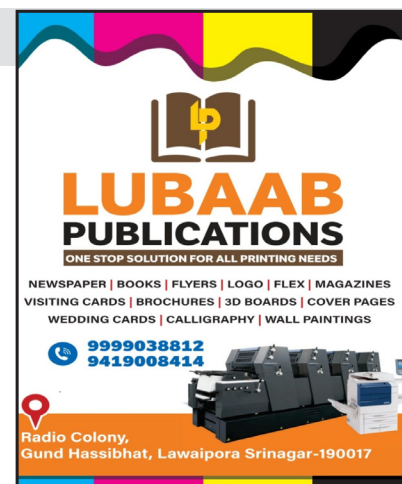


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HEADLINES TODAY

Voice To The Voiceless



'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' on Display as J&K Lok Bhavan Celebrates Statehood of Three North Eastern States

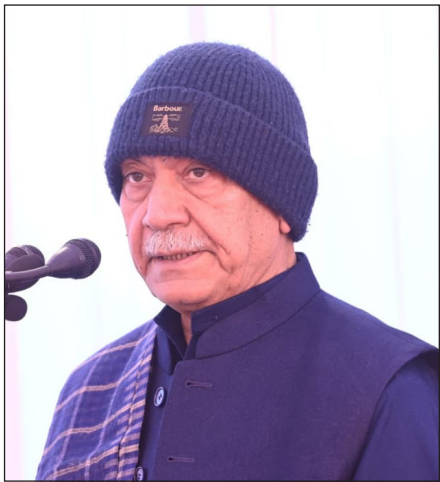
The Rich Cultural Heritage of Indian States is Driving Growth, Innovation and Social Resilience Under PM Modi's Leadership : LG Manoj Sinha

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JAN 21: Jammu and Kashmir Lok Bhavan on Tuesday celebrated the Statehood Day of Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya with a vibrant cultural evening in Jammu, showcasing the spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat and India's unity in diversity.

The event brought together students, security personnel and residents from Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya currently living in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Traditional performances and cultural presentations reflected the unique heritage, art and traditions of the three northeastern states.

Addressing the gathering, Lieutenant



Governor Manoj Sinha extended his warm greetings to the people of Tripura, Meghalaya and Manipur on their Statehood Day. He paid rich tributes to iconic personalities from these states and recalled their significant contributions to nation-building.

The Lieutenant Governor said the cultural diversity and rich heritage of Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya are emerging as powerful engines of regional growth, fostering innovation, economic vitality and social resilience.

"Under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the region has witnessed historic development. This transformation is not only driving

● Turn on Page 2

"Twin Western Disturbances Likely to Lash J&K, Disrupt Travel," : Warns IMD

Rain, Snowfall Likely From Jan 22-24, Followed by Another Spell From Jan 26-28

■ HT NEWS DESK / KNO

SRINAGAR, JAN 21: Jammu and Kashmir is bracing for widespread rain and snowfall as two western disturbances are set to impact the Union Territory in quick succession, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Wednesday, cautioning that the weather systems could disrupt air and surface transport, including the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway.

According to the IMD, the first and relatively intense western disturbance will affect the region from January 22 to 24, with peak activity expected on January 23. A second, moderate-intensity system is forecast to influence weather conditions from the night of January 26 to the forenoon of January 28,

peaking on January 27.

Under the influence of these systems, widespread light to moderate rain and snowfall is likely across Jammu and Kashmir, with heavy precipitation at isolated places, particularly over the Pir Panjal range, the Chenab Valley, and the middle and higher reaches of south Kashmir.

Areas expected to witness significant impact include Anantnag, Pahalgam, Kulgam, Shopian, Pir Ki Gali, Gulmarg, the Sonamarg-Zojila axis, Bandipora-Razdan Pass, Kupwara-Sadhna Pass, and the districts of Doda, Udhampur, Reasi, Kishtwar and Ramban.

Meanwhile, minimum temperatures across Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh showed mixed trends on Wednesday. In the Kashmir

● Turn on Page 2

Air power sent 'clear message' in Operation Sindoor: IAF Chief

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

NEW DELHI, JAN 21: Indian Air Force (IAF) Chief A P Singh on Wednesday said air power played a central role in Operation Sindoor, enabling the force to achieve its objectives within hours, including strikes on targets in Pakistan.

Addressing the 22nd Subroto Mukerjee Seminar, the Air Chief Marshal, as reported by the news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said recent conflicts show that air power has become the primary instrument for achieving strategic outcomes.

"The IAF demonstrated its capability to plan and execute operations that delivered results in



a short timeframe," he said.

Referring to Operation Sindoor, Singh said air operations allowed India to send a clear message through coordinated strikes on multiple

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Budget Must Reflect People's Aspirations : CM Omar Abdullah Sets Tone for J&K's Upcoming Budget

Second Day of Pre-Budget Consultations Focuses on Healthcare, Education, Infrastructure, Jobs and Inclusive Growth

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JAN 21: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday chaired the second consecutive day of pre-budget consultations with key departments, calling for a realistic, outcome-oriented and people-centric budget for Jammu and Kashmir ahead of the Budget Session of the Legislative Assembly beginning on February 2.

Holding the Finance portfolio, the Chief Minister led detailed discussions with the



departments of Social Welfare, Health and Medical Education, School Education,

Higher Education, Public Works (Roads

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DGP Reviews Shopian Security Ahead of R-Day

■ MK NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN, JAN 21: Director General of Police, Jammu and Kashmir, Nalin Prabhat (IPS), on Wednesday chaired a high-level security review meeting at the District Police Office (DPO) Shopian to assess the prevailing security situation and review ongoing anti-terror operations, with a special focus on arrangements for Republic Day-2026.

