

Srinagar
Wednesday
December 24 | 2025
04 Rajab1447 AH
Issue No: 302
Volume: 15
Pages: 12
Price: Rs 02/-

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“Strong Border Infrastructure Is the Backbone of National Security”: Rajnath Singh

Defence Minister unveils BRO DPR manual to speed up strategic road projects in J&K, Ladakh

HT NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI, DEC 23: Emphasising the decisive role of border infrastructure in safeguarding the nation, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said that strong and reliable connectivity in frontier areas is essential for national security as well as regional development. He made these remarks while releasing a new Border Roads Organisation (BRO) manual aimed at improving the planning and execution of strategic road projects across Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and other border states.



and high-altitude terrains such as those in J&K and Ladakh.

The manual, titled “Guide on Preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for Road Infrastructure Projects”, was unveiled at South Block and is intended to bring uniformity, precision and efficiency to the preparation of DPRs, a critical component of infrastructure development.

Officials said that the guide would help address long-standing issues related to delays and cost overruns by ensuring better planning and higher-quality project documentation, particularly in difficult

for DPR preparation. It covers both new road construction and the upgradation of existing infrastructure, and is expected to significantly improve the pace and quality of execution of BRO projects.

The BRO plays a pivotal role in constructing and maintaining highways and strategic roads in some of the country’s most remote and sensitive regions, including areas along the Line of Control (LoC) and the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

According to officials, improved DPRs would translate into faster completion of roads and bridges, smoother logistics movement for the armed forces and enhanced socio-economic development in border regions. Better connectivity is also expected to boost tourism, improve disaster response and strengthen public confidence in governance in far-flung areas.

The release ceremony was attended by Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi, Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, Road Transport and Highways

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Srinagar Put on High Alert Ahead of Christmas, New Year Celebrations

HT NEWS DESK / KNO

SRINAGAR, DEC 23: As the city gears up for Christmas and New Year festivities, Srinagar has been brought under a tightened security framework, with joint teams of

Jammu and Kashmir Police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) intensifying surveillance, checking and patrols across key locations.

Authorities have stepped up preventive

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IGP VK Birdi Pushes Intelligence-Led Policing, Orders Crackdown on Drug Networks

HT NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA, DEC 23: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir, V.K. Birdi (IPS), on Monday reviewed the crime situation in north Kashmir and called for proactive, intelligence-driven policing to tighten crime control and dismantle drug trafficking networks.

During a comprehensive review meeting in Baramulla, police stations briefed the IGP on crime trends recorded in 2025, detection rates, preventive policing initiatives, and steps taken to strengthen investigation and prosecution.

Emphasising the need for anticipatory action, the IGP directed officers to maintain close surveillance over crime-prone areas and habitual offenders, ensure prompt registration of cases, and conduct professional, time-bound investigations.

Taking serious note of the growing drug menace, IGP Birdi reiterated a zero-tolerance policy against narcotics trafficking and

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High Alert for New Year Pilgrims: Vaishno Devi Yatra Route Under 24x7 Surveillance

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

JAMMU, DEC 23: Ahead of the anticipated New Year surge of devotees, authorities have placed the entire Mata Vaishno Devi pilgrimage route under heightened security and round-the-clock surveillance, stepping up measures to ensure a safe, smooth and well-regulated yatra.

Officials said a comprehensive, multi-layered security arrange-

ment has been rolled out along the track leading to the shrine atop the Trikuta hills and across the shrine complex. The deployment includes personnel from the Jammu and Kashmir Police, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Shrine Board security, supported by Quick Response Teams to deal with any contingency.

The enhanced arrangements were reviewed at a high-level meeting chaired by Shri Mata

Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) Chief Executive Officer Sachin Kumar Vaishya, attended by senior officials of the Shrine Board, district administration, security agencies and other concerned departments.

To prevent overcrowding and ensure regulated movement, strict implementation of RFID-based access control has been ordered, with only pilgrims carrying valid Radio Frequency Identification

cards being allowed to proceed on the track. Additional handheld RFID scanners and manpower are being deployed at key checkpoints to eliminate bottlenecks and lapses.

Joint teams are conducting continuous monitoring of high-footfall and congestion-prone locations through advanced surveillance systems, enabling real-time assessment and swift response. Fire and Emergency

Services have been directed to position fire tenders at strategic points and carry out a detailed fire safety audit of the shrine area and surrounding facilities.

Stressing adherence to standard operating procedures and disaster preparedness norms, the CEO also instructed that the existing sound system along the yatra route be upgraded into a fully functional public address

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Five-Year-Old Assaulted: Srinagar POC SO Court Hands 12-Year RI, Orders ₹7 Lakh Compensation

HT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, DEC 23: A fast-track POC SO court in Srinagar has sentenced a man to 12 years of rigorous imprisonment for sexually assaulting a minor boy aged around five and a half years, underscoring that crimes against children warrant strict punishment even while adhering to statutory minimums.

The sentence was awarded by Presiding Officer Umi Kulsom while deciding the quantum of punishment in connection with FIR No. 45/2018 registered at Police Station Harwan. The court observed that India’s criminal justice system is not purely retributive and requires a balanced consideration of aggravating and mitigating factors.

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Blanket Sellers Turned Spies: Two More Kupwara Men Nabbed in Arunachal Espionage Racket, Arrest Toll Rises to Five

HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

ITANAGAR, DEC 23: Arunachal Pradesh Police have arrested two more men from North Kashmir’s Kupwara district in an alleged cross-border espionage case, taking the total number of arrests to five, officials said on Tuesday.

The latest arrests—Aijaz Ahmed Bhat and Bashir Ahmad Ganai—were made on December 18 following sustained intelligence-led opera-

tions, Inspector General of Police (Law and Order) Chukhu Apa said. The duo was brought from Kupwara to Arunachal Pradesh and is currently in police custody for further interrogation.

According to police, preliminary investigations indicate that the accused were involved in collecting sensitive and strategic information from various parts of Arunachal Pradesh

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CS finalises arrangements for 77th Republic Day celebrations in J&K

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, DEC 23: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo today called upon the civil administration and police to ensure comprehensive and flawless arrangements for the celebration of the 77th Republic Day, to be observed with national fervour on January 26, 2026. He made these remarks while chairing a high-level meeting to review the preparedness

and arrangements being put in place across the UT.

Emphasising the significance of the occasion, the Chief Secretary impressed upon the Divisional and District Administrations to illuminate all government offices and prominent buildings with decorative lighting on the eve of Republic Day. He enjoined upon them to ensure maximum public participation in the celebrations at all levels and to orga-



nise befitting functions across the length and breadth of J&K, reflecting the spirit of unity and national pride.

The Chief Secretary directed the concerned authorities to make special efforts to ensure cleanliness and sanitation in and around all venues as part of the celebrations. He stressed the need for uninterrupted power and water supply, particularly at the main venues in Srinagar and

Jammu. Highlighting the role of educational institutions, he instructed that every school in the UT should organise its own Republic Day event. He further directed all Heads of Departments and District Officers to hold commemorative functions within their respective offices.

Dulloo also reviewed the arrangements being made for cultural programmes,

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₹27.59 Cr Spent on Unapproved SAUBHAGYA Works in J&K

HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, DEC 23: The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has revealed that Rs 27.59 crore were spent in Jammu & Kashmir, including Ladakh, on unapproved works under an ambitious scheme of the Union Power Ministry.

The audit report, tabled in Parliament on December 18, 2025, states that an expenditure of Rs 27.59 crore across seven projects was booked for works that were not approved in the Detailed Project Reports (DPRs), resulting in the execution of ineligible works under the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (SAUBHAGYA) in Jammu & Kashmir including Ladakh.

“SAUBHAGYA guidelines required DISCOMs to ensure that funds received by them were utilized strictly for the purposes for which they were released and not diverted elsewhere. Audit, however, observed that District Divisional Authorities of Jammu & Kashmir booked an expenditure of Rs 27.59 crore in seven projects on account of execution of works which were not approved in the DPRs, resulting in ineligible works under the scheme,” the report notes, as accessed by news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO)

According to the report, the Union Power

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Seven Fire Incidents Reported Across Kashmir in 24 Hours

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, DEC 23: At least seven fire incidents were reported from different parts of the Kashmir Valley during the past 24 hours, officials from the Fire and Emergency Services said on Tuesday.

The officials said Fire and Emergency Services teams responded to all calls promptly, and timely firefighting operations helped bring the blazes under control, preventing any loss of human life.

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President Presents National Award To ‘Team Aroma’, Dr Jitendra Hails Lavender Success Story

HT NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI, DEC 23: At the second “Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar” ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan today, the prestigious “Rashtriya Vigyan Ratna Puraskar 2025” for lifetime achievement was awarded posthumously to eminent astrophysicist Prof. Jayant Vishnu Narlikar while the entrepreneurial science team that powered India’s much-discussed “Purple Revolution” and Lavender entrepreneurship found national recognition in “Rashtriya Vigyan Team Puraskar 2025” or Vigyan Team Award

, which was bagged by the CSIR-led

Aroma Mission.

President of India, Droupadi Murmu presented the awards to 24 scientists and innovators across disciplines, in the presence of Union Minister of Science and Technology Dr. Jitendra Singh.

The Rashtriya Vigyan Puruskars were instituted by the Modi government.

Taking to ‘X’, Dr Jitendra Singh wrote, “Congratulations ‘Team Aroma’ for the coveted #RashtriyaVigyanPuruskar 2025, in recognition of your contribution in gifting the world the concept of ‘Purple Revolution’ and presenting ‘Lavender’ as a new avenue of Agri-Entrepreneurship....kindling prospects of

attractive livelihood even in remote hilly terrains of the Himalayas”.

The Aroma Mission team, working under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, has been widely credited with translating laboratory research into field-level outcomes by promoting cultivation and processing of aromatic crops, particularly lavender, in the Himalayan region. Its work helped open up new livelihood avenues for farmers in Jammu and Kashmir, reduced dependence on imports of essential oils, and demonstrated how coordinated scientific intervention can lead to measurable

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CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

“Strong Border.....

Secretary V Umashankar, Director General Border Roads Lt Gen Raghu Srinivasan and other senior officials.

Earlier this month, Rajnath Singh had dedicated 125 BRO infrastructure projects to the nation, many of them located in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Completed at a cost of around ₹5,000 crore, these included 28 roads, 93 bridges and four other infrastructure works, providing crucial all-weather connectivity to forward and remote areas.

Reiterating the government's commitment to strengthening border regions, the Defence Minister said that robust infrastructure not only enhances operational preparedness but also acts as a catalyst for economic growth and overall development in strategically important areas like J&K and Ladakh.

Srinagar Put.....

measures to ensure a safe and peaceful festive season, increasing the visibility of security personnel in busy marketplaces, tourist hotspots and along major thoroughfares. Surprise checkpoints, random frisking and vehicle inspections have been introduced as part of the enhanced vigil.

From the commercial hub of Lal Chowk to Maharaj Bazar, Hari Singh High Street, Jehangir Chowk and Magarmal Bagh, security forces remained on high alert throughout the day. Tourist and leisure zones, including Dal Lake, Nehru Park and Dalgate interiors, also witnessed heightened deployment, while the Tengpora Bypass and adjoining stretches were closely monitored.

Officials told Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the intensified security is part of routine precautionary arrangements ahead of major public celebrations. Joint Police-CRPF teams are conducting area domination exercises and thorough checks of vehicles, identity documents and passenger belongings to rule out any potential threats.

In a parallel operation, Srinagar Police, in coordination with CRPF, carried out an Area Security Trial (AST) along the Tengpora stretch of the National Highway. The exercise simulated emergency response scenarios and assessed ground preparedness, with inspections carried out at shops, commercial establishments and moving vehicles as part of a comprehensive security review.

Commuters and shopkeepers reported a noticeable increase in uniformed personnel, with security vehicles stationed at major intersections and sensitive points across the city.

A police spokesperson said that Area Security and Anti-Sabotage operations were conducted around vital installations and sensitive locations in the North Zone of Srinagar to strengthen the overall security grid. “These exercises are aimed at enhancing operational preparedness, ensuring the safety of critical infrastructure and safeguarding the general public,” the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson added that thorough sanitisation of identified areas and a detailed review of existing security arrangements were carried out, stressing that such joint exercises would continue in the coming days as a proactive measure to deter threats and reinforce public confidence.

Srinagar Police, the statement said, remains committed to maintaining peace and ensuring a secure environment across the city during the festive period—(KNO).

High Alert for.....

system to facilitate timely announcements and advisories for pilgrims.

Security vetting of individuals employed in private establishments and service operations along the route has been intensified to safeguard the sanctity of the shrine area. Traffic management has also been prioritised, with authorities asked to strictly curb unauthorised parking, particularly in the Banganga area and along the Tarakote Marg, to ensure smooth vehicular flow during peak days.

Officials said advanced surveillance tools have been deployed for real-time threat assessment, underlining the administration's preparedness to handle the New Year rush and provide a secure and hassle-free pilgrimage experience for devotees.

IGP VK Birdi.....

instructed police leadership to intensify enforcement while simultaneously strengthening preventive and public awareness measures.

The visit, according to a police statement, reaffirmed the Jammu and Kashmir Police's commitment to robust crime control, public safety and building citizens' confidence in policing.

The meeting was attended by DIG NKR, SSPs of Baramulla, Sopore and Handwara, Addl SP Baramulla, SP Operations Baramulla, ASP HQ Baramulla, CPO DPHQ, and all SDPOs, SHOs and In-Charge Police Posts of district Baramulla.

Srinagar POCSO.....

The convict, Nazir Ahmad Doyi, son of Gami Doyi, a resident of Fakir Gujri, Harwan, Srinagar, had earlier been found guilty of aggravated penetrative sexual assault under Sections 5(m) and 5(n) read with Section 6 of the POCSO Act, in addition to Section 377 of the Ranbir Penal Code (RPC).

While pronouncing the sentence, the court noted the tender age of the victim and observed

that during trial the child could only narrate the incident in general terms due to his young age. The court took into account the nature of evidence, the vulnerability of the victim, and the enduring psychological impact such offences have on children.

The defence sought leniency, arguing that the offence dated back to 2018 and that enhanced punishments introduced later could not be applied retrospectively. It also highlighted the convict's socio-economic condition, stating that he was a daily wage, belonged to a poor family, and was the sole breadwinner for his wife and four minor children.

The prosecution, however, pressed for strict punishment, stressing that the victim was below 12 years of age and that sexual crimes against children leave lifelong scars. The court reiterated that the POCSO Act prescribes mandatory minimum sentences, leaving no scope for reduction through judicial discretion.

After weighing all aspects, the court held that awarding the minimum prescribed punishment would meet the ends of justice. Accordingly, the convict was sentenced to 12 years of rigorous imprisonment under the POCSO Act and 10 years of simple imprisonment under Section 377 RPC, with both sentences to run concurrently. The period already spent in custody will be set off as per law.

In a significant relief to the victim, the court also directed payment of ₹7 lakh as compensation, stating that the amount would support the child's rehabilitation and help address the mental and physical trauma suffered. The District Legal Services Authority, Srinagar, was directed to ensure the immediate release of the compensation.

The convict has been remanded to Central Jail Srinagar to serve the remaining sentence, and copies of the judgment were ordered to be provided to him free of cost and forwarded to the jail authorities for compliance.

Two More Kupwara.....

and transmitting it to handlers based in Pakistan. Several electronic devices seized during the operation have been sent for forensic examination.

“We are awaiting forensic reports. Initial findings suggest that sensitive information was being shared with handlers across the border. More details will emerge as the investigation progresses,” IGP Apa told reporters.

The case first surfaced on November 21, when Itanagar Police arrested Nazir Ahmad Malik and Sabir Ahmed Mir, both residents of Kupwara, on credible intelligence inputs pointing to their alleged involvement in espionage activities. A third accused, Shabir Ahmed Khan, also from Kupwara, was later arrested from the Itanagar Capital Region.

Police officials revealed that the accused frequently travelled across different districts of Arunachal Pradesh, often posing as blanket sellers—an identity that allegedly helped them move freely and gather information without raising suspicion.

The arrests, police said, were the outcome of coordinated efforts by the Itanagar Police under the supervision of Superintendent of Police Jummar Basar, backed by sustained surveillance and intelligence analysis.

Meanwhile, police have urged residents to remain vigilant and verify the credentials of individuals seeking accommodation on rent, as investigations into the espionage network continue.

CS finalises.....

including performances by school children and band displays by various forces. He sought details regarding transport arrangements and traffic management plans, especially in the major cities, to ensure smooth conduct of the celebrations without inconvenience to the public.

Encouraging departments to creatively showcase their achievements, the Chief Secretary asked them to prepare thematic tableaux (‘Jankies’) for display during the main Republic Day functions at Jammu and Srinagar. He advised that the tableaux should prominently reflect national and UT-specific themes such as Viksit Bharat, Nasha Mukht Bharat, Swachh Bharat, digital transformation, women empowerment, and other areas where Jammu and Kashmir has made notable progress.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary took a comprehensive appraisal of the overall readiness of all concerned departments for organising the national event with enthusiasm and dignity. He underscored the importance of advance planning and seamless coordination among departments for the successful conduct of the celebrations.

