

Zero Tolerance Against Terrorism: Reaffirms Amit Shah

- Home Minister Reviews J&K Security at High-Level Meeting in Delhi
- Focus on Sustaining Post-Article 370 Gains, Achieving a Terror-Free J&K
- HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 8: Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah on Wednesday chaired a high-level security review meeting on Jammu and Kashmir, reiterating the Centre's firm resolve to establish lasting peace and completely eliminate terrorism in the Union Territory.

The meeting was attended by Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha, the Union Home Secretary, Director of the Intelligence Bureau, Chief Secretary and Director General of Police of J&K,

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Kashmir Freeze Deepens as Cold Intensifies

- HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JAN 8: Several places, including Srinagar, experienced the coldest night of the season as cold conditions tightened grip in Kashmir with a significant fall in the minimum temperature in most parts, officials said on Thursday.

The bone-chilling cold conditions led to the freezing of the fringes of several water bodies, including the famous Dal Lake here.

Srinagar recorded a low of minus 5.1 degrees Celsius on Wednesday night, down 3.5 degrees from minus 1.6 degrees Celsius on Tuesday night, they said.

The officials said it was the season's coldest night in the city so far this season, and the minimum temperature was 3.2 degrees below the season's normal.

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Third Landslide Hits Baramulla-Uri Highway

- HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

BARAMULLA, JAN 08: The Baramulla-Uri National Highway remained closed on Thursday after another landslide struck the stretch - the third such incident reported in the last 20 days, causing severe inconvenience to commuters.

Officials told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that a fresh landslide hit the highway in the morning, forcing authorities to immediately halt traffic movement on the route as a precautionary measure. Only emergency vehicles were allowed

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CS calls for stronger credit linkages and women-led rural enterprises

- HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JAN 08: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo today chaired the 9th Executive Council Meeting of the Jammu & Kashmir Rural Livelihood Mission (JKRLM) to undertake a comprehensive review of its performance under the UMEED (National Rural Livelihood Mission – NRLM) framework and to chart out a roadmap for strengthening rural livelihoods and women-led development across the UT.

The meeting was attended by Secretary, Rural Development Department (RDD); Managing Director, JKRLM; Director General (Resources); Director General (Budget); Chief Operating Officer, HIMAYAT; Convenor, UTLBC, and other senior officers of the department.

During the deliberations, the Chief Secretary underscored

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Census 2027: House Listing to Begin Across India from Apr 1

- HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JAN 08: The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has announced the schedule for house listing operations for Census 2027, which will be conducted across all states and Union Territories from April 1 to September 30, 2026.

According to news agency KNS, a notification issued by the Office of the Registrar General of India states that the house listing exercise will be carried out over a period of 30 days. Each state and Union Territory will be assigned a specific time frame

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LG To Preside Over Main Republic Day 2026 Function at MA Stadium, Jammu

Beating Retreat scheduled for January 29

- HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JAN 8: Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Manoj Sinha, will preside over the main function of the Republic Day celebrations, 2026, to be held at Maulana Azad Stadium, Jammu, where he will also take the salute.

As part of the official observance of the national event, all officers and officials of the Government and Public

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JK e-Pathshala Marks a New Beginning in Technology-Driven Education: CM Omar Abdullah

Dedicated DTH Education Channel Launched to Bridge Learning Gaps in Remote Areas

- HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JAN 08: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday launched JK e-Pathshala, a dedicated Direct-to-Home educational television channel (Channel 53), describing it as a major digital initiative aimed at strengthening school education and improving learning outcomes across Jammu and Kashmir, especially in



far-flung and remote areas.

The launch ceremony, held at the Convention Centre here, was attended by Minister for Education Sakina Itoo, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo (via video conferencing), Commissioner Secretary School Education Ram Niwas Sharma, Project Director Samagra Shiksha Bawani

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Governance Must Move From Rulebooks to Real Roles: Dr Jitendra Singh

- Launches AI-Enabled Learning Initiative 'Karmayogi AI Classroom' on iGOT
- Stressing Continuous, Role-Based Capacity Building For Future-Ready Governance
- HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES



Dr. Singh said the capacity-building framework under Mission Karmayogi is rooted in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of preparing government officials for dynamically changing responsibilities rather than limiting them to procedural compliance. He emphasised that traditional systems focused largely on qualifying officers for service, but often

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Operation Sindoos Stresses Nation-Building Role: IAF Chief

- HT NEWS NETWORK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, JAN 8: Chief of the Indian Air Force, Air Chief Marshal AP Singh, on Thursday praised NCC cadets for their contributions during Operation Sindoos, and said the military action reinforced the message that life is not just about earning money or personal pursuits, but also doing something for the country.

Addressing cadets at the ongoing National Cadet Corps (NCC) Republic Day Camp at Delhi Cantonment, the IAF chief urged them to continue giving their best for the country, irrespective of whether they join

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Zero Tolerance.....

heads of Central Armed Police Forces, and other senior officials.

Addressing the gathering, Shah said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Government of India is following a policy of zero tolerance against terrorism. He noted that sustained and coordinated efforts by security and intelligence agencies have severely crippled the terror ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Home Minister appreciated the role of security forces in strengthening the overall security environment and stressed that counter-terror operations aimed at dismantling terrorist infrastructure and choking terror financing must continue in a mission mode.

Shah directed all security agencies to remain alert and work in close coordination to ensure that the gains achieved after the abrogation of Article 370 are sustained. Emphasising the goal of a terror-free Jammu and Kashmir, he assured that the Centre would extend all necessary resources and support to security agencies to achieve this objective at the earliest.

Indian AI.....

innovation, reflecting the ethos of "Made in India, Made for the World." He described startups and AI entrepreneurs as the co-architects of India's future, highlighting the country's capacity for innovation as well as large-scale implementation.

Highlighting the transformative potential of artificial intelligence, the Prime Minister said the upcoming India AI Impact Summit would position India as a key global player in the technology sector. He added that the government is actively leveraging AI to drive societal transformation across sectors.

The roundtable was attended by 12 Indian AI startups selected for the 'AI for All: Global Impact Challenge', who showcased their work across diverse domains including Indian language foundation models, multilingual large language models, speech and generative AI, healthcare diagnostics, engineering simulations, material research and advanced data analytics.

Startup leaders welcomed India's strong policy push for artificial intelligence, noting the rapid growth and vast potential of the sector. They observed that the centre of gravity of AI innovation and deployment is increasingly shifting towards India, supported by a robust and enabling ecosystem.

The meeting was attended by representatives from Avataar, BharatGen, Fractal, Gan, Genloop, Gnani, Intellihealth, Sarvam, Shodh AI, Soket AI, Tech Mahindra and Zenteq. Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw and Minister of State Jitin Prasada were also present.

Kashmir Freeze.....

The tourist resort of Sonamarg in central Kashmir's Ganderbal district was the coldest recorded place in Jammu and Kashmir as it shivered at a low of minus 9.8 degrees Celsius, they said.

The night temperature in Gulmarg in north Kashmir's Baramulla district settled at a low of minus 9.2 degrees Celsius, down from minus 7.6 degrees Celsius, they said.

It was the lowest night temperature at the resort so far this winter, they added.

In south Kashmir's tourist resort of Pahalgam, the minimum settled at a low of minus 8.6 degrees Celsius, down from minus 7.2 degrees Celsius the previous night, the officials said, adding, the Wednesday night was the season's coldest in the resort.

The minimum in Qazigund, the gateway town of the valley, went down by over five degrees to record a minimum of minus 5.4 degrees Celsius, the season's coldest, the officials said.

Kokernag recorded a low of minus 3 degrees Celsius and Kupwara minus 5.1 degrees Celsius, they added.

Kashmir valley is currently in the midst of 'Chilla-i-Kalan', a 40-day period of extreme cold, during which night temperatures often drop several degrees below the freezing point and chances of snowfall are the highest.

'Chilla-i-Kalan', which began on December 21 last year, ends on January 30.

The plains of the valley have not received any snowfall so far this season.

The India Meteorological Department has said the weather is likely to remain dry but cloudy till January 20.

It said the night temperatures would witness a significant fall in the valley till January 10. (Agencies)

LG To Preside.....

Sector Undertakings stationed in Jammu have been directed to attend the function in the discharge of their official duties. The government has further instructed all Heads of Departments and Chief Executives of Public Sector Undertakings to ensure their personal presence, along with that of employees working under them, to mark the occasion with due solemnity and collective participation.

Meanwhile, the Beating Retreat Ceremony, marking the formal conclusion of the Republic Day celebrations, will be held on January 29,

2026, at 4:30 p.m. at Maulana Azad Stadium, Jammu. All officers and officials of government departments posted in Jammu have been directed to attend the ceremony, while Heads of Departments and Chief Executives of PSUs have been asked to ensure participation of their subordinate staff as well.

JK e-Pathshala.....

Rakwal, Director School Education Javid Naseem Choudhary, Special Director General BISAG-N Vinay Thakur, along with teachers, students and senior officials.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister also inaugurated two newly established digital studios, declared 14 districts of Jammu and Kashmir as fully literate, and dedicated 1,010 works completed under the Samagra Shiksha scheme during 2025-26 to the people, aimed at augmenting school infrastructure.

Addressing the gathering, Omar Abdullah said JK e-Pathshala represents a significant step forward in the use of technology for education, while underscoring that digital platforms are meant to support not replace classroom teaching and teachers.

"A teacher and a classroom can never be replaced. Technology is only a tool to fill gaps and support learning," the Chief Minister said, emphasising that the personal bond between teachers and students remains central to education.

Reflecting on the evolution of teaching methods, he recalled how even overhead projectors were once considered revolutionary. "Today, we are witnessing a real technological transformation in education," he remarked, congratulating the School Education Department for the initiative.

Sharing a personal anecdote, the Chief Minister highlighted the role of dedicated teachers in shaping students' futures, saying good teachers help even the weakest students overcome their limitations something no technology can match.

He stressed the need for continuous upskilling of teachers and regular updating of content on JK e-Pathshala, calling for sustained feedback from students and educators to keep the channel effective and relevant.

Highlighting the region's geographical and climatic challenges, Omar Abdullah said the channel would be particularly beneficial for students in isolated areas, enabling them to continue learning beyond school hours from their homes.

He also advised responsible use of digital screens, encouraging students to focus on educational content while discouraging excessive gaming and non-productive activities. Emphasising reading habits, he urged parents and teachers to cultivate a culture of reading books, newspapers and magazines among children.

Expressing optimism about the future, the Chief Minister said JK e-Pathshala could evolve into a broader digital education ecosystem, with the possibility of introducing class-wise dedicated channels in the coming years.

Earlier, Education Minister Sakina Ito, Advisor Nasir Aslam Wani and Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo described the launch of JK e-Pathshala as a historic and transformative step towards strengthening the education sector in Jammu and Kashmir.

Governance.....

failed to equip them for the diverse and complex roles they assume during their careers.

Highlighting the transformation brought by the iGOT Karmayogi platform, the Minister said it represents a clear transition from "rule to role", enabling officers to work with greater clarity, accountability and outcome orientation. He noted that Mission Karmayogi, which initially focused on civil servants, has now expanded across ministries, departments and levels, including newly recruited officials through Mission Karmayogi Prarambh, offered alongside appointment letters at Rozgar Melas.

Referring to the growing use of artificial intelligence in governance training, Dr. Singh said AI-driven tools such as AI Saarthi, AI Tutor and AI-based Capacity Building Plans are enabling personalised learning pathways and faster, more effective planning across government institutions. He stressed that artificial intelligence must act as an enabler and not a replacement, advocating a hybrid model where AI complements human judgement and experience.

The Minister underscored that governance can no longer operate in silos and must continuously adapt to technological advancements and rising citizen expectations. "Artificial intelligence is a powerful means, but it is not an end in itself. Human responsibility and ethical judgement must always guide its use," he said.

The event was attended by senior officials including Secretary, Department of Personnel and Training, Smt. Rachna Shah; Chairperson, Capacity Building Commission, Smt. Radha Chauhan; and Chairperson, Karmayogi Bharat, Shri Subramanian Ramadorai, along with representatives from academia, industry and training institutions.

Setting the context, CEO Karmayogi Bharat, Smt. Chhavi Bhardwaj, said the iGOT platform has emerged as the backbone of public sector capacity building, with over 1.5

crore learners and 6.7 crore course completions. Smt. Rachna Shah highlighted the role of AI in strengthening transparent, responsive and citizen-centric governance, while emphasising ethical safeguards and inclusive access.

The newly launched Karmayogi AI Classroom aims to deliver contextual, interactive and personalised learning experiences for civil servants. The programme also featured live demonstrations by AI ecosystem partners, showcasing indigenous AI solutions tailored for public administration.

Concluding his address, Dr. Jitendra Singh said that lifelong learning is no longer optional in governance and that a blend of artificial and human intelligence will be key to building a future-ready, responsive and effective public administration.

Operation Sindooring.....

the armed forces later or pursue other professions.

He also exhorted them not to be deterred by failures but to emerge stronger from any setback, citing his own journey to the top post.

Singh said he too faced failures in his life and career, but he rose to become an IAF chief, which he described as something "that was destined".

"So, whether you are a soldier or a military leader in uniform, or a regular citizen, give your best and contribute to nation-building," he said.

The IAF chief told the NCC cadets that the role played by them in civil defence activities during Operation Sindooring motivated many people.

"Operation Sindooring has brought a lot of awareness. It is not just about earning money or doing things only for oneself in life, it is equally important to do something for the country," he asserted.

Operation Sindooring was carried out by the Indian armed forces in the early hours of May 7, 2025, targeting terror hideouts in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) in response to the Pahalgam terror attack that claimed 26 civilian lives last April.

A large number of NCC cadets assisted in emergency drills, blood donation camps and other civil defence activities during the operation, officials said.

A total of 2,406 NCC cadets, including 898 girls, from across the country are participating in the nearly month-long camp, which was inaugurated on Monday by Vice President C P Radhakrishnan.

It will culminate with the NCC PM Rally on January 28.

Before his address, the IAF chief attended several cultural performances.

In one of the dance acts, a group of cadets visually depicted Operation Sindooring, portraying air strikes and air defence measures.

The performance included a poster carrying the logo of Operation Sindooring, while also honouring the vision of a Viksit Bharat. (Agencies)

Third Landslide.....

to pass, while all routine traffic was stopped to avoid any untoward incident, they said.

An official stated that road clearance operations were launched soon after the incident, with personnel and machinery mobilised to remove debris and stabilise the affected area. "The highway is expected to be made motorable again from the evening hours, subject to completion of the clearance work and assessment of slope safety," he said.

The closure of the main Baramulla-Uri National Highway compelled authorities to divert vehicles through the dilapidated Khadnayyar-Gantamulla road, causing immense hardship to commuters.

Locals and passengers, however, complained that the alternate route is in poor condition, with potholes and narrow stretches, making travel risky and time-consuming, especially for passenger vehicles and load carriers.

The fresh landslide marks the third such incident in just 20 days on the Baramulla-Uri National Highway, following two earlier slides that also triggered full traffic halts and diversions through alternate routes, with officials attributing both to ongoing construction activity and hill-cutting—(KNO)

CS calls for.....

the critical importance of enhancing credit linkages and strengthening the capacity of Self Help Groups (SHGs) so that they are able to transform into sustainable rural enterprises, reiterating that enterprise development remains the core objective behind the formation of SHGs.

He stressed the need for making Community Managed Training Centres (CMTCs) functional in every district, ensuring delivery of high-quality training to SHG members through resource persons from OMPLIS. He emphasised that these centres should emerge as vibrant learning spaces where women feel encouraged to spend time acquiring new skills and upgrading existing ones.

Highlighting the role of financial inclusion at the grassroots level, the Chief Secretary directed that the income of Banking Correspondents (BCs) be enhanced substantially. He called for onboarding Common Service

Centres (CSCs) and J&K Bank to increase transaction volumes, thereby improving the earnings and sustainability of BCs.