Prabhat, chaired a comprehensive Security Review Meeting at the Conference Hall, District Police Office (DPO), Shopian, to assess the prevailing security scenario and review



operational preparedness ahead of Republic Day-2026.

During the meeting, the DGP J&K conducted a detailed review of

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Security Tightened in Srinagar Ahead of R-Day

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JAN 21: Police have intensified security measures in Srinagar ahead of Republic Day to ensure smooth and incident-free celebrations, officials said on Wednesday.

In preparation for the upcoming Republic Day festivities, the Srinagar police has heightened security and inspection protocols throughout the city to guarantee a peaceful and safe observance

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PM Surya Ghar Yojana: Where rooftops turn into powerhouses for the households

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JAN 21: The implementation of the Prime Minister's flagship PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSGMBY) has gained remarkable traction in Jammu & Kashmir, positioning the Union Territory at the forefront of India's household-level renewable energy revolution.

Designed to provide free electricity up to 300 units per month through grid-connected rooftop solar systems, the scheme is rapidly transforming energy consumption patterns while strengthening energy self-reliance and sustainability across urban and rural households.

Backed by strong administrative oversight

and a robust digital delivery framework, the scheme is being rolled out in a structured, transparent, and time-bound manner, reflecting the UT Administration's commitment to clean energy adoption and consumer-centric governance.

Impressive On-Ground Progress
As of 31 December 2025, the scheme has recorded robust physical and financial progress. A total of 17,998 rooftop solar systems have been installed across Jammu & Kashmir, with 16,284 systems already commissioned and feeding clean power into the grid.

The financial impact is equally significant. Subsidies have been disbursed to 14,889

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House Listing Census to Begin in J&K June 1

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JAN 21: House Listing Operations (HLO) will be conducted across Jammu and Kashmir from June 1 to 30 as part of the upcoming census exercise, with self-enumeration commencing 15 days prior, officials said on Wednesday.

The schedule was decided by the Union Territory Level Census Coordination Committee, which met here on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, they said, adding that the

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Bringing Wool Home: How In-House Carding Could Recast the Future of Kashmir's Namda Craft

Policy Shift Ends Decades of Outsourcing, Cuts Costs for Artisans and Signals a Broader Strategy to Revive Traditional Livelihoods

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JAN 21: In a move that could quietly but decisively reshape the economics of Kashmir's traditional handicrafts, the Jammu and Kashmir government has initiated in-house wool carding for the indigenous Namda craft—ending a long-standing dependence on outsourcing and

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CS SEEKS TIME BOUND ACTION PLAN FOR COMPREHENSIVE MSME ASSESSMENT

Reviews MSME Health Clinic working under RAMP scheme

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JAN 21: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today reviewed the implementation of the MSME Health Clinic under the Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) programme during a meeting with senior officers of the Industries & Commerce Department and

other stakeholders.

The review focused on progress achieved, outreach to enterprises, and mechanisms for early identification and rehabilitation of stressed MSMEs.

Besides Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce Department the meeting was attended by Secretary in I&C; MD,

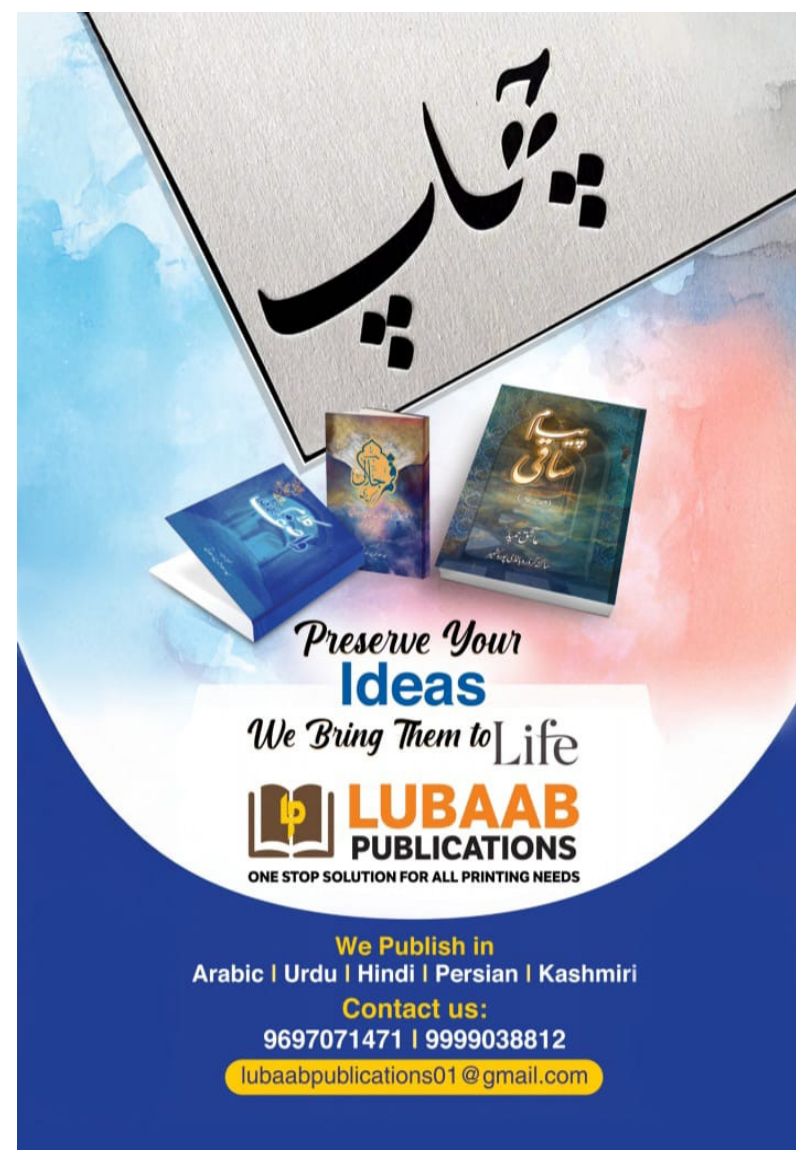
JKTPO; Director, Industries, Jammu/ Kashmir and other concerned officers.

