per cent of water bodies that have remained defunct or disappeared over the years. "Revived water bodies will play a meaningful role in controlling pollution in Delhi," he said. UNI

Pret: When Ibsen's Ghosts haunt the contemporary India

■ SARATH CHANDRAN

NEW DELHI, DEC 22 : At a time when societies across the world are grappling with the friction between tradition and change, theatre veteran MK Raina's latest production "Pret" arrives as a disturbing and deeply relevant intervention.

Pret is a Hindi adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's landmark 1881 play Ghosts, translated by noted scholar and playwright Nemi Chandra Jain.

For Raina, revisiting Ghosts is not an act of nostalgia but of urgency. "Contemporary," he explains, "is the confrontation between new ideas, new discoveries and new beliefs against old beliefs."

Written at a time when Europe was being intellectually shaken by Darwin's Origin of Species, Freud's emerging psychology and Marx's Communist Manifesto, Ibsen's play questioned inherited morality, social hypocrisy, and the

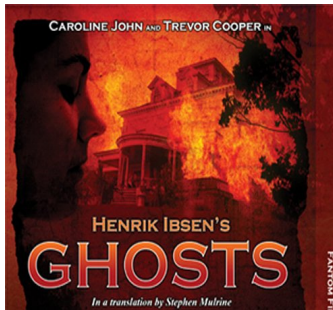
cost of silencing truth.

Those tensions, Raina believes, are far from resolved. In Pret, these conflicts are translated seamlessly into an Indian context, where the struggle between scientific rationality and rigid social codes continues to shape personal and political life.

The central conflict mirrors Ibsen's original: a society desperate to protect its moral image even if it means perpetuating lies that destroy future generations. The "ghosts" here are not supernatural beings, but inherited ideas of fear, repression, blind faith, and the anxiety of "what will society say?"

The title Pret, a word laden with moral, psychological and spiritual meaning in Indian culture, was chosen deliberately. For Raina, the "pret" is internal.

"Everyone has a ghost within themselves," he says, reflecting on his own experiences of fear, rebellion and self-realisation. These



ghosts surface during moments of transition: between generations, ideologies, and ways of seeing the world. India, he notes, is currently "stuck" in such a confrontation, negotiating the pull of the past against the demands of the present.

The play also draws from older theatrical traditions. The idea of sin repeating itself across generations, with innocent children becoming victims of inherited guilt, has roots in Greek tragedy.

In Pret, disease becomes a powerful metaphor not merely a

medical condition like syphilis, which haunted Ibsen's time, but a symbol of a diseased society. "He is not dying," Raina explains of the afflicted character, "he is being devoured." The illness represents a community that consumes its own by refusing to confront truth.

This metaphor resonates strongly in contemporary India, particularly in the context of women and silence.

Asked whether Indian women are still expected to protect family honour at the cost of truth, Raina acknowledges that while change has begun, the struggle continues. "What my mother did, what my sister does, what my daughter will do each era is different," he says.

Progress, for him, is not a single rupture but a continuous movement across generations, often propelled by women who push against boundaries imposed on them.

The production features a

distinguished cast including Rakesh Kumar Singh, Kavita Seth, Vipin Kumar, Namrata Sinha and Arpit Anand, who bring emotional depth and intensity to this layered adaptation. The play is produced by Anuradha Dar, a prominent figure in Delhi's theatre and education circles. Dar describes Pret as "not just a play from the past, but a mirror held up to our present."

She emphasises theatre's role in provoking thought and unsettling comfort.

"Our endeavour at TAC has always been to bring meaningful, intellectually engaging work to audiences," she says, "and Pret continues that legacy."

Ultimately, Pret does not offer easy answers. Instead, it leaves audiences with wide range of questions. What is the real disease afflicting us? Is it moral hypocrisy, blind faith, or the refusal to investigate and accept truth? UNI



Rohit in Mumbai Hazare Squad

No Rahane, Jaiswal or Mhatre, though, in the Shardul Thakur-led side

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

VISAKHAPATNAM: Rohit Sharma has been named in Mumbai's squad for the first two games in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. Shardul Thakur will lead the side, which includes Sarfaraz Khan, Musheer Khan and Angkrish Raghuvanshi.