Dulloo also reviewed the preparedness of the Information Department regarding the issuance of passes to journalists and installation of public address systems. He assessed arrangements by the Transport Department for providing buses to school children, distribution of invitation cards by the concerned Divisional Administrations, and availability of essential services including power, water supply, fire tenders, and other utilities by the respective departments.

The Chief Secretary urged all stakeholders to work with dedication and coordination to ensure the successful and memorable celebration of this year's Republic Day in Jammu and Kashmir, and extended his best wishes for the smooth culmination of the national event.

₹27.59 Cr Spent.....

Ministry, in its response to audit observations, claimed that there was no irregular expenditure.

“MoP stated (June 2022) that in respect of KPDCCL, no irregular expenditure or ineligible works were included in the closure of schemes, as closure was approved by REC after scrutiny as per the guidelines and approval of the Monitoring Committee. Regarding JPDCCL, the closure for the scheme has been submitted and only those works which were complete in all respects had been loaded on the scheme fund,” the report adds.

However, the audit pointed out that the Ministry provided a closure report for only one division, showing spending of just Rs 0.09 crore, but didn't provide supporting documents for the remaining amount.

“In response to the Audit Rebuttal, MoP provided the closure report covering only one division portion that incurred expenditure of Rs 0.09 crore. In respect of the balance portion, no document in support of the reply was provided to Audit,” the report states.

The SAUBHAGYA scheme was launched by the Union Government in October 2017 to provide last-mile connectivity and electricity connections to all un-electrified households across the country—(KNO)

Seven Fire.....

In Srinagar's Chanapora area, a fire broke out in a garbage compound. Firefighters reached the spot in time and extinguished the flames before they could spread to nearby structures.

Another fire incident was reported from Fateh Kadal in Srinagar, where the attic portion of a residential house was damaged. Officials said swift action by Fire and Emergency Services personnel prevented the fire from spreading to adjoining houses.

In Noor Colony area of Bandipora district, a residential house was affected by fire. The blaze was controlled in time, thereby limiting damage to the structure.

In Kupwara district, a fire incident occurred inside the 168 MH Army Camp, affecting two residential quarters. Fire and Emergency Services teams managed to control the fire promptly.

Another fire was reported from Nadimarg area of Dooru in Kulgam district, where one residential house was involved. Officials said timely firefighting operations averted a major incident.

In Dikbagh, Nunner area of Ganderbal district, a Chinara tree caught fire. The fire was successfully extinguished by Fire and Emergency Services personnel.

Meanwhile, in Manchattir area of Chowkibal in Kupwara district, two residential houses were damaged in a fire incident. Officials said coordinated efforts by the firefighting teams prevented the fire from spreading further.

Fire and Emergency Services officials reiterated their appeal to inhabitants to follow fire safety guidelines, particularly during the winter season, and urged people to immediately report any fire incident to the nearest fire station or control room. [KNT]

President Presents.....

socio-economic impact. The recognition places collaborative, application-oriented science at the centre of the national awards framework. The Lavender cultivation and entrepreneurship, beginning from Baderwah and Gulmarg townships of J&K has now spread in other parts of the UT also and is being adopted by other States like Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh as well.

The Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar, instituted last year as part of a new national science awards architecture, is designed to acknowledge scientific work across the full spectrum — from lifetime achievement to early-career excellence and team-based innovation. This year's ceremony marked the second edition of the awards, underscoring the government's intent to present science and technology honours in a structured, contemporary format aligned with global best practices.

Among the honours announced, the Vigyan Ratna for lifetime achievement was awarded posthumously to eminent astrophysicist Prof. Jayant Vishnu Narlikar, while several Vigyan Shri and Vigyan Yuva awards recognised individual contributions across physics, agriculture, biological sciences, chemistry, engineering, medicine, space science, mathematics, and technology. The full list of awardees spans senior scientists as well as researchers below the age of 45, reflecting the award's emphasis on both experience and emerging talent.

Under the Vigyan Shri category, which recognises distinguished contributions in specific fields, awards were conferred on Dr. Gyanendra Pratap Singh (Agricultural Science), Dr. Yusuf Mohammad Sheikh (Atomic Energy), Dr. K. Thangaraj (Biological Sciences), Prof. Pradeep Thalappil (Chemistry), Prof. Aniruddha Bhalchandra Pandit (Engineering Sciences), Dr. S. Venkata Mohan (Environmental Science), Prof. Mahan Mj (Mathematics and Computer Science), and Shri Jayan N (Space Science and Technology), highlighting sustained and field-defining work across disciplines.

The Vigyan Yuva—Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Award, aimed at scientists below the age of 45, recognised emerging researchers for innovative contributions. Awardees included Prof. Amit Kumar Agarwal and Prof. Suruh Shrikant More

in Physics; Dr. Jagdis Gupta Kapuganti and Dr. Satendra Kumar Mangrauthia in Agricultural Science; Dr. Deepa Agashe and Shri Debarka Sengupta in Biological Sciences; Dr. Dibyendu Das in Chemistry; Dr. Waliur Rahaman in Earth Science; Prof. Arkaprava Basu in Engineering Sciences; Prof. Sabyasachi Mukherjee and Prof. Shweta Prem Agrawal in Mathematics and Computer Science; Dr. Suresh Kumar in Medicine; Shri Ankur Garg in Space Science and Technology; and Prof. Mohanasankar Sivaprakasam in Technology and Innovation.

Women scientists featured prominently among this year's awardees, with recognition across multiple categories and disciplines. Researchers such as Dr. Deepa Agashe and Prof. Shweta Prem Agrawal were honoured for their work, reflecting the growing participation and leadership of women in India's scientific ecosystem.

Dr. Jitendra Singh congratulated all the award recipients, stating that their work reflected the depth and diversity of India's

scientific talent and underscored the role of science and technology in addressing national priorities and improving the quality of life of citizens.

The presence of the President and the Science and Technology Minister was seen as reinforcing the national priority accorded to scientific research, innovation, and its translation into public value. The awards framework also seeks to bring clarity to categories, particularly the young scientist segment, by clearly defining age and achievement criteria.

With the Aroma Mission's recognition, the ceremony highlighted how government-backed scientific programmes, when anchored in local needs and implemented through teamwork, can deliver outcomes that go beyond laboratories and journals. As India looks to strengthen its science-led development model, the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar is increasingly positioned as a platform that connects research excellence with national priorities and grassroots impact.

NIA court orders attachment of US-based Kashmiri lobbyist, convicted ISI agent's property in Budgam

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

BUDGAM, DEC 23: A special NIA court on Tuesday ordered immediate attachment of land belonging to Ghulam Nabi Fai, a US-based Kashmiri lobbyist and convicted agent of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

According to the details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) the attachment of immovable property was ordered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

National Investigation Agency (NIA) Special Judge Yahaya Firdous of Budgam district authorised the seizure of over 1.5 kanals of land across two villages — Wadwan and Chattabugh.

The NIA Court directed the District Collector Budgam to take immediate possession of the Fai's land and asked the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Budgam to provide necessary assistance to ensure the execution of the order.

The attachment was ordered in FIR No. 46/2020 registered at Police Station Budgam under Sections 10, 13 and 39 of the UAPA. The order was passed after the accused failed to appear before the investigating agency despite the issuance of a proclamation notice.

The court noted that Fai was declared a proclaimed absconder on April 26, 2025, for deliberately evading the legal process and avoiding arrest.

The prosecution, through the investigating officer, had moved an application seeking attachment of the accused's property under Section 83 of the Criminal Procedure Code, now Section 85 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, citing the accused had concealed himself.

“This court is satisfied from the record that the accused... has deliberately and intentionally concealed himself,” the judge said in the seven-page order.

The prosecution argued that the attachment was urgent as Fai's relatives currently in possession of the land were likely to sell it, which would defeat the legal process.

“... this court directs collector Budgam to attach the immovable property of land measuring one kanal and two marlas under Khawat No 60, survey No 466 in village Wadwan and land measuring 11 marlas under Khawat No 136, Survey No 343 situated at village Chattabugh (belonging to Fai) and take possession forthwith,” the court said.

Background
The case against Fai, originally a resident of Budgam, was registered in 2020 under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

Fai, a known supporter of banned Jamaat-e-Islami and alleged to be a close associate of designated terrorist and chief of Hizbul Mujahideen Syed Salahuddin, has been booked for giving support to a terrorist organisation in the country.

Fai, 76, has a long history of legal trouble in both India and the United States. He rose to prominence as the director of the Washington-based Kashmiri American Council (KAC), which he claimed was an independent grassroots organisation of Kashmiri people.

He was arrested by the FBI in 2011 after an investigation showed that the KAC was a “front” for the Pakistani intelligence agency ISI. The US authorities proved that for over 20 years, Fai funnelled at least USD 3.5 million from the ISI into the US to influence American policy on Kashmir.

In 2012, Fai was sentenced to two years in prison by a Virginia federal court for conspiracy and tax violations. At the time, US Attorney Neil MacBride noted that Fai had “lied to the Justice Department, the IRS, and many political leaders” while pushing ISI propaganda. After his release, he was kept under supervision for three years.

During his US trial, federal prosecutors said that Fai had lied about holding a doctorate degree, a title he used for decades to bolster his credibility in political circles.

“Fai has no doctorate degree,” US Attorney MacBride informed the court in 2011, noting that his false representation unfairly diluted the respect earned by actual scholars—(KNO)

Northern Railway Introduces ‘Scratch Rake’ To Curb Fog-Related Delays In Jammu Division

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, DEC 23: Amid fog-related disruptions over the past many days, the Northern Railway's Jammu Division has arranged ‘scratch rake’ to minimize delays in train operations and to ensure passenger convenience during winter months, an official said on Tuesday.

The significant decision has been taken on the directions of Divisional Railway Manager, Vivek Kumar, the official said.

With this facility, it has been decided to provide a scratch rake or additional rake for Train No. 12414 (Jammu Tawi-Ajmer) and Train

No. 22478/22477 (Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra-New Delhi-Katra) to compensate for delays in their departure and arrival, the official said.

He said the step would ensure that passengers reach their destinations on time.

The scratch rake or additional rake is a solution for trains that are delayed by seven hours or indefinitely, the official said, adding that by using these scratch rakes, the punctuality of delayed trains can be maintained.

Regarding the initiatives taken to improve passenger amenities in the Jammu division, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Uchit Singhal

said the main objective of introducing scratch rake is to ensure comfortable and timely travel to passengers during the foggy weather in winter.

“Trains often get delayed due to fog. The operation of these scratch rakes or additional rakes will be beneficial for passengers and will also help in the timely operation of trains.

“Such additional measures will also help in meeting the increasing demand of passengers in the future. This successful operation is a testament to the efficient management of the railways and its understanding of passenger needs,” Singhal said. (Agencies)



KU-JKSTIC holds two-day Math Fest to mark National Mathematics Day

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR DEC 23: The Department of Mathematics, University of Kashmir (KU), in collaboration with Jammu & Kashmir Science, Technology & Innovation Council (JKSTIC), organised a two-day Math Fest 2025 at the Main Campus to commemorate the National Day of Mathematics, celebrating the 138th birth anniversary of Srinivasa Ramanujan.

The event aimed to promote mathematical awareness, strengthen academic outreach, and inspire young minds, particularly school students, towards mathematics.

Vice-Chancellor, KU, Prof. Nilofer Khan, in her message, said that Mathematics forms the backbone of scientific temper and logical reasoning, adding, "such



events play a vital role in nurturing analytical thinking among young learners."

She further said that celebrating the legacy of Ramanujan through academic engagement, research dialogue and school outreach reflects the University's commitment to strengthening foundational sciences and inspiring the next generation of scholars.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Dean, School of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, KU, Prof. Manzoor A. Malik, highlighted the enduring relevance of Ramanujan's contributions and emphasised the need for sustained initiatives that nurture curiosity and excellence in mathematical sciences.

Earlier, Prof. M. A. Khanday,



Head, Department of Mathematics KU and Convener, while welcoming the participants, noted that the festival seeks to bridge classrooms, research, and society by creating inclusive platforms for learning and interaction.

The Math Fest featured thematic sessions including the National Day of Mathematics celebration, Alumni Meet-2025,

School Outreach Programme, and research paper presentations.

Invited expert lectures were delivered by Prof. P. G. Siddheshwar (Christ University, Bengaluru), Prof. Subuhi Khan (AMU), and Prof. Renu Jain, former Vice-Chancellor, DAVV Indore, covering Ramanujan's legacy, mathematics in everyday life, and advanced mathematical concepts.

A special outreach programme engaged over 150 school students from Classes VIII-XII through interactive talks and medal distribution. Research scholars from various institutions also presented papers, promoting academic exchange.

The event concluded with a valedictory session, reaffirming the Department's commitment to strengthening mathematical learning, alumni ties, and research culture.

One-Day Immunology & Molecular Science Screening Camp Held at CHAARAH SAAZ Budgam

A Significant Step Towards Drug-Free Budgam Under MSJE Initiatives

HT NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM, DEC 23: In a major boost to the ongoing efforts aimed at creating a Drug-Free Budgam, a One-Day Screening and Awareness Camp on Immunology and Molecular Science was successfully organised today at CHAARAH SAAZ - District Drug De-Addiction, Rehabilitation & Reintegration Centre, Budgam.

The programme was conducted by the Department of Immunology & Molecular Medicine, SKIMS Soura, in collaboration with CEEOIndia, and was supported under the initiatives of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJE), Government of India.

Inauguration and Eminent Presence

The camp was formally inaugurated by His Highness Aga Syed Hadi, a highly respected religious and community leader, whose address emphasised compassion, collective responsibility, and the urgent need to eradicate drug abuse from society. His presence added moral strength to the initiative and inspired participants to embrace recovery and healthy living.

The event was also graced by the Chairman of the Aga Syed Yusuf Memorial Trust, reflecting strong faith-based and community support for rehabilitation, social reform, and youth welfare in the district.

Participation of District Authorities

The programme witnessed active participation and appreciation from key district-level authorities, underscoring strong coordination between government departments and civil society organisations. Officials present included representatives from:

Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Budgam District Social Welfare Office, Budgam District Administration, Budgam

Their presence reaffirmed the administration's commitment towards strengthening public health services, substance abuse prevention, and rehabilitation mechanisms in the district.

Screening and Medical Outreach

As part of the medical outreach, 50 youth and patients affected by substance use disorders were screened by expert doctors and scientists from SKIMS Soura. The screening focused on:

Immunological and basic molecular health assessments

Scientific counselling and health education
Early detection, referral guidance, and preventive healthcare support

Special emphasis was laid on educating participants about the impact of substance abuse on the immune system and overall physical health, helping them understand the scientific basis of recovery, prevention of relapse, and long-term wellbeing.



Community Impact and Awareness

The awareness sessions significantly enhanced participants' understanding of preventive healthcare, promoted healthy lifestyle choices, and encouraged individuals to continue their journey towards recovery and social reintegration. The initiative received widespread appreciation from beneficiaries and local stakeholders and is being recognised as a model intervention under the Nasha-Mukt Bharat Abhiyan.

Way Forward

Representatives of CEEOIndia, while speaking on the occasion, reaffirmed their commitment to work closely with MSJE, healthcare institutions, district administration, and community leaders to further expand prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and reintegration services across Budgam district and the wider Jammu & Kashmir region.

The successful organisation of this one-day camp stands as a powerful example of how science, governance, faith-based leadership, and civil society can come together to restore dignity, health, and hope—bringing Budgam one step closer to a Drug-Free future.

15-Day NSD TIE Workshop Concludes

HT NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM, DEC 23: The 15 day-long TIE workshop organized by National School of Drama, TIE Centre, Srinagar in collaboration with Aglow Educational Institute and the J&K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages, concluded today at Chadoora, Budgam with heartwarming and inspiring performances. Designed for two age groups, the workshop aimed to cultivate life skills, nurture creativity, and unlock the latent potential of young minds through theatre.

Chief Guest Mr. Mohammad Iqbal Rather, Chairman, Aglow Educational Institute congratulated the students on their exceptional skit performances and wished them a bright future. He emphasized that such activities are crucial for personality develop-



ment and inspire students to move forward with confidence. The performances left a lasting impact on the audience. After the performances Certificates were awarded to the participating students.

Sandeep Chaudhary - Workshop Leader & Coordinator, NSD T.I.E Centre Srinagar expressed his assurances to organizing similar creative workshops in the future and extended the vote of thanks to all present on the occasion.

Cultural Academy Plays a Key Role in Connecting Youth with Theatre

Wahab Cultural Society Hajin Presents Theatre Play "Intiqam"

JAMEEL ANSARI

HAJIN, DEC 23: Under the aegis of the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, the Wahab Cultural Society Hajin staged the theatre play "Intiqam" at the Municipal Hall, Hajin. The play, written by late Lateef Ashiq and directed by renowned poet Sagar Sarfaraz, received wide appreciation from the audience.

The play Intiqam delivers a powerful message against monopoly, injustice and exploitation prevailing in society. Through the central character Ramzan, the drama effectively portrays how wealth and power acquired through illegitimate means ultimately lead a person towards self-destruction and the inevitable law of retribution.

Various characters were presented in an impactful manner. Performances by Sagar Sarfaraz, Altaf Ahmad Shah, Mir Farooq, Irfan Ahmad Shah, Shabir Ahmad Rathar, Master Mohammad Iqbal, Waseem Ahmad Parray, Mohammad Yaqoob Parray, Hidayatullah Parray, Mushtaq Ahmad, Meraj-ud-Din, Manzoor Ahmad, Hakeem Firdous and Manzoor Ahmad Shah were especially appreciated. All artists, through their natural and expressive acting, successfully conveyed the central theme of the play to the audience.