The Chief Secretary also directed the department to fully leverage the Lal Ded Street Shakti Scheme and Mission YUVA, urging that women entrepreneurs be encouraged to move beyond the 'Lakhpatti' benchmark. He set an ambitious target of doubling the number of 'Millionaire Didis' from the existing 50 to 100 within the next six months.

Earlier, Secretary RDD, Ajaz Asad, informed that the UMEED programme is currently being implemented across 285 blocks in all 20 districts of Jammu & Kashmir, covering almost the entire rural geography of the UT. He stated that 7,84,053 rural households have been mobilised into 96,000 Self Help Groups, which have further been federated into 7,453 Village Organisations (VOs) and 650 Cluster Level Federations (CLFs).

He added that to strengthen community institutions, capitalisation support of ₹528.86 Cr has been provided to community-based organisations. Further, since 2013-14, ₹2,912.66 Cr in bank credit has been accessed by 67,269 SHGs, significantly deepening financial inclusion and livelihood opportunities in rural areas.

Presenting the achievements of JKRLM, Managing Director, JKRLM, Subhra Sharma, informed that under the Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP), 8,231 rural enterprises have been supported in 14 blocks, with ₹18.71 Cr disbursed as Community Investment Fund (CIF).

She further apprised that farm-based livelihoods interventions have been implemented across all blocks, benefiting 5,15,706 Mahila Kisanas through adoption of agro-ecological practices and improved livestock management.

During the current financial year, under CIF, against a physical target of 2,990 SHGs, an achievement of 3,459 SHGs has been recorded, with financial assistance of ₹2,249 Cr disbursed. Under the Revolving Fund (RF), 1,688 SHGs were supported against a target of 3,026, with ₹2.53 Cr released.

Cumulatively, 78,508 SHGs have received Revolving Fund support amounting to ₹117 Cr, while 65,000 SHGs have been provided CIF support totalling ₹402.83 Cr, as reflected on the official portal.

Under the Lal Ded Street Shakti Scheme, against a target of 5,000 cases for FY 2025-26, 2,356 cases involving ₹25.59 Cr have been sponsored so far. Of these, 709 cases have already been sanctioned with financial approval of ₹8.50 Cr, providing focused entrepreneurial support to women.

Regarding doorstep banking services, the meeting was informed that 710 SHG members are currently engaged as Banking Correspondents, of which 553 are associated with J&K Bank, significantly strengthening rural banking outreach.

The Lakhpatti Didi Mission has shown remarkable progress. Against a target of

2.33 lakh potential Lakhpatti Didis, 2.60 lakh women have been identified, and 2.01 lakh women have already been transformed into Lakhpatti Didis through a combination of skill development, financial assistance and market linkages.

Highlighting other key interventions, it was informed that 17,511 SHG members have received skill training through ITIs, NJT, ICICI Foundation, Honda Foundation and the Central University of Jammu. In addition, 7 SARAS Melas and 4 exhibitions have been organised across districts to promote SHG products.

It was further informed that 90 SHG products have been onboarded on major e-commerce platforms including Amazon, Flipkart and Meesho. To strengthen market access, 9 District Haats and 8 UMEED Women Haats have been developed, while retail outlets have also been established at airports to showcase and sell SHG products.

In the financial inclusion domain, 337 Bank Mitras and 710 Banking Correspondents have been engaged from among SHG members. Further, 1.79 lakh members have been enrolled under PMJJBY and PMSBY insurance schemes, 476 PLD cases have been disbursed under the Lal Ded Scheme, and 1,56,843 members have been converged with Agriculture, Horticulture and allied departments.

Outlining the roadmap ahead, it was stated that JKRLM will focus on enterprise scaling and diversification, cluster-based growth, capacity building in high-end handicrafts and food processing, financial literacy across all 285 blocks, and strengthening start-up ecosystems through SVEP and MKSP.

The Mission also plans exposure visits to best livelihood models in states such as Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Kerala and Telangana, besides establishing mini common facility centres and processing units in 176 clusters across different districts of J&K.

Census 2027.....

within the notified window to complete the process.

The notification said that the exercise will be conducted under the provisions of the Census Act, 1948, and the Census Rules, 1990. It will replace the earlier notification issued on January 7, 2020, except for actions already taken under the previous order.

In a key step, the central government has introduced a self-enumeration option for the upcoming census. The self-enumeration facility will be available for 15 days immediately before the start of door-to-door house listing operations.

The house listing phase is a vital part of the census process. It aims to collect information on residential buildings, households and basic amenities, which will serve as the foundation for the subsequent population enumeration.

The announcement marks an important step in preparations for Census 2027, ensuring systematic data collection across the country. (KNS)



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KU's Persian Department designated as Gyan Bharatam Cluster Centre for manuscript preservation

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JAN 08: The Department of Persian, University of Kashmir (KU), has been designated as a Gyan Bharatam Cluster Centre for UT of Jammu & Kashmir by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, for a period of five years, in recognition of the Department's sustained academic performance and expertise in manuscript studies.

The Department will undertake large-scale projects related to the identification, cataloguing, preservation, conservation, digitisation, and research of manuscripts across Jammu and Kashmir.

The initiative will cover valuable manuscripts housed in government, semi-government, public and private repositories, as well as temples, khanaqas, gurdwaras, trusts, and personal collections.

In her message, Vice-Chancellor



Prof. Nilofer Khan, welcomed the recognition and said, "The designation of the Department of Persian as a Gyan Bharatam Cluster Centre reflects the University's long-standing commitment to safeguarding the nation's manuscript heritage. This initiative will help preserve

invaluable intellectual traditions for future generations through systematic and scientific methods."

She added that the project would strengthen varsity's role as a key contributor to national cultural and research priorities.

Jammu & Kashmir is home to nearly 70,000–90,000 manuscripts, many of which suffered extensive damage during the 2014 floods, resulting in the loss of a significant portion of the region's documentary heritage.

The project will be implemented in line with the guidelines of the Gyan Bharatam pro-

gramme, Ministry of Culture, New Delhi, and will include the establishment of sub-centres in Jammu and other parts of the Valley to ensure wider outreach and access.

The Department of Persian KU already hosts a Manuscripts Resource Centre (MRC) under the National Mission for Manuscripts and has successfully completed several major projects supported by UGC, ICHR, ICSSR, and the Ministry of Culture.

The initiative is expected to play a key role in restoring, documenting, and researching rare manuscripts and Indian literary heritage in Jammu and Kashmir over the next five years.

The initiative will be implemented under a Memorandum of Understanding signed earlier between Gyan Bharatam, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, and the Department of Persian, University of Kashmir, for a period of five years.

PVR INOX reaches Ladakh with India's highest cinema site

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JAN 8: PVR INOX Limited, India's largest cinema exhibition company, announces the launch of Leh's first multiplex. Set in Solar Colony, Saboo, along the Leh-Manali Bypass Road in the Himalayas, this two-screen cinema stands at 11,500 feet above sea level, making it India's highest multiplex and bringing quality film viewing to one of the most striking regions in the country.

An spokesperson of the company said that this landmark property also marks another successful chapter in PVR INOX's Franchise Owned Company Operated (FOCO) model. For Ladakh, known for its silence, spirituality, and sweeping mountain views, the launch marks a significant cultural step. Cinema has long been a cherished outlet in the region, yet access to modern theatres remained limited.

With this opening, PVR INOX brings high-quality cinema closer to local communities and travellers alike, offering advanced technology in a warm, comfortable setting. The people of Ladakh can now experience the same world-class entertainment enjoyed across the country.

The backdrop, paired with steady PVR INOX standards, sets the tone for an engaging outing. Both auditoriums feature 2K projection for clear visuals. Dolby 7.1 While Surround Sound lets viewers feel each moment and Next-Gen 3D supports big releases with sharp detail. At Leh's extraordinary altitude, where thin air weakens sound, PVR INOX transformed this challenge into an innovative advantage. Working with Pulz and precision-engineered German components, PVR INOX delivers a custom audio system offering rich, engaging sound on par with the finest cinemas worldwide.

As another major highlight, the multiplex also introduces Leh's first-ever food court, created in partnership with Devyani International Limited. Bringing multi-brand global outlets to the highest altitude in the world, the space offers a modern dining experience with stunning mountain views and comfortable interiors, featuring KFC, Pizza Hut, Costa Coffee, Vaango, and more.

Built as a standalone property on the peaceful edge of Leh town, the cinema is surrounded by quiet homes and open views. What makes it special is the ease it offers. It is more than a place to watch films.

Ajay Bijli, Managing Director, PVR INOX Limited, said, "Launching a multiplex in Leh is a truly proud moment for us. Few places in the world offer a setting as extraordinary as Ladakh, and bringing world-class cinema to 11,500 feet reflects our commitment to reaching audiences everywhere. This destination blends the magic of movies with the majesty of the mountains, making it a remarkable addition to the PVR INOX journey."

Pramod Arora, CEO-Growth & Investment, PVR INOX Limited, said, "Leh represents the kind of thoughtful expansion we believe in. This cinema has been planned with care for local conditions, regional sensibilities, and long-term sustainability. Our aim is to create spaces that locals feel connected to, while also welcoming travellers who want to experience cinema in a new setting."

Tsewang Nurboo, Owner, LHR Plaza said, "This project was planned with respect for Ladakh's pace of life and its people. Bringing a multiplex to Leh was about more than adding a building; it was about creating a space where families, young audiences, and visitors can come together. Partnering with PVR INOX helped us deliver a cinema that meets national standards while fitting naturally into the region."

With this launch, PVR INOX redefines cinema across diverse landscapes—from major cities to remote valleys, and now to one of the highest-inhabited regions in the world. It marks a new era for Ladakh, one that fuels creativity, boosts tourism, generates opportunities, and shapes a modern entertainment ecosystem for the future.

Awareness-cum-Training Programme on Scientific Sheep & Goat Rearing Held at Handwara

■ DR. AB QAYOOM

HANDWARA, JAN 08: The Mountain Research Centre for Sheep & Goat, in collaboration with Kissan Khidmat Ghar Karimah, organized an awareness-cum-training programme at the Livestock Development Office, Handwara, aimed at enhancing farmers' knowledge of scientific livestock management and promoting sustainable sheep and goat rearing practices in the region. The programme was managed by Dr. Parvaiz Ahmad Rather, Krish Udyami, Kissan Khidmat Ghar Karimah. Dr. Rouf Ahmad Shah, Director, Sheep Husbandry Department, attended the event as the Chief Guest. He was accompanied by the District Sheep Husbandry Officer (DSHO) Handwara and a team of veterinary doctors. The technical sessions were conducted by Dr. Parvaiz Ahmad Reshi and his team of scientists from SKUAST-Kashmir, who provided valuable insights into modern breeding techniques, balanced nutrition, and effective disease prevention measures.



Alive interactive session was also held, during which participating farmers raised various field-level issues and grievances. Dr. Shah patiently addressed the concerns and assured farmers of continuous departmental support and close coordination to strengthen the sheep and goat sector in Kupwara and adjoining districts. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks to all participants for their active involvement and a resolve to organize more such farmer-centric initiatives in the future.

Kupwara Tightens Noose on Illegal Mining, Langate Leads Action

860 Seizures, ₹1.25 Cr Penalty: Record FIRs and Seizures Mark Anti-Mining Drive in Kupwara

■ DR. AB QAYOOM

KUPWARA, JAN 08: The year 2025 proved to be a difficult period for illegal mining activities in Kupwara district, particularly in the Langate area, due to strict and continuous action by the Geology & Mining Department with strong support from Handwara and Kupwara Police. According to official figures of the Geology & Mining Department Kupwara for the financial year 2024–25 (up to December 2024), the department collected ₹1.39 crore as royalty, imposed penalties worth ₹66 lakh, and made 364 seizures. In comparison, during the following year up to December 2025, enforcement action intensified further. The department collected ₹1.77 crore as royalty, imposed penalties worth ₹1.25 crore in penalties, carried out 860 seizures, and registered 57 FIRs. These figures clearly show that the crackdown on illegal mining continued in a strong and sustained manner. The Langate area remained the main focus of enforcement. As per Police Post Langate, teams working under the directions of SSP Handwara and under the supervision of Chowki Officer Rayees Ahmad conducted



regular operations throughout the year. The police recovered over ₹1 lakh as fines, seized 135 vehicles and machines involved in illegal mining, and registered 15 FIRs, the highest within sub-district Handwara.

Police officials said that 2025 was significant as no tragic incident related to illegal mining was reported in and around Nallah Mawar. They ensured that no JCBs or heavy machinery were allowed to

operate illegally in the water body. Civil society members, social activists, senior citizens, and students have welcomed the firm action by the administration. They recalled that in earlier years, illegal mining

Ahead of Republic Day, Security Tightened Along Jammu-Srinagar NH-44 in Qazigund area

■ FAROOQ RATHER

KULGAM, JAN 8: In the run-up to Republic Day celebrations, Kulgam Police on Thursday intensified security measures along the Jammu–Srinagar National Highway (NH-44), particularly in the Qazigund area of south Kashmir's Kulgam district, to ensure public safety and maintain law and order.

As part of the heightened security arrangements, police carried out extensive checking and frisking operations at multiple points along the highway. The drive was led by the Station House Officer (SHO) Qazigund, Syed Nazir Indrabi, under the supervision of the Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Highway Mumtaz Ali Bhatti (JKPS) and the Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Qazigund, Mansoor



Ahmad in compliance with the directions of Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Kulgam, Anayat Ali Choudhary (IPS).

An official said that the intensified checking aims to prevent any untoward incident and to ensure a peaceful atmosphere ahead of the national celebrations. "A close vigil is being maintained on the overall security situation in the district. Senior police officers are personally monitoring developments to ensure a safe and secure environment for Republic Day celebrations," the official added.

Police have appealed to the public to cooperate with security personnel during checking procedures and report any suspicious activity, reiterating that these measures are purely precautionary and in the interest of public safety.

caused serious damage to agricultural land, bridges, and even led to loss of human lives. Improved monitoring and police control, they said, has helped protect Nallah Mawar, an important source of drinking water in the region. Environmental experts also expressed concern, warning that illegal mining near bridges, roads, forests, and water bodies poses a serious threat to the environment. They cautioned that unchecked mining could damage Nallah Mawar and worsen climate related challenges. District Mining Officer Kupwara, Mumtaz Hussain appreciated the cooperation of Handwara and Kupwara Police, stating that the results were achieved through collective efforts. He clarified that the department's main objective was not revenue generation but the protection of natural resources. Preventing loss of human life due to illegal mining in 2025, he said, was a major achievement. The district administration has urged the public to cooperate with authorities and spread awareness about the harmful effects of illegal mining, warning that strict legal action will continue against violators.

JKTPO Spotlights Jammu & Kashmir's Culinary Brilliance in Food & Agriculture at 9th edition of Indus Food 2026

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

NOIDA, JANUARY 08: The Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation (JKTPO), under the aegis of the Department of Industries and Commerce, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, is proudly showcasing the region's diverse Food, Agriculture and Horticulture products at the prestigious 9th Edition of Indus Food 2026, Asia's largest export-focused food and beverage (F&B) exhibition, being held from 08-10 January 2026 at the India Expo Centre & Mart, Greater Noida under Raising and Accelerating MSME Programme (RAMP) intervention of Ministry of MSME.

The event, organised by the Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI), aims to further consolidate India's position as a trusted and competitive partner in global food supply chains by bringing together leading Indian food producers, international buyers, policymakers, industry leaders and global institutions on a single platform to facilitate trade collaborations, bilateral engagements and long-term partnerships.

The mega event was inaugurated by Union Minister of Food Processing Industries, Chirag Paswan, reflecting the



Government's strong commitment towards strengthening India's food processing ecosystem, enhancing export competitiveness and expanding global market access for Indian food products.

The Jammu & Kashmir Pavilion, located at Hall No. 8A, provides a vibrant platform for MSMEs, FPOs and women entrepreneurs to showcase their premium offerings. The Pavilion highlights Jammu

and Kashmir's world-renowned Geographical Indication (GI)-tagged products such as Saffron, Garlic, Rajmah, Basmati Rice, Sulai (Acacia) and multifloral honey, along with organic honey, essential oils, herbs, grounded spices, pulses, dry fruits, dehydrated fruits and vegetables — reflecting the region's authenticity, quality and excellence.