There was no Ajinkya Rahane, Yashasvi Jaiswal or Ayush Mhatre, but the squad included several fresh faces. Chinmay Sutar, who played four

List A games for India Emerging in 2019, got a call-up, as did fello batter Ishan Mulchandani and fast bowler Onkar Tarmale, who was recently picked by Sunrisers Hyderabad at the IPL auction.

Among familiar faces, there is Siddhesh Lad, wicketkeeper Hardik Tamore and the spin twins Shams Mulani and Tanush Kotian.

Mumbai are in Group C. They start their campaign against Sikkim in Jaipur on December 24. Two days later, they will face Uttarakhand.

Conrad happy with learnings despite the series loss

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

AHMEDABAD: South Africa's recce for the next year's T20 World Cup is done and they're adopting the you either win or you learn mentality after a 3-1 series defeat to India. The T20Is came at the end of ten weeks on the road for South Africa, in which they played in both India and Pakistan and began their World Test Championship title defence with three wins and a loss.

"It's been a wonderful tour," Shukri Conrad, South Africa's coach, said on their last stop in Ahmedabad. "You learn a lot about yourself and the game and conditions. This last bit has been wonderful for us in terms of conditions that we're



going to experience in a few months' time when we come here for the World Cup. I'm really happy with the outcomes. Obviously, you want to win every series you play, but India are the world champions in this format for a reason and we've got to make sure that we come back in a few months' time and try and topple them." South Africa will play three of their four group stage matches at the T20 World Cup at the Narendra Modi Stadium, and, if they get there, two of their three Super Eight games at the same venue, so ending their India trip in Ahmedabad was informative. Conrad expects less fog and dew when the T20 World Cup is played in February and March, which could decrease the significance of the toss. If the fifth T20I is anything to go by, he also expects big scores as both teams topped 200, and South Africa fell 30 runs short.

That margin of defeat was a symptom of a wider problem as inconsistency stalked South Africa through the last four white-ball tours. In India, they were bowled out for their lowest T20I score - 74 - in the opener, then defended 213 for 4 in the second game to come back in the series but posted only 117 in game three to fall behind. Chasing 232 in the final match, they made a decent effort to get to 201 for 8 but will look back at their bowlers leaking runs as the reason they could not share the spoils.

Overall, South Africa's record in T20Is in 2025 is not pretty. They've played 18 matches and lost 12, including a tri-series final to New Zealand and series in both Pakistan and India. Ordinarily, less than two months before a T20 World Cup, that would be a cause for concern but South Africa have tended to use bilateral series as spaces to experiment and so what Conrad has is data, not disaster, from his first six months as all-format coach. In T20Is, South Africa have done the most shuffling. Among Full Members, only West Indies (32) have fielded more players in T20Is than South Africa (31) this year.

Dewald Brevis has made the most appearances, and played in 17 of those 18 matches, while Corbin Bosch and Lungi Ngidi have been the next most consistent, with 13 caps each. Captain Aiden Markram has only played half the fixtures, Kagiso Rabada was limited to five appearances through a combination of rest and, most recently, a rib injury, while injuries also kept star middle-order batter David Miller to three games and Keshav Maharaj to only one. So where does that leave Conrad as he puts together his T20 World Cup squad?

Sehwag fanboy Tejasvi Dahiya becomes latest DPL talent to break into IPL

He was picked by KKR for INR 3 crore at the mini-auction in Abu Dhabi

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

ABUDHABI: Over the past two years, the Delhi Premier League (DPL) has become a key pit stop for the scouts. After the emergence of Priyansh Arya and Digvesh Rathi, the latest to join the IPL bandwagon is wicketkeeper Tejasvi Dahiya, who was signed for INR 3 crore by Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) at the IPL 2026 mini-auction in Abu Dhabi.