Prior to the performance, General Secretary of Wahab Cultural



Society Hajin, Majid Majazi, presented the welcome address and warmly greeted the audience, artists and organisers. He thanked the Cultural Academy and stated that theatre is a powerful medium for social reform and intellectual awakening, and theatre festivals play a vital role in engaging youth in positive and creative activities.

On the occasion, Constituency In-charge of Apni Party, Intiaz Ahmad Parray, attended the programme as the chief guest. In his address, he lauded the efforts of Wahab Cultural Society and the Cultural Academy, expressing hope that

such meaningful and quality theatrical productions would continue to promote awareness and constructive dialogue in society, especially among the youth.

Besides a large number of local residents, Vice President of Adabi Markaz Kamraz and educationist Shakir Shafi, Dr. Adil Mohi-ud-Din, and members of Municipal Council Hajin were also present at the event. The programme was conducted by Assistant Editor of the Cultural Academy, Dr. Gulzar Ahmad Rathar, while the vote of thanks was presented by President of Wahab Cultural Society Hajin, Dr. Riyaz-ul-Hassan.

Hinsa Par Khamoshi Kyun? BJP Slams NC-PDP's Mouth-Locked Policy on Bangladesh Minority Killings

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, DEC 23: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Jammu & Kashmir Spokesperson Manzoor Bhat today expressed grave concern and deep anguish over the escalating violence against minorities in Bangladesh. Reacting to the horrific reports of brutal killings and lynchings of Hindus and other minorities, Bhat questioned the conspicuous silence of regional leaders like Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti.

Drawing a chilling parallel between the current crisis and the dark days of 1990 Kashmir Manzoor Bhat stated that the horrific visuals coming out of Bangladesh are a haunting reminder of the Kashmiri Pandit genocide. The pattern is identical Bhat remarked. What we saw in Kashmir in 1990 the targeted

killings, the atmosphere of fear, and the forced exodus of minorities being replayed in Bangladesh today. It is a planned conspiracy to ethnically cleanse the land of its minority population.

He further added, My heart bleeds because I see the same pain in the eyes of Bangladeshi Hindus that I saw in the eyes of my Kashmiri Pandit brothers decades ago. It is a tragedy that while the world has moved to 2025 the mentality of extremists remains stuck in the brutal past. Those who remained silent then are remaining silent now, proving that they have learned nothing from history.

Bhat stated It is deeply disheartening to see that those who claim to be the champions of human rights and 'bhaichara' (brotherhood) in Jammu & Kashmir are today tight-lipped. When



any minor incident occurs in India leaders like Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti are the first to tweet and lecture the nation on secularism. But today, when our Hindu brothers and sisters are being dragged out and murdered in Bangladesh, where is their conscience? Why has their 'Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb' gone into hiding? Islam Teaches Protection, Not

Silence: Drawing a parallel with the teachings of Islam, Bhat reminded these leaders that the Prophet (PBUH) always advocated for the protection of the weak and showed immense grace even to those who wronged him. A true follower of the faith cannot stand by and watch such inhumanity. By remaining silent, these regional parties are proving that their sympathy is selective and purely driven by vote-bank politics he added.

Bhat urged the Central Government to take even more stringent measures on the international stage. The safety of Hindus, and other minorities in Bangladesh is not just an internal matter of another country it is a matter of civilizational responsibility. If the interim government there cannot protect its citizens, the Government of India must inter-

vene decisively.

Addressing the growing demand for providing refuge, Bhat noted, While relocating millions is a massive logistical and economic challenge, India has always been a natural home for the persecuted. Our priority must be to ensure they are safe where they are but if the situation becomes untenable, India will not shut its doors on its own people. However, the world must hold the perpetrators accountable so that no one is forced to leave their ancestral home due to fear.

The BJP called upon the people of India to unite beyond party lines and demand justice for the victims. Bhat added that Secularism cannot be a one-way street and the time has come for every political voice in J&K to condemn the atrocities in Bangladesh in no uncertain terms.

Assembly Environment Committee reviews industrial impact at SIDCO Ghatti

High level committee to examine pollution concerns, ecological safeguards, submit report in 15 days

HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

KATHUA, DECEMBER 23: The Committee on Environment of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, headed by its Chairman Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami, MLA, today visited the SIDCO Industrial Estate, Ghatti Complex, Kathua to interact with the stakeholders and take stock of environmental concerns related to industrial activities in the area.

The Committee has been mandated to assess the impact of industrial waste on human health, flora, fauna and agricultural land besides reviewing the status of measures taken for maintaining ecological balance and environmental protection.

During the visit, MLA Chanapora, Mustaq Guroo, MLA Kokernag, Zafar Ali Khatana, MLA Gulabgarh, Khurshid Ahmad, MLA Jasrota Rajiv Jasrotia and MLA Basohli Darshan Kumar, who are members of the Committee, were present.

Secretary, Industries and Commerce Department, Vikramjeet Singh, Chairman Pollution Control Committee, Vasu Yadav, Director Industries and Commerce Jammu, Arun Kumar Manhas, Deputy Commissioner Kathua Rajesh Sharma, President Industrial Association Kathua and deputations from different areas also attended the interaction.

The Committee took first-hand appraisal of the issues and concerns raised by various deputations. It held detailed discussions on the



prevailing ground situation, environmental implications and apprehensions of the local population.

A delegation raised objections to the proposed acquisition of land for establishment of a cement industry near Kaalna-Bhatodi villages, stating that

the area is agro-dependent and falls under the red category zone. The delegation maintained that such an industry should be set up in an uninhabited area to safeguard agriculture and the environment.

Another deputation, led by an ex-PR member, alleged that certain

industrial units are discharging effluents into local water bodies in violation of prescribed safety norms.

A deputation from Jhang village informed the Committee that wastewater from some industrial units contains chemical concentrations that have adversely

affected crops in the area.

MLA Jasrota Rajiv Jasrotia also pointed out that the proposed site for the cement unit is surrounded by a wildlife sanctuary, raising serious ecological concerns.

The deputations also submitted water and crop samples to the Committee for examination.

The Committee further enquired about the functioning of Effluent Treatment Plants (ETPs) and the extent of local employment being provided by the industrial units.

After patiently hearing all the stakeholders, the Committee constituted a high-level team headed by the Chairman, Pollution Control Committee, along with the Deputy Commissioner Kathua and other concerned officers, to visit the affected areas, assess the ground situation in detail and submit a comprehensive report to the Committee within fifteen days for further action.

In his concluding remarks, the Chairman assured the people that after submission of the report by the high-level team, the Committee on Environment will re-examine the emerging situation in detail and assess the findings in consultation with the feedback received from the local residents. He reiterated that the Committee is committed to protect public health and environmental safety. He categorically assured that no industrial activity would be allowed or encouraged at the cost of the lives, livelihood and well-being of the people.

DLSA Budgam Holds Awareness Program on LSMS

HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BUDGAM, DECEMBER 23: District Legal Services Authority, Budgam (DLSA Budgam), under the aegis of the J&K Legal Services Authority and under the chairmanship of O.P. Bhagat, Chairman, DLSA (Principal District & Sessions Judge) Budgam successfully conducted a Training-cum-Awareness Programme on the Legal Services Management System (LSMS) along with a review of Regulation 11 of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).

The programme was organized with the objective of reviewing the progress of legal aid cases, monitoring the performance of panel lawyers, and sensitizing all stakeholders on the effective use of the Legal Services Management System (LSMS) to strengthen case management and enhance the delivery of legal aid services.

The programme witnessed active participation from legal professionals, officials and staff of DLSA, panel lawyers and Junior Assistants of TLSCs, who attended the programme virtually.

The technical and theoretical sessions focused on imparting practical training and awareness on LSMS, reviewing existing case management processes, sharing best practices, identifying challenges, and ensuring timely and effective legal assistance to beneficiaries, particularly those belonging to marginalized sections of society.

In her address, the Secretary, DLSA Budgam highlighted the critical need for regular and timely updating of case details on LSMS to enhance transparency, efficiency, and effective oversight. She exhorted panel lawyers to maintain regular communication with their clients, uphold the highest standards of professionalism, integrity, and confidentiality, and adopt a client-centric approach while representing vulnerable groups such as women, children, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities.

Practical training on the use of LSMS was imparted by the official of DLSA Budgam, who elaborated on the practical aspects of the system. The session was specifically tailored for legal professionals and staff members of DLSA and TLSCs.

The programme also provided an interactive platform for panel lawyers to exchange experiences, discuss challenges faced in the delivery of legal aid, and explore practical solutions for improving outcomes.

The active participation of all stakeholders reflected a strong collective commitment to strengthening the legal aid framework and advancing access to justice in District Budgam.

District-Level Good Governance Workshop Held at Bandipora

HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BANDIPORA, DECEMBER 23: As part of Good Governance Week under the initiative "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore," a District-Level Good Governance Workshop was held today at the Conference Hall, Mini Secretariat, Bandipora.

The workshop aimed at sharing best practices, success stories, and innovative, citizen-centric initiatives undertaken by various departments to strengthen transparent and responsive governance.

Addressing the gathering, Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, highlighted the significant contribution of the Samoon family to public service and noted



that Masood Hassan Samoon has served the administration in diverse capacities.

She emphasized that public service goes beyond routine responsibilities and requires creativity, innovation, and a genuine commitment to society.

In his address, Former IAS Officer Masood Hassan Samoon, spoke on the evolution of governance, citing historical examples of people-centric administration. He observed that while e-governance and digital tools have made service delivery more efficient, they also present new challenges. He stressed that honesty, coupled with good intent, remains fundamental to effective and ethical public service.

The workshop featured documentary presentations showcasing departmental initiatives and beneficiary success stories, highlighting the impact of various government schemes at the grassroots level.

Beneficiaries from NRLM, Animal Husbandry under HADP, Sheep Husbandry Department Bandipora under HADP, Cooperative Societies, and other sectors shared their experiences, motivating unemployed youth to avail opportunities under government welfare and livelihood schemes.

Among others, the event was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Zaffar Husson Shawl; Chief Planning Officer Bandipora; Assistant Commissioner Planning Bandipora; Chief Agriculture Officer Bandipora; Chief Animal Husbandry Officer Bandipora, beneficiaries, and other concerned officers.

Dr. G. N. Itoo chairs Workshop on Good Governance Practices at Baramulla

HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BARAMULLA, DECEMBER 23: As part of the nationwide observance of Good Governance Week, Dr. G. N. Itoo, Director, Centre for Good Governance and Policy Analysis, Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) chaired a workshop on Good Governance Practices at the Main Meeting Hall of the DC Office, Baramulla.

The workshop was organised under the banner of "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore", a week-long outreach programme being observed from 19th to 25th December across all Panchayat Halqas of the district, with the objective of strengthening citizen-centric governance and effective service delivery.

In his welcome address, Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD) Baramulla, Chaudhary Mudasir Hussain,



highlighted the various outreach activities being undertaken across all the 402 Halqa Panchayats during Good Governance Week in the district.

Speaking during the workshop, Dr. G. N. Itoo appreciated the district administration for its proactive initiatives and committed efforts

in promoting transparent and responsive governance.

Meanwhile, Dr. Itoo stated that the broader goal of Good Governance Week aligns with the national vision of Viksit Bharat, which requires the adoption and consistent implementation of best governance practices.

Furthermore, Dr. Itoo underscored that transparency is a cornerstone of good governance and emphasised that government officers must remain easily accessible to the public, enabling citizens to voice their grievances and participate meaningfully in the governance process.

The workshop witnessed interactive deliberations, during which officers from various departments shared valuable insights and perspectives on strengthening governance mechanisms at the district level.

During the workshop, DIO Baramulla, Iftakhar Ahmad, presented an overview of the newly conceptualized podcast series "Jhelum Se Chinab Tak", highlighting its role as a technology-driven good governance initiative that facilitates direct outreach by Heads of Departments to improve public awareness, transparency and citizen participation.

The workshop concluded with a renewed commitment by all stakeholders to uphold the principles of transparency, accountability and citizen-centric administration in pursuit of effective and inclusive governance.

District Level Workshop on Good Governance practices & initiatives held at Shopian

Panchayat level grievance, service delivery camps held across the district

HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

SHOPIAN, DECEMBER 23: District Level Workshop on Good Governance practices and initiatives was today held under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta here at Mini Secretariat, Shopian, as part of the ongoing "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" campaign aimed at strengthening public grievance redressal and service delivery.

Workshop commenced with a welcome address by ADC Shopian, Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaz, who elaborated the significance of organising the district workshop.

The session was followed by an inaugural address by the Chief Guest Showkat Aijaz Bhat, former Deputy Commissioner, Shopian who highlighted the importance of innovation, accountability and people-centric governance in strengthening public service delivery. He stressed that good governance must translate into timely, transparent and citizen-friendly service delivery at the grassroots level.

Chief Horticulture Officer Shopian presented specific points of District @100,

outlining the horticulture sector developmental vision and scheme achievements. Short films showcasing district-level initiatives was also presented on the occasion detailing the achievements of different government schemes and district initiatives for accelerating the developmental and welfare parameters of the district.

The workshop featured presentations on good governance practices implemented in the district, covering key areas such as public service delivery, horticulture, animal husbandry, health, education, social welfare, grievance redressal and public works.

ADDC Shopian, Dr. Nasir Ahmad Lone in his address, appreciated the efforts of departments for their contribution in the ongoing campaign.

District, Sectoral officers besides officials of all line departments participated in the workshop along with public.

Meanwhile, grievance redressal cum services delivery and awareness camps were held by Rural Development Department in association with tehsil administrations and line departments in scheduled Panchayats of the district.

Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore: District Level Workshop held at Anantnag

HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

ANANTNAG, DECEMBER 23: As part of the ongoing Good Governance Week (Sushasan Saptah-2025) being organised under the flagship campaign 'Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore' and to strengthen efficient and citizen-centric governance, a one day district-level workshop was held today at Town Hall Anantnag.

The event was presided over by the Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC), Sandeep Singh Bali and attended by ACD, CAO, DSEO, ARTO, Tehsildar Anantnag, DAO, officers and officials of line departments, civil society members and the general public.

The ADC in his address impressed upon the officers to ensure saturation of centrally sponsored and other government schemes, expedite grievance redressal and enhance the quality of public service delivery across the district. During the workshop, resource persons from Transport, AYUSH, Agriculture and other departments imparted awareness to the general public about key government services, schemes and initiatives.

On the occasion, beneficiaries from multiple departments including Agriculture, Horticulture, Fisheries, RDD, Social Welfare,



ICDS, Health, Animal Husbandry, Sheep Husbandry and Industries were provided sanction letters.

Additionally, documentaries highlighting achievements and good governance practices of the district were screened and beneficiaries of Agriculture (HADP), Animal Husbandry and Industries Departments shared testimonials about the success of their self-employment units established under various government schemes.

The workshop reaffirmed the district administration's commitment to participatory governance and improved service delivery at the grassroots level.

DC Srinagar Reviews Progress of ABHA ID Generation, Enrolment of Senior Citizens under Vay Vandhana yojana, TB Control Measures

Stresses universal health coverage, faster enrolment and strengthened TB surveillance

HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 23: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, today chaired a comprehensive review meeting at the Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex to assess the progress of key health initiatives being implemented in the district.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed Medical Zone-wise progress of the enrolment of Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) IDs, the status of enrolment of eligible beneficiaries under the Ayushman Vay Vandhana Card, an expansion of the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) and the implementation of Tuberculosis (TB) control measures.

At the outset, the DC emphasized the importance of achieving universal coverage under the ABHA ID initiative to ensure seamless access to digital health services. He directed the Officers to intensify awareness campaigns and expedite the registration process across all Medical Zones/Blocks in the district



so that citizens are benefited from the Government initiatives.

While reviewing the enrolment status of senior citizens under the Vay Vandhana Card scheme, the DC instructed the concerned health functionaries to ensure saturation of eligible beneficiaries, enabling them to avail cashless healthcare services at empanelled public and private hospitals under the AB-PMJAY framework.

On the occasion, the DC

emphasized the importance of digital health records, and directed the concerned officers to ensure maximum coverage through intensified awareness drives, field-level mobilisation and coordinated efforts among health functionaries.

The DC directed the Health Functionaries to ensure considerable progress in ABHA ID generation and Vay Vandhana enrolment in the coming days across all medical zones and blocks to ensure that

citizens benefit from digital health services

The DC called for improved inter-departmental coordination and real-time monitoring to address implementation gaps and ensure that the benefits of these flagship health schemes reach every eligible citizen. Reviewing the status of Tuberculosis control measures, the DC assessed screening, detection, treatment and follow-up mechanisms being undertaken under the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP).

He stressed the need to further enhance presumptive TB screening, early diagnosis, and regular monitoring to further reduce TB incidence and achieve the goal of a TB-free district.

Among others, the meeting was attended by Chief Planning Officer Fayaz Ahmad Dar; Chief Medical Officer, Dr Tahir Sajad; Medical Superintendents of SKIMS, JLN Hospital, SMHS Hospital and CD Hospital, District Tuberculosis Officer and all Zonal Medical Officers of Srinagar district.