The exhibition is expected to witness participation from over

120 countries, including thousands of verified global buyers and several high-level international trade delegations.

The platform not only provided exposure and experience but also facilitated substantial business opportunities for entrepreneurs from Jammu & Kashmir.

The region's exceptional products and culinary traditions stood out, contributing to the

success of Indus Food 2026 as a significant avenue for promoting India's diverse food industry on the global stage.

Speaking on the occasion, the Managing Director, JKTPO, Sh. Sudershan Kumar stated: "The Jammu & Kashmir Pavilion at Indus Food 2026 reflects our region's growing strength in agri-based value chains, quality production and export readiness. Our entrepreneurs are receiving encouraging responses from global buyers, opening new avenues for market access and long-term partnerships."

JKTPO remains committed to enabling MSMEs, FPOs and women entrepreneurs to integrate with global markets and build a strong brand identity for J&K products worldwide."

The event served as a testament to the region's commitment to promoting its unique offerings and fostering meaningful connections within the global food and beverage community.

Visitors, buyers and trade delegates are warmly invited to visit the Jammu & Kashmir Pavilion at Hall No. 8A and explore the best of J&K's vibrant agro sector and experience the richness of the region's premium food, agriculture and horticulture products.

ADPC, ACP Bandipora review VB-GRAMG Works in Block Bonkoot

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BANDIPORA, JANUARY 8: Additional District Programme Coordinator (ADPC), MGNREGA and Assistant Commissioner Panchayats (ACP) Bandipora conducted an extensive field visit to Block Bonkoot to review proposed and ongoing developmental works being executed under the VB GRAM G initiative.

During the visit, the officers inspected several works currently under execution and assessed the feasibility of upcoming projects sanctioned under VB-GRAMG, aimed at strengthening rural infrastructure and improving public amenities.

Interactions were held with field functionaries, local residents, and job card holders engaged at the worksites, while the physical progress of works was reviewed on the ground.



Income Tax Department holds Tax Awareness Program at Bandipora

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BANDIPORA, JANUARY 08: The Income Tax Department, Circle Srinagar, organised a Tax Awareness Program at the Conference Hall, Mini Secretariat, Bandipora, to promote voluntary tax compliance, grievance redressal and awareness about recent changes in income tax laws.

Joint Commissioner of Income Tax (OSD), Srinagar, Shakeel Ahmad Ganai, termed the initiative a first-of-its-kind outreach in the district and said it aimed at amicable settlement of grievances and better understanding of income tax provisions.



On the occasion, Income Tax Officer (ITO) made a detailed presentation, giving general awareness about the functioning of the Income Tax Department, available taxpayer services and the importance of timely and correct compliance.

While addressing the gathering, the Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, emphasised timely response to income tax notices and highlighted that tax compliance is essential for development and growth. She noted that the people of the district are cooperative and stressed expanding such programmes to include all associations in future.

The program witnessed participation from representatives of trade bodies, business associations, mining community and other stakeholders, marking an important step towards strengthening tax awareness and cooperative compliance in the district.

JKTPO organizes Export Awareness-cum E-Commerce Onboarding workshop in Ganderbal

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

GANDERBAL, JANUARY 08: Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation (JKTPO) organized an Export Awareness cum E-Commerce Onboarding workshop in collaboration with the District Administration Ganderbal, ODOP Team, DPLI, GeM, ONDC and Flipkart.

The objective of the workshop was to empower local MSMEs, artisans, SHGs and entrepreneurs by providing them with vital knowledge about export schemes and benefits of digital commerce.

The event was attended by General Manager District Industries Centre Ganderbal, Dr. Mantasha binti Rashid, Functional Manager, District Industries Centre Ganderbal, Bushra Ashraf Shah, Assistant Director Fisheries, AHTO Handicrafts Ganderbal, and other officers from the concerned departments.

At the outset of the programme, JKTPO representative emphasized

the pivotal role of JKTPO in organizing the district-level workshop aimed at promoting ODOP sellers and their facilitation on e-commerce platform.

It was informed that Ganderbal district, renowned worldwide for its Willow Work, has been identified under the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative by the District Administration Ganderbal and the Handloom & Handicrafts Department.

The event aimed to connect local producers and artisans with national and international markets through digital platforms and to get well acquainted with the different schemes of the Centre and State Governments. The Senior Consultant from GeM, briefly explained about working of GeM Portal, documents required for the registration and benefits which could be leveraged by the Sellers after getting themselves onboarded on the portal.

Representatives from ONDC and Flipkart joined the session virtually

and elaborated their role for providing marketing facilities digitally to the exporters/entrepreneurs including market research and buyer information.

Further, more than 110 Artisans, Exporters and FPOs of district Ganderbal attended the workshop, witnessed enthusiastic participation and actively engaged in discussions and showed a keen interest for onboarding their products on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) platform, ONDC and Flipkart.

The initiative is part of JKTPO's ongoing efforts to promote exports from all districts of Jammu & Kashmir under the District as Export Hub Scheme and ODOP initiative. Expert-led sessions covered a wide range of topics including the benefits of exports, branding local products for international markets, export financing options and credit risk insurance schemes to safeguard exporters.

The visiting officers also inspected the under-construction Panchayat Ghar at Panner, where they evaluated the pace and quality of ongoing construction. Emphasis was laid on the timely completion of all sanctioned works in strict adherence to prescribed technical specifications and quality standards.

On the occasion, the officers underscored the importance of transparency, community participation, and strict compliance with the guidelines governing the implementation of developmental schemes. Necessary directions were issued to address existing bottlenecks and ensure the effective and optimal utilization of public resources.

The visit reflects the district administration's continued commitment to strengthening rural infrastructure and promoting sustainable and inclusive development across Block Bonkoot under the VB-GRAMG initiative.

DLSA Srinagar organizes awareness program under DAWN

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 08: On the eve of the upcoming National Youth Day, scheduled to be observed on 12 January 2026, the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Srinagar organized an awareness programme under the DAWN (Drug Awareness and Wellness Navigation, For a Drug-Free India) Scheme.

The programme is part of a week-long initiative aimed at promoting youth-centric outreach and community awareness in accordance with the directions of the National Legal Services Authority. During the drive, Para



Legal Volunteers of DLSA Srinagar, actively engaged with the general public to spread awareness about

the ill effects of drug abuse and the importance of leading a healthy and responsible life. Through

sustained interaction and sensitization efforts, the Para Legal Volunteers highlighted preventive

measures, legal safeguards, and the support systems available for individuals affected by substance abuse.

District Legal Services Authority, Srinagar informed that the awareness activities under the DAWN Scheme will continue up to 12 January 2026, culminating on National Youth Day.

The ongoing programme seeks to reinforce the message of youth empowerment, resilience, and informed decision-making, while reaffirming the commitment of DLSA Srinagar towards building a drug-free and socially aware community.

SWD Srinagar organizes "Father-Daughter Selfie" initiative under BBBP at UPHC Batamaloo

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 08: Social Welfare Department (SWD), SANKALP- Hub for Empowerment of Women-Mission Shakti Srinagar, today conducted 'Father-Daughter Selfie' initiative under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) campaign at UPHC Batamaloo.

The 'Father-Daughter Selfie' Initiative, implemented under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme, aims to foster gender equality by encouraging families to publicly celebrate and value their daughters. The initiative seeks to generate awareness about the importance of educating and empowering the girl child, while also strengthening the emotional bond between fathers and daughters. It also highlights the effective use of digital platforms as tools for social change and positive messaging.



As part of the programme, hygiene kits were distributed among girl children to promote personal hygiene and help prevent the spread of infectious diseases. The initiative emphasized the importance of adopting good hygiene practices from an early age to support better health, improved immunity and overall well-being of children.

SMC Commissioner inspects Municipal Assets to strengthen Financial Sustainability

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 8: In a bid to reinforce financial sustainability and enhance the delivery of civic services, the Commissioner, Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), Faz Lul Haseeb, on Thursday conducted an on-ground inspection of municipal assets, with a focus on strengthening the Corporation's revenue framework.

The Commissioner was accompanied by the Joint Commissioner, Chief Revenue Officer, and other senior officials of SMC.

The inspection included

Khatoon Complex at Parimpura.

During the visit, the Commissioner assessed the structural condition, functional status, and existing utilisation of the assets as part of the ongoing municipal asset documentation and revenue optimisation exercise. He also reviewed the scope for their systematic, transparent, and regulation-compliant utilisation through well-defined monetisation strategies.

Emphasising that a robust financial base is vital for effective urban governance, the Commissioner observed that reliable municipal revenues are essential for sustaining



sanitation services, upgrading infrastructure, and ensuring uninterrupted civic amenities. He directed the concerned officers to complete an updated and

comprehensive inventory of municipal assets, identify assets with untapped potential, and initiate timely, lawful measures for revenue generation.

The Commissioner further underscored the importance of regular monitoring, planned maintenance of assets, protection of municipal assets from encroachment, and plugging revenue leakages. Senior officers briefed him on the progress of the asset mapping and revenue enhancement drive, aimed at augmenting SMC's fiscal capacity and strengthening citizen-centric municipal services across Srinagar.

DC Srinagar inaugurates Public Toilet complex at DC Office

Facility aims to enhance Public Sanitation, improve Civic Amenities

■ **HT NEWS DESK / DIPR**

SRINAGAR JANUARY 08: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, on Thursday inaugurated a newly constructed Public Toilet complex at the DC Office premises.

The facility has been developed by the District Administration Srinagar to enhance public sanitation and improve civic amenities within the Amar Niwas complex with a focus on cleanliness, hygiene and public welfare.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner said the public convenience facility has been constructed by R&B department under District Capex budget. He said the facility includes separate washrooms for males and females and will cater to both office employees and visiting citizens ensuring inclusivity and accessibility.

The Deputy Commissioner reiterated that the District



Administration Srinagar remains committed to upgrading infrastructure and amenities to enhance comfort, accessibility and service delivery for both staff and the public visiting the DC Office complex, in line with growing requirements.

On the occasion, visitors, stamp vendors and employees working in the offices housed in Amar Niwas Complex expressed their gratitude for developing the facility and making it functional in a short span of time.

Additional District Development Commissioner, Rifat Aftab Qureshi; Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiaz-ul-Aziz; Additional Deputy Commissioner, Aadil Fareed; Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar; SDM East, Zubair Ahmad; Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar; Executive Engineer R&B, Tehsildar South, citizens, stamp vendors and staff were present on the occasion.

DDC Kupwara chairs Block Diwas at HSS Lalpora, resolves multiple Public Issues on the spot

■ **HT NEWS DESK / DIPR**

KUPWARA, JANUARY 8: District Development Commissioner (DDC) Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, today chaired a Block Diwas programme at Government Higher Secondary School (HSS) Lalpora aimed at hearing and redressing public grievances at the grassroots level.

The event was attended by Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Lolab, Mudassir Ahmad; Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD), Chief Planning Officer (CPO), Chief Education Officer (CEO), Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Assistant Director, Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs; Executive Engineers of R&B, Jal Shakti and I&FC; Block Development Officer (BDO), Tehsildar, Block Medical Officer (BMO), Child Development Project Officer (CDPO), Zonal Education Officer (ZEO), besides other officers of the line departments and a large gathering of local inhabitants.

While addressing the participants, the DDC reiterated the Government's unwavering commitment to public welfare and inclusive development, particularly focusing on the upliftment of people residing in remote and far-flung areas.

He exhorted all officers to discharge their duties with utmost diligence, coordination, and dedication to ensure timely resolution of public grievances and effective implementation of developmental schemes.

Expressing satisfaction over the progress achieved under Mission YUVA, the DDC encouraged unemployed youth to actively participate in the mission by establishing self-employment ventures, thereby becoming job providers rather than job seekers. He informed the participants that SDM Lolab has been designated as the Nodal Officer to address grievances of Mission YUVA applicants within the subdivision.

During the proceedings, the DDC conducted a comprehensive review of various departments, including Power Development Department (PDD), Public Health Engineering (PHE), Roads & Buildings (R&B), Health, and Education, to assess their performance in Lalpora Tehsil.

Several issues raised by the public were resolved on the spot. The DDC accepted demand for borewell at Government Higher Secondary School Lalpora, fulfilling a long-



standing demand of the institution. Additionally, he directed the Tehsildar Lalpora to undertake demarcation of land for construction of a sanitary complex in Lalpora market to facilitate public convenience.

Taking serious note of the shortage of paramedical staff at PHC Lalpora, the DDC directed the Chief Medical Officer to take action for prompt redressal of the issue. He also emphasized the need for inter-departmental coordination to ensure seamless implementation of government programmes and efficient service delivery.

Earlier, prominent citizens and local representatives of Lalpora Tehsil apprised the DDC of various developmental issues such as augmentation of drinking water supply, desilting of irrigation khuls, and healthcare facility enhancement, road upgradation, etc.

On the occasion, the DDC distributed several benefits and entitlements among beneficiaries, including SVAMITVA Cards, Income Certificates, etc.

Stressing the importance of sanitation and waste management, the DDC directed the BDO Lalpora to identify a suitable dumping site for solid waste disposal to maintain cleanliness and hygiene in the area.

Later, the DDC undertook an extensive field inspection of Lalpora Tehsil, reviewing ongoing digitization of revenue records at ITI Lalpora and as well as issues related to ITI, High school, JJM and Poshan Abhiyan.

DC Shopian Reviews Digitisation of Jamabandies

■ **HT NEWS DESK / DIPR**

SHOPIAN, JANUARY 8: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta today presided over a district level review meeting to assess the progress of the ongoing digitisation of Jamabandies.

He underscored the imperative of accelerating the exercise while upholding transparency, accuracy and strict adherence to timelines. He directed Naib Tehsildars and Patwaris to collaborate closely and devote themselves exclusively to the digitisation work. Tehsildars were instructed to monitor the process vigilantly, ensure the smooth conduct of



revenue activities and demonstrate visible progress on the ground. The DC set a target of achieving 50% digitisation of Khasra records within one week. To maintain effective oversight, Tehsildars have been mandated to hold daily review meetings and submit comprehensive progress reports each day, reflecting the actual status of the work.

The Deputy Commissioner also called for the prompt identification and resolution of bottlenecks to avoid delays and reiterated that Jamabandi constitutes a key revenue record, demanding coordinated effort, accountability and strict adherence to timelines. In addition, a structured grievance redressal mechanism was ordered to be activated immediately to address any complaints concerning the digitisation process. All grievances are to be logged, acknowledged and assigned to the concerned Tehsildar for resolution, with progress on grievance resolution incorporated into the weekly reports submitted to the DC's office.

ADC, Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaz; ACR, Shakoor Ahmed Dar; SDM, Bilal Ahmed; Tehsildars, NTs, Girdawars and Patwaris were present in the meeting.

Republic day Arrangements reviewed at GDC Khansahib

■ **HT NEWS DESK / DIPR**

BUDGAM, JANUARY 08: Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Khansahib, Jahangir Ahmad Giri, today chaired a preparatory meeting to finalise the arrangements for the upcoming Republic day celebrations here at Government Degree College (GDC), Khansahib.

During the meeting, the SDM took a detailed stock of all necessary arrangements related to the Republic Day parade, including security measures, logistics,

and coordination among departments. Emphasis was laid on ensuring the attendance of all the government officials and flag hoisting at all the government office. It was also urged upon officers to illuminate all govt offices on the eve of Republic day.

The officers were also directed to showcase their achievements and public welfare schemes by putting up their kiosks at the venue to make the Republic Day celebrations more attractive, successful and dignified.

DC Kulgam Chairs Monthly District-Level NCORD Committee Meeting

113 drug peddlers arrested, 88 FIRs registered in district over the past few months

■ **HT NEWS DESK / DIPR**

KULGAM, JANUARY 08: The monthly meeting of the District-Level Narcotic Coordination Centre (NCORD) Committee was today held under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan, to review measures for curbing substance abuse and narcotic trafficking in the district.