While taking assessment of the progress made, the Chief Secretary impressed upon the Industries & Commerce Department to prepare a clear, time-bound action plan for systematic analysis of all MSMEs across Jammu and Kashmir. He

emphasized the need for defined timelines, measurable milestones and district-wise coverage to ensure the Health Clinic delivers tangible outcomes on the ground.

The Chief Secretary further stressed that timely diagnosis and intervention are critical for safeguarding employment and

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Ethical Direct Selling Key to sustainable growth, says Satish Sharma at 6th Direct Selling Conclave 2026

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI, JAN 21: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Information Technology, Youth Services & Sports and Transport, Satish Sharma, today emphasized the need for transparency, consumer trust and technology-driven regulation to ensure sustainable growth of the Direct Selling sector in India.

The Minister was speaking at the 6th Direct Selling Conclave 2026, held at Hyatt Centric, New Delhi, which brought together policymakers, regulators, industry leaders and national icons on a common platform.

Addressing the gathering, Satish Sharma stated that consumer confidence forms the backbone of any economic system. He



stressed that strict adherence to ethical practices and regulatory compliance is essential for the credibility and long-term stability of the Direct Selling industry.

He said that the government is vigorously strengthening the consumer protection mechanisms through policy reforms, digital monitoring systems and awareness programmes, ensuring that business growth goes hand in hand with accountability and fairness.

Referring to youth empowerment, the Minister highlighted technology's role in transforming public service delivery and enhancing transparency, grievance redressal and market surveillance. He also noted that direct selling can provide meaningful livelihood opportunities, especially for youth and women, when supported by skill development and compliance

frameworks.

The Minister also lauded the contributions of sports personalities present at the conclave, noting that the values of discipline, integrity and perseverance demonstrated by the sports persons serve as powerful lessons for industry and society alike.

The conclave witnessed the presence of eminent personalities including Olympic Medallist, Sakshi Malik, Arjuna Awardee Satyawart Kadian, Padma Bhushan and Padma Awardee Brigadier Anil Kohli and former Secretary, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Hem Pande.

The conclave featured discussions on policy reforms, consumer rights and innovation, along with an awards ceremony recognizing excellence in the industry.

Javid Dar assesses development issues, assures time bound action

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JAN 21: Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development Department and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Department, Javid Ahmad Dar, today met several delegations and individuals at the Civil Secretariat Jammu to assess and address issues related to development works and service matters.

Various delegations from Jammu, Udhampur and various districts of Kashmir highlighted concerns regarding rural infrastructure, road connectivity,



irrigation facilities, drinking water supply, implementation of Panchayati Raj schemes, employment-related issues and pending development projects.

The Minister issued on the spot directions to the concerned departments to examine the issues for early resolution. He emphasized that the government is focused on accelerating development works at the grassroots level, especially in rural and remote areas to ensure equitable growth.

Javid Dar reaffirmed the government's commitment towards strengthening the Panchayati Raj institutions, improving service delivery and ensuring effective implementation of development schemes under Agriculture Production and Rural Development sectors. He stressed that quality execution and timely completion of projects remain a key priority.

The Minister assured the delegations that their grievances would be addressed on a priority and time-bound basis, adding that the government is taking all necessary measures to fulfil the aspirations of the people and ensure sustainable development and prosperity across Jammu and Kashmir.

Security Intensified Across Kulgam Ahead of Republic Day

■ FAROOQ RATHER

KULGAM, JAN 21: In view of the forthcoming Republic Day celebrations, security arrangements have been significantly strengthened across Kulgam district to ensure peace and public safety.

As part of these measures, a special security operation has been launched in the Devsar area, where multiple checking points have been established at strategic locations. The operation is being led by SHO Devsar, Masood ul Hassan, with the objective of maintaining strict vigil and preventing any untoward incident.

The security drive is being conducted on the directions of SSP Kulgam Anayat Ali Chowdhury (IPS) and under the close supervision of ASP NHW Mumtaz Ali Bhatti (JKPS) and SDPO Qazigund. Police personnel are carrying out thorough checking of vehicles and individuals, while also keeping a close watch on suspicious movements.

Officials stated that these proactive measures are aimed at ensuring the smooth and peaceful conduct of Republic Day celebrations and instilling a sense of security among the public. They added that such operations will continue across the district in the coming days.

Police have urged citizens to cooperate with security forces during checking and remain vigilant, reiterating that public cooperation is vital for maintaining law and order during national events.

Kulgam Court Awards Community Service Under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM, JAN 21: Reflecting the reformative intent of the newly introduced Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, a local court in Kulgam has sentenced three individuals to community service for disturbing public peace while under the influence of alcohol.

The Judicial Magistrate of First Class, Kulgam, awarded the punishment after holding the accused guilty of creating a public nuisance in an intoxicated state. The trio had been booked by Police Station Kulgam under Section 355 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita for causing disturbance at a public place.

The convicted persons have been identified as Mubarak Ahmad Dar, son of Ghulam Hassan Dar of Bogund; Arif Ahmad Ganie, son of Mushtaq Ahmad Ganie of Bogund; and Bilal Ahmad Ahanger, son of Mohammad Yousuf Ahanger of Tuli Nowpora.

Upon conclusion of the trial, the court directed the convicts to perform ten days of community service, involving cleaning and maintenance of hygiene at the Tehsil and Sub-District Hospital, Qaimoh. The court observed that such non-custodial punishment not only ensures accountability but also provides offenders an opportunity to make a positive contribution

to society.