It capped off a special evening for the family of academic scholars: Ravindra, his father, teaches mathematics; Babita, his mother, is an economics teacher. "My sister too is a PhD scholar," Dahiya tells ESPNcricinfo.

On Tuesday, Dahiya was hopeful. Like he was last year too, when his name came up twice, only to be passed by. He clutched onto anything he could find this time around as his name came up for bidding. After the first bid came in, there were a few more, and before he realised, Mumbai Indians, KKR and Rajasthan Royals were all involved in a bidding war.

Dahiya, the Virender Sehwag fanboy, had trialled for seven teams, and all of them clearly had his stats for ready reference. Dahiya was the leading six-hitter in this year's DPL, smashing 29 sixes and

scoring 339 runs at a strike rate of nearly 200. And when they saw him showcase those abilities at trials too, he was earmarked by at least three teams.

When Dahiya chose cricket over academics, his parents chose to send him to Sanjay Bhardwaj, a renowned coach in Delhi whose alumni list is rather long, including current India head coach Gautam Gambhir. But getting a chance to train under Bhardwaj isn't easy, as Dahiya found out.

Dahiya first attended Bhardwaj's LB Shastri Academy for a summer training camp as a 12-year-old, an experience he said "changed his life".

"Getting direct admission into Sanjay sir's academy is very difficult," Dahiya said. "He does not give admission to just anyone. When I went there for the summer camp and spent two months there, he liked not only my game but also my discipline and work ethic. So when the camp was ending, he told my parents that I was now his responsibility."

It was there that Dahiya met Arya, who would become one of his closest friends, and later teammates in Delhi. Being from the same age group, the two played all their cricket together, and have now used the DPL as a platform



to launch themselves into the IPL.

But the path to getting there wasn't rosy. Like several others, Dahiya was a struggler coming through the age-group circuit in Delhi. He only made it as far as a stand-by in Under-16s, and sat out the entire first year of his Under-19s. Finally, when he got his chances in his second year, he scored two consecutive centuries in the Cooch Behar Trophy.

"After those two back-to-back hundreds in the Cooch Behar Trophy, my confidence grew that I could survive at a higher level too," Dahiya said. "These centuries were more special because that year, no other Delhi batter scored a hundred. But the next year Covid came."

When cricket resumed, Dahiya found himself excluded from the Under-23 side and had to wait for his turn for nearly two seasons. And even when he was included, breaking into the XI proved near impossible. This is when the DPL happened, and Dahiya could not be more thankful.

In DPL 2024, he scored 208 runs in ten innings with two half-centuries and a strike rate of 163.78 for South Delhi Superstarz. In the 2025 season, he took his game a step higher, scoring 339 runs in ten innings at a strike rate of 190.45. He was the only batter among the 12 run-getters to have over 300 runs with a strike rate above 190. He also hit the second-most six-

es (29), after Nitish Rana (34).

In a rain-affected match against Purani Dilli 6, when his team needed 134 runs in seven overs, Dahiya smashed a half-century in just 12 balls and finished with 69 runs off 21 balls at a strike rate of 328.57 to pull off the impossible. This innings proved he could open as well as bat in the lower middle order.

"The DPL has helped a lot. Since it is telecasted, not only selectors but also IPL scouts watch it," Dahiya says. "They already have a clear picture of every player. Trial matches are not telecast, but here players know everyone is watching. Your attitude is noticed that how you handle pressure."

"Now I don't think too much about selection, because it becomes a burden on your game. You get stuck thinking that you are playing only for selection. So I just follow my process, the same one I've followed since childhood - if it's a rest day, recover properly, then practice well the next day, instead of thinking about IPL or Ranji Trophy."

In a season where KKR have to move on from their greatest finisher, Andre Russell, Dahiya has an opportunity to take baby steps to being one. And he couldn't be more excited.

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