The meeting was attended by SSP Kulgam, Anayat Ali Choudhary; ADC Kulgam, Viqar Ahmed Giri;

ACR, Riyaz Ahmad Shah; CEO, Tehsildars, and other members of the NCORD Committee.

During the meeting, the DC reviewed the implementation of decisions taken in previous NCORD meetings and assessed the actions initiated by enforcement agencies to combat the drug menace.

It was informed that 113 drug peddlers have been arrested and 88 FIRs registered over the past few months.

The DC also reviewed the activities carried out under the

second phase of the IEC (Information, Education and Communication) Campaign aimed at strengthening awareness and community participation in the fight against drug abuse.

The DC was informed that the district has achieved 100% installation of CCTV cameras under the NCORD initiative. Additionally,

88 inspections were conducted across pharmacies during the month of December, resulting in four medical shops being disallowed/suspended for violations

related to maintenance of sale and purchase records.

With regard to the Nasha Mukti Gram Panchayat initiative, it was informed that 9 new Gram Panchayats have been declared Nasha Mukti.

The DC directed all stakeholders to launch a continue second phase of the IEC campaign to further raise awareness about the ill effects of drug abuse and strengthen community participation in prevention efforts.

He emphasized close inter-

departmental coordination to ensure effective eradication of the drug menace from the district.

While reviewing the status of cancellation of driving licenses involved in NDPS and bovine smuggling cases, the DC directed the concerned authorities to expedite the cancellation of such driving licenses and ensure suspension of Registration Certificates (RCs) of all vehicles involved in these illegal activities.

DC Kulgam Chairs DLTC Meeting on Scale of Finance for Agriculture & Allied Sectors for FY 2026-27

■ **HT NEWS DESK / DIPR**

KULGAM, JANUARY 08: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan, today chaired a meeting of the District Level Technical Committee (DLTC) at the Mini Secretariat, Kulgam, to finalize the Scale of Finance for the year 2026-27 for agriculture and allied sectors, including Agriculture, Horticulture, Floriculture,

Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and

Sheep Husbandry, Sericulture etc. During the meeting, the chair was briefed on the agenda, followed by detailed deliberations with the Chief Planning Officer, General Manager, ACC Bank, Lead District Manager, sectoral officers and representatives of various banks on input costs for crops and allied activities such as fodder, fertilizers, pesticides, labour, manure and maintenance of dairy animals. Subsequently, the committee finalized the proposed Scale of Finance

for short-term agricultural loans, which will be forwarded to the State Level Technical Committee for approval.

Once approved, the Scale of Finance will form a key basis for the preparation of the District Potential Credit Plan and will guide banks in fixing crop loan and Kisan Credit Card limits for the financial year 2026-27.

The meeting was attended by Joint Director Planning, Malik Suhail, along with other concerned officers.

DC Baramulla Flags off Students for Bharat Darshan Tour

■ **HT NEWS DESK / DIPR**

BARAMULLA, JANUARY 08: A batch of 20 students were flagged off for the Bharat Darshan Tour 2026, organized by BSF 112 Naga Battalion by Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, in the presence of Commanding Officer, BSF 112 Naga Battalion, Nakul Vaid at railway station Baramulla.

During the event, the Deputy Commissioner interacted with the students, encouraged them to make the most of the educational tour, and emphasized the importance of learning through travel and experience.

He also appreciated the BSF for organizing the tour, highlighting its role in promoting national integration and providing students with valuable exposure to India's cultural, historical, and geographical diversity. He wished the students a safe and enriching journey.

Speaking on the occasion, Commanding Officer, BSF 112 Naga Battalion said that the Bharat Darshan Tour aims to foster a sense of unity, patriotism, and mutual understanding among the youth. He reaffirmed the BSF's commitment towards youth engagement and nation-building initiatives. The students, accompanied by escort teachers and BSF officers, were enthusiastic and excited as they embarked on the tour.

The Principal, Boys Degree College Baramulla, lauded the BSF for providing students with this valuable learning opportunity beyond the classroom.

Officers of the district administration, Police and BSF Officers and parents were present on the occasion and extended their best wishes to the students for a safe, memorable, and enriching tour.

DDC Shopian takes stock of Social Security, Pension & Insurance Schemes

Stresses timely benefit delivery to eligible beneficiaries

■ **HT NEWS DESK / DIPR**

SHOPIAN, JANUARY 8: District Development Commissioner (DDC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta, today chaired a comprehensive review meeting here at the Mini-Secretariat to assess the implementation, coverage and progress of various Social Security, Pension and Insurance Schemes being executed across the district.

During the meeting, The DDC undertook a detailed review of beneficiary coverage, pendency of cases, verification status and inter-departmental coordination.

He laid special emphasis on achieving saturation of all eligible beneficiaries and ensuring seamless, time-bound delivery of benefits under welfare schemes. DDC directed the concerned officers to expedite disposal of pending cases, address gaps in verification and remove bottlenecks hindering smooth implementation. He also stressed strengthening awareness campaigns at the grassroots level so that maximum eligible beneficiaries are informed about the schemes. Highlighting the importance



of transparency and accountability, the DDC instructed officers to ensure regular monitoring and timely submission of updated progress reports. He called for close coordination among departments to enhance efficiency and improve service delivery. He directed to adopt a proactive, people-centric approach to ensure that the intended benefits reach all deserving sections of society without delay.

The meeting was attended by ADDC, Dr. Nasir Ahmed Lone; DSEO, CAO, District Coordinator, CSC, BDOs and other concerned

HT EDITORIAL

BBBP, a game changer in empowerment of girl child

Over the past few years, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has taken many initiatives aimed at successful implementation of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) programme launched across the country. As part of this SANKALP-Hub for Empowerment of Women-Mission Shakti Srinagar on Thursday conducted 'Father-Daughter Selfie' at UPHC Batalaloo. The 'Father-Daughter Selfie' initiative, implemented under the BBBP scheme, aims to foster gender equality by encouraging families to publicly celebrate and value their daughters.

The initiative seeks to generate awareness about the importance of educating and empowering the girl child, while also strengthening the emotional bond between fathers and daughters. It also highlights the effective use of digital platforms as tools for social change and positive messaging. As part of the programme, hygiene kits were distributed among girl children to promote personal hygiene and help prevent the spread of infectious diseases. The programme aims to give the much-needed fillip to the empowerment of the girl child.

The initiative emphasized the importance of adopting good hygiene practices from an early age to support better health, improved immunity and overall well-being of children. There is no denying the fact that the BBBP programme has led to a revolution across the country with more and more girl children heading towards schools so as to receive education. At the same time there are many places in the country where the practice of killing girl children has been banned.

There was a time when the birth of a girl was greeted with sorrow and grief by the family members as well as both the near and distant relatives. In many cases the family members took the extreme step of killing the girl child and shockingly these people had no remorse at the end of the day. The situation has changed and the real change has been made by a pro-people programme like BBBP. It is due to this scheme that girls are getting encouragement from their parents to excel in their fields of choice.

The girls have not only excelled in the field of education and research, but in sports as well. In the past male sports personalities would be followed by both boys and girls, but in the present-day context women sports stars have made a mark in the different sports. It is time that the good work carried out under the BBBP scheme is taken to the far-flung areas so that there is overall success in the real sense.

Uses and Misuses of Artificial Intelligence (AI)



■ **SYED SAHRAAN HUSSAIN AL-BUKHARI
AL-NAQVI**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one of the most powerful technological advancements of the modern era. It refers to the ability of machines and computer systems to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making. AI has transformed many aspects of human life, bringing both remarkable benefits and serious challenges. Like any powerful tool, AI can be used wisely for the betterment of humanity or misused in ways that cause harm. Therefore, understanding the uses and misuses of AI is essential in today's world.

■ **Uses of Artificial Intelligence**

1. **AI in Healthcare**

AI plays a crucial role in modern healthcare. It helps doctors diagnose diseases accurately through medical imaging, such as X-rays and MRI scans. AI-powered systems assist in predicting illnesses, developing personalised treatment plans, and even performing robotic surgeries with high precision. This has improved patient care and saved countless lives.

2. **AI in Education**

In education, AI enhances learning experiences by providing personalised study plans, virtual tutors, and smart assessment tools.

Students can learn at their own pace, while teachers can analyse student performance more efficiently. Online learning platforms powered by AI have made education accessible to people across the globe.

3. **AI in Business and Industry**

AI is widely used in business for data analysis, customer service, and automation. Chatbots provide instant support to customers, while AI algorithms help companies forecast demand, manage supply chains, and detect fraud. Automation has increased productivity and reduced human error in industries.

4. **AI in Transportation**

Self-driving cars, traffic management systems,



and route optimisation are major contributions of AI in transportation. These technologies aim to reduce accidents, save fuel, and improve road safety. AI also helps in managing public transport efficiently.

5. **AI in Daily Life**

AI is present in everyday applications such as voice assistants, recommendation systems on social media and streaming platforms, and smart home devices.

These technologies make life more convenient by saving time and improving efficiency.

■ **Misuses of Artificial Intelligence**

1. **Job Displacement**

One of the major concerns regarding AI is job loss. Automation can replace human workers in factories, offices, and even creative fields.

This may lead to unemployment and economic inequality if proper measures are not taken.

2. **Privacy and Surveillance**

AI systems collect and analyse vast amounts of personal data. Misuse of AI can lead to privacy violations, mass surveillance, and misuse of sensitive information. This threatens individual freedom and personal security.

3. **Spread of Misinformation**

AI can generate fake news, deepfake videos, and manipulated images that appear real. These can

mislead people, damage reputations, and create social unrest. The misuse of AI in spreading misinformation is a serious global issue.

4. **Ethical and Bias Issues**

AI systems can reflect biases present in the data they are trained on. This can result in discrimination based on race, gender, or social background. Ethical misuse of AI may lead to unfair decisions in areas like hiring, law enforcement, and lending.

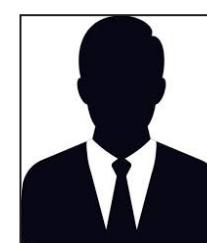
5. **Cybercrime and Security Threats**

Hackers can misuse AI to launch advanced cyberattacks, create malware, or break security systems. AI-driven cybercrime is more difficult to detect and prevent, posing a major threat to digital security.

■ **Conclusion**

Artificial Intelligence is a double-edged sword. When used responsibly, it has the potential to revolutionise healthcare, education, transportation, and many other fields, improving the quality of human life. However, its misuse can lead to serious problems such as unemployment, loss of privacy, ethical concerns, and security threats. Therefore, it is essential for governments, organisations, and individuals to use AI ethically and responsibly. Proper laws, awareness, and human oversight can ensure that AI remains a force for good and serves humanity in the best possible way.

Suhail Rashid: Voice of Kashmiri Sufi Soul



■ **BURHAN NAZIR**

Suhail Rashid, a young and dedicated Sufi singer from Wakura, Ganderbal, is emerging as one of the promising voices of Kashmiri Sufi music while strongly advocating for the academic growth of the Kashmiri language.

Suhail Rashid, who holds a Post-graduate degree in Kashmiri from the Central University, Ganderbal, has devoted nearly nine years of his life to learning Sufi music and traditional musical instruments. Out of these, he dedicated six years exclusively to mastering Sufi musical instruments and has been actively performing as a singer for the past three years. His soulful renditions of Kashmiri Sufi music and Qawwali have earned him recognition among music lovers and cultural circles.

Despite his deep commitment to the Kashmiri language and culture, Suhail Rashid expressed concern over the lack of higher academic opportunities in the field. "There is no PhD course available for the Kashmiri language, which could significantly



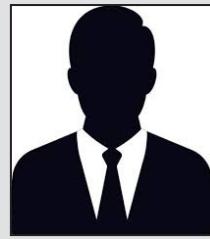
boost our culture, language, traditions, and research," he said. He further added that although he has a strong urge to pursue a PhD in Kashmiri, unfortunately, there is not a single opportunity available in central universities for doctoral studies in the language.

Suhail believes that introducing PhD programs in Kashmiri would not only encourage scholars but also help preserve and promote the rich linguistic and cultural heritage of Kashmir. According to him, academic support is essential to strengthen the roots of Kashmiri identity and pass

it on to future generations.

Through his music and voice, Suhail Rashid continues to serve Kashmiri culture, blending devotion, tradition, and art, while hoping for institutional support that can give the Kashmiri language the academic recognition it truly deserves.

Nature Fading Grace



■ **ANZAR FAYAZ BANDAY**

Nature, once the pride of our land, is slowly losing its charm. The graceful beauty of Kashmir, known for its snow-covered mountains and crystal-clear lakes, is fading before our eyes. I still remember the days when the snow from the mighty peaks melted gently into the lakes, forming a mesmerizing sight that made us believe paradise truly existed on Earth. Today, those same lakes are burdened with garbage and waste, turning beauty into neglect.

It is heartbreaking to see how human carelessness has stolen nature's grace. Pollution, plastic, and reckless dumping have taken over the pure waters that once reflected the glory of the mountains. We often talk about development



and progress, but what kind of progress destroys the very environment that gives

us life? The air feels warmer, the winters are shorter, and the once-familiar snow-

fall now feels like a distant memory. When we were children, we used to

witness snowfall as early as November. The white blanket would cover the valleys, and the world seemed peaceful and still. But in the past few years, the snow has become rare. The seasons have shifted, and the climate has changed. It's a silent cry from nature – a reminder that something is deeply wrong. All this is not nature's fault; it is the result of human negligence.

We have ignored the warnings, polluted the land, and harmed the balance that once kept our world thriving. Now, it is our responsibility to correct this mistake. We must take serious steps to keep our surroundings clean, reduce waste, and restore the beauty of Kashmir.

If we act now – plant more trees, protect our lakes, and limit pollution – perhaps nature will forgive us. The grace of nature is fading, but it is not lost forever. With care, awareness, and unity, we can bring back the purity of our valleys and the snow that once marked the beginning of winter's magic.

The author from Baramulla
Kashmir

Bye Bye Mailbox



■ **DR. RATAN BHATTACHARJEE**

"At Srinagar I wrote to you / from the house of roses / from the house where the windows open/ to the lake/ from the house where the pigeons/ fly into the kitchen/ I wrote to you/ from the house of roses /But you never received my letter." The haunting fragment of the poem captures the essence of the whole poem of Agha Shahid Ali's Letter from Kashmir. He was a Kashmiri-American poet celebrated for his lyrical style and his ability to weave together personal memory, political conflict, and cultural heritage. "A Letter from Kashmir" was written when Ali was still a student, and it captures the ache of distance from home. The poem is often read as a precursor to his later works, where the breakdown of communication in Kashmir – post offices closed, letters undelivered – became a metaphor for silenced voices and fractured identities. 'The Country Without a Post Office' was written in 1997 when the local Kashmiris took to guns to fight against the Indian rule in the state. The poem talks about the haunted and haunting experiences of widespread bloodshed and violence in Kashmir that resulted in total collapse of state machinery, including the breakdown of all the post offices in Kashmir. Originally called "Kashmir Without a Post Office," the poem, "The Country Without a Post Office" is considered Agha Shahid Ali's one of the best masterpieces. Dedicated to Ali's life-long friend James Merrill, the poem continues to maintain the integrity of feeling in the midst of political violence and tragedy.

The mailbox was once a fixture of everyday life, a small but significant object that stood outside homes, offices, and public spaces, silently waiting to carry words across distances. It was more than a container for letters; it was a symbol of anticipation, of human connection, of the art of waiting. Denmark's decision to do away with the mailbox marks the end of an era, not only for that country but as a sign of a global transformation in communication. The mailbox, once indispensable, is now obsolete, replaced by digital systems that deliver messages instantly, securely, and efficiently. This change is practical, but it is also deeply symbolic, reflecting the way modern communication has reshaped human interaction and gradually turned letter writing into a lost art.