The order aligns with recent criminal law reforms that encourage addressing minor offences through corrective and community-based measures rather than imprisonment, with a focus on reformation and reintegration.

The decision has been widely welcomed by local residents, who described it as a balanced approach that maintains public order while promoting responsible behaviour. Kulgam Police have urged citizens to remain aware of the new legal provisions, stating that the reforms aim to strengthen discipline through responsibility and corrective justice.

EAC holds environment clearance granted to Ratle project valid till December 2030

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, JAN 21: The Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) of the Union Ministry of Forests, Environment & Climate Change has held that the environmental clearance (EC) granted to the 850-MW Ratle hydroelectric project is valid until December 11, 2030, and can be extended for up to two more years.

The Ratle Hydroelectric Power Corporation Limited (RHPCL), a joint venture of the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation Lim-

ited and the Jammu & Kashmir State Power Development Corporation Limited, had submitted a proposal for extension of the EC validity for the project.

Documents in possession of news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) reveal that the proposal came up for discussion before the EAC on January 09, 2026.

As per the record note of the meeting, the EAC observed that the EC for the project was granted on December 12, 2012, and was originally valid until December 11,

2022.

Citing the notification issued by the Union Ministry of Forests, Environment & Climate Change on January 18, 2021, the EAC noted that the period from April 01, 2020 to March 31, 2021 was excluded from EC validity due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Later, through another notification issued on April 12, 2022, the Ministry fixed the validity of EC for river valley projects at 13 years, with a possible extension of up to two years.

The Ministry, through an Office Memorandum dated October 30, 2025 clarified that if a project was halted due to proceedings before the NCLT or Courts, that period would be treated as "zero period," provided documentary proof was submitted.

According to the record note of the meeting, RHPCL submitted documentary evidence showing that the project was halted for four years.

"The EAC inquired about the necessary documentary evidence, wherein it was justified that the project was halted for four years. The Project Proponent, vide email dated 10.01.2026, provided the requisite documents. Therefore, the EAC opined that four years shall be considered as zero period in calculating the validity of the EC," the documents state.

The EAC held that the EC granted to the Ratle Hydroelectric Project on December 12, 2012 is valid until December 11, 2030, and further extendable by a maximum of two years—(KNO)

Kashmir saffron prices soar 50% as production plunges to all-time low

Growers fear losing global market to other countries, seek govt intervention

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, JAN 21: Kashmir's world-famous saffron, often hailed as "red gold", is witnessing an unprecedented surge in prices this season as production has plunged to an all-time low, triggering serious concerns among growers, traders, and consumers alike.

According to farmers and market traders who spoke to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), saffron production during the last season declined drastically to merely 5-10 per cent of an average year's yield, resulting in a sharp rise in market prices. They said the steep fall in output has pushed saffron rates up by 40 to 50 per cent compared to last year, with fears that prices may escalate further in the coming months.

In local markets across the Valley, one gram of saffron that was sold at around Rs 200 last year is now fetching Rs 250 to Rs 350, depending on quality and grade, according to traders. They attribute the surge to extremely low availability, saying that the supply crunch has affected both domestic and outside markets.

"The supply is very limited this year. Whatever little produce came

to the market has been quickly absorbed, and prices are likely to rise further if the situation remains unchanged," a trader said.

Growers have blamed the sharp decline in production on a combination of prolonged dry spells, erratic weather patterns, and the continuous shrinking of traditional saffron land due to urbanisation and land conversion.

They said the ongoing dry winter has further compounded their worries, as saffron cultivation is heavily dependent on timely moisture for healthy corm development. "This winter has remained largely dry so far. Without adequate rainfall or irrigation facilities, the impact will be felt in the next season as well," growers said, warning of another poor harvest if conditions persist.

Mohammad Ayoub, a saffron grower from Pampore—Kashmir's saffron hub—said the previous season was among the worst he has witnessed in decades.

"We have never seen production fall to this extent. Most farmers harvested only a few grams last year. The continued dry conditions are damaging the corms, which directly affects future production. If this trend continues, many grow-

ers will be forced to abandon saffron cultivation altogether," he said.

Echoing similar concerns, Gh Rasool, another grower from Lethpora, said the poor yield has pushed many saffron-dependent families into financial distress.

"Saffron is our primary source of livelihood. With production limited to just 5-10 per cent, managing household expenses has become extremely difficult. If the government does not intervene immediately, this crop may disappear from Kashmir," he warned.

Traders said the impact of low production is being felt not only in Kashmir but also in markets outside the Valley. Ali Mohammad Ganaie, a saffron trader from south Kashmir's Anantnag district, said prices have surged sharply within a short period.

"Prices have increased by nearly 50 per cent compared to last year and may go up further due to limited supply. Both local buyers and traders from outside Kashmir are bearing the brunt of low production," he said.

Another trader, Ashiq Rather, cautioned that the continued decline in local output could have long-term consequences for Kashmir's dominance in the global saffron market.

"Demand for Kashmiri saffron remains strong, but supply is critically low. This imbalance is driving prices up. If production continues to fall, saffron from other countries may replace Kashmiri saffron in markets we traditionally dominated," he said.

Meanwhile, saffron growers across Kashmir have appealed to the government for urgent intervention to save the sector from collapse.

They have demanded the creation of effective irrigation facilities, strict protection of saffron land from encroachment, and the strengthening of the Mission Saffron project with scientific, technical, and financial support.

"We need proper irrigation, modern scientific guidance, and timely support from the government. Without immediate intervention, the future of Kashmir's saffron industry is at serious risk," said Abdul Majid, another grower.