District Administration Kupwara holds Mega Workshop at Town Hall

HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

KUPWARA, DECEMBER 23: In continuation of the ongoing Good Governance Week "Sushasan Saptah - Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" campaign, the District Administration Kupwara today organized a Mega Workshop aimed at strengthening governance delivery at the grassroots level here at Town Hall Kupwara.

The workshop was chaired by the Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Kupwara, Mufti Fareed-ud-Din. Officers from various line departments, along with a large number of officials and field functionaries, participated in the programme.

The workshop focused on sensitizing officers and field staff about the objectives of Good Governance Week, emphasizing transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and effective implementation of government schemes at the grassroots. Discussions were held on improving service delivery mechanisms, addressing public grievances promptly, and enhancing coordination among departments.

Speaking on the occasion, the ADDC highlighted the importance of taking administration closer to the people and ensuring that the benefits of government initiatives reach the intended beneficiaries in a timely and efficient manner. He urged all departments to work with dedication and synergy to realize the spirit of



"Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore".

Information & PR Kupwara presented a film on the district level initiatives taken under the Good Governance Week.

The programme witnessed active participation from attendees, who shared insights and field-level experiences, making the workshop interactive and outcome-oriented.

Agriculture Department organises Kisan Diwas

HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 23: Directorate of Agriculture Kashmir organised Kisan Diwas (National Farmer's Day) 2015 to acknowledge and encourage the relentless efforts of farmers, who form the backbone of the agricultural economy.



The programme highlighted the need to support farmers through sustained policy measures, innovation, and extension services.

On the occasion, Director Agriculture Kashmir, Sartaj Ahmad Shah, delivered a detailed address on the importance of Kisan Diwas and underscored the vital role played by farmers in ensuring food security and rural development. He also outlined the future work strategies of the department, focusing on strengthening farmer-centric initiatives, improving productivity, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. The Joint Director Agriculture (Extension) Kashmir also spoke on the significance of the day, emphasizing the role of extension services in transferring modern technologies and best practices to farmers at the grassroots level. Senior officers of the Agriculture Department were present during the event, reaffirming the department's commitment to farmer welfare and agricultural development in the region.

DC Budgam Chairs Daylong Public Darbar at Khansahib under Good Governance Week

Distributes sanction letters among beneficiaries under different welfare schemes

HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BUDGAM, DECEMBER 23: District Administration Budgam today organised a comprehensive District-Level Public Darbar-cum-Workshop on Good Governance at Town Hall, Khansahib, under the flagship initiative "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore".

The daylong programme was presided over by the Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat.

The focus of the programme was overarching the objective of strengthening transparency, administrative efficiency, public accountability and citizen-centric service delivery at the grassroots level.

The programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from a large number of citizens, frontline service providers, district and sub-district officers, reflecting the spirit of participatory governance and direct public engagement.

The initiative was aimed at fostering meaningful interaction between the administration and the people, while simultaneously sensitising government functionaries on the core principles of Good Governance, Transparency, Accountability, Responsiveness and Timely Delivery of Public Services.

Addressing the gathering, the DC emphasised that good governance must translate from policy frameworks into visible outcomes on the ground. He highlighted that the true essence of "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" lies in taking governance to the doorstep of the people, ensuring that grievances are addressed promptly, services are delivered efficiently and public trust in institutions is continuously strengthened.

"Good governance is not limited to rules and procedures, it is reflected in the daily conduct of officers and the quality of services delivered to citizens. Our focus must be on proactive administration, where issues are anticipated and resolved with sensitivity and empathy," the DC remarked.

He further underlined that the ultimate objective of governance is to ensure that the benefits of government welfare schemes reach the last person in the queue without delay, inconvenience or discrimination.

Stressing the need for a paradigm shift, the DC called upon officers to move from a reactive approach to a proactive, citizen-friendly and solution-oriented administration.

During the Public Darbar, the DC patiently listened to a wide



range of issues and grievances raised by citizens pertaining to public services, development works, healthcare, education, revenue matters and welfare schemes.

He issued on-the-spot directions to the concerned departments for time-bound redressal of grievances and instructed officers to adopt a humane, responsive and accountable approach while dealing with public concerns.

The workshop component of the programme focused on key pillars of good governance, including the Public Services Guarantee Act, effective Grievance

Redressal Mechanisms, transparency in public service delivery and zero tolerance towards corruption.

Officers were sensitised about their roles and responsibilities in ensuring efficient service delivery and upholding ethical standards in public administration.

The DC also impressed upon officers to institutionalise regular public outreach programmes, field visits, grievance redressal camps and Jan Samvaad initiatives to bridge the gap between the administration and the public.

He stressed that continuous

engagement with citizens is essential for understanding ground realities and building trust in governance institutions.

On the occasion, the DC also distributed sanction letters among various beneficiaries under different government welfare schemes, reaffirming the District Administration's commitment to timely, transparent and inclusive delivery of benefits to eligible beneficiaries. The beneficiaries expressed gratitude for the prompt support and responsive approach of the administration.

The DC reiterated that the District Administration Budgam remains committed to further strengthening responsive, transparent and people-centric governance, and will continue to ensure that public institutions remain accessible, accountable and dedicated to serving citizens in an efficient and time-bound manner.

The programme was attended by Chief Planning Officer (CPO) Budgam, Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Khansahib, Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD) Budgam, Chief Agriculture Officer (CAO), Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Chief Education Officer (CEO), Tehsildar Khansahib, along with heads of various line departments and other senior officers.

DC Budgam Reviews Progress of RDD works under District Capex, CDF

Directs Speedy Execution, Adherence to Timelines

HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BUDGAM, DECEMBER 23: A comprehensive review meeting of works sanctioned under District Capex and Constituency Development Fund (CDF) for the Rural Development Department (RDD) sector was conducted under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat.

The review was called to assess the overall physical and financial progress across all the 17 blocks of the district.

During the meeting, the DC was apprised that a total of 2,694 new works have been taken up across the 17 blocks of Budgam district. Out of these, 2,660 works have been accorded Administrative Approval, 2,633 works have been tendered, 2,485 works have been issued Letters of Intent, 1,911 works have been allotted, 2,113 works have been started on the ground, and 1,376 works have been completed, registering an overall completion percentage of 51.73 percent.

The DC noted that significant progress has been achieved in several blocks, while special attention was recommended for blocks such as Chadoora, Nagam, and Khansahib, where progress was relatively slower.

Financially, it was highlighted that a total of 4,271.346 lakh has been released under District Capex and CDF for the RDD sector works, out of which 1,558.885 lakh has been expended till date.

The DC emphasised that the pace of physical execution must align with fund utilization and that the timely completion of ongoing works should be ensured. He directed that delays at the execution stage must be minimized and quality standards strictly maintained.

The DC instructed officers to carry out close monitoring, regular field inspections, and to expedite tendering and allotment wherever required. He reiterated that RDD sector works are crucial for strengthening rural infrastructure, and all stakeholders must coordinate effectively to ensure maximum completion within the stipulated timelines, thereby delivering tangible benefits to the local communities.

The DC directed that Progress reports to be submitted regularly by the concerned officers to ensure timely execution. He stressed on BDOs to complete the pending works vigorously and to induce extra efforts to achieve the desired results.

The meeting was attended by CPO Budgam, ACP Budgam, Executive Engineer REW, BDOs and AEs.

DC Kulgam chairs DLRC/DCC meeting, Reviews performance of Banks & Line Departments

HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

KULGAM, DECEMBER 23: A meeting of the District Level Review Committee/District Consultative Committee (DLRC/DCC) for Q2 FY 2025-26 was held today under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan here at Mini Secretariat Kulgam to review the performance of banks and sponsoring departments under various Government initiatives and flagship schemes for the financial year 2025-26. The meeting was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner Kulgam, Altaf Ahmad Khan; DLO RBI, Anoop Sharma; General Manager DIC, Dr. Bashir Ahmad; CEO Kulgam, Shabir Ahmad; Lead District Manager (Banks) Iftikhar Ahmad Padder; Director RSETI, Mohd Ayoub, Other District Officers and representatives of banks and financial institutions operating in Kulgam. At the outset, the Deputy Commissioner, who is also Chairman of the DLRC/DCC, conducted a detailed sector-wise review of banks' performance in implementing various Government schemes. He also assessed achievements under Priority and Non-Priority Sector lending in line with the Annual Credit Plan. Addressing on the occasion, the DC urged banks and sponsoring agencies to

focus on achieving Priority Sector Lending targets and emphasized improving ease of access to banking facilities for consumers.

The DC stressed effective implementation of self-employment schemes including Mission YUVA, Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, and other livelihood-oriented initiatives. He also emphasized strengthening financial inclusion through proper handholding of beneficiaries to enhance credit outreach. He further directed banks to sensitize their staff to deal with customers compassionately and ensure timely redressal of public grievances.

The DC emphasized close coordination between banks and sponsoring agencies for seamless implementation of self-employment schemes, enabling beneficiaries to establish income-generating units effectively. During the meeting, it was informed that YOY Deposits of the District have increased from Rs 2541.67 Cr to Rs 2747.05 Cr witnessing 8.08% increase. Advances have grown from Rs 2324.98 Cr to Rs 2560.94 Cr witnessing 10.15% growth.

Further, it was informed that the achievement as on 30.09.2025, under District Credit Plan is Rs 1070.68 Cr which is 55% of the fixed target of Rs 1938 Cr for FY 2025-26.

District Admin Kulgam Intensifies Public Outreach under "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" Campaign

HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

KULGAM, DECEMBER 23: Continuing its citizen-centric governance initiative under the ongoing "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore" campaign, the district administration Kulgam organised public outreach and grievance redressal programmes at multiple locations across the district.

A large number of residents actively participated and projected their grievances and demands. Officers from the concerned departments patiently listened



to the issues raised by the public and assured time-bound and effective redressal.

Special emphasis was laid on awareness generation regarding various welfare and beneficiary-oriented schemes and on-the-spot service delivery.

The outreach camps provided an effective platform for resolving long-pending issues while further strengthening trust and coordination between citizens and the administration.

HT EDITORIAL

Undo wrongs, make corrections for future

In the past whenever the winter season would knock at the doors of the people the masses would make all the arrangements in advance. In other words, we can say that the people were well prepared to brave the vagaries associated with the winter season. The winter season would be marked by heavy snowfall and the people were ready to face the problems associated with it and the situation thereof.

As on date a single drop of rainfall during winter brings cheer on the face of people and at times the situation is blown out of proportion. It is important that nature is allowed to play its part and people should not be hyper when it comes to analyzing weather forecasts. There is no harm in listening to the weather forecast from radio or television or reading the same from the newspapers. But at the same time the people should not be overawed by the situation and they should take things normally.

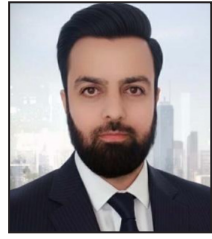
Given the fact that the whole world is affected by climate change, how can the Kashmir valley remain aloof from the same. The people should understand that the time for heavy snowfall has gone and at present if there is moderate snowfall that should be considered as sufficient by the masses. In such a scenario the people need to be thankful to Almighty Allah and at the same time they need to be sensitive to Mother Nature. It is important that further deterioration of the environment is stopped.

Over the years the people have resorted to loot and plunder of natural resources especially forests and water. This is not a localized issue but a universal matter and needs to be viewed in a broader manner. People should ensure that there is no more loot of the natural resources so that for posterity some lost ground is regained. One can expect that people are sensitive towards the environment in future.

Once the things get restored to the normal level then there are chances that the almighty would be merciful and the results would be evident on the ground. In such a situation the weather pattern is expected to return to the previous time. As such one can hope that the snowfall would be bountiful and the same would come as a huge relief for the people associated with the tourism sector. The sooner it happens the better it will be.

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Printed At: Lubaab Publications, Radio
Colony Gund Hassibhat Lawaipora
Srinagar -190017,
Gen. Manager: Sheikh Mushtaq Ahmad
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Editorial Section: 7006846797,
Multimedia Section: 9419008414,
Advertisement Section: 9697071471
RNI No: Jkeng/2011/39231
dailyheadlinestoday@gmail.com
headlinestoday2024@gmail.com

Winter's deepening chill revives Kashmir's tourism hopes



MOHAMMAD HANIEF

As winter tightens its grip across Jammu and Kashmir, the Valley is once again undergoing its familiar seasonal transformation. Mornings now break through dense layers of fog, evenings descend sooner than expected, and the air carries a biting chill that signals the onset of harsher cold. Fresh snowfall in the upper reaches of Gulmarg, Sonamarg, and Gurez has turned the landscape white, while frost settling on rooftops and orchards has become part of everyday life. This seasonal shift is not merely atmospheric; it marks the return of a crucial phase that has long shaped Kashmir's economy, culture, and collective rhythm.

Winter has traditionally been a season of anticipation for the region. While the cold complicates daily life, it also triggers a steady inflow of visitors eager to experience Kashmir at its most dramatic and tranquil. After the disruption caused by the pandemic and intermittent security concerns, tourism in the Valley has shown notable resilience. Between 2019 and 2024, Kashmir recorded more than nine million tourist arrivals, reflecting a strong recovery and renewed interest in its natural and cultural offerings. In 2024 alone, arrivals neared three million, restoring confidence among local stakeholders who depend heavily on tourism for their livelihoods.

This winter has begun on a cautiously optimistic note. Early snowfall has lifted sentiment across the tourism sector, particularly in Gulmarg, where fresh snow on the Agharwat slopes has rekindled enthusiasm among ski operators and hoteliers. Bookings for December and January have picked up

steadily in Srinagar, Tangmarg, Gulmarg, and Pahalgam, suggesting that winter tourism is gradually regaining its pre-pandemic momentum. Gulmarg, one of South Asia's premier skiing destinations, continues to anchor Kashmir's winter tourism economy, drawing both domestic visitors and international travellers from Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East. For many tourists, the promise of timely snowfall is a decisive factor, and this year's early winter conditions have strengthened that confidence.

Beyond Gulmarg, Srinagar presents a quieter but equally compelling winter experience. Dal Lake, partially frozen in the early hours, mirrors the subdued colours of the season. Houseboats, heated with traditional bukharis and decorated with Kashmiri furnishings, offer a distinctive winter stay that blends comfort with heritage. The old city neighbourhoods of Hazratbal, Rainawari, Khanyar, and Zaina Kadal come alive with the aroma of winter delicacies, particularly harissa prepared before dawn. The slower pace of life—marked by warm tea, woolen pherans, and the glow of the kangri—creates an immersive cultural atmosphere that many visitors find deeply appealing.

Pahalgam, is gradually regaining its footing as the snow-covered meadows and pine-lined slopes are once again attracting families and leisure travellers seeking a calm winter retreat. Enhanced security arrangements, improved road maintenance, and renewed promotional efforts have helped restore confidence among visitors. Horse rides, winter walks, and short snow excursions have re-emerged as key attractions, particularly during the early winter phase before heavy snowfall limits access.

Other destinations traditionally associated with summer tourism are also finding a place in Kashmir's winter circuit. Sonamarg continues to draw visitors before peak snowfall restricts movement, while Yusmarg, Doodhpathri, Bangus Valley, and Gurez are gaining attention as offbeat winter destinations.

Improved road connectivity and the growth of rural homestays have played a critical role in this shift. These quieter locations, often showcased through social media, appeal to travellers seeking less crowded experiences marked by frozen streams, snow-laden meadows, and village life adapted to winter conditions.

The economic significance of winter tourism remains substantial. Thousands of people—including taxi drivers, ski instructors, guides, artisans, porters, pony operators, and small shopkeepers—rely on the season for income. The expansion of homestays and boutique lodges in rural and semi-urban areas has helped spread tourism benefits beyond traditional hubs. Demand for Kashmiri handicrafts also rises during winter, particularly for pashmina shawls, carpets, wooden carvings, and papier-mâché items, providing artisans with a valuable seasonal market.

Recognising the importance of winter tourism, government agencies have intensified preparations ahead of anticipated heavy snowfall. Snow-clearance machinery has been deployed across vulnerable routes, coordination between tourism and disaster management authorities has been strengthened, and safety measures in high-altitude areas have been reinforced. In Gulmarg, efforts are focused on slope safety, upgraded first-aid facilities, and crowd regulation around the Gondola. Srinagar International Airport has improved its winter operational systems, including visibility aids and flight scheduling, to accommodate increased seasonal traffic.

Despite these measures, winter remains inherently unpredictable. Heavy snowfall, while essential for tourism, can disrupt connectivity through flight delays, road closures, and temporary power outages. The Srinagar-Jammu National Highway continues to be a critical vulnerability, often affected by landslides and snow accumulation. Local tourism operators repeatedly stress the need for stronger contingency planning,

alternative routes, and real-time communication systems to minimise disruption for visitors.

Alongside logistical concerns, environmental sustainability has emerged as a growing challenge. Rising tourist numbers increase pressure on fragile ecosystems, particularly in high-altitude meadows and forested valleys. Waste management becomes especially difficult during peak snowfall, and unregulated construction in scenic areas has raised concerns about long-term ecological damage. Experts advocate a more balanced tourism model that prioritises energy-efficient infrastructure, responsible construction practices, and environmentally sensitive adventure tourism.