Denmark's postal reforms did not happen overnight. For years, the country witnessed a steady decline in the number of letters being sent. In 2000, millions of letters flowed through the Danish postal



system, but by 2024, volumes had dropped by nearly ninety percent. Citizens no longer relied on handwritten correspondence or even printed letters for official communication. Instead, they turned to secure digital mail systems, where government notices, tax documents, and healthcare information arrived electronically. The red mailboxes that once dotted Copenhagen's streets became redundant. In 2025, Post-Nord, Denmark's state-run postal service, delivered its final letter, ending more than four centuries of traditional mail delivery. About 1,500 mailboxes were removed, and some nostalgic citizens even bought retired boxes to keep as mementos, reminders of a slower, more tactile form of communication.

The disappearance of the mailbox in Denmark is emblematic of a global trend. Across Europe, North America, and Asia, letter writing is gradually becoming a lost art. The romance of handwritten letters, the thrill of waiting for the postman, the joy of opening an envelope – all these experiences are fading. In their place, we have the immediacy of emails, the brevity of text messages, and the ubiquity of social media. Communication today is faster, more efficient, and more accessible, but it is also less tangible, less personal, and often less reflective. The handwritten letter carried not just words but also the imprint of the writer's hand, the rhythm of their thoughts, the pauses of their emotions. Digital communication, for all its advantages, rarely captures that depth.

In South Asia, too, the mailbox is disappearing. Bangladesh, India, and other countries in the region once had thriving postal cultures. The red mailbox in India was an iconic symbol, standing proudly in neighborhoods, railway stations, and marketplaces. It was the gateway to distant

connections, the bridge between families separated by migration, the lifeline for students writing home, and lovers exchanging tender words. In Bangladesh, the green postal boxes carried similar significance, serving as vessels of human emotion and social connection. Today, those boxes stand neglected, rusting in corners, rarely used, often forgotten.

The rise of digital communication in South Asia has been rapid and transformative. Mobile phones have penetrated even the remotest villages, bringing with them the power of instant messaging and voice calls. Internet connectivity, though uneven, has expanded dramatically, enabling millions to access email, social media, and video calls. Government services, banks, and businesses now rely on digital platforms for communication, reducing dependence on physical letters. In India, the Aadhaar-linked digital identity system has further accelerated the shift, with citizens receiving official notifications electronically. In Bangladesh, mobile banking and e-governance platforms have made digital communication indispensable. The mailbox, once central to everyday life, has been replaced by the smartphone screen.

Yet, the disappearance of the mailbox raises questions about what we lose in the process. Letter writing was not just a means of communication; it was an art form, a ritual, a deeply personal act. A letter carried the texture of paper, the fragrance of ink, the individuality of handwriting. It was something to hold, to keep, to treasure. Families preserved letters for generations, lovers tied them with ribbons, historians studied them for insights into the past. Emails and texts, by contrast, are ephemeral. They can be deleted with a click, lost in the flood of digital data, forgotten in the endless scroll of messages. The permanence

of letters, their ability to endure, is something digital communication struggles to replicate.

Moreover, the pace of digital communication has altered the nature of human interaction. Letters required patience. You wrote, you waited, you anticipated. That waiting was part of the emotional experience, deepening the value of the message when it finally arrived. Today, communication is instant. We expect replies within minutes, sometimes seconds. The art of waiting, the joy of anticipation, has been lost. In its place, we have the anxiety of immediacy, the pressure to respond quickly, the constant buzz of notifications. Communication has become faster, but not necessarily richer. Denmark's farewell to the mailbox is therefore both a practical decision and a symbolic moment. It reflects the inevitability of change, the triumph of digital efficiency, but also the fading of a cultural practice that once defined human connection. Other countries will follow, not because they want to, but because the logic of modern communication demands it. Postal services worldwide are struggling with declining revenues, rising costs, and shrinking relevance. Digital platforms are cheaper, faster, and more secure. The mailbox, once indispensable, is now redundant.

In Bangladesh and India, the transformation is particularly poignant. These are societies where letter writing was deeply embedded in cultural life. Bengali literature is filled with references to letters – poems, stories, and songs that celebrate the act of writing and receiving. Rabindranath Tagore himself wrote letters that are treasured as literary gems. His correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi, compiled in *The Mahatma and the Poet*, reveals how letters were not just communication but intellectual debates and moral appeals. Tagore's letter

to Gandhi after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919, renouncing his knighthood, is a powerful example of how letters carried political weight and personal conviction. Similarly, Jawaharlal Nehru's letters to his daughter Indira Gandhi, written from prison, became the celebrated Letters from a Father to His Daughter. These letters were not only personal but educational, introducing Indira to history, science, and philosophy. They remain treasured documents, showing how the act of writing could nurture thought across generations.

In Urdu literature, ghazals and novels romanticize the arrival of a letter as a moment of revelation. The letter is often the bearer of love, longing, or heartbreak. In countless South Asian films, the postman is a character of anticipation, his arrival a moment of drama. The cultural imagination of the region is filled with letters, their arrival shaping stories, their absence creating tension. The decline of letter writing in these societies is therefore not just a technological shift; it is a cultural loss. Yet, it would be simplistic to romanticize the past and dismiss the present. Digital communication has brought undeniable benefits. It has democratized access, allowing millions who never had reliable postal services to connect instantly. It has enabled education, healthcare, and commerce to flourish in ways that letters never could. Online classes, telemedicine, and virtual meetings are modern miracles, made possible by digital communication. In South Asia, where distances are vast and infrastructure often inadequate, digital platforms have bridged gaps that letters could never fill. The mailbox may be gone, but connectivity has expanded.

The challenge, then, is to preserve the spirit of communication even as the medium changes. We may no longer write letters, but we can still write thoughtfully. We may no longer wait for the postman, but we can still value patience. We may no longer treasure envelopes, but we can still treasure words. The art of communication lies not in the medium but in the meaning. Denmark's farewell to the mailbox reminds us that while forms change, the human urge to connect remains eternal. In the end, the mailbox's disappearance is not the end of communication but the beginning of a new chapter. It is a reminder that technology evolves, but human emotions endure. Whether through letters or emails, postcards or texts, handwritten notes or digital messages, people will continue to reach out, to share, to connect. The mailbox may say goodbye, but the conversation goes on.

Professor Ratan Bhattacharjee a multiple awardee poet and writer is a former Affiliate Faculty of Virginia Commonwealth University and a multifilingual columnist cum author of short fiction *Twilight of Love* (2025). Email profratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com

Adverse Impacts of Tobacco Consumption

Smoking Causes Lethal Health Issues in Society



■ **SAHIL MANZOOR BHATI**

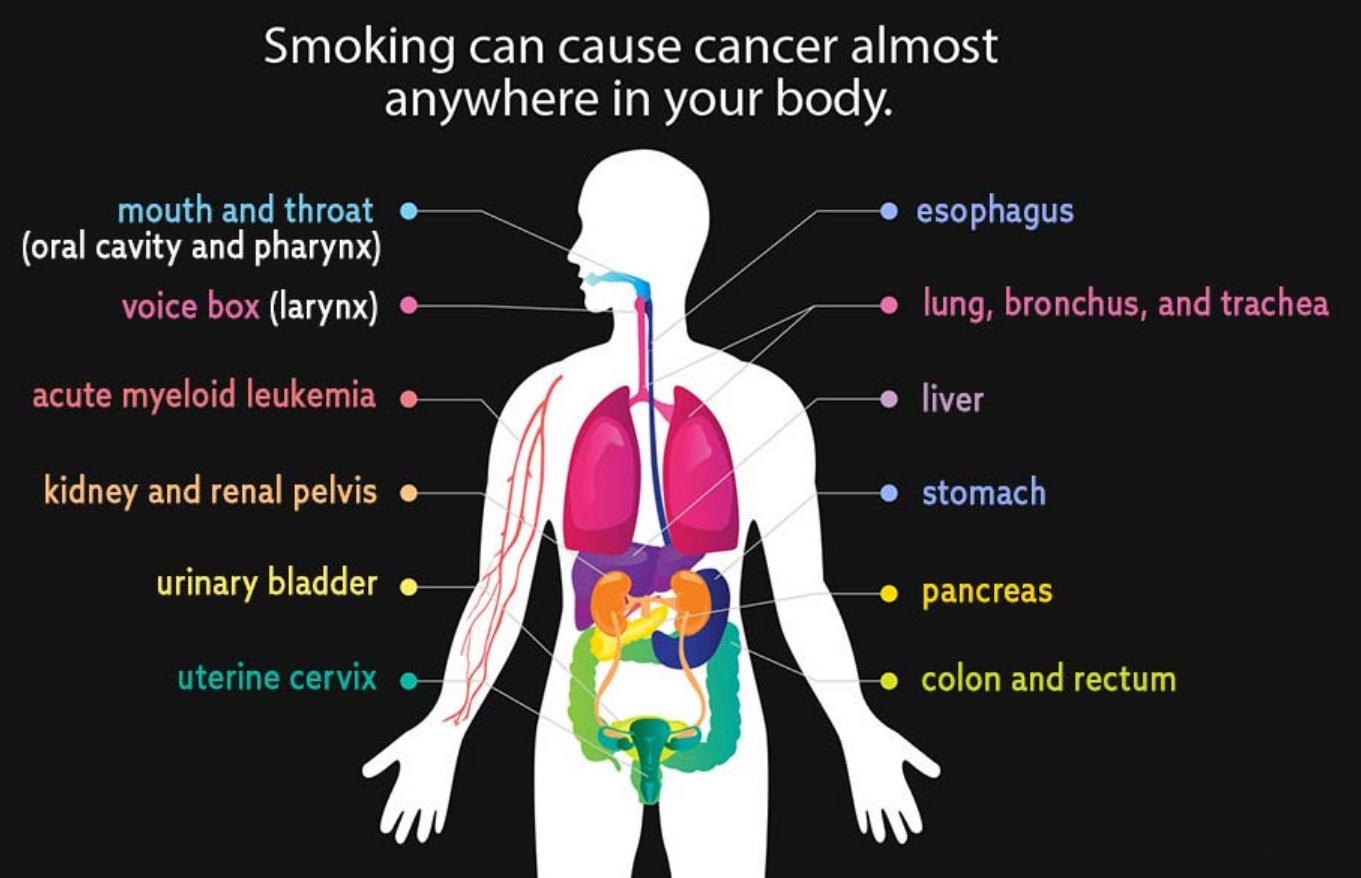
Tobacco belongs to the nightshade family and is cultivated for its dried leaves. Tobacco plants grow from 1 to 3 metres tall and produce more than ten broad leaves. These leaves are dried, processed, and used to manufacture cigars, cigarettes, and other tobacco products, which are extremely harmful to human health and pose immense health hazards.

Cigarettes contain about 4,000 chemicals, out of which nearly 43 are carcinogenic, meaning they can cause cancer. These chemicals include polycyclic hydrocarbons, ammonia (which causes cellular irritation), formaldehyde, and oxides of nitrogen. Carbon monoxide is one of the most dangerous and poisonous gases present in cigarette smoke. It reduces the oxygen-carrying capacity of the blood among smokers and severely affects their health worldwide.

It is believed that in 1492, Christopher Columbus landed on Tobago Island and observed that the natives were using dried tobacco leaves for pleasure. Since then, tobacco consumption has spread throughout the world in different forms such as smoking, chewing, and cigars. Nicotine, which is present in tobacco leaves, is the main active component and is highly harmful to human health. It affects the nervous system and increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Interestingly, nicotine also has some limited uses, such as in agriculture as an insecticide and in certain medical treatments for gastrointestinal disorders. However, its harmful effects far outweigh its benefits. Nicotine is highly addictive and affects the human mind, making a person dependent, sick, aggressive, unhygienic, and short-tempered.

Tobacco also contains tar, which causes lung cancer and is responsible for many fatal diseases among active smokers. Active smokers are nearly ten times more likely to die from lung cancer than passive smokers. The combination of carbon monoxide



and nicotine temporarily increases heart rate and blood pressure and is responsible for strokes and heart-related complications.

Carbon monoxide reduces the oxygen-carrying capacity of muscles and the brain, making these organs stressed and weak. Consuming tobacco products in different forms can also trigger irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), which is becoming increasingly common worldwide. Smoking affects the stomach by disturbing digestion, which leads to intestinal irritation and other digestive problems. Smoking is not only a concern for active smokers; it also affects passive smokers. It causes irritation among children, coughing, sneezing, breathing difficulties, and significantly pollutes the environment. Passive smoking is equally dangerous, especially for pregnant women, infants, and elderly people.

Every year on the 31st of May, World No Tobacco Day is observed across the globe. On this day, seminars, awareness programs, and anti-tobacco campaigns are organized in schools, colleges, and

public places to educate people about the dangers of tobacco consumption.

As responsible citizens and good human beings, we must take steps to identify the factors that lead our youth toward tobacco and drug abuse at an early age. Our young generation is losing health and wealth in a very cheap and dangerous way. There are numerous health hazards caused by smoking cigarettes, which are discussed below.

Heart Diseases

Smoking cigarettes severely damages the heart, blood vessels, and blood cells. The chemicals and tar in cigarettes increase the risk of atherosclerosis, which is the buildup of plaque in the blood vessels. This plaque restricts blood flow and can lead to serious blockages. Smoking also increases the risk of peripheral artery disease (PAD), which occurs when arteries in the arms and legs narrow and restrict blood flow. Research shows a direct link between smoking and PAD. Even former smokers face a higher risk compared to those who

have never smoked.

Damaged Lungs

Smoking greatly affects lung health because smokers inhale not only nicotine but also many toxic chemicals. Cigarettes significantly increase the risk of developing lung cancer. This risk is about 25 times higher for men and 25.7 times higher for women. According to health reports, nearly 9 out of 10 lung cancer deaths are linked to smoking. Smoking also increases the risk of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Nearly 80 percent of COPD-related deaths are caused by smoking.

Cigarette smoking is also linked to emphysema and chronic bronchitis. It can trigger or worsen asthma attacks and permanently damage lung tissues.

Fertility Problems

Smoking cigarettes damages the reproductive system in women and makes it difficult to conceive. This happens because tobacco chemicals disturb hormone levels.

In men, long-term smoking increases the risk of erectile dysfunction. Smoking also affects sperm quality and reduces fertility.

Weakened Immune System

Smoking weakens the immune system, making smokers more vulnerable to infections and illnesses. Smokers take longer to recover from diseases compared to non-smokers.

Vision Problems

Smoking increases the risk of eye problems such as cataracts and age-related macular degeneration. Other eye-related issues include dry eyes, glaucoma, and diabetic retinopathy.

Poor Oral Hygiene

People who smoke have twice the risk of developing gum disease. This risk increases with the number of cigarettes smoked. Symptoms include swollen and bleeding gums, loose and sensitive teeth, and bad breath. Smoking also reduces the ability to taste and smell properly and stains teeth yellow or brown.

Unhealthy Skin and Hair

Smoking affects skin and hair health. Smokers often experience premature aging, wrinkles, and dull skin. They are also at a higher risk of skin cancer, especially on the lips. Smoking causes an unpleasant tobacco smell in hair and skin and may lead to hair loss and baldness.

Risk of Other Cancers

Apart from lung cancer, smoking also increases the risk of several other cancers. It contributes to 20–30 percent of pancreatic cancer cases. Smokers are three times more likely to develop bladder cancer and have a higher risk of stomach cancer. Smoking is also linked to cancers of the mouth, throat, larynx, oesophagus, kidney, cervix, liver, colon, and acute myeloid leukaemia.

Conclusion

Tobacco consumption is a silent killer that destroys health, families, and society. Awareness, strong laws, and personal responsibility are essential to control this menace. By quitting tobacco and spreading awareness, we can protect future generations and build a healthier society.

schilmanzoor0401@gmail.com

The Harmful Impact Of "I" And "Mine" In The Contemporary Era



■ **DR. SURINDERPAL SINGH**

If the present materialistic age were to be summed up in a single word, that word would be self-centeredness. The modern world, driven by speed, competition, and constant comparison, has increasingly narrowed human vision to the boundaries of "I" and "mine." Today, ideas, actions, and relationships are largely shaped by personal gain, individual success, and ownership. This tendency is no longer confined to personal life alone; rather, it has deeply penetrated social, political, religious, and economic spheres, quietly redefining human values and weakening the foundations of collective existence.