Stakeholders warned that continued neglect could spell the end of one of Kashmir's most iconic, heritage-rich agricultural sectors, which has sustained generations of farming families and brought global recognition to the region—(KNO)

Govt restores helicopter service to snow bound border areas

Subsidized services to resume for Gurez, Badugam, Tangdar, and Kanzalwan; priority given to patients, pregnant women, students

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, JAN 21: The Jammu and Kashmir administration Wednesday restored subsidized helicopter services to Gurez valley and other remote border areas of north Kashmir—re-establishing a crucial winter lifeline for snowbound communities.

In view of disrupted road connectivity during winters, the services operated by M/s Global Vectra Helicorp Limited aim to ensure smooth travel for residents, students and patients.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the subsidized fares range from Rs 2,000 to Rs 3,000 per passenger depending on the route.

Routes include Srinagar—Gurez (Rs 3,000), Bandipora—Gurez (Rs 2,000), Bandipora—Kanzalwan (Rs 2,000), Bandipora—Badugam (Rs 3,000) and Kupwara—Tangdar with Rs 3,000 per passenger.

Officials said boarding priority will be given to the patients, pregnant women, and students based on proper documents.

To ensure orderly operations, the Office of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Gurez, has appointed liaison officers at each helipad. ASI Mohammad Shafi will

oversee Baduaab and Gujran, while Feroz Ahmad Lone will handle Kanzalwan/ Izmar, and Naveed Anjum and Reyaz Ahmad Lone will manage Badugam and Neeru respectively.

Dawar and PTL helipads will be supervised by Bashir Ahmad Lone and Mohd Yaseen, with assistance from NYCs Shanawaz Ahmad Mapnoo and Lateef Ahmad Sheikh at Dawar.

The SDM Gurez, Mukhtar Ahmad, said liaison officers will coordinate passenger manifesting, verify documents, and remain in constant touch with the SDM office. "No patient referrals will be entertained unless properly endorsed."

"Technical glitches or weather-related cancellations will be reported immediately," the circular said, adding that bookings and inquiries can be made through the SDM Gurez office or designated officers in Kupwara and Bandipora.

It clarified that subsidized fares are exclusively for the local residents and will not be extended to central/UT officers on tour, tax payers, tourists, or VIPs.

The move comes as the Gurez valley and adjoining border areas remain cut off due to snow—(KNO)

Sakeena Itoo visits Kulgam, lays foundation stone of Rs. 2.74 Crs WSS at Banimullah

Also interacts with public delegations, locals, takes stock of developmental issues, local needs

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM, JANUARY 21: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education Sakeena Itoo, today visited Kulgam district and laid the foundation stone of Water Supply Scheme (WSS) at Herpora Banimullah here with an aim to ensure availability of safe and reliable potable drinking water to the local population.

The project being executed at an estimated cost of Rs. 2.74 crore under the UT Capex budget, once completed, is expected to provide safe and adequate potable water to a large number of households, addressing a long-standing demand of the local population.

After the foundation stone laying ceremony, the Minister addressed a public gathering, where she reiterated the



government's commitment to inclusive and balanced development. She emphasized that developmental projects are being implemented with a focus on transparency, quality, and timely completion to ensure maximum public benefit. "Access to clean drinking water is a basic necessity and a top priority of the government, especially in

rural and far-flung areas", Minister Sakeena stated.

On the occasion, the Minister also took stock of various developmental issues affecting the area, including water supply, healthcare facilities, education, road connectivity, and social welfare schemes. She assured the people that their genuine concerns would be addressed on priority

and conveyed that the government is working tirelessly to improve basic amenities and living standards.

During the interaction with the public delegations and individuals of the area, they raised several grievances and demands, ranging from infrastructure development to welfare-related issues.

The Minister listened patiently to the issues highlighted by the residents and directed the concerned officers present on the spot to take immediate steps for redressal wherever feasible, while ensuring follow-up action on other matters.

Highlighting the importance of public participation, the Minister said that community involvement and feedback play a crucial role in effective governance. She underlined that the government is committed to strengthening basic infrastructure, particularly drinking water supply, to improve the quality of life of people in rural and remote areas.

Senior officers of the district administration, officials from Jal Shakti Department, local representatives, and a large number of locals were present on the occasion.

SKUAST-Jammu hosts 3-day Agriculture Summit, Kisan Mela 2026 from Feb 11, 2026

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JANUARY 21: Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Jammu (SKUAST-Jammu) today formally announced the organization of the Agriculture Summit & Kisan Mela 2026, scheduled to be held from 11th to 13th February 2026 at the University's Main Campus, Chatha.

Addressing the media, the Vice-Chancellor of SKUAST-Jammu, Prof. B. N. Tripathi informed that the three-day mega event will be organized with the overarching theme "AI-enabled Advanced Agriculture." He said that the summit aims to bring together all major stakeholders associated with agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries, rural development, agri-linked industries, startups, researchers, extension professionals and farmers on a common platform.

Prof. Tripathi highlighted that the summit will place special emphasis on artificial intelligence based smart technologies, data-driven decision support systems, precision agriculture, climate-smart practices and digital innovations. He added that the event will serve as a unique interface between farmers, scientists, entrepreneurs and policy makers to promote research-extension-industry convergence and foster innovation in the agricultural sector.

The Vice-Chancellor further informed that the three-day programme will feature expert sessions on improved crop varieties, modern farm machinery, organic and natural farming, entrepreneurship and startup models, value addition and market linkages. Special attractions of the event will include farmer-scientist interactions, live demonstrations of advanced technologies, entrepreneurship workshops, dedicated programmes for women and young farmers and felicitation of progressive farmers.