As Kashmir moves deeper into winter, the prevailing mood is one of cautious optimism. Strong booking trends, broader destination interest, and improved preparedness suggest that the Valley is entering a new phase in its winter tourism narrative. From adventure sports in Srinagar to quiet retreats in emerging destinations, winter tourism now offers a diverse range of experiences.

For local communities, winter continues to represent both hardship and opportunity. While the season tests daily resilience, it also opens vital economic avenues. For visitors, Kashmir in winter offers a rare experience within the subcontinent—silent landscapes softened by snow, frozen lakes reflecting muted skies, and a culture that finds warmth in tradition.

If snowfall patterns remain favourable and infrastructure and safety measures continue to improve, the winter of 2025-26 could emerge as one of the most rewarding seasons in recent years, reaffirming Kashmir's enduring appeal as one of South Asia's most captivating winter destinations.

The author is a senior analyst and can be mailed at m.hanief@gmail.com

X (Twitter): @haniefmha

Syed Shareef Qadri A Life Dedicated to Literature, Service and Spiritual Thought



SYED WAQAS-UL-HAQ BUKHARI

Syed Shareef Qadri stands among the prominent literary personalities of the Kashmir Valley who have successfully carved a niche for themselves in both poetry and prose. Belonging to the esteemed, scholarly and religious Qadri family of Kreeri, he represents a lineage renowned for its enduring contributions to knowledge, culture and social service.

Born on March 5, 1953, Syed Shareef Qadri is the son of Syed Ahmadullah Qadri, a respected figure of his time, remembered for his dignity, hard work and sense of responsibility. He received his early education in his native town of Kreeri, where the foundations of his intellectual and literary inclinations were laid.

He later pursued professional education by completing a TDC along with a Diploma in Veterinary Science—considered a prestigious and advanced qualification during that period. This academic background paved the way for a distinguished professional career.

Syed Shareef Qadri served the Department of Veterinary Services in various capacities, earning respect for his honesty, professional competence and dedication to public welfare. Throughout his service, he was regarded as an efficient and prin-



Born on March 5, 1953, Syed Shareef Qadri is the son of Syed Ahmadullah Qadri, a respected figure of his time, remembered for his dignity, hard work and sense of responsibility. He received his early education in his native town of Kreeri, where the foundations of his intellectual and literary inclinations were laid

ciplined officer and ultimately retired with honour as an Assistant Veterinary Officer.

His literary journey began in 1973, soon after completing matriculation, and has continued uninterrupted ever since. Over the decades, he has made significant contributions to Kashmiri and Urdu literature. He has shown notable mastery in poetic forms such as ghazal, nazm, ruba'i, naat and manqabat, while his prose writings also reflect depth and clarity. His work is distinguished by intellectual maturity, simplicity of expression and a strong spiritual and ethical sensibility.

Beyond literature, Syed Shareef Qadri has remained actively engaged in social and community affairs. His efforts toward the promotion of education, encouragement of literary culture, guidance of young minds and strengthening of social harmony have earned him wide appreciation.

In recognition of his sustained literary services, he was recently appointed General Secretary of the Adbi Kruhun Cultural Forum. This appointment is widely seen as an acknowledgment of his commitment to literature and culture, and it is expected to further energize and guide the forum's literary and cultural initiatives.

Trehgam: A Village Of Shared Harmony And Heritage

"Dedicated To those who believe in peace, humanity and the fraternity, To those who toil to eradicate the hatred, animosity and the oppression, To those who advocate justice and equality, And to those who dream of a nation built on moral values"



■ SYED NASRULLAH RASHID

Introduction of Trehgam Town

Trehgam is a historic town in North Kashmir, as per the sources of the Rajatarangini, attributed to Pandit Kalhana. If Kupwara town had not been made the district headquarters, then it is likely that Trehgam would have assumed that role. This historical village is located 9 kilometres west of the frontier district of Kupwara. The village has served as a melting pot of ancient settlers from early historical periods. It gained importance across different ages, especially as a connecting point between Sharda and Shivloora—the earlier tehsil station of Uttara. The town flourished during the Chak period and was reportedly burnt thrice during the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin, also known as Budshah. The village of Trehgam features a Hindu temple and the nearby shrine of a great Sufi saint, Syed Ibrahim Bukhari (RA), symbolizing communal harmony and peaceful coexistence. It has long served as a sanctuary for learned men and religious scholars. One of Trehgam's central landmarks is the Naag (pond), located beside the Grand Mosque and near the temple—a representation of the village's religious syncretism. The pond, abundant with fish year-round, is celebrated for its natural beauty. Sir Walter Lawrence writes, "The pond of Trehgam indicates the utmost beauty of Kashmir." The proximity of the Muslim shrine, Jamia Masjid, and Shiv temple on the same bank of the spring is a living testament to interfaith reverence. Limestone has also been discovered in the hills behind the village. Geographical Location The Trehgam village is located in the Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir, India. Geographically, Trehgam lies in the northern part of the Kashmir Valley, close to the river Kishanganga. Trehgam is situated at a latitude of about 34.5141° N and longitude of 74.1709° E. This area is known for its scenic beauty and historical significance within the region. It is one of the famous historical villages of Kupwara, having played an important role from ancient times onward. The village holds cultural and political relevance in modern Kashmiri consciousness, being associated with resistance and regional memory.

Historical Significance of Trehgam Village.

Trehgam, a local town, was ruled by regional feudatories called Chaks (locally known as Chakdars) before the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin. Jonaraja mentions that the town was burnt thrice during Zain-ul-Abidin's rule. It served as an important link between Kashmir and the tribal regions in the northwest. Since medieval times, Trehgam has been home to many sections of the Kashmiri population. Historical sources suggest that it gave shelter to learned men like Syed Ismayeel Bukhari and Syed Ibrahim Bukhari, and later, figures such as Nutreshi Baba, who were deputed to spread Islamic teachings in the region. Oral traditions also preserve that Zati Shahwali was born and educated in Trehgam—his shrine remains at Drugmulla, Kupwara. The revered Sufi saint Khair Mir Sahib is buried in front of the present Jamia Masjid Shareef, while his disciple, Qadir Sahib, rests at Hirri. Panjer Baba Sahib, a Reshi saint, is believed to have imparted Islamic knowledge in Trehgam, though no trace of his khanqah remains. As for its nomenclature, it is difficult to determine the precise historical origin of the name "Trehgam." A local tradition holds that thirty clans were settled here during the early medieval era, from which the village derived its name—though this remains unverified.³ Geologically, the village lies on Paleozoic rocks of the Ordovician series, with ferruginous slates, quartzose greywackes, and limestone lying conformably above the Upper Cambrian. To the north of the village are relics of an ancient lake basin that appeared intermittently during warm interglacial periods, filling the region now known as Kerewas. Atop the Ordovician mountain series (dated to around 425 million years before present) lies a fort that



remains unscanned in official archaeological literature.

The Fort and Archaeological Potential of Trehgam

This fort stands on the summit of a thick green forest above the village. You can see the western and northwestern villages from this height. You can also identify many villages in the eastern, southern and some northern areas of the district. The location works like a natural telescopic point. It is likely that this place served as a watch post for the ancient Uttar route. The fort shows similarities to Parihaspora in Pattan and Avantipora. A comparative study suggests a date in the seventh or eighth century CE. The sculptures preserved in the spring below the fort show mixed origins. Some represent Bodhisattvas. Some represent Vishnu and Vaishnavi. Some show forms of Shiva. A linga and yoni are installed at the center of the spring. Water rises from this point and flows outward. The spring is part of a large aquifer that draws water from the nearby mountains. Scientific excavation could help determine the exact age of the fort and the spring. Terracotta and bone samples could be tested through Thermoluminescence (TL) and Carbon-14 analysis.

Above the Jamia Masjid and the Shiv temple, the forest holds the remains of a palace believed to have been built by Pandu Chak. Sikandar Malik said that elders called the site Qila Shergadi. Oral accounts claim that the monument in the Trehgam forest served as an observation post that covered the entire region. It is possible that during conflict with Zain ul Abidin, the Terhgami Chaks used this height for defense.

A question remains. If the fort predates the medieval conflict, why has Trehgam produced no archaeological remains, even though sources like Kashmir Under the Sultans and Baharistan i Shahi state that the town was burned during the reign of Zain ul Abidin?

Political Legacy and Communal Harmony of Trehgam

On the other side, this historic place stands as solid proof of communal harmony in the Kashmir Valley. Yet, Trehgam is not just a religious symbol; it also represents a rich political and historical legacy, as mentioned in various chronicles.

Muhammad Din Fauq and Mohibbul Hasnan have documented the long-standing conflict between the Chaks and Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (Budshah). While The Valley of Kashmir by Walter Lawrence does not detail these conflicts, it describes "Uttarmachipura, the lovely pool of Trehgam," said to have been constructed by Madan Chak.² Although Madan Chak may have been a minor noble at the time, this reference appears only in Lawrence's work. The conflict between Budshah and Pandu Chak is described in Baharistan-i-Shahi, which details how the Chaks rose to feudal prominence despite not being part of the original Damara class. According to the text, Helmat Chak and Lankar Chak entered the system as guests but became entrenched in the local aristocracy. Most historical sources agree that the Chaks originated from the Darads of Dardistan—ferocious and physically strong people whom Shah Mir incorporated into the Sultanate's power structure. By the time of Zain-ul-Abidin, Pandu Chak led the Trehgam branch of the Chaks, but his resistance to forced labor led to his downfall. As punishment, the Sultan executed several Chak leaders and burned their homes. Surviving families were relocated to Kupwara and Trehgam, forming two main branches: Helmat Chak (Sunni-Hanafi) and Lankar Chak (Shia), who settled in Trehgam during the 14th century. When Pandav Chak organized a protest against forced labor during the Sultan's northern tour, it marked the beginning of open resistance. In retaliation for Pandav's defiance, which included burning parts of Zainabad, the Sultan's forces destroyed Chak homes. Pandav fled with his family to Drava (Karnah), but was captured when the Sultan offered land to the people of Drava. All adult males were executed; only women and children survived, and were settled in Trehgam. From this lineage, Hussain, a descendant of Pandav, had ten sons who re-established the Chak legacy—eventually leading to the foundation of the Chak Sultanate. Later, under Mughal rule, the Chaks became rebels. After Akbar's annexation of Kashmir in 1586, the Chaks resisted domination. Despite repeated efforts by governors like Qalich Khan and Saadat Khan, who confiscated Chak properties and forced them into low-status labor, the Chaks continued to revolt. Over time, they retreated into

forests and became known as Galwans—horse thieves who terrorized rulers and subjects alike. During the Afghan era, locals even paid protection money to keep their herds safe from these former aristocrats. After the execution of Yusuf Shah Chak by Akbar in Bihar, Trehgam, once a seat of power, passed into new hands. It is said that during the Dogra rule (1846 to 1947), the head priest of this temple was a personal priest to the Dogra Shahi. According to one legend, he kept an "eternal flame" outside the temple, which locals—regardless of religion—helped keep alive by donating part of their daily firewood. This act of communal generosity impressed the Dogra ruler, who subsequently exempted the residents of Trehgam from forced labor or serfdom. Locals recall that a Hindu priest used to sit near the village mosque, enjoying high regard within the Dogra administration. As a result, the village remained largely free from begar (forced labor), a rare privilege under the Dogras. For over a century, the priests of this temple helped establish Trehgam as a spiritual and cultural nucleus in the Kupwara region. By the late 20th century, a mosque was constructed beside the temple, reinforcing the town's reputation for communal harmony. The pond of Trehgam—referred to by Walter Lawrence as one of the most beautiful scenes in Kashmir—is sacred to both communities and symbolizes this enduring harmony. The Grand Mosque, Hindu temple, and the shrine of Sufi saint Syed Ibrahim Bukhari all share a common courtyard, making Trehgam a powerful emblem of Kashmir's pluralistic past. But I had my first opportunity to work on my hometown's iconic feature—the Trehgam Pond. The idea that every civilization begins near a water body is a simplification, but it is undeniable that water has played a vital role in the development and sustainability of human societies. Across religions and cultures, water is considered sacred. In the Bible's Book of Genesis, the Spirit of Jehovah hovers over the waters, initiating the creation process by dividing the waters above from those below. This creation narrative, like many others in the Bible, is widely acknowledged to draw from Mesopotamian myths where the god Marduk similarly shapes the cosmos from the waters. In the Qur'an, God's throne is said to rest upon water (11:7), and all living beings, including man, are said to be created from water (24:45; 25:54). In Hinduism, water embodies the divine: Vishnu reclines upon the cosmic ocean, symbolizing preservation and creation. Water is a purifier, deity, and spiritual medium—ritual pitchers are revered, rivers are worshipped, and sacred pools or tirthas are gateways to the spiritual realm.

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The Trehgam Pond, believed to be thousands of years old, remains the principal water source for several nearby villages. Walter Lawrence refers to it as "the ultimate beauty of Kashmir" in his The Valley of Kashmir, emphasizing both its natural splendour and cultural importance. The pond is revered by both Hindus and Muslims, making it a powerful symbol of religious unity. It irrigates vast stretches of paddy land and sustains agriculture, especially during water crises. The pond also serves as a community prayer site with ample space for large congregations. On Fridays, designated exits allow worshippers to disperse without obstruction. A water fountain with fish, which remain in the pond year-round, adds to its tranquil beauty. The Trehgam Pond, thus, is not just a geographical feature—it is a living monument of memory, belief, and coexistence.



■ SAHIL MANZOOR

Orange is one of the most loved fruits of Kashmiri people during winters. While most fruits become costly or even disappear in the valley due to the harsh season and frequent suspension of the National Highway—the main route that connects Kashmir with other states—orange remains widely available and affordable.

In winter, our diet in Kashmir often shifts toward red meat, mutton, chicken, fish, cereals, and other heavy foods. Though nourishing, overconsumption of these items can lead to fat accumulation and health problems. A balanced diet is what our body truly needs: adequate amounts of proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals, and fibers. Without balance, lifestyle diseases like fatty liver—now common both in Kashmir and across the globe—can develop. Fatty liver brings risks such



as kidney issues, dehydration, and backache. Preventing these problems requires not just a mindful diet but also regular physical activity. Exercise doesn't always mean going to the gym—it can simply be staying active at

home through daily tasks. In this context, oranges come as a natural blessing. This citrus fruit, grown in warm climates across the country, offers numerous health benefits: Nutritional and Health Benefits

of Oranges
Rich in Vitamin C: Boosts immunity, fights harmful free radicals, and slows down age-related macular degeneration (a major cause of vision loss).
Supports Healthy Skin: Vitamin

C helps the body make collagen, which heals wounds and keeps skin smooth.
Prevents Anaemia: Oranges enhance iron absorption in the body.
Good for Pregnant and Lactating Women: Oranges are a natural source of folate, vital for DNA formation, cell division, and preventing birth defects.
Strengthens Bones and Muscles: Being rich in calcium, oranges help maintain bone and muscle strength.
Improves Digestion: High fiber content supports bowel movement, prevents constipation, and keeps the body refreshed.
Regulates Blood Pressure: Potassium in oranges helps lower blood pressure and keeps the heart healthy.
Final Word
Oranges are a simple, natural way to maintain health during winters in Kashmir when fresh local produce is scarce. For those with sensitive stomachs or medical issues, it is wise to consult a doctor before consumption. Otherwise, making oranges part of your daily winter diet can be one of the easiest steps toward staying active, balanced, and disease-free.
sahilmanzoor0401@gmail.com



■ SURINDERPAL SINGH

Dengue fever is a mosquito-borne viral disease that has emerged as a major global public health concern. It is transmitted primarily by the Aedes aegypti mosquito and affects hundreds of millions of people every year, placing a heavy burden on healthcare systems worldwide. Over the past few decades, dengue has become one of the fastest-spreading vector-borne viral diseases. Factors such as rapid urbanization, climate change, increased global travel and inadequate mosquito control measures have contributed significantly to its widespread expansion. Although dengue is often self-limiting, it can progress to severe and potentially fatal forms, making early recognition, prevention and public awareness critically important.

Dengue is caused by the dengue virus, which exists in four closely related serotypes known as DENV-1, DENV-2, DENV-3 and DENV-4. Infection with one serotype provides long-term immunity against that particular serotype but only temporary and partial protection against the others. As a result, subsequent infections with different serotypes increase the risk of developing severe dengue due to immune-related mechanisms such as antibody-dependent enhancement. Transmission occurs mainly through the bite of an infected female Aedes aegypti mosquito, which commonly breeds in stagnant water found in urban and peri-urban environments. These mosquitoes are most active during daylight hours, especially in the early morning and late afternoon, which

distinguishes dengue from many other mosquito-borne diseases.

The impact of dengue on human health varies widely, ranging from asymptomatic infection to severe, life-threatening illness. After an incubation period of approximately four to ten days, classic dengue fever typically begins with a sudden onset of high fever. This is often accompanied by severe headache, pain behind the eyes, muscle and joint pain commonly referred to as "breakbone fever," as well as nausea, vomiting and skin rash. In certain individuals, particularly children, the elderly and those with a history of previous dengue infection, the disease may progress to severe dengue. This serious form can involve plasma leakage, internal bleeding, organ impairment and shock, all of which require urgent medical attention and hospitalization. Beyond its effects on individual health, dengue has significant social and economic consequences. Recurrent outbreaks place enormous pressure on healthcare facilities, reduce workforce productivity and disproportionately affect low- and middle-income communities where access to medical care and effective mosquito control is often limited. These broader impacts highlight dengue as not only a medical issue but also a socio-economic challenge.