Human civilization has historically thrived on cooperation, shared responsibility, and mutual care. Families, communities, and societies evolved when individuals placed collective well-being above personal desires. However, the contemporary era, dominated by materialism and consumer culture, has reversed this balance. The self has become central, while others are often viewed as tools, competitors, or obstacles. This excessive focus on the self has not only altered behavior but has also reshaped thought patterns, priorities, and moral frameworks.

The psychological roots of "I" and "mine" lie deep within the human mind. Ego is a natural element of human psychology

and, when balanced, plays a positive role in shaping identity, confidence, and self-respect. However, when ego exceeds healthy limits, it transforms into arrogance, entitlement, and self-obsession. At this stage, an individual begins to perceive himself as the center of the universe, expecting the world to revolve around his desires, opinions, and interests.

Modern materialism has significantly amplified this ego-driven mindset. The constant pursuit of wealth, status, and recognition has conditioned individuals to measure their worth through possessions and achievements. Intense competition in education, careers, and social life reinforces the belief that personal success must come at any cost, even if it means disregarding others. Additionally, the psychological influence of digital media has further strengthened the culture of "I" and "mine." Social media platforms encourage self-promotion, validation through likes and followers, and curated displays of personal success. Over time, this creates a distorted sense of importance, where external recognition replaces inner contentment and humility.

The social impact of this self-centered mindset is profound and far-reaching. One of its most visible effects is the growing distance in relationships. In families and friendships, selflessness has gradually been replaced by calculations and expectations. Relationships are increasingly evaluated through the lens of "What will I gain from this?" Emotional bonds, once rooted in care and sacrifice, now often depend on convenience and benefit. When expectations are not met, relationships weaken or break, leading to emotional isolation and

loneliness.

Alongside this, the spirit of cooperation has declined sharply. Collective and community-oriented efforts that once formed the backbone of social life are losing relevance. People are less willing to contribute time, effort, or resources unless there is a clear personal advantage. This erosion of cooperation weakens social institutions and reduces the sense of shared responsibility that is essential for societal progress.

Moreover, excessive focus on "I" and "mine" has intensified social divisions. Narrow self-interest and class-based thinking have widened gaps between rich and poor, powerful and powerless. Conflicts rooted in identity, status, and resources have become more frequent, as individuals and groups prioritize their own interests over harmony and justice. The result is a fragmented society marked by mistrust, intolerance, and growing polarization.

The economic impact of this mindset is equally significant. Market-driven consumerism has elevated the sense of "mine" to extreme levels. People are encouraged to consume more than they need, often beyond their financial capacity, in pursuit of comfort, prestige, and social approval. Ownership has become a symbol of success, and accumulation is mistaken for achievement. As a result, many individuals fall into cycles of debt, stress, and dissatisfaction, despite material abundance.

Businesses and corporations actively exploit this psychology. Advertising strategies are designed to stimulate desire, insecurity, and comparison, convincing individuals that happiness lies in constant consumption. This not only strengthens

self-centered attitudes but also promotes environmental degradation and economic inequality. The relentless focus on profit often comes at the cost of ethical responsibility, social welfare, and sustainable development.

The influence of "I" and "mine" extends deeply into political and religious spheres as well. In politics, the mindset of "I alone am right" or "only my ideology matters" has weakened democratic values and the spirit of public service. Leadership, which should be rooted in humility, accountability, and service to the people, increasingly becomes a platform for personal power, recognition, and control. This erosion of ethical leadership undermines public trust and destabilizes democratic institutions.

In the religious sphere, a similar shift is evident. The essence of religion, which emphasizes humility, compassion, and selfless service, is often overshadowed by self-promotion and image-building. Religious practices, instead of nurturing inner transformation, sometimes become tools for social status, influence, or personal gain. This distortion not only weakens spiritual values but also fuels intolerance and division in the name of faith.

The possible consequences of this unchecked dominance of "I" and "mine" are alarming. Human relationships continue to break down as trust erodes and emotional bonds weaken. Psychological stress, anxiety, and depression rise as individuals struggle under the pressure of constant comparison and unmet expectations. The lack of empathy and patience contributes to increased violence, intolerance, and social unrest. Despite technological advancement and

material progress, many individuals feel more isolated and dissatisfied than ever before.

Protecting ourselves from this destructive trend requires conscious effort and inner transformation. Self-reflection plays a crucial role in this process. Regular introspection and honest evaluation of one's thoughts, intentions, and actions can help identify ego-driven behavior and correct it before it becomes destructive. Awareness of one's limitations fosters humility and balance.

Equally important is cultivating the spirit of service. Serving others without expecting personal gain helps reduce the dominance of the ego and

restores a sense of purpose. Acts of kindness, compassion, and generosity reconnect individuals with the shared human experience and strengthen social bonds.

When personal happiness is linked with the well-being of family, society, and the nation, individual fulfillment becomes deeper and more sustainable.

practice also offers a powerful path toward overcoming ego. Through meditation, prayer, and engagement with spiritual teachings such as Gurbani and other religious scriptures, individuals can cultivate humility, gratitude, and inner peace. Spirituality reminds human beings that life is not solely about possession and self-interest but about meaning,

connection, and service.

In the contemporary era, the dominance of "I" and "mine" is steadily pushing human life toward isolation, dissatisfaction, and stress. Material progress alone cannot guarantee happiness or social harmony. For the healthy development of society, it is essential to consciously reduce selfish tendencies and move toward selflessness, cooperation, and shared well-being.

Only when "I" is replaced by "we" can trust be restored, relationships strengthened, and the true welfare of humanity achieved.

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

DR. JIBRAN BASHIR

Orthopedic Surgeon

MBBS, DNB ORTHOPAEDICS, D.ORTHO, MNAMS.

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CSIR-IIIM hosts Mission YUVA awareness event-'Innovative X 1.0' at Biotech Park Kathua

HT NEWS NETWORK

KATHUA, JAN 08: The BIONEST Bioincubation Centre of CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (CSIR-IIIM) Jammu in collaboration with IIIM's Technology Business Incubator (IIIM-TBI) organised the "Innovative X 1.0 - Awareness Campaign" under the Mission YUVA initiative here today.

Scores of students from local colleges, farmers and aspiring entrepreneurs from across the region participated in the programme, reflecting the growing interest in biotechnology-driven enterprises in J&K.

The event was inaugurated by the Chief Guest Shahzad Alam, Managing Director, Mission YUVA and Director Employment and Skill Development Department J&K. He commended CSIR-IIIM for creating a vibrant and enabling platform for innovation and startups. He explained Mission YUVA to the audience, outlining clear pathways for Nano Enterprises, MSMEs and Neo-Innovative Enterprises, particularly for knowledge-driven startups. He urged the youth to identify local problems, develop innovative solutions and utilise government platforms for funding and mentorship. "You now have a clear platform, if you want to start something, you know where to go and how to proceed," he said, encouraging participants to apply for the Neo-Innovative Enterprises scheme through the Mission YUVA portal.

Director CSIR-IIIM Jammu and Chairman, IIIM-TBI Dr Zabeer Ahmed, in his address, said that

CSIR-IIIM remains committed to fostering innovation-led entrepreneurship by creating a robust ecosystem that integrates scientific research, technology development and enterprise creation. He emphasised that such initiatives can play a crucial role in empowering youth, startups and farmers by providing access to advanced infrastructure, mentorship and industry linkages. He also highlighted that the Industrial Biotech Park, Kathua and IIIM-TBI serve as key enablers in translating research outcomes into market-ready solutions, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, biotechnology and healthcare.

Earlier, in his welcome address, Dr Saurabh Saran provided an extensive overview of the state-of-the-art Industrial Biotech Park at Ghatti, Kathua. He also highlighted the park's strategic location and its six functional areas including fermentation technology, phytopharma development and micropropagation along with advanced instrumentation worth several crores of rupees available for startups. "IIIM-TBI has so far nurtured over 125 startups, of which 15 have successfully launched market-ready products," he informed and emphasised the park's role as a comprehensive ecosystem offering infrastructure, scientific mentorship and business support to convert ideas into viable enterprises.

Principal Scientist, Dr Nasir-ul-Rasheed focused on skill development initiatives. He outlined hands-on training programmes ranging from five days to six months in areas such as quality control, advanced instrumentation and

fermentation technologies, aimed at making youth industry-ready. He inspired the audience by sharing the success story of a Class 12 student mentored at IIIM. "He went on to win a prestigious international robotics fellowship," he said, asserting that "the sky is the limit" for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir.

The participants gained insights into Mission YUVA from Gauri Deoli, representative of the Mission. She explained Mission YUVA's vision of transforming J&K into a vibrant entrepreneurial hub, built on four key pillars — Culture, Capital, Capacity and Connectivity. She particularly elaborated on the Neo-Innovative Enterprises scheme, which provides seed funding of up to ₹20 lakh along with mentorship and market linkages for innovative, knowledge-based startups.

The event also featured inspiring startup pitching experiences from four entrepreneurs including Vikrant Dogra, Chairman Unati Foundation; Shvanku CEO Herbal Aura; Sandeep Razdan Chairman Sarnas OPC Pvt Ltd and Dr Swamy Founder Crop-Domain Pvt Ltd.

Later, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also signed between Crop-Domain Pvt Ltd and IIIM-TBI. The collaboration aims to foster innovation, technology development and entrepreneurship in the agricultural biotechnology sector.

Following this, startups, students and ecosystem partners were felicitated for their contributions. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr Vidushi Abrol, Business Manager, IIIM-TBI and the event moderator.

SAD DEMISE

With profound sorrow and deep grief, we inform all relatives, friends and well-wishers of the sad demise of



Haji Ali Mohammad Kumar
S/o Late Abdul Satar Kumar
Resident of Wuyan Payeen, Pampore

who departed for his heavenly abode on 07 January 2026.

The Rasme-Chahrum (Fateha Khwani) will be observed on Saturday, 10 January 2026, at his residence in Wuyan Payeen, Pampore.

All relatives and friends are requested to participate and pray for the departed soul.

May Allah (SWT) grant him Jannat-ul-Firdous and give patience to the bereaved family. Ameen...

Bereaved Family
9906458575 9622758081

Ghulam Qadir Bhat(Patoo) passes away



With deep sorrow, we announce the passing of Ghulam Qadir Bhat (Patoo) of Khanyar, presently at Al Huda Colony, Kanipora who left us on Jan 07, 2026. He was a person whose kindness, strength, and generosity touched the lives of all who knew him.

He lived a life guided by love, integrity, and compassion. Though he is no longer with us in person, his legacy will continue to live on in our hearts forever.

Ijtimai Fateh khani will be on Friday i.e. 9th Jan, 2026 at 2:30 pm at the ancestral grave yard near Sarfari cricket ground, Malkhah.

We request you to remember him in your prayers.

BEREAVED FAMILY
Contact: 7006447761

Public Notice

Notice is hereby given that the Office of the Tehsildar Shahroora Litter, Department of Revenue, UT of Jammu and Kashmir, shall conduct a public auction of an immovable property as per the directions of the Hon'ble Court.

Date & Time: 19 January 2026 at 11:00 AM, **Location:** Village Chakkoora, Tehsil Shahroora Litter, **Area:** 01 Kanal 09 Marlas, Survey Nos: 3305 and 2271 min

Interested and eligible bidders may attend the auction at the scheduled time. Auction shall be conducted as per rules.

For details, contact: Patwari Halqa Chakkoora - 7780953262
Email: tehsilshahroora1988@gmail.com

Issued by:
Office of the Tehsildar Shahroora Litter Pulwama

Public Notice

In the Bank records bearing Account No 0082040100013304 My name has been mentioned as Gulshan Begum/Akther Whileas My correct name is Gulshan Assad now I want to apply for the correction of the same in bank regards if any person has any objection in this regards he/she may contact Branch J&K bank office Langate within seven days from the date of publication of this notice After seven days no objection shall be entertained.

Name: Gulshan Assad, W/O Ajaz Ahmad Wani R/O Shanoor, Langate District Kupwara

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeri

Subject: Application for issuance of OBC certificate applicant MEHRAJ GANI MIR & RASHID GANI MIR S/ O ABDUL GANI MIR R/O KAKOTHAL Tehsil KREERI in favour of self for the issuance of OBC (Other Backward class in his /her / their favor

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 AB REHIM LONE S /O AB AHAD LONE has passed away on 01/12/2025 .The report of the patwari further depicts that the deceased has left behind following dependent as tabulated below

1.... AB AHAD LONE SON, 48 Labour married
2.... SHAFIQA BANO daughter 52 years H/W widow
3.... SHAHEENA BEGUM daughter 45 years H/W married
4.... SHAKEELA BANO daughter 40 years H/W married
5.... HAJRA BEGUM daughter 49 H/W married
6.... RUBEENA LONE daughter 38 years H/W married

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 Tehsildar Kreeri

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeri

Subject: Application for issuance of OBC certificate applicant MEHRAJ GANI MIR & RASHID GANI MIR S/ O ABDUL GANI MIR R/O KAKOTHAL Tehsil KREERI in favour of self for the issuance of OBC (Other Backward class in his /her / their favor

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the subject cited above in the office of the undersigned for the issuance of OBC in this connection a report of patwari halqa concerned has been sought which reveals that the applicant is currently residing in the village of KAKOTHAL KREERI of Tehsil KREERI and belongs to the MIR community having annual income 696560 // the details of family of the applicant are as follows

1.... ABDUL GANI MIR Father 65 years RETIRE EMPLOYEE
2.... TASLEEMA BEGUM Mother 55 years House wife
3.... YASMEERA GANI sister 25 years Student
4.... RASHID GANI MIR self Brother 20 years student
5.... MEHRAJ GANI MIR Brother 20 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 Tehsildar Kreeri

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeri

Subject: Application of AB AHAD LONE S/O AB REHIM LONE R/O THINDIMA 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 AB REHIM LONE S /O AB AHAD LONE has passed away on 01/12/2025 .The report of the patwari further depicts that the deceased has left behind following dependent as tabulated below

1.... AB AHAD LONE SON, 48 Labour married
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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 Tehsildar Kreeri

RANGE POLICE HEADQUARTERS SRINAGAR

Balgarden, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir - 190010

Tele: 0194-2455064, Fax: 24651133, E-mail: digsgroff@jkpolice.gov.in

AUCTION NOTICE

It is hereby notified for the information of the general public that Range Police Headquarters Srinagar is going to conduct an on-the-spot auction of dumped wooden material lying at Police Housing Colony, Bemina Bypass, retrieved during repair/renovation of residential quarters. The approximate quantity of the material is assessed to be around 20 quintals.

Details of auction:

Nature of Material: Dumped wooden items (firewood)

Approximate quantity: 20 Quintals.

Starting Price: Rs.10,000/- (Rupees Ten Thousands only)

Mode of Auction: On-the-spot auction.

Venue: Police Housing Colony, Bemina Bypass Srinagar.

Date & Time: 15/01/2026 at 1100 hours.

Interested bidders are advised to be present at the venue on the notified date and time. The auction shall be conducted on "as-is-where-is basis".

The successful highest bidder has to deposit the bid amount in full on the spot before lifting the auctioned material from the site at his own cost.

No. GB/CKR/PHC/108-1/26/511-14

Dated: 07/01/2026

DIPK: 9831/25 | Dated: 08-01-2026

Sd/- (Peer Zahoor Ahmad), JKPS Staff Officer, Dy. Inspector General of Police, CKR Srinagar

Cluster University of Srinagar

Re-Advertisement Notice No. 01-CUS of 2026

Dated: 07-01-2026

Online applications are invited from the eligible candidates for the post of Assistant Professor in Management Studies (HRM) and Journalism & Mass Communication under RBA and ST-2 categories, respectively. The details of which are available on the Cluster University website www.cusrinagar.edu.in. Candidates are advised to go through the detailed employment notification available on the university website.