Dr. Amrith Vaid, Director Extension, SKUAST-Jammu, while briefing the media, stated that the Kisan Mela component of the event will provide a vibrant platform for farmers to directly interact with scientists and technology providers, witness live demonstrations of new tools and techniques and access information on government schemes and agribusiness opportunities. He added that stalls of various departments, agri-input companies, FPOs, SHGs, startups and partner organizations will also be a major attraction.

It was informed that the Agriculture Summit & Kisan Mela 2026 is being organized in collaboration with the Agriculture Production Department, J&K; Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Jammu; Department of Horticulture, Jammu; Department of Floriculture, Jammu; Department of Animal Husbandry, Jammu; Department of Sheep Husbandry, Jammu; Department of Fisheries, Jammu; Jammu & Kashmir Farmers Advisory Board; NABARD, Jammu; Forest Department, Jammu; Directorate of School Education, J&K; Department of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj; IFFCO, Jammu and J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, among others.

On the occasion, the brochure of the Agriculture Summit & Kisan Mela 2026 was also formally released, outlining the theme, programme highlights, registration details and participation modalities for farmers, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders.

All the statutory officers of the University were also present on the occasion. Among others, Dr. Vinod Gupta, Dr. Punit Choudhary, Dr. Pawan Sharma, Dr. Anil Bhat and Dr. Vijay K. Sharma were present and coordinated the event. The speakers appealed to farmers, entrepreneurs, students and all stakeholders to actively participate in the event and take advantage of this mega platform for knowledge enhancement, capacity building and networking.

The interaction concluded with a question-answer session with media persons, during which detailed queries regarding registration, stall booking, programme schedule and logistics were addressed.

Samba admin finalizes arrangements for 16th National Voters' Day, 2026

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SAMBA, JANUARY 21: Deputy Commissioner Samba, Ayushi Sudan today chaired a meeting in the Conference Hall of DC office Complex Nandani Hills to review and finalize arrangements for the celebration of the 16th National Voters' Day (NVD), 2026.

National Voters' Day is observed every year on 25th January across the country to commemorate the foundation day of the Election Commission of India and to promote informed and active participation of citizens in the democratic process. In line with this objective, a series of awareness and outreach activities shall be organized across Samba district, with special focus on newly enrolled and first-time voters.



The meeting was informed that events would be organized at polling stations. The newly registered voters would be felicitated by providing Elector Photo Identity Cards (EPICs) and badges. The Voters' Pledge events shall be held at all levels, emphasizing the importance of ethical voting and electoral participation.

To enhance youth participation, the NCC cadets would be actively involved in the awareness programmes. "The theme for National Voters' Day 2026, 'My India, My Vote', will be highlighted through outreach and awareness initiatives" the meeting was told.

The main district-level function will be held at the District Headquarters. Concerned officials were directed to ensure maximum voter enrolment and participation, particularly among eligible youth.

The meeting was attended by ADDC Jagdish Singh, ASP, Garu Ram and other concerned officers.

DC Pulwama reviews progress of Jamabandi Digitisation

Quality, timely updation key to effective implementation

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

PULWAMA, JANUARY 21: Deputy Commissioner Pulwama today chaired a review meeting at administrative complex Pulwama to assess the status of digitisation of Jamabandies across the district.

The meeting focused on reviewing progress at various stages of the process and ensuring timely completion of the exercise.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner took a detailed halqa-wise review of all tehsils and sought details regarding pendencies at the Maker, Checker and Approval levels. He directed the concerned Tehsildars to devise a clear action plan for expediting the completion of pendencies and emphasized the need for close supervision at the field level.

Dr. Qayoom further instructed the Tehsildars to monitor progress on a daily basis, fix clear targets for Patwaris and ensure regular follow-up to avoid delays. He further directed that villages where digitisation has been completed should be frozen promptly on the portal and the draft records shared with village Numberdars and Chowkidars to facilitate the collection of public grievances, if any.

Concluding the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted the need to speed up the digitisation process while maintaining accuracy and



accountability. In addition to timely completion, emphasis was laid on maintaining high quality standards and ensuring effective grievance collection and redressal mechanisms.

The Deputy Commissioner stressed that coordinated efforts at all levels

are essential for the successful implementation of the digitisation initiative.

The meeting was attended by the Assistant Commissioner Revenue (ACR) Pulwama and all concerned Tehsildars.

Com JMC assessed sanitation, encroachment issues in Talab Tillo, Gol Gujral areas

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JANUARY 21: As part of the ongoing Swachh Republic Day campaign, Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC), Dr. Devansh Yadav, today carried out a detailed inspection of sanitation and encroachment issues in wards No. 30, 31, 32 and 40, covering Talab Tillo, Gol Gujral, Punch House and surrounding localities.

The Commissioner reviewed the overall cleanliness scenario, including door-to-door garbage

collection, lifting of legacy waste, cleanliness of streets and lanes and desilting of drains. He inspected major roads, inner lanes and public spaces to assess the ground-level implementation of sanitation measures being undertaken by the Corporation as part of the Swachh Republic Day initiative.

Dr. Yadav also took serious note of illegal encroachments on footpaths, roads and other public spaces, which were found to be causing inconvenience to pedestrians and vehicular traffic. The inspection also included the



demolition of illegal stalls and the removal of vendors operating on sidewalks. He directed the concerned enforcement teams to carry out these actions in a systematic and time-bound manner, ensuring that public spaces are restored for public use and kept free from re-encroachment.

Emphasizing the need for strict enforcement, the Commissioner instructed officers to conduct regular anti-encroachment drives and maintain close coordination between sanitation and enforcement wings. He stressed that such measures are essential for ensuring smooth traffic movement, pedestrian safety and overall urban cleanliness.

Interacting with local residents and shopkeepers, Dr. Yadav appealed for their cooperation in maintaining cleanliness and complying with municipal

regulations. He urged citizens to avoid littering, ensure proper segregation of waste at source and refrain from encroaching upon public land.