At present, there is no specific antiviral treatment available for dengue infection, and clinical management is largely supportive. Treatment focuses on careful monitoring and supportive care to prevent complications. Adequate hydration is essential to prevent dehydration and shock, while sufficient rest helps support immune recovery. Fever and pain are commonly managed using acetaminophen or paracetamol, whereas non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin and ibuprofen are avoided because they increase the risk of bleeding. Natural or traditional remedies should be regarded strictly as supportive measures rather than cures. Proper nutri-

tion, oral fluids such as water or oral rehydration solutions and a balanced diet rich in vitamins and minerals may aid recovery, but they do not replace medical care. Importantly, reliance on unproven remedies should never delay professional medical evaluation. Early diagnosis and close clinical monitoring remain the most effective ways to reduce dengue-related complications and mortality.

Prevention remains the most effective strategy for controlling dengue, given the lack of specific treatment options. Preventive efforts primarily focus on controlling mosquito populations and reducing human-mosquito contact. Eliminating standing water in containers, discarded tires and household storage areas is crucial in preventing mosquito breeding. The appropriate use of larvicides and insecticides, along with improved urban sanitation and waste management, further helps reduce mosquito density. Personal protective measures such as wearing long-sleeved clothing, using mosquito repellents, installing window screens and sleeping under mosquito nets also play an important role in reducing transmission.

Community and public health measures are equally vital in combating dengue. Public education campaigns aimed at raising awareness about mosquito breeding and prevention practices help empower communities to take preventive action. Surveillance systems that allow early detection of outbreaks enable timely response and control measures. Although dengue vaccines have been developed, their use is currently limited to specific populations and guided by considerations of safety and effectiveness. Vaccination is therefore viewed as a complementary tool rather than a standalone solution for dengue control.

The Author is a Faculty, Science Department Sri Amritsar Sahib Punjab

Protect Childhood, Not Pressure



■ DR. PRIYANKA SAURABH

The recent news of the sudden death of a 10-year-old child is not just a tragic incident, but a reflection of one of the gravest social ironies of our times. The possible causes suggested by doctors—lack of sleep, going to school without breakfast, heavy school bags, the mental pressure of homework and performance, and the lack of timely and nutritious meals—point to a system in which childhood is being constantly crushed. This incident forces us to consider whether, in our attempt to provide children with a better future, we are robbing them of their present.

Today's society is caught in a blind race for achievement. Parents, teachers, and institutions—all, in one form or another, have embraced competition as the fundamental principle of life. The most vulnerable victims of this competition are children, who are still at an age for play, learning, and natural development. At four or five years old, when a child is just beginning to understand the world, they are expected to wake up on time, complete a prescribed curriculum, ace exams, and decide their future direction right away. This thinking is not only unscientific but also inhuman.

Child psychology clearly states that a child's brain is most malleable and sensitive during their early years. Pressure exerted during this period has long-term effects on their personality, self-confidence, and health. Lack of sleep, stress, and fear disrupt the learning process. Yet, we wake children up in the mornings, send them to school without breakfast, and expect them to remain active and focused throughout the day. This expectation is far from reality.

Heavy school bags have been a topic of discussion for years. Despite government guidelines and court orders, young children are still seen carrying loads exceeding their own weight on their shoulders. This isn't just a physical problem; it also sends a psychological message that education is a burden, not a joy. When education becomes a burden, a child's natural curiosity for learning gradually fades.

Homework and exam pressure exacerbate this problem. The purpose of homework should be to reinforce class learning and reinforce understanding, not to intimidate the child. However, in practice, homework often becomes a form of punishment. Incomplete reprimands, punishments, and comparisons—all of which undermine a child's self-esteem. Instead of learning, they become afraid of mistakes, and this fear ultimately leads to stress, anxiety, and depression.

Food and daily routine also play a crucial role in children's health. Not getting timely and nutritious meals at school, being forced to eat cold lunches, and the pressure to bathe and study without rest as soon as they return home—all of this ignores a child's natural body needs. The body and mind need rest. Constant activity without rest exhausts a child's resilience.

Equally important is the question of what we

truly want from our children. Do we want them to be happy, healthy, and sensitive human beings, or merely machines for scoring marks and titles? When parents compare their children to others—"So and so's child is doing this, why can't you?"—they inadvertently instill a sense of inferiority in them. This comparison breeds social competition, in which everyone strives to get ahead, even if it costs the child their childhood.

The education system must also introspect in this regard. Schools are not merely factories for completing curriculum; they are laboratories for building society. If schools lack adequate space for play, art, communication, and creative activities, education is incomplete. Teachers are not only imparters of knowledge to children, but also guides and mentors. Creating an atmosphere of fear in the name of discipline is contrary to the fundamental purpose of education.

The role of the government and administration at the policy level is also crucial. Clear and strict guidelines are needed on school bag weight, school hours, the amount of homework, and the examination system in early grades. Effective monitoring mechanisms must also be in place to ensure adherence to these rules. Regular health checkups, counseling services, and nutrition programs should become integral to children's education.

The biggest question for parents is one of self-reflection. It's important to remember our own educational journey—when we started school, how we learned, how much space was given to play and friendship. Were we truly more capable than today's children, or did we simply have more time and freedom to learn? If we struggled and progressed, it's not necessary to assume our children will follow the same path. Every generation has different challenges and needs.

It's also important to understand that success isn't just about a high position or a high salary. Success also includes becoming a balanced, sensitive, and responsible citizen. If a child isn't mentally healthy, their achievements are meaningless. Society must recognize that not every child is the same—their interests, abilities, and pace vary. The goal of education should be to respect these differences, not to suppress them.

The role of media and social discourse is no less important. When we only talk about toppers, ranks, and records, it indirectly creates an atmosphere of pressure. We must also highlight stories where children have given meaning to life through sports, art, service, and human values. This will balance society's perspective.

Ultimately, the question before us—is are we truly shaping our children's futures, or are we burdening them with our own egos and insecurities? If the price of an achievement is a child's health, smile, and life, then it's not an achievement, it's a failure. Children don't need pity, they need rights—to rest, to play, to make mistakes, and to grow at their own pace.

Now is the time to choose compassion over competition. Free education from fear, protect childhood, not burden it. Because a healthy childhood is the foundation of a healthy society, and if the foundation is weak, the building of the future, no matter how tall, will not stand.

The author is a Research Scholar in Political Science, Poet, freelance journalist and columnist, Ubba Bhawan, Aryanagar, Hisar (Haryana)-127045

Radio and TV Artists Association Pays Tribute to Abdul Ahad Farhad

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, DEC 23: The series of condolence meetings organized by various cultural organizations for the Esal-e-Sawab (prayers for the departed soul) of the renowned broadcaster, writer, poet, and a respected literary and broadcasting figure of the Kashmir Valley, Abdul Ahad Farhad, is continuing. In these condolence gatherings, his selfless services to literature are being remembered, and he is being paid a befitting tribute.

Meanwhile, the President of the All J&K Radio and Television Artists, Freelancers, Producers and Directors



Association, and noted filmmaker, actor, and director Sheikh Tariq Javed, in his condolence message, described the late Abdul Ahad Farhad as a shining star of the literary world. He said that with Farhad's passing, the literary community has lost a respected writer, an eminent broadcaster, and a literary figure who held a distinguished position in Kashmiri poetry. He further stated that all members of the association equally share the grief of the bereaved family. He prayed for the elevation of the departed soul's ranks and also expressed his condolences, praying for patience and strength for the bereaved family.

JKCCC Seeks 75% Capex Release Before Dec 31

HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, DEC 23: Jammu & Kashmir Contractors Coordination Committee (JKCCC), Chairman Ghulam Jeelani Purza, has expressed deep concern over the continued financial hardships being faced by the contractor fraternity due to delayed payments, Capex Caps, treasury bottlenecks and long-pending liabilities. He has urged the Government of Jammu and Kashmir to take urgent and good steps to resolve these long-standing issues in the larger interest of development works and public welfare.

Speaking on the issue, JKCCC Chairman Jeelani Purza said, "The Finance Department had issued an order several years ago stating that under the UT Capex Budget, a Cap is imposed every year on 31st December. As per this mechanism, contractors are entitled to receive 75 percent payment of the work done up to 31st December, while the remaining 25 percent is released by the end of the financial year March."

He said the problem arises when contractors are unable to receive the mandatory 75 percent payment before 31st December, due to which they are left with only 25 percent payment eligibility later on. "If a contractor does not receive 75 percent payment before 31st December, it becomes extremely difficult for him to sustain operations. This creates severe financial stress and pushes contractors into hardships," he added.

The JKCCC Chairman made a strong appeal to Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who also holds the Finance Ministry portfolio, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Secretary, Financial Commissioner and all Heads of Institutions (Hols), Drawing and Disbursing Officers (DDOs) and the Finance Department, to ensure that 75 percent payments under UT Capex are released well before 31st December every year.

Purza emphasized, "Timely release of payments will ensure that contractors do not suffer financially and that all development projects are completed on time." He further demanded that all pending payments under the UT Capex Budget be released immediately, particularly the 75 percent payments before 31st December, to avoid further complications.

"Once the Cap is imposed after 31st December, it not only creates a financial burden on the government but also results in huge liabilities, making timely payments even more difficult. Ultimately, the entire contractor fraternity suffers," he said.

Raising the second major issue, Jeelani Purza highlighted serious delays in treasuries. "All contractor bills submitted up to 10th November 2025, but bills submitted from 11th November onwards are still pending in various treasuries till date. This is a major problem for contractors," he said. He appealed to the Finance Department, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and the Chief Secretary to intervene and resolve this issue at the earliest.

"We humbly request the government to resolve this treasury bottleneck so that contractors are not pushed into further financial distress," he added.

Purza said that delays in payments directly affect project execution and livelihoods. "If payments are not released on time, not only do contractors suffer, but all those who are directly or indirectly associated with these projects also face serious hardships."

He also reminded the government of an earlier order which stated that contractor bills should be released and transferred to accounts within 24 hours. "For several years, bills were cleared within 5 to 7 days. Unfortunately, now it takes several months for a single bill to get cleared. Due to the Cap imposed by the Finance Department, contractors are repeatedly to suffer. We seek a permanent and humane solution to this problem." The third issue raised by the JKCCC Chairman pertains to long-pending liabilities of completed works since the 2014 floods. "Payments for work done and completed projects post-2014 floods are still pending. Although the LG Administration has released payments to some extent in phases, a good amount remains unpaid," Purza said. He pointed out that almost all pending payments in Jammu have been cleared, while Kashmir still has outstanding liabilities of approximately 100-200 crore. "We strongly urge the government to release these long-pending payments at the earliest so that contractors can finally get relief," he added.

Highlighting the fourth major concern, Purza spoke about delays in Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) payments, which have severely affected contractors. "We sincerely appreciate the positive step taken by the J&K Government under the leadership of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and the efforts of Jal Jeevan Mission Minister Javid Rana, who has taken up the issue of contractor payments with the Union Government,"

Public Notice

Notice is hereby given that Mrs. Sakeena Akhter, W/o Nazir Ahmad, R/o Pinglena, Tehsil Pulwama, District Pulwama, has applied for renewal of licenses in favour of her firm M/S Phytocare Agri Services, Pinglena, details of which are as under:

Wholesale Seed License
Regd. No. 52 of 2021, dated 16-02-2021
Wholesale Fertilizer License
Regd. No. 274 of 2020, dated 30-12-2020

If any person(s) or institution(s) has any objection with regard to the said renewal(s), the same may be submitted in writing to the License Registering Authority, Joint Director Agriculture (Extension) Kashmir, Department of Agriculture, Lalmandi, Srinagar, within 7 (seven) days from the date of publication of this notice.

After the expiry of the stipulated period, no objection shall be entertained.

**Mrs. Sakeena Akhter
W/o Nazir Ahmad, R/o Pinglena
Tehsil Pulwama, District Pulwama**

Public Notice

I have lost Number Plate of my Vehicle ALTO VXI JK05L 3235. Now I am applying for its duplicate if anybody have any objection in this regard He/She may contact ARTO Baramulla within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained.

**TARIQ AHMAD MALLA S/O BASHIR AHMAD MALLA
R/O DUBBUG SULTANPORA BARAMULLA**

Public Notice

I have changed my name from Old name)Niseer Ahmad Mir to (New name) Naseer Ahmad Mir in future He will be known as (New name) Naseer Ahmad Mir, If anybody is having any objection he/she may contact passport office, Srinagar with in 7days, After 7days no objection will be accepted.

**Naseer Ahmad Mir
S/o: Sonaullah Mir
R/o: Bakhiakar
Handwara**

Public Notice

I have changed my name from Old name)Shakeela Bano to (New name) Shakeela Begum in future She will be known as (New name) Shakeela Begum, If anybody is having any objection he/she may contact passport office, Srinagar with in 7days, After 7days no objection will be accepted.

**Shakeela Begum
R/o: Bakhiakar
Handwara**

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeri

Subject: Application of FAMEEDA BANO W/O BILAL AHMAD WANI R/O WARIPORA BALA for the issuance of LEGAL HEIR certificate

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the subject cited above in this context a report sought from patwari halqa concerned and the Death certificate issued by the competent authority reveals that BILAL AHMAD S/O ABDUL AHAD WANI has passed away on 04/12 /2025 .The report of the patwari further depicts that the deceased has left behind following dependent as tabulated below

- 1... , FAMEEDA BANO wife 36 H/W widow
- 2... , ABRAR BILAL SON 15 years student
- 3... MUZAFFAR BILAL son 09 years student
- 4...TAJA BEGUM Mother 68 years old aged

The applicant has applied for Issuance of Legal heir certificate in favour of Self

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

Naib Tehsild Kreeri

Public Notice

I WAHEED MAQBOOL DAR S/O MOHAMMAD MAQBOOL DAR R/O ALLHPORA WAGORA hereby inform the general public that I am applying for pesticides and fertilizers Licence. If anyone has any objection regarding the same he/she may contact the Head Office HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT LAL MANDI SRINAGAR within stipulates time after that no objection shall be entertained.

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeri (Executive Magistrate 1st Class)

Subject: Issuance of Registration Orders in respect of delayed Birth/ Death certificate.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Registrar Births and Deaths (Block Development Officer Wagoora)/ chokedar hassubmitted case file pertaining to Birth of RUTBA HAMID D/O ABDUL HAMID DEADAR R/O BANDIBALA Tehsil KTEERI Distt. Baramulla having verified the date of Birth as 31/03/2015 and event has been shown to be occurred at home for issuance of delay order .In this connection .

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

Sd/- Executive Magistrate 1st Class Kreeri

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeri

Subject: Application MUSLIM SHAFI WAR S/O MOHAMMAD SHAFI WAR R/O SHEIKHPORA for issuance of RBA certificate in favour of self Tehsil KREERI for the issuance of RBA in his / her / their favor

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the subject cited above the file in the office of the undersigned for the issuance of RBA in this connection a report of patwari halqa concerned has been sought which reveals that the applicant is currently residing in the village of SHEIKHPORA of Tehsil KREERI and belongs to the WAR community having annual income 500000// the details of family of the applicant are as follows

- 1..MOHAMMAD SHAFI Father 51 years farmer
- 2.FAREEDA BAGUM Mother 45 years H/W
- 3... TABASUM SHAFI sister 22 years student student
- 4..MASRAT SHAFI sister 20 years student
- 5...MUSLIM SHAFI self 18 years student

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

Naib Tehsild Kreeri

Public Notice

I am applying for fresh Pesticide and Fertilizer License under the name SOFI AGRO CHEMICALS situated at sheikpora KREERI BARAMULLA In this regard if anybody is having any objection may file the same to Chief Agriculture Officer Baramulla and PPO Lal Mandi Srinagar within the time period of 07 days from the date of Publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained.

Jamsheedah Bano

**D/o: Ghulam Mohammad Sofi
Address: SHEIKH PORA KREERI
CELL.NO-8493812176**

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

Office of the Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Qazigund Notice Inviting Tenders

FRESH NIT No: 45 OF R&B/QAZIGUND/2025-26 /E-TENDERING/4610-25 | DATED: 22-10-2025

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, Union Territory of J&K e-tenders are invited on %age basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K Govt. CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for each of the following works: -

S. No	Name of Work	Est Cost (In Rs)	Basic Cost (In Rs)	GST Amt (In Rs)	T.D Cost (in Rs)	E/M (in Rs)	Time
1.	Construction of C/C drain Near H/O Nadeem Ahmad (R/o Nipora).	249055.31	211063.83	37991.48	200	4981	30 Working Days

Head of Account: MH: 3054 M&R
Position of AAA: Authorization No. ARD/ CESK/2025-26/89 Dated: 22/11/2025
Class of Contractor: DEE Class Only
Position of TS: Accorded

The NIT Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms- and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website www.jktenders.gov.in as per schedule of dates given below:

S. No.	Particulars	Dated
1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	22.12.2025
2	Period of Downloading of bidder documents	From 23.12.2025 To 30.12.2025 (11:00 AM) (04:00 PM)
3	Bid submission Start Date	From 23-12-2025 To 23-12-2025 (11:00 AM)
4	Bid Submission End Date	To 30.12.2025 (04:00 PM)
5	Date and time of opening of bid(online)	31.12.2025 (11:00AM)

1. Bids must be accompanied with cost of tender document in shape of Treasury Challan / Receipt (Under MH- 0059 PWD) in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division QAZIGUND- [Tender Inviting Authority](Name of Work to be mentioned on the Treasury Challan / Receipt)(Refer Govt. order No. O.M No. A/24 (2017)-651 Dt 07-06-2018 (The Date of Treasury Challan should be between the date of Start of Bid and Bid Submission End Date) and EMD (2% of advertised Cost) in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division QAZIGUND (Tender receiving Authority).