Important Dates:

Date of availability of online application form: 08-01-2026

Last date for submission of online application form: 29-01-2026

Last date for submission of Print-out of the application form submitted online along with enclosures: 05-02-2026

Sd/-

Registrar

Cluster University of Srinagar

No.CUS/Adv.AP/2026/62-69

Dated: 07-01-2026

Satish Sharma attends National Transport Ministers' Meeting, meets Nitin Gadkari

Raises border area issues, secures central support for ATS in J&K

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 8: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Information Technology, Transport, Youth Services and Sports, Science & Technology, ARI and Trainings, Satish Sharma, today participated in the Meeting of Transport Ministers of all States and Union Territories and the 43rd Meeting of the Transport Development Council (TDC) held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, under the chairmanship of Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari.

The high level national meeting deliberated on a wide range of issues related to road safety, vehicular standards, accident response mechanisms and transport reforms. These included cashless treatment for the accident victims, compensation to hit-and-run cases, e-DAR implementation, Zero Fatality Districts, Sadak Suraksha Mission, BN-CAP2.0, bus bodycodes, Divyangjan accessibility and introduction of advanced safety technologies in buses and trucks.

Earlier, Satish Sharma held a detailed interaction with Nitin Gadkari, during which he highlighted the pressing problems



faced by the people residing in border and far-flung areas of Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in terms of emergency medical services and public transport connectivity. He strongly urged the Union Minister to provide ambulances

and Border Passenger (BP) buses for the border belts so that residents are ensured timely medical aid and dependable transport facilities.

The Minister also sought Central Government funding for establishment of Automated Testing

Stations (ATS) in Srinagar and Jammu, stating that these facilities are essential for ensuring scientific vehicle fitness testing, pollution control and enhanced road safety.

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari agreed to the proposal on the spot,

assuring full support for setting up the ATS infrastructure in the Union Territory.

The meeting also witnessed discussion on safety standards, programme schedules and the proposed amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act, with emphasis on strict compliance with the safety norms, time-bound implementation and high-quality execution of transport and highway projects.

Later in the day, Satish Sharma met with the representatives of major travel and transport unions from across the country.

During the interaction, he invited them to become active partners in the tourism and trade development of Jammu and Kashmir. He highlighted the immense potential of Jammu and Kashmir in pilgrimage, leisure and adventure tourism as well as in logistics and commercial transport.

He assured all government's commitment towards providing a conducive, secure and business-friendly environment. He called upon them to expand their operations, tourism circuits and transport services in Jammu and Kashmir to help generate employment and strengthen the region's economy.

DC Budgam inspects Playfield Development in Panchayat Khag

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BUDGAM, JANUARY 8: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat, visited Khag to inspect the local playground in panchayat khag and reviewed the proposed development works of the playfield, which is being developed at an estimated cost of 7.90 lakh.

During the visit, the DC took detailed assessment of the existing facilities and interacted with local residents, youth, and children of the area.

The visit was marked by a cordial and encouraging atmosphere, as the Deputy Commissioner was seen playing with little children at the playground, conveying a strong message on the importance of sports, physical fitness, and outdoor activities in daily life.

The DC emphasized that the development of sports infrastructure at the grassroots level plays a vital role in promoting a healthy lifestyle, discipline,



teamwork, and positive values among young minds.

He stated that well-planned and properly maintained playfields not only serve as recreational spaces but also act as platforms for identifying and nurturing sporting talent in rural and semi-urban areas.

While reviewing the project, the DC stressed the need for quality execution of the development works and directed the concerned executing agencies to adhere strictly to approved plans and specifications.

He laid emphasis on the timely completion of the project within the sanctioned cost so that the facility can be made available for public use without delay.

The DC also underscored the importance of community participation in the upkeep and effective utilization of such public assets. He said that collective ownership and responsible use significantly contribute to their sustainability and long-term impact.

The DC further informed that another Playfield at Posher Panchayat is being developed at an estimated cost of 3.00 lakh, adding that district administration is focused on strengthening sports and recreational infrastructure across different panchayats of the district.

The DC stated that the development of these playfields forms part of the district administration's ongoing efforts to provide safe, inclusive, and accessible recreational spaces for children and youth, thereby encouraging positive engagement and overall community well-being.

The visit of the DC was appreciated by the local community, who expressed optimism that the upgraded playfields at Khag and Posher will emerge as valuable community assets and hubs for sporting and recreational activities.

CPO Budgam, Tehsildar Khag, BDO Khag, and other senior officers of the district administration accompanied the DC during his visit.

DC fulfills Block Diwas commitment, hands over 3 computers to GUPS Tashnal

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

DODA, JANUARY 8: Deputy Commissioner Doda, Harvinder Singh today handed over three computers to Government Upper Primary School (GUPS) Tashnal, Zone Gundna under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative. The move met the assurance made by the Deputy Commissioner at the weekly Block Diwas Camp held at Tashnal the other day, reflecting responsive and accountable governance.



The Deputy Commissioner underscored the vital role of technology in strengthening the education system, particularly in rural and remote areas.

He stated that access to computers would enhance digital literacy, improve learning outcomes and equip students with essential skills required for higher education and future career opportunities, thereby helping bridge the digital divide.

The school staff, students and local representatives expressed their gratitude to the District Administration for promptly translating the public commitment into action.

They noted that the computers would support innovative teaching methods, facilitate access to e-learning and create a more engaging and interactive learning environment for students. Reiterating the District Administration's commitment to the holistic development of the education sector, the Deputy Commissioner said that focused interventions through CSR and government convergence would continue across Doda district. He added that priority would be given to far-flung and underserved areas to ensure inclusive, equitable and quality education for all children.

Seminar on commercial production of Aromatic, Medicinal Plants held at Ramban

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

JAMMU, JANUARY 8: A one-day seminar on "Promoting Conservation, Cultivation of Medicinal Plants and Developing Entrepreneurship in the Medicinal Plants Sector in the UT of J&K," was today organized here by Health & Medical Education Department J&K, Directorate of AYUSH J&K and the J&K Medicinal Plants Board in collaboration with the District Administration Ramban.

Farmers and educated unemployed youth hailing from different parts of the district attended the seminar. Deputy Commissioner, Mohammad Alyas Khan along with Director AYUSH J&K, Dr. Suresh Sharma inaugurated the event.

Expert lectures on the subject were delivered by Chief Planning Officer Dr. Shakeeb Ahmed; Chief Agriculture Officer Vinay Jandyal; Technical Officer Dr. Wahid-ul-Hassan; District Nodal Officer Medicinal Plants Board Dr. Masood Zargar and resource persons

from AYUSH including Nodal Officer Dr. Paramjeet Puri; Dr. Romesh Chander and Dr. Bashir Ahmed Dar.

Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized the need for a structured, sustainable and commercially viable strategy to harness the economic, ecological and livelihood potential of aromatic and medicinal plant cultivation in both forest and non-forest areas. He directed the concerned departments to prepare comprehensive, area-specific action plans for large-scale propagation of high-value plant species and to popularize their cultivation among farmers and local communities.

"The land available in education and other institutions and forest areas can be used for demonstration, training and capacity-building, besides the production of quality planting and propagation material," he said. Highlighting the importance of practical exposure, he also called for the establishment of model herbal gardens

in colleges and schools to showcase best practices and motivate farmers to adopt cultivation on a commercial scale.

In his address, the Director AYUSH J&K underscored the profitability and long-term potential of the medicinal and aromatic plants. He urged the departments to explore the possibilities for setting up processing units, value-addition facilities and dedicated clusters, while effectively utilizing available land as reserves and demonstration sites. He noted that such initiatives would significantly enhance income-generation opportunities for farming communities.

The Director further suggested the development of cluster-based frameworks to enable farmers to learn collectively, access to technical knowledge, quality planting material and market linkages, thereby strengthening entrepreneurship and ensuring sustainable growth of the sector in District Ramban.

DC Ramban reviews implementation of Mission YUVA

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

RAMBAN, JANUARY 8: Deputy Commissioner Ramban, Mohammad Alyas Khan today chaired a review meeting to assess the progress and effectiveness of Mission YUVA in the district.

The Deputy Commissioner conducted an in-depth review of the Mission's key components, including capacity-building initiatives, progress of the Beyond Lakshmi Didi initiative, enterprise mentorship and the status of loan cases pending with banks for disbursement. The review focused on identifying operational gaps and strengthening the delivery



mechanism to achieve optimal outcomes.

Emphasizing a result-oriented and coordinated approach, the DC directed the stakeholder departments to intensify beneficiary facilitation, ensure effective hand holding and strengthen field-level engagement so that approvals are translated into sustainable entrepreneurial ventures.

The banks were asked to remove procedural bottlenecks without delay and clear the pending within a period of one week.

The DC further directed officers to utilize the services of YUVA DOUs to facilitate targeted beneficiaries in availing the

benefits.

The meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC); Sub-Divisional Magistrates (SDMs) of Banihal, Gool and Ramsoo; Cluster Head J&K Bank; General Manager, DIC; District Nodal Officer (DNO) JKEDI; Assistant Director Employment; J&K Bank Branch Managers; Career Counselling Officer (CCO); the Principal Government Polytechnic College Chanderkote; Superintendent ITI; District Project Manager (DPM) NRLM and members of the Small Business Development Unit (SBDU) and Business Help Desk (BHD) staff.

DC Baramulla reviews progress of projects under ADP, ABP & CSR

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

BARAMULLA, JANUARY 8: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa today convened a meeting of all concerned officers at DC Office Complex here to review the progress achieved under different indicators of Aspirational District Programme (ADP), Aspirational Block Programme (ABP) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

The meeting held threadbare discussion and reviewed the progress achieved under various indicators including health and nutrition,



developmental gaps and to further improve the district's overall performance under the ADP framework.

While addressing the meeting, the DC directed the SDM Patti to carry out frequent inspections of Nari Arogya Kendras across the sub-division to monitor their functioning and service delivery.

Meanwhile, the DC also reviewed the progress of ongoing projects under Award Money and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) directing all the concerned to expedite the work and ensure the completion by the already set timelines.

DDC Doda reviews progress under Jal Shakti Abhiyan - Catch the Rain

■ HT NEWS DESK / DIPR

DODA, JANUARY 8: District Development Commissioner (DDC), Doda Harvinder Singh today chaired a review meeting to assess the progress achieved in the district under the Jal Shakti Abhiyan - Catch the Rain (CTR) initiative. The meeting was convened to reinforce effective execution of water conservation measures and to enhance inter-departmental coordination.

The DDC reviewed the uploading of the status report of ongoing and completed works on the Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari (JSJB 2.0) portal,

emphasizing the importance of timely and accurate data entry for effective monitoring, transparency and accountability. The DDC directed the concerned departments to expedite the uploading process without any further lapse. The DDC also stressed the importance of timely completion of work assignments under the Abhiyan, directing stakeholders to ensure strict adherence to timelines and ensure quality execution of works on the ground. The meeting further reviewed awareness and outreach activities under the Catch the Rain campaign. Emphasis was laid on strengthening

community participation, intensifying public outreach and conducting awareness programmes to promote rainwater harvesting, water conservation and sustainable water management at the grassroots level.

The meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Project Officer ICDS, Superintending Engineer Hydraulic Circle, Chief Planning Officer, Assistant Commissioner Development, Assistant Commissioner Panchayats, the heads of Government Degree Colleges, concerned Executive Engineers and other district officers.

ECI holds CEO conference ahead of global IICDEM 2026 meet

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JAN 8: In the run-up to the India International Conference on Democracy and Election Management (IICDEM) 2026, the Election Commission of India (ECI) on Thursday held a conference of Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) at the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) in New Delhi.

The conference was chaired by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, along with Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi, who briefed the CEOs on the framework, objectives and operational nuances of IICDEM 2026, scheduled to be held from January 21 to 23, 2026, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.

Addressing the gathering, the CEC underscored India's commitment to strengthening democratic institutions globally. "IICDEM 2026 will provide a unique platform for election management bodies across the world to share experiences, best practices and innovations, building a collective body of knowledge in the field of election management," he said, while outlining the critical role



CEOs will play during the international conference.

The Election Commissioners also detailed the responsibilities assigned to the CEOs, particularly in steering the thematic discussions and facilitating meaningful engagement with international delegates. Following the addresses, the CEOs deliberated on 36 thematic

groups that will be led by them during IICDEM 2026. These themes span the entire spectrum of election management, drawing upon the diverse and rich experiences of election management bodies (EMBs) globally.

IICDEM 2026 is poised to be the largest global conference of its kind hosted by India in the

domain of democracy and election administration. Nearly 100 international delegates representing EMBS from across the world are expected to participate, alongside representatives from international organisations, foreign missions in India, and leading academic and practising experts.

With extensive bilateral engagements, over 40 bilateral meetings, and 36 breakout sessions planned, IICDEM 2026 is expected to reinforce India's leadership role in promoting democratic values and strengthening election management practices worldwide. UNI

Kala Yatra 2026: Delhi sets stage for new classical choreographies

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JAN 8: 'Kala Yatra 2026', a cultural festival curated by Padma Vibhushan Sonal Mansingh, aims to bring together tradition, innovation and civilisational dialogue through classical dance.

The "festival of new choreographies" will be held in the national capital on January 13, 14, 15, 28 and 29 at Kamani Auditorium.

Presented by the Department of Art, Culture and Language, Government of Delhi (NCT), in collaboration with the Centre for Indian Classical Dances (CICD), the festival has been envisioned as a platform for contemporary creative work rooted firmly in India's classical dance traditions.

The festival will present 10 newly crafted choreographies by eminent gurus and institutions from across Bharat, engaging with themes ranging from Sanatan history and mythological narratives to ecology, gender and present-day social concerns, while remaining anchored in the grammar of classical forms such as Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Mohiniyattam, Yakshagana, Sattriya and Odissi.

Speaking at the curtain raiser, Mansingh described the Festival of New Choreographies as "not merely a cultural event, but a civilisational dialogue."

Emphasising the need for renewal within tradition, she said, "New choreographies are essential to keep our classical traditions alive, responsive and relevant. When rooted in our sacred wisdom and lived realities, innovation becomes a continuation of tradition, not its rupture."

The curtain raiser brought together a distinguished panel of gurus, choreographers and cultural leaders, including Shri Babu Panicker, Smt. Vanashree Rao, Smt. Bhawati Mishra, Smt. Sindhu Mishra, Shri Bhabananda Bharyan, Smt. Deepa Omchery Bhalla and Smt. Meenakshi Dass.

Speakers reflected on the responsibility of teachers in shaping cultural consciousness and the importance of national platforms that nurture creative exploration without disconnecting from Bharatiya values. Responding to a question on pre-performance preparation, Dr. Mansingh shared a glimpse into her inner discipline as a performer.

She told UNI that she has developed a habit of remaining quiet on the day of a performance, particularly at home and in the green room, before stepping on stage by locking away her phone and distancing herself from the crowd.

She believes in purifying the Rangamanch, for which she lights incense sticks, prays, and invokes positive vibrations, treating the ritual as a form of spiritual cleansing.

"Before making it to the stage, I want myself to be free from bad energies," she said, noting that such mindful preparation allows her to perform Bharatanatyam with clarity, balance, and devotion. The festival repertoire reflects a wide artistic spectrum.

Highlights include Amruth Manthan, directed and choreographed by Dr. Mansingh with CICD repertory artistes; Athijeevanam, themed on environmental preservation; Girija Kalyana (Shiva-Parvati Vivaha) in Yakshagana style; Karna Bound by Fate; Duryodhana by Srijan, Bhubaneswar; Chakravyuha by Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra; Saugandhikaharana; and Matrika, presented by the professional LGBTQ Rainbow Dance Troupe.

Running parallel to the performances, the foyer of Kamani Auditorium will host a retrospective exhibition tracing CICD's 49-year journey since its founding in 1977 by Dr. Mansingh, showcasing rare photographs, milestones and memories that underline the institution's commitment to training, research and socially engaged performance. UNI

ECI to Host Global Democracy, Election Management Conference in New Delhi from Jan 21-23

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JAN 8: The Election Commission of India will host the inaugural India International Conference on Democracy and Election Management (IICDEM)-2026 from January 21 to 23 at Bharat Mandapam in the national capital, marking a major global outreach initiative in the field of electoral governance. The three-day international conference is being organised by the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) under the aegis of the ECI and is expected to be the largest global conference of its kind hosted by India on democracy and election management.