The Commissioner reiterated that the Swachh Republic Day campaign aims to ensure a clean, hygienic and encroachment-free city ahead of the Republic Day celebrations, reaffirming the Jammu Municipal Corporation's commitment to improving civic amenities and enhancing the quality of life for the people of Jammu.

Awareness programme on National Road Safety held at Rajouri

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

RAJOURI, JANUARY 21: As part of the National Road Safety Month 2026, the Motor Vehicle Department (MVD) Rajouri in collaboration with District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Rajouri organised an awareness programme on National Road Safety. The programme was held under the national theme "Sadak Suraksha - Jeevan Raksha" (Road Safety - Life Protection) with the aim to promote road safety awareness and reduce road accidents through collective public participation.

The programme witnessed the presence of Principal District and Sessions Judge, Rajouri Rajinder Sapru; Secretary District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) Shama

Sharma; Munsiff Shavika Gupta; Administrator One Stop Centre (OSC) Nitu Sharma, officers from the Motor Vehicles Department (MVD) including ARTO, Rajesh Gupta and DTI, officials from Traffic Police and others. Addressing the gathering, Rajinder Sapru, Principal District and Sessions Judge emphasized that human life is extremely precious and urged the general public to strictly adhere to traffic rules and regulations while driving. He also stressed that enforcement agencies must take firm action against traffic violators to ensure road discipline and safety.

As part of the awareness initiative, helmets, sweets and flowers were distributed among the general public to encourage compliance with traffic



rules and promote safe driving behavior

During the weeklong campaign, a series of activities were organized including road safety rallies,

interactive workshops and public awareness sessions.

Officials from the Motor Vehicles Department and Traffic Police sensitized the public about traffic rules, safe driving practices and the importance of wearing helmets and seatbelts to prevent loss of life.

The dignitaries highlighted that road safety is a shared responsibility and appealed to citizens to avoid rash and negligent driving, follow traffic norms in letter and spirit and adopt safe road behavior for their own safety and that of others.

The programme concluded with participants taking a pledge to follow road safety norms and spread awareness in the community, reinforcing the message that road safety saves lives.

Nukkad Natak organised to promote Labour Welfare Schemes in Samba

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SAMBA, JANUARY 21: A Nukkad Natak was organised by the Office of the Assistant Labour Commissioner (ALC) Samba today at the SIDCO Phase-I park to create awareness among factory and construction workers about various labour welfare schemes.

The programme aimed to sensitize workers to the Labour Codes, Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maandhan (PM-SYM) Scheme and Labour Card schemes.

The Nukkad Natak team, headed by Ravi Dutta, presented a satirical play highlighting the importance of PM-SYM and Labour Card schemes for construction workers. The play also educated factory workers about their rights under the



new Labour Codes proposed to be implemented shortly.

The initiative was well received by the workers and proved effective in spreading awareness about social security measures and labour rights.

DC Srinagar reviews progress on digitization & modernization of land records in the district

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, JAN 21: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo Wednesday chaired a meeting of senior Revenue Officers here at Confrnce Hall of the DC Office Complex aimed to review the progress of digitization and modernization of revenue record in district.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Mir Imtiyaz Ul Aziz; SDM West, Irfan Bahadur; SDM East, Zubair Ahmad; Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Umar Gulzar and all Tehsildars of Srinagar District.

At the outset, the DC conducted Tehsil wise progress achieved in the digitization of revenue records of the district aimed to enhance transparency and efficiency in land records management.



The DC assessed the status of digitization of land records, including data entry, verification, and updation processes and emphasized the need for timely completion of the digitization process.

The DC emphasized digitization of revenue record in efficient and professional manner to improve land records management and streamline revenue-related services. He stressed ensuring quality checks and maintain coordination among field functionaries to expedite the process. The DC underlined that the digitization of revenue records is pivotal to ensure ease of access to land-related information for citizens.

The DC stressed the Revenue Officers to work with added zeal and dedication to ensure quality and timely services to citizens.

Digitised Jamabandi Reading Commences at Village Lalad Sopore

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA, JAN 21: As part of the ongoing digitisation of revenue records, the Tehsil Administration Sopore has commenced the public reading of Digitised Jamabandies (Revenue Records), beginning with village Lalad.

The exercise is being conducted under the supervision of Tehsildar Sopore, Sheikh Tariq Ahmad, with the objective of ensuring transparency, accuracy, and active public participation in the revenue record management system. During these camps, digitised land records are read out in the presence of landowners and local residents, allowing them to verify entries and raise objections, if any, on the spot.

This process is a vital component of the district's broader initiative to digitise all revenue records and provide reliable, transparent, and citizen-friendly land record services.

The Tehsil Administration has urged landowners and residents, particularly farmers and other stakeholders, to actively participate in these camps and attend the readings to safeguard their land-related interests.

DC Bandipora chairs DLC Meeting for Change of Land Use

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, JAN 21: Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, today chaired a meeting of the District Level Committee (DLC) to review cases related to Change of Land Use (CLU) in the district.

During the meeting, a total of seven CLU cases were taken up for discussion. Concerned officers briefed the chair about the parameters and criteria being followed for issuance of No Objection Certificates (NOCs). After detailed deliberations, four cases were approved, while three cases were kept under review for further examination and clarification.

The Deputy Commissioner stressed that unchecked and increasing construction activities could lead to a decline in agricultural production and environmental degradation. She emphasized that NOCs must be issued strictly after due scrutiny and verification, keeping environmental concerns in view.

On the occasion, the DC further directed all line departments to



ensure that NOCs are issued only after proper examination of each case.

Emphasising inter-departmental coordination, the Deputy Commissioner called for responsible decision-making to balance development needs with environmental and agricultural sustainability.