2. All the Bidders have to submit Earnest Money/Bid Security (EMD@2% of Advertised Cost) in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG. Non submission of Earnest Money/Bid Security shall render the bidder as Non-responsive.

3. The 1st lowest responsive (Successful) Bidder has to produce an amount equal to 5% of contract as Performance Security in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG in favour of Executive Engineer R&B Division QAZIGUND (Tender receiving authority) within 03 Days before fixation of Contract and shall be released after successful completion of Defect Liability Period (DLP) of the work. Failure to produce Performance Security shall render the L1 as non-responsive and case for debarring of the Contractor for a period of 01 Year be forwarded to Higher Authorities.

4. The Earnest Money Deposit (EMD@2% of Advertised Cost) in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG of the successful Bidder shall be released after receiving Performance security @5% of the allotted cost in the shape of CDR/FDR/BG and same shall be released after successful completion of Defect Liability Period (DLP) of the work.

The bidders are requested to quote their rates excluding GST. GST @18% shall be added to the contract value by the allotting authority at the time of issuance of allotment.

5. The date and time of opening of Bid shall be notified on Web Site www.jktenders.gov.in and conveyed to the bidders automatically through e-mail message on their e-mail address. The bids of Responsive bidders shall be opened online on same Web Site in the office of Executive Engineer PWD(R&B) Division QAZIGUND.

6. The bids for the work shall remain valid for a period of 120 days from the date of Opening of Technical bids.

7. The Earnest Money/Performance Security shall be forfeited if:
a) Any bidder/tenderer withdraws his bid/tender during the period of bid validity or makes any modification in the terms and conditions of the bid.
b) Failure of successful bidder to furnish the required performance security within specified time period before issue of letter of intent.

c) Successful Bidder fails to execute the agreement within 28 days after fixation of contract.
d) If at any stage of work, the Bidder back up from the contract, again the Performance security/EMD as well as work done claim will be forfeited.

No: 4610-25 | Date: 22-10-2025

Sd/- Executive Engineer, PW (R&B) Division Qazigund

DIPK: 9258/25 | Dated: 23-12-2025

اللهم صل على محمد وآل محمد

Condolence

Dr. Ab. Salam Lone

With profound grief and deep sorrow, we regret to inform about the sad demise of our beloved father Dr. Ab. Salam Lone, Resident of Magam, Handwara, presently residing at Iqbal Colony, Babur Rehaan Lane, HMT Zainkoot. The Jiremayi Fateha Khawani shall be observed at the graveyard, Babur Rehaan Lane on 25th December 2025 at 11:30 AM sharp. All relatives, friends, and well-wishers are requested to attend and pray for the departed soul.

**Dr. Tufail Ahmad Lone
(Grieving Son)**

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Div Com Reviews Progress of Wooden Pedestrian Bridge at Amira Kadal

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 23: Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Anshul Garg, on Tuesday conducted a comprehensive on-site review of the under-construction wooden pedestrian bridge at Amira Kadal.

He was accompanied by the Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, and the Chief Executive Officer, Srinagar Smart City Limited (SSCL), Faz Lul Haseeb.

During the inspection, the Div Com assessed the pace, quality, and technical aspects of the work being executed on the existing piers of the old bridge.

The review covered retrofitting and strengthening of the piers, construction of the wooden superstructure, and other allied components of the project, which is being developed at an estimated cost of ₹ 7.17 crore.

The bridge, once completed, is expected to substantially improve pedestrian connectivity across the Jhelum River and will also help preserve the traditional and heritage look of the Amira



Kadal area. It will provide safe and convenient pedestrian access to the Jhelum Riverfront and

ensure seamless linkage to prominent heritage and commercial hubs, including Goni Khan, Maharaja Bazar, and Hari Singh High Street.

Emphasising the importance of quality and safety, the Div Com directed the executing agencies to adhere strictly to prescribed standards and timelines. He also underscored the need for incorporating heritage-sensitive design elements that harmonise with the historical and cultural significance of the area.

Officials informed that the project will not only serve as an important pedestrian link but will also promote walkability, support local business activity, and enhance the overall city experience for residents, traders, and tourists.

Expressing satisfaction over the progress achieved so far, the Div Com urged the concerned agencies to maintain momentum and ensure timely completion of the project, delivering a durable, safe, and aesthetically appealing public asset for the city of Srinagar.

Javid Ahmed Dar inaugurates Farmers' Mela at Samba on National Farmers Day

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

SAMBA, DECEMBER 23: Minister for Agriculture Production Department, Rural Development Department and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmed Dar, today inaugurated a Farmers' Mela at Samba.

The event has been organised with a special focus on innovation, secondary agriculture and awareness about government schemes on the occasion of National Farmers Day (Kisan Diwas). It is being celebrated annually on December 23 to mark the birth anniversary of 5th Prime Minister of India, Choudhary Charan Singh.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that the main objective of the mela was to bridge the gap between the scientists, innovators and farmers by promoting scientific temper and encouraging adoption of modern farming techniques. He emphasised that such initiatives play a



crucial role in empowering the farmers with knowledge about the latest developments in agriculture.

The Minister further highlighted that the Mela provided farmers with exposure to the latest farm machinery and technologies, improved seed varieties, field demonstrations and best agricultural practices. He said the event also served as an important platform for agro-industrial exhibitions and direct interaction with the scientists and subject-matter experts from various departments.

Among those present on the occasion were MLA Samba Surjit Singh Slathia, MLA Vijaypur Chander Prakash Ganga, MLA Ramgarh Dr Devinder Kumar Manyal, DDC Chairman Keshav Dutt Sharma, Deputy Commissioner Samba Ayushi Sudan, DDC Vice Chairman along with senior officers from the Agriculture and allied sectors.

During the Mela, Javid Ahmed Dar inspected various stalls set up by different departments, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and volunteers. He interacted with the participants and appreciated their efforts in spreading awareness about the innovative agricultural practices and government schemes aimed at farmers' welfare.

MLAs from Samba, Vijaypur and Ramgarh also addressed the gathering and underlined the vast potential of the agriculture sector in generating employment and strengthening the rural economy. They emphasized that diversification, adoption of modern technology and promotion of allied sectors such as horticulture, dairy and agri-based industries can open new avenues of livelihood for the youth and farmers. The legislators stressed the need to encourage innovation, skill development and value addition to make agriculture a sustainable and profitable sector, while assuring continued support for initiatives aimed at farmers' welfare and rural development.

The Mela witnessed enthusiastic participation from the farmers from across the district.

Ali Sagar chairs PUC meeting to examine audit para pertaining to JKRTC

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

JAMMU, DECEMBER 23: A meeting of the Committee on Public Undertakings (PUC) was held today under the Chairmanship of MLA, Ali Mohammad Sagar, at meeting J&K Legislative Assembly Secretariat Jammu to discuss the working of JKRTC.

Legislators, Saifullah Mir, Baldev Raj Sharma, Ranbir Singh Pathania, Dr. Bashir Ahmad Shah Veeri, Showkat Hussain Ganie and Tanvir Sadiq besides Secretary, JKLA, Manoj Kumar Pandit were present in the meeting.

Threadbare discussion was held on Audit Para No. 6.1 contained in CAG's Audit Report for the year 2018-19, pertaining to Transport Department, (JKSRTC).

Accountant General J&K, Tsewang Tharchin, briefed the Committee about the issues highlighted in the CAG's audit reports pertaining to Transport Department (JKRTC).

Secretary, Transport Department, Avny Lavasa, briefed the Committee about the functioning of the department and the action taken on issues pointed out in the audit report.

MD, JKRTC also briefed the Committee about performance, mission, status of man power, JKRTC fleet and other issues besides physical and financial activities of the Corporation.

The Committee emphasized upon the senior officers of Transport Department to take all necessary measures to make the Corporation profitable. It also asked to provide transportation facilities to the neglected areas so that the people of the area could be benefited.

The Chairman directed the Secretary, Transport Department, to submit the written reply on the queries raised by the Members of the Committee in the meeting and submit the same to the Committee as early as possible.

The Committee also directed the concerned officers of Transport Department to clear all the liabilities of government.

The members also gave their valuable suggestions on the subject.

Among others, Director, Finance, (Transport); GM (Operations), Jammu; GM (Operations), Kashmir; GM (Load) besides senior officers of concerned Department and Assembly Secretariat attended the meeting.

Rana reviews key infrastructure, administrative issues in Pir Panjal

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

JAMMU, DECEMBER 23: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, today reviewed key infrastructure and administrative matters pertaining to Peer Panjal with a focus on accelerating development and improving governance mechanisms in the region.

The review was conducted during a meeting at the Civil Secretariat here, attended by Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo and Additional Chief Secretary (PWD), Anil Kumar.

The Minister emphasised the need to strengthen implementation mechanisms and expedite ongoing and proposed development works across the region to ensure timely and tangible benefits for the public.

During the meeting, detailed deliberation was held on the shortage of technical officers in R&B divisions.

The Minister stressed that addressing these manpower gaps is critical for effective planning, proper supervision and timely execution of infrastructure projects. He called for appropriate and immediate measures to overcome these deficiencies and



avoid unnecessary delays.

Rana also laid special emphasis on execution of important projects, underscoring that optimal utilisation of available resources is essential to maximise public welfare and deliver visible development outcomes in the region.

Issues related to the uploading of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) on the PMGSY portal were also reviewed.

The Minister said that timely uploading of DPRs is vital to ensure prompt compliance with procedural requirements and to eliminate

bottlenecks that often hinder project approvals and implementation.

Highlighting the importance of administrative efficiency, the Minister stressed proper routing and timely submission of official files to facilitate faster decision-making and approvals at various levels.

The Chief Secretary assured inter-departmental coordination, addressing manpower shortages and ensuring efficient utilisation of funds to accelerate development works and strengthen service delivery in Pir Panjal region.

Rana chairs review meeting to resolve drinking water issues in Jammu city

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

JAMMU, DECEMBER 23: Minister for Jal Shakti, Javed Ahmed Rana, today chaired a review meeting at the Civil Secretariat here to assess and address the pressing drinking water related issues in various localities of Jammu city.

The Minister impressed upon the concerned officers to formulate both short-term and long-term strategies to ensure that the existing and future drinking water requirements of the city are met

in a sustainable manner. He underscored the importance of ensuring a regular, adequate and reliable water supply for the public. He directed the officials to respond promptly and effectively to public grievances.

During the deliberations, the Minister reviewed the proposal for permanent restoration of the Sitlee Water Treatment Plant. He instructed the concerned authorities to prepare a Detailed Project Report (DPR) at the earliest to facilitate timely execution of the project.



To further augment the drinking water supply in Chaman Vihar and adjoining areas, the Minister directed to make the pumping water station fully operational within a week. He noted that once functional, the project would substantially alleviate water scarcity issues faced by the

residents in the area.

Emphasising efficient utilisation of available resources, the Minister stressed that all development initiatives must translate into tangible benefits for the people on the ground. He also highlighted the need for expeditious completion of procedural and administrative formalities to ensure early implementation of approved projects.

Reviewing another significant intervention, the Minister discussed the construction of a sump tank at Kamdhenu. He said that the

facility would address the drinking water concerns not only in Kamdhenu but also in surrounding areas once it gets completed.

The Minister also took note of the issues raised by MLA Jammu West, Arvind Gupta. He assured him that all genuine concerns pertaining to drinking water supply would be examined and addressed on priority.

The meeting was attended by the Chief Engineer, PHE, Superintending Engineers and other senior officers of the department.

Forest Minister reviews solar power generation prospects for Poonch

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

JAMMU, DECEMBER 23: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, today chaired a review meeting with the Secretary, Science and Technology Department, Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary to assess and advance the prospects of solar power generation in Poonch district.

The meeting focused on positioning Poonch as a priority district for decentralised renewable energy development, keeping in view its hilly terrain, scattered habitations, border location and frequent power supply constraints. Detailed discussion was held on identifying technically viable sites for solar installations, including government land, institutional

rooftops and community level spaces, while taking advantage of the district's favourable solar irradiation and climatic conditions.

The Minister underlined that renewable energy, particularly solar power, must form the backbone of development planning in remote and border districts. He stated that solar energy is not only a clean and sustainable alternative but also a strategic necessity for energy security, reduced dependence on conventional grids and resilience in areas prone to weather related disruptions.

Special emphasis was laid on expanding solar solutions in farflung and tribal habitations, where decentralised systems such as off-grid and hybrid solar plants can ensure uninterrupted power for households, schools, health centres, anganwadi centres and water supply

schemes.

The Minister observed that reliable electricity access has a direct bearing on education outcomes, healthcare delivery, livelihood generation and overall quality of life in these regions.

It was agreed that the Science and Technology Department will expedite detailed feasibility assessments for Poonch district, covering both grid-connected and standalone solar projects. A structured roadmap will be prepared, aligning district level interventions with central and Union Territory renewable energy schemes, with particular focus on convergence, optimal financing and long term sustainability.

The meeting also stressed the need for close inter-departmental coordination among the Science and Technology, Revenue, Power

Development, Rural Development and district administration to ensure timely clearances, land identification and smooth implementation. Priority will be given to solarisation of public institutions and community assets, alongside the targeted interventions for border villages and nomadic and tribal populations.

The initiative is expected to significantly strengthen the clean energy generation capacity in Poonch, reduce carbon emissions and support the government's broader vision of sustainable, inclusive and region-sensitive development, especially in ecologically fragile and strategically important areas.

The meeting was attended by the Sub Divisional Magistrate, Mendhar, Deputy Secretary, Science and Technology Department and other concerned revenue and departmental officials.

SKUAST-K Celebrated National Farmers Day 2025

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 23: Directorate of Extension, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology Kashmir (SKUAST-K), celebrated National Farmers Day (Kisan Diwas) today at the Conference Hall of the Directorate of Extension.

National Farmers Day is observed every year on the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister, Shri Chaudhary Charan Singh, in recognition of his lifelong dedication to the welfare of farmers and the agricultural sector.

The occasion highlights the indispensable role of farmers in ensuring national food security and strengthening the rural economy.

The programme was organized under the guidance of Prof. Raihana H. Kanth, Director, Directorate of Extension and Dean,



Faculty of Horticulture, SKUAST-K. The event witnessed active participation from faculty members, scientists, extension professionals, students, and other stakeholders.

As part of the celebrations, about 120 participants attended the live telecast of the national-level programme during which Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, and Minister of State for Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, addressed the gathering.

VHP, Bajrang Dal activists protest outside B'desh HC in Delhi

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, DEC 23: Activists of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal staged a protest outside the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi on Tuesday, condemning the brutal lynching of a Hindu man in Bangladesh whose body was set on fire while hung on a tree.

Protesters gathered in large numbers outside the diplomatic mission, demanding action from Bangladeshi authorities to protect Hindu minorities.

'Hanuman Chalisa' could be heard being recited during the demonstration. The incident has sparked outrage among Hindu organisations in India, with protesters calling for international intervention to ensure the safety of minorities in the neighboring country.

The protest outside the Bangladesh High Commission underscores the mounting tension and anger in India over attacks on Hindu communities across the border.

In a fresh escalation to the diplomatic crisis between New Delhi and Dhaka, the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi on Monday suspended issuance of visas, according to a notice pasted at its entrance.

Bangladesh had earlier in the day notified stoppage of visa work



without any timelines for resumption at its Assistant High Commission in Agartala.

Bangladesh suspended its consular services and visa operations at the High Commission in New Delhi and the Assistant High Commission in Agartala over security concerns.

This came even as Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma on Monday visited the Indian Visa Application Centre (IVAC) in Dhaka to take stock of the functioning of visa services.

Verma interacted with visa applicants at the centre in Jamuna Future Park, many of whom were

applying for medical visas to travel to India for treatment.

Last week, on December 17, the Indian High Commission had suspended its visa services for a day in the aftermath of the shooting of Osman Hadi when protesters under the banner of 'July Oikya' had announced plans to surround the Indian mission - over the issue of repatriation of ex-PM Sheikh Hasina, and accusations that Hadi's killers had fled to India.

The protesters had broken through initial police barricades, and later staged a sit-in outside the Indian High Commission in the Gulshan area of Dhaka. The

centre was reopened the following day.

On Monday, the Indian High Commission said it continues to operate visa centres in Dhaka, Khulna, Sylhet and Rajshahi, as several visa applicants are travelling to India for treatment of serious medical conditions. Keeping these humanitarian needs in mind, and despite the evolving security situation, it is keeping the visa centres open.

However, the Indian Visa Application Centre (IVAC) in Chittagong remains temporarily shut following a mob attack at the entrance of the Assistant High

Commission of India (AHC) in Chittagong on the night of December 18-19, following the death of Hadi, when protesting mobs threw stones at the Indian mission in Chittagong, creating serious security concerns for officials and others residing within the premises.