Nearly 100 international delegates representing Election Management Bodies (EMBs) from across the world will participate, along with representatives of international organisations, foreign missions in India, and leading academic and practising experts in election-related fields. IICDEM 2026 will carry forward the agenda articulated by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar following India's assumption of the Chairship of the Council of Member

States of International IDEA for 2026. The conference is anchored on the overarching theme, "Democracy for an inclusive, peaceful, resilient and sustainable world."

Addressing media persons on Wednesday, Director General, IIIDEM, Rakesh Verma, outlined the broad contours of the conference, describing it as a global platform aimed at strengthening international cooperation among EMBS. "The conference will enable the development of a shared understanding of contemporary electoral challenges, facilitate the exchange of best practices and innovations, and support the co-creation of solutions to safeguard democratic processes worldwide," he said. The interaction concluded with the unveiling of the official logo of IICDEM 2026.

The conference will also familiarise participants—who collectively represent a significant proportion of the global electorate—with India's electoral framework, institutional processes and technological innovations, which have earned international recognition for managing elections at scale.

The programme will feature a range

of general and plenary sessions, including the Inaugural Session, EMB Leaders' Plenary, EMB Working Group Meetings, and the launch of ECINet. These will be complemented by thematic sessions focusing on global electoral challenges, model international electoral standards, and innovations and best practices in electoral processes.

During the three-day event, the ECI-led by CEC Gyanesh Kumar, along with Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi—will hold over 40 bilateral meetings with heads of participating EMBS and other international delegates.

The conference will also see wide academic participation, with leading institutions including four IITs, six IIMs, 12 National Law Universities and Indian Institutes of Mass Communication taking part.

As many as 36 thematic groups, led by Chief Electoral Officers of States and union Territories and supported by national and international academic experts, will contribute to in-depth deliberations, reinforcing India's role as a global hub for democratic and electoral discourse. UNI

Indore water tragedy kills 18; Congress alleges govt negligence', seeks SC probe

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JAN 8: The Congress on Thursday launched a blistering attack on the BJP-led Madhya Pradesh government over the deaths of at least 18 people, including a six-month-old infant, allegedly due to contaminated drinking water in Indore, calling the tragedy a case of "criminal negligence" and demanding a Supreme Court-monitored independent inquiry.

Addressing the media at party headquarters, Congress leader and party spokesperson Pawan Khera said the incident had exposed the "ugly, brutal and utterly callous face" of the BJP government, accusing it of failing in its most basic duty of ensuring safe drinking water despite years of central and international funding.

"In Indore, 18 innocent lives have been senselessly lost due to gross negligence, incompetence and blatant apathy of the BJP government. Over 40,000 people have been affected, many of whom are still battling for their lives in ICUs," Khera said in his statement.

The incident has sparked



leaders have termed the tragedy a stark contradiction of official claims on urban sanitation and public health.

Khera alleged that instead of responding with urgency and empathy, the state government displayed arrogance. He criticised senior BJP leader and Madhya Pradesh minister Kailash Vijayvargiya for his remarks to journalists during the crisis.

"When families were mourning and waiting for compensation, a BJP minister told journalists 'don't ask fokat questions' and used the word 'ghanta'. This is the BJP's idea of governance—hubris over humanity," Khera alleged.

The Congress also slammed the government's decision to announce a compensation of Rs 2 lakh per victim, calling it a "grotesque calculation of human life".

"Two lakh rupees is a contemptible sum that mocks the value of human life. Families are left to carry lifelong grief caused entirely by the BJP's reckless arrogance and incompetence," Khera said.

Placing the tragedy in a broader context, the Congress pointed to what it described as decades of systemic failure in urban water management in Madhya Pradesh. Khera recalled that in 2003 and 2008, the Asian

Development Bank (ADB) had extended loans worth over \$270 million to the state for the Urban Water Supply and Environment Improvement Project covering cities including Indore. According to him, these funds were meant for rehabilitating pumping stations, laying sewage networks, installing water metering systems and constructing water treatment plants.

"Quarterly water quality testing was not conducted, monitoring reports were never prepared, and critical infrastructure projects were left incomplete or mismanaged," Khera alleged, adding that Rs 100 crore released during the UPA government under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for these purposes had been "squandered."

He claimed that the contamination of drinking water with sewage, which allegedly led to the deaths, was a direct result of this failure. "This is not mere administrative negligence; it is a criminal betrayal of citizens and a blatant violation of international loan conditions," Khera said.

The Congress leader argued that the Indore tragedy was not an isolated incident, citing recent cases in the state, including the deaths of children allegedly linked

to contaminated cough syrup and reports of unhygienic conditions in government hospitals.

"Today people are dying from drinking sewage-mixed water. Madhya Pradesh under the BJP has become an epicentre of misgovernance, where apathy kills and accountability is nowhere to be found," he said.

Calling clean drinking water a fundamental right, Khera said the denial of this right "squarely indicts the BJP's double-engine government".

He demanded immediate intervention by the Prime Minister's Office, escalation of the matter to the Asian Development Bank, and a Supreme Court-level independent inquiry to fix responsibility. "Only such intervention can ensure that those responsible are held accountable and that the blood of innocent citizens does not go unavenged," Khera said.

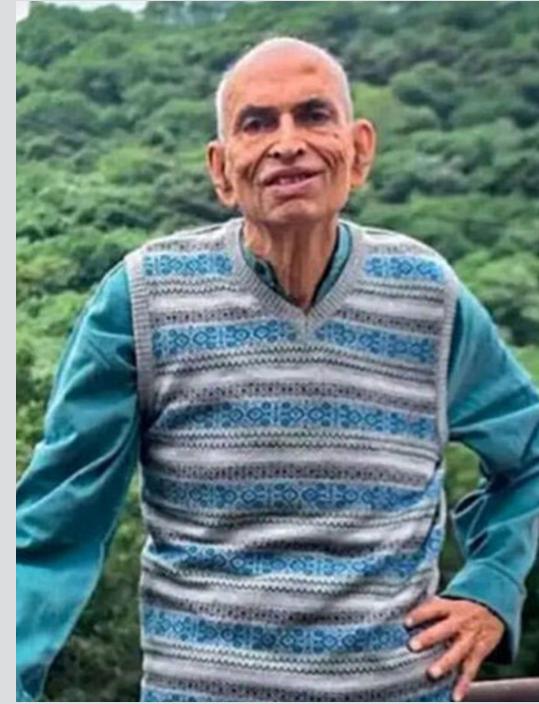
Raising a series of pointed questions, he asked how sewage could contaminate a city's drinking water system without official knowledge, why warnings from citizens were allegedly ignored, and who would take responsibility for what he called "entirely preventable deaths." UNI

Congress leaders pay tribute to ecologist Madhav Gadgil, a 'compassionate voice for nature'

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JAN 8: Congress leaders Thursday paid tribute to renowned ecologist Dr Madhav Gadgil, who passed away, leaving behind a legacy of conservation efforts and community rights advocacy.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge remembered Gadgil's contributions to ecological conservation, saying, "In the passing of Dr Madhav Gadgil, India has lost one of its foremost voices in ecological inquiry. His leadership helped turn scientific evidence into protective action, most notably through decisive engagement with landmark conservation efforts and community rights, particularly in the Western Ghats."



Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Congress leader, expressed her condolences, stating, "Deeply saddened by the passing of Dr. Madhav Gadgil, a compassionate voice for nature and social justice. His life's work will continue to inspire generations."

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh recalled Gadgil's profound influence on public policy, citing his crucial role in the Save Silent Valley Movement and his efforts to protect forests in Bastar. "Madhav Gadgil was a top-notch academic scientist, a tireless field researcher, a pioneering institution-builder, and a great communicator," Ramesh said.

Gadgil, a recipient of the Padma Bhushan, Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize, and Karnataka's Rajyotsava Prashasti, was a pioneering figure in Indian ecology, known for his tireless work in promoting sustainable development and protecting the country's natural resources.

Gadgil's work on the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel report (2009-2011) remains a landmark in India's environmental conservation efforts. His memoir, published three years ago, is a testament to his dedication to scholarship and his commitment to India's ecological future.

Gadgil's legacy extends beyond his academic contributions, as he inspired countless individuals and communities to work towards a more sustainable and equitable future. His passing is a significant loss to India's environmental movement, but his work and ideas will continue to inspire and guide future generations. UNI

Guided by Bumrah and trusted by RCB, Shreyanka is ready for her next chapter

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

BENGALURU: That was Jasprit Bumrah's advice when Shreyanka Patil sought him out for a conversation while undergoing rehab for multiple injuries at the Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru (CoE).

What Shreyanka initially believed would be a short injury lay-off stretched into a 14-month ordeal, marked by shin splints, a wrist injury and a fractured left thumb just as she was returning to full fitness mid-2025.

While Shreyanka fought through the physical pain, she realised the challenges were more mental. She had missed WPL 2025, the Sri Lanka tri-series and England tour, but the magnitude of having spent so much time away hit her all at once, when she missed the ODI World Cup at home. Set to return on the field in WPL 2026, Shreyanka, now 23, reflected on her setback.

"I thought it was just a one-off injury," she said on Wednesday. "I felt I'd be back in two or three months. I never imagined I wouldn't be on the field for more than a year."

"Once I started missing tournaments back to back, and then miss-

ing out on WPL, that was a big blow for me," she said. "Missing the World Cup hurt a lot. As a cricketer, you always want to lift that trophy."

But long before the World Cup came around, her perspectives began to change after the chat with Bumrah at CoE. While Bumrah spoke to her about the technicalities in great depth, Shreyanka felt a sense of reassurance when he spoke of how to bounce back from injuries.

"I had so many questions," Shreyanka said. "About bowling under pressure, about practising yorkers. Even though he's a fast bowler and I'm a spinner, I bowl at the death too."

"He told me 'this is okay, everyone goes through it.' He said I'm facing it at a young age, so 'don't fight it. Just be in it.'"

Those conversations, along with informal chats with fellow cricketers at CoE - Riyam Parag, Mayank Yadav, Asha Sobhana and Amanjot Kaur, among others - slowly helped her emerge from isolation.

"I wasn't talking to anyone at the start. I locked myself in a room for two or three months," she said. "That wasn't me. I'm usually very bubbly. But talking to people made me realise I wasn't alone."

What also helped bring some cheer back was a phone call from Malolan Rangarajan late last year, to convey the news that Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) were retaining her ahead of the mega-auction cycle. In her own words, her "mind went blank."

"No words can describe how I felt," Shreyanka said. "Someone who hasn't played for 13 or 14 months, and they still trust you and say, 'We'll back you because your skill is up there'...it gives so much confidence."

"I was overthinking before that. 'What if I'm not retained, which team will I play for?' All those thoughts were there. After the call, I rang Arjun [Dev, her personal coach] sir and just started crying. I didn't even know what I was feeling. It was just so much love and belief."

Shreyanka has been pain-free for a few months now. Having played in the Women's CPL and the domestic season for Karnataka, she has worked on a number of technicalities with her offspin, batting and fitness during a month-long conditioning camp at the private academy she trains at. With the WPL now just couple of days away, she's never felt more ready.



'It was always coming' - Bethell's SCG milestone

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

SYDNEY: Jacob Bethell bristled at the idea that he had given away his England spot by playing in last season's IPL, after scoring his maiden Test (and first-class) hundred to take the fifth Ashes Test into a final day at the SCG. Bethell was a surprise selection for England's Test tour to New Zealand in late 2024 and made three half-centuries in what was his maiden series, thrust in at No. 3 because of the absences of Jamie Smith (paternity leave) and Jordan Cox (thumb injury) had forced Ollie Pope to take the gloves and slide down the order.

England's management left open the possibility that Bethell would continue at No. 3 for their home series against India, but he missed their one-off Test against Zimbabwe in late May due to his IPL commitments with Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), and Pope scored 171 to effectively secure the No. 3 spot. When Pope made 108 in the first Test against India at Headingley, Bethell was consigned to a month running the drinks and looked short on match practice when he replaced the injured Ben Stokes for the fifth Test at The Oval. Pope's form tailed off dramatically through the summer and he was replaced as vice-captain, but he was retained at No. 3 for the first Ashes Test.

Bethell finally got his chance to replace Pope



for the Boxing Day Test at the MCG after Pope managed just 125 runs in six innings, and top-scored with 40 in England's successful run chase on the second day. He followed up with a dazzling maiden hundred in Sydney, finishing the fourth day unbeaten on 142 to keep England's slim hopes of a second win in the series alive. He pushed back at the idea that he had sacrificed his place by going to the IPL - where he only made two appearances for RCB - rather than returning home for the Zimbabwe Test, the result of the ECB's agreement with the BCCI to make England players fully available. "I wouldn't say I gave it away at the IPL," he told Fox Cricket. "That experience I had over there was unbelievable... I came back a better cricketer."

He added: "I was pretty happy with how I went in New Zealand. I knew that I was coming in two places away: there was Jamie Smith, who was not present on the tour, and then Coxy was the back-up batter that got injured. I knew that it'd be a tough decision to bring me back in place of someone else."

JONATHAN DAVID REDEEMS HIMSELF WITH GOAL AND ASSIST IN JUVENTUS' 3-0 WIN OVER SASSUOLO

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

MILAN: Jonathan David repaid coach Luciano Spalletti's faith in him with a goal and an assist to help Juventus to a 3-0 win at Sassuolo in Serie A on Tuesday.

That saw fourth-place Juventus remain level on points with Roma after the capital side won 2-0 at relegation-threatened Lecce. Juventus and Roma are three points below Serie A leader Inter Milan, although all three of the teams above them have played two matches fewer.

David had come under fire after his penalty was saved in Saturday's 1-1 draw at home with Lecce.

However, he kept his place in the starting lineup and was

crucial in securing the result in the second half after an own goal from Sassuolo defender Tarik Muharemovic was the only thing to separate the sides at the break.

David set up Fabio Quagliarella for Juve's second, in the 62nd minute, and the Canada forward got on the scoresheet himself a minute later. The whole squad rushed over to celebrate with David, including those off the bench and Spalletti.

Roma coach Gian Piero Gasperini had been left fuming by refereeing decisions in Saturday's loss to his former team Atalanta.

But Roma rebounded in Lecce and took the lead in the 14th minute with a well-worked move, that ended with Evan Ferguson controlling Paulo Dy-



bala's disguised pass and drilling into the bottom left corner. Roma doubled its lead in the

71st as a corner came through to Niccolò Pisilli, whose angled drive was tapped in by Artem

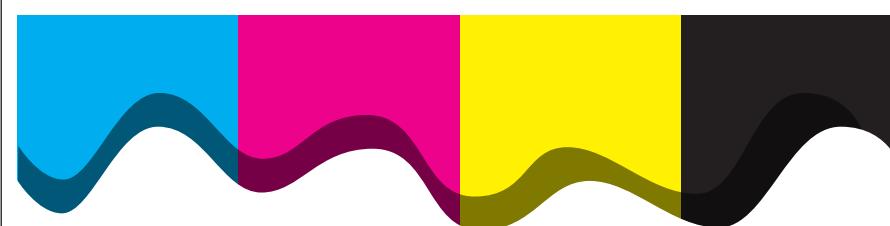
Dovbyk from close range. Dovbyk limped off late on after pulling up clutching the back of his leg.

Lecce remained 16th. Como broke down a resolute Pisa in the second half to win 3-0 and remain just three points off the Champions League spots.

Máximo Perrone broke the deadlock in the 68th and Anastasios Douvitas doubled Como's lead eight minutes later before Jean Butez saved M'Bala Nzola's penalty to prevent Pisa from getting back into the match.

Douvitas was more successful from the penalty spot in stoppage time to wrap up the match for Como.

Pisa was three points from safety.



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