The Indian High Commission in Dhaka has said that a decision will be taken to fully resume operations at all IVACs in Bangladesh after the security situation improves.

In the meantime, Bangladesh has temporarily suspended all visa issuance and consular services at its High Commission in New Delhi until further notice, citing security concerns and the need to avoid any untoward situation, Dhaka Tribune reported.

The decision was announced in a notice issued by the Bangladesh High Commission on Monday, December 22.

The notice, displayed at the mission premises, expressed regret for the inconvenience caused by the suspension. The move follows protests outside the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi on Saturday.

The Bangladesh High Commission said consular operations, including visa services, will remain suspended until a further announcement is made. UNI

NITI Aayog's Internationalisation of Higher Education in India suggests 22 policy interventions

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, DEC 23: NITI Aayog India's top policy think tank, that replaced the Planning Commission has come out with a comprehensive report on "Internationalisation of Higher Education in India: Prospects, Potential, and Policy Recommendations".

The report, produced through a collaboration between NITI Aayog and an IIT Madras-led consortium of knowledge partners, marks a pioneering contribution from the Global South. It focuses on 'internationalisation at home' as envisioned in NEP 2020.

It examines approaches to internationalisation at the global, national, and institutional levels, along with temporal trends in academic mobility over the last 20 years. The report explores opportunities for enhanced student and faculty mobility, greater international academic and research collaborations, and the potential of establishing international branch campuses in India and campuses of Indian public and private universities overseas.

The report recommends 22 policy interventions for "inbound and outbound student mobility". Along with policy interventions, it also outlines 76 Action Pathways and 125 Performance Success Indicators, drawing from nearly 30 Indian and global best practices. Spanning five thematic areas Strategy, Regulation, Finance, Branding, Communication & Outreach, and Curriculum & Culture the recommendations aim to transform India into a global destination for higher education and research by 2047.

The recommendations were made after drawing responses from 160 Indian HEIs across 24 States to a comprehensive survey comprising 100 questions, and perspectives, ideas, and experiences from 140 national and international participants at a National Workshop organised at IIT Madras earlier this year.

Key Informant Interviews were also conducted with experts from 30 international institutions across 16 countries, providing global perspectives.

The report was released by the senior leadership of NITI Aayog including Suman Bery, Vice Chairman, Dr. V.K. Paul, Member (Education), Dr. Vineet Joshi, Secretary, Department of Higher Education and others.

Suman Bery, Vice chairman, NITI Aayog said, "there is a business case and a diplomatic case for promoting internationalisation of higher education in India, especially as an instrument of soft power."

Dr. Virmani observed, "International students who have benefitted from the Indian system can contribute to the growth of India and the world. He emphasised the need to strengthen India's doctoral programmes through greater international collaborations."

Shri B.V.R. Subrahmanyam highlighted the many positive outcomes of internationalising the higher education system of the world's 4th largest economy. "It can improve the quality of courses and curriculum within Indian universities, have a positive effect in reducing forex outflow, and provide greater opportunities for research partnerships. He underscored the role of private universities in furthering internationalisation, the opportunity to leverage the 3.5 crore strong Indian diaspora, and the need for the government to play a catalytic role through ease of regulation."

Dr. Vineet Joshi said, "India to be a global hub of higher education, public and private universities need to work in tandem. Initiatives under NEP are the starting point, and UGC Regulations have been facilitators in attracting nearly 13 international universities to India. He expressed immense appreciation for the quality of the report and said that the 76 action pathways stated therein provide a robust roadmap to achieve the internationalisation targets of 2047."

Dr. V.K. Paul observes that India must target to host 1 lakh international students across Central and State Universities by 2030. UNI

AAP questions Delhi govt over alleged non-disclosure of Yamuna pollution reports

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI DEC 23: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Tuesday accused the BJP-led Delhi government of withholding official data on Yamuna river pollution, alleging a lack of transparency in environmental governance.

AAP Delhi state president Saurabh Bharadwaj said the government has stopped publishing monthly Yamuna pollution reports over the past three months.

Bharadwaj said that earlier governments led by Arvind Kejriwal had regularly released monthly Yamuna pollution data since 2014, which he described



as a standard practice of accountable governance.

He alleged that the current administration under Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and Water Minister Parvesh Verma discontinued the reports after he highlighted certain findings from a Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) report.

The AAP leader further alleged that the Delhi government is not cooperating with an expert panel from IIT Delhi appointed by the National Green Tribunal (NGT). According to him, the panel has been denied access to sewage treatment plants (STPs) and relevant pollution data while reviewing the functioning of 37 STPs in the city. Bharadwaj referred to a DPCC report dated October 23, 2025, stating that the Yamuna water was not fit even for bathing and contained high levels of pollution, including human waste. He claimed that suppressing such data could have serious public health implications.

The Delhi government has not issued an official response to the allegations so far. UNI

Jairam Ramesh questions Minister's clarifications on Aravallis mining protection

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, DEC 23: Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Tuesday expressed serious concerns and doubts following recent clarifications by the union Minister of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change on the contentious issue of mining in the Aravalli mountain range.

In a detailed statement, Ramesh questioned the validity of the data cited by the Ministry and the implications of a new definition that could potentially open up large tracts of the ecologically sensitive Aravallis to mining and real estate development.

"The Minister says that only 0.19 percent of the 1.44 lakh square kilometers of the Aravallis is presently under mining leases. This already amounts to 68,000 acres, which is a huge amount," Ramesh pointed out.

He added that the figure of 1.44 lakh sq km is misleading since it includes the entire landmass of 34 districts

across four states, not just the actual Aravalli land. "If the area under the Aravallis is used as the base, then 0.19 percent will turn out to be a very huge underestimate."

Ramesh also highlighted that in 15 of these districts where data is verifiable, the Aravallis constitute about 33 percent of the total land area. He criticised the lack of clarity about how much of this area might be excluded from protection under the new definition and made available for mining and other developmental activities.

Further concerns were raised about the potential exclusion of many hills over 100 meters high from protective cover if local profiles are adopted as the baseline, as the Minister suggested.

"With the revised definition, most hilly tracts in the Delhi NCR region could be opened for real estate development, adding to environmental stress."

Ramesh, who is a former union Minister having held the portfolio of Environment and Forests in the

erstwhile Manmohan Singh government, also criticised the ongoing move to redefine the boundaries of the Sariska Tiger Reserve to allow mining.

"Fragmentation of what is essentially an interconnected ecosystem will damage its ecological value. Such fragmentation elsewhere is already causing havoc."

Calling the Aravallis "part of our natural heritage" with immense ecological significance, Ramesh questioned the government's intent. "Why is the Modi government hellbent on redefining them? To what end? For whose benefit? And why are the recommendations of a professional organisation like the Forest Survey of India being deliberately ignored and set aside?"

Environmental experts and activists have echoed these concerns, warning that any dilution of protections for the Aravallis could have long-term detrimental effects on biodiversity, groundwater recharge, and air quality, especially in the National Capital Region. UNI

SHANTI Act 2025 to boost India-US Nuclear Cooperation: USISPF

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, DEC 23: The US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) on Tuesday welcomed the passage of the SHANTI (Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India) Act, 2025, calling it a "comprehensive overhaul" of India's civil nuclear framework that will strengthen bilateral cooperation in clean energy.

The legislation, which received Presidential assent after being passed by both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, marks the most significant reform of India's nuclear sector since independence. It repeals and replaces the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010.

USISPF described the Act as a "historic turning point in India's energy landscape" that will unlock opportunities for enhanced



cooperation between the United States and India in nuclear energy development.

The SHANTI Act introduces critical amendments designed to expand private and foreign participation in India's nuclear

power sector, clarify the liability framework for nuclear operators, and operationalise the long-standing potential of the Indo-US Civil Nuclear Agreement signed in 2008.

"This reform marks a pivotal step toward modernising India's nuclear energy infrastructure and strengthening bilateral cooperation in clean energy development," USISPF said in a statement.

The forum emphasized that the legislation harnesses the

potential of the US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement and supports the transition to sustainable and advanced nuclear energy, a key component of both countries' clean energy goals.

The Act is expected to attract significant foreign investment and technology transfer in India's nuclear sector, which has long faced challenges in expanding private participation due to regulatory constraints and liability concerns. UNI

Rouse Avenue Court frames charges against Karti Chidambaram in Chinese visa scam case

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI DEC 23: Rouse Avenue Court on Tuesday framed charges against Congress leader Karti Chidambaram and his Chartered Accountant S. Bhaskararaman in connection with the alleged Chinese Visa Racket case being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The court also charged Bhaskararaman for allegedly destroying crucial evidence related to the case. Both accused pleaded

not guilty, following which the court scheduled the next hearing for January 16. The CBI has granted approver status to Vikas Makharia, who is expected to play a key role in the prosecution's case. As per the CBI's FIR, a private firm based in Mansa, Punjab—Talwandi Sabo Power Limited, allegedly paid Rs 50 lakh through intermediaries to facilitate the issuance of visas for Chinese nationals. The firm was setting up a 1,980 MW thermal power plant, the construction of which had been

outsourced to a Chinese company. With the project running behind schedule, the company allegedly sought to bring in additional Chinese professionals beyond the visa ceiling fixed by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). CBI officials stated that to bypass these restrictions, the company's representatives approached a Chennai-based individual through associates. A plan was allegedly devised to reuse 263 Project Visas earlier granted to Chinese officials, effectively

circumventing the MHA's cap. Following this, a request letter was submitted to the MHA seeking approval for reusing the visas, which was cleared within a month. According to investigators, a bribe of Rs 50 lakh was demanded by the Chennai-based individual and paid by the Punjab-based firm. The money was allegedly routed through a Mumbai-based company under the guise of consultancy and out-of-pocket expenses for visa-related work.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi pays tribute to Chaudhary Charan Singh on birth anniversary

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, DEC 23: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra paid tribute to former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh on his birth anniversary on Tuesday, hailing him as the "messiah of farmers, the poor, and the deprived."

"On the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister of India, Chaudhary Charan Singh Ji, who is known as the messiah of farmers, the poor, and the deprived, I pay my respectful obeisance to him," she said in a post on X. Priyanka Gandhi also extended her congratulations and best wishes to all the farmer brothers of the country on Farmer's



Day, Chaudhary Charan Singh's contributions to the welfare of farmers and the poor continue to inspire the nation, she noted.

Chaudhary Charan Singh was a champion of farmers' rights and played a pivotal role in shaping India's agricultural policies during his tenure as Prime Minister from 1979 to 1980. UNI



McCullum Unsure About Coaching Future

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

ADELAIDE: Brendon McCullum insists he is still the man to take England forward despite over-seeing the latest addition to a horrific Ashes record in Australia, but admits he is unsure whether he will still be Test head coach at the start of next summer.

Defeat in the third Test by 82 runs saw Australia achieve an unassailable 3-0 lead to retain the urn inside 11 days. As well as extending England's winless streak down under to 18 matches - of which only two have been draws - it has poleaxed the Bazball ethos and methodology, which had seen England arrive at the start of November confident of an upset.

Speaking immediately after the match, Ben Stokes was unequivocal that he remains committed to the captaincy while conceding his side had been "poor". Much of that has been put down to the preparations leading into the series, which featured a single warm-up match over three days against England Lions at Lilac Hill.

There has also been criticism of the team's lack of appreciation of Australian conditions, and a general hands-off approach to players who needed more guidance. All of which falls under the domain of McCullum as head coach.

After a promising start following McCullum's appointment at the start of the 2022 summer, results have dropped off. Since the start of 2024, England have lost more Tests (13) than they have won (12), giving McCullum and Stokes an overall record of 25 wins and 17 defeats from 44 matches. This

latest Ashes capitulation means England have not won a five-match series in four attempts during his tenure.

Having had his deal extended through to 2027 by managing director Rob Key - who is due to speak to the media on Tuesday - in a move that included making McCullum head coach of the limited overs set-up at the start of the year, sacking him could reportedly cost the ECB over £1million.

McCullum admitted he was uncertain about his future, but reiterated his desire to continue what he described as "a pretty good gig".

"I don't know," he said when asked whether he would be in charge of the Test side for the start of the 2026 English summer. "It's not really up to me, is it?"

"I'll just keep trying to do the job, try to learn the lessons that [we] haven't quite got right here and try to make some adjustments. Those questions are for someone else, not for me."

"It's a pretty good gig. It's good fun. You travel the world with the lads and try to play some exciting cricket and try to achieve some things ... For me, it's a matter of trying to just get the very best out of the people and try to achieve what you can with them."

"Those other decisions are up to other people. But from my point of view, I'm enjoying the time that I've got with these guys and I think we've made some progress from when I took over to where we are. We're not the finished article, but I think we've definitely improved as a cricket team. We've had an identity about us. Now's the time for us in the last two Tests to really show that identity and try to

salvage something from it."

England travelled to Melbourne on Monday ahead of Friday's Boxing Day Test at the MCG. McCullum ruled out bringing in reinforcements from beyond the squad, but changes are expected, with Jacob Bethell and Matthew Potts possible replacements for Ollie Pope and Brydon Carse, respectively.

While the series has passed England by, they do have two chances to break their Australian duck. Their last Test victory here came in 2011 at Sydney, at the end of a historic 2010-11 Ashes success. And off the back of a more spirited and functional display in Adelaide, McCullum sees no reason why they cannot achieve some consolation in the final three weeks of the tour.

"Well, we've got to find a way to win the next one. If we can just play again, just find that beautiful state you can get in where you're not restricted by the pressures and the expectations of everything. Acknowledge all of that, lean into it, and just accept that it's going to be there, but then just go out and when you cross the line, go out and just play the game."

"If we can do that, then we give ourselves a better chance. Camaraderie, morale will always be what it is within this group. We've tried to unite this team right throughout and we try to ensure that everyone is putting into the bucket, and that will be no different over the coming days."

"This one is going to sting, no doubt. But we know we've got a job to do in Melbourne and in Sydney. If we can salvage something out of the next two Test matches, then that's something."

Gill, Abhishek and Arshdeep named in Punjab's Vijay Hazare Trophy squad

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

CANBERRA: Shubman Gill, Abhishek Sharma and Arshdeep Singh have been named in Punjab's 18-man Vijay Hazare Trophy squad, which begins its campaign against Maharashtra on December 24.

Alongside the three India internationals, Punjab have selected a strong group of power-hitters and allrounders, including Prabhsimran Singh, Naman Dhir, Anmolpreet Singh, Ramandeep Singh, Sanvir Singh and Harpreet Brar. Gurnoor Brar and Krish Bhagat will lead the pace attack.



The extent of Gill, Abhishek and Arshdeep's availability remains unclear, with India scheduled to play three ODIs against New Zealand starting January 11, followed by five T20Is from January 21. Gill, recently dropped from India's T20I squad for the T20 World Cup and the New Zealand T20Is, is set to captain the ODI side, while Abhishek and Arshdeep are part of the T20I squad.

Punjab, last season's losing quarter-finalists, will play all seven of their league matches in Jaipur. Arshdeep was their leading wicket-taker in the 2024-25 edition. Their group includes Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Goa and Mumbai, with league-stage fixtures concluding on January 8, three days before India's first ODI.

Punjab have not named a captain in the official squad announcement.

Jhye Richardson closing in on return to Australia's Test squad

■ ESPNCRICINFO

ADELAIDE: Jhye Richardson is in the frame to be included in Australia's squad for the Boxing Day Test following a successful recovery from shoulder surgery.

Pat Cummins is expected to sit out Melbourne, and potentially the rest of the series, with the Ashes secured after victory in Adelaide, meaning there is a vacancy in the pace attack. Brendan Doggett and Michael Naser, who took a five-wicket haul in Brisbane, played earlier in the series and would also be in contention to return to the XI but

ESPNcrinfo understands Richardson is very close to being in consideration. Richardson trained with the Test group ahead of Adelaide but was not officially part of the squad. Australia also need to replace Nathan Lyon who is out of the series with a hamstring injury. Todd Murphy is likely the frontrunner, although Western Australia's Corey Rocchiccioli could earn a first call-up, while left-arm spinner Matt Kuhnemann had a successful tour of Sri Lanka earlier this year and toured the West Indies. Should Richardson's official return to a Test squad be locked in, it would come exactly a year



since he was last included, against India for the Boxing Day Test. Shortly after that, he opted to undergo shoulder surgery to fix

long-standing issues and was ruled out of action for nearly 12 months. The selectors had long held hope that he would be in contention for the latter stages of the Ashes.

He has made a gradual return to action in recent months, starting in grade cricket before playing for a Cricket Australia XI against England Lions. He then featured for Australia A against the Lions where he increased his workload, claiming five wickets across 26 overs. Richardson missed Perth Scorchers' first game of the BBL season due to being with the Test squad, but returned for the record-breaking clash against Brisbane

Heat at the Gabba. He struck with his first ball to remove Colin Munro and would have claimed Matt Renshaw but overstepped.

Richardson has only played three Tests since his debut in 2018-19, taking 11 wickets at 22.09, in a career hampered by injury. Having returned in a starring role in Adelaide, Cummins conceded it was unlikely he would backup with the Ashes won. "We had a pretty aggressive build-up knowing that it's the Ashes there to be won and we thought that was worth it," he said. "Now that the series has been won, there might be a sense of job's done and let's reassess the risk."

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