The meeting was attended by Superintending Engineer, PWDCircle Bandipora; Sub Divisional Magistrate Sumbal; Assistant Commissioner Development Bandipora; Chief Agri-

culture Officer Bandipora; Chief Horticulture Officer Bandipora; Executive Engineers from REW/RDD Bandipora, R&B/Jal Shakti Sumbal and I&FC/PDD Sumbal/Gurez/Bandipora; District Officer, Pollution Control Board Bandipora; Tehsildars; Chief Town Planner Bandipora and other concerned officers. While, SDM Gurez, Executive Engineer SSD Gurez, Tehsildar Gurez and other concerned officers attended the meeting virtually.

DC Kupwara Assesses Youth Engagement and Empowerment initiatives in district

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KUPWARA, JAN 21: Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Shrikant Suse, today chaired a detailed review meeting to assess and strengthen the Youth Engagement and Empowerment initiatives being implemented across the district. The meeting aimed at evolving a structured approach to channel the potential and energy of youth towards positive, creative and productive avenues.

During the meeting, discussions were held on promoting youth participation in sports, recreational activities, skill development programmes and other constructive engagements. Special emphasis was laid on intensifying awareness and preventive measures against drug abuse



through sustained outreach and sensitisation efforts at the community level.

While addressing the meeting, the DC underscored the importance of collective and proactive involvement of all line departments to ensure meaningful youth

engagement. He directed departments to reinforce drug awareness campaigns, counselling services and grassroots-level interventions to protect young people from social challenges, particularly substance abuse.

The DC instructed all con-

cerned departments to prepare innovative, future-ready action plans for youth engagement for the year 2026, with a focus on maximising participation in both urban and rural areas. He highlighted the need to prioritise sports activities, cultural pro-

grammes, vocational training, employment-oriented initiatives and awareness drives.

Departments were also asked to explore greater youth participation in national events such as Tiranga rallies and upcoming tourist festivals.

Reiterating that youth empowerment remains a key priority of the district administration, the DC called for strong inter-departmental coordination to ensure timely implementation of planned initiatives. He directed that the draft action plans be finalised within the stipulated timeframe to translate policy decisions into tangible outcomes on the ground. The meeting was attended by ADDC Kupwara, Mufti Fareed ud Din; CPO, CEO, CMO, ACD, DSHO, besides other concerned officers.

DC Kulgam inaugurates Capacity-Building Workshop for Krishi Udhymis

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM, JAN 21: A one-day Training-cum-Workshop for Krishi Udhymis of 81 Kisan Khidmat Ghars (KKGs) of District Kulgam was organized by the Department of Agriculture Kulgam here at the Conference Hall of the Mini Secretariat, Kulgam.

The programme was presided over by the Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan.

While addressing the participants, the DC urged the Krishi Udhymis to work with zeal and dedication in the best interest of the farming community and appreciated department for organising such programmes.

During the programme, 27 left-out Krishi Udhymis were provided with Micro-ATM and Biometric L1 devices.



Technical sessions on onboarding of services were also conducted, and detailed information regarding Agriculture and Allied Sector schemes was provided by District and Technical Officers of various departments.

Chief Agriculture Officer informed that the sessions aimed at strengthening the functioning of Kisan Khidmat Ghars and improving last-mile service delivery to farmers.

The programme was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Kulgam, Altaf Ahmad Khan; Chief Agriculture Officer, Farooq Ahmad Reshi and the State and District Coordinator CSCs.

DC Kulgam reviews Republic Day 2026 arrangements

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM, JAN 21: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan today reviewed preparations for the smooth conduct of Republic Day-2026 celebrations during a meeting of officers held here at new conference hall Mini Secretariat, Kulgam.

Threadbare discussions were held on various arrangements to be made at the venue, including security, seating arrangements, parking, transportation, illumination of buildings, refreshments and accommodation for participants.

During the meeting, the DC directed all concerned departments to put in place elaborate and well-coordinated arrangements to ensure the successful conduct of the national function.

During the meeting it was shared that the main function will be held at DPL Kulgam, where the National Flag will be unfurled by the Chief Guest, followed by a parade comprising contingents of J&K Police, CRPF, NCC, Police Band, Women Contingent, NCC and other participating units.

The DC issued strict instructions to all departments to complete arrangements well in advance to ensure the smooth and dignified conduct of the celebrations.

Keeping in view the prevailing cold weather conditions, departments were asked to ensure adequate heating arrangements for rehearsals as well as on the final day of the event.

Emphasising coordination, the DC directed all concerned officers and agencies to maintain close inter-departmental coordination.

KPDCL was instructed to ensure uninterrupted power supply and to keep standby DG sets in readiness at the venue.

Municipality and Power Department were also directed to ensure proper illumination of important buildings across the town.

The DC further instructed the concerned departments to arrange colourful cultural programmes to mark the occasion.

Executive Engineer, MED was directed to keep men and machinery in a state of readiness to ensure timely snow clearance in case of any snowfall.

The meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner Revenue and officers from Police and other concerned departments.

ADDC Shopian presides over Block Diwas at block Ramnagri Reviews Public Grievances, Developmental Issues

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN, JAN 21: Additional District Development Commissioner (ADDC) Shopian, Dr. Nasir Ahmed Lone today presided over a block diwas at Chek Saidpora Ramnagri aimed at strengthening participatory governance and ensuring effective delivery of public services at the grassroots level.

The ADDC reviewed the progress of ongoing developmental projects in the block and stressed

upon quality execution of works, convergence among departments and optimal utilisation of funds. He also emphasized creating awareness among the public regarding various flagship government schemes so that eligible beneficiaries are covered without delay.

Interacting with the officials, the ADDC urged them to maintain regular field presence and adopt a people-centric approach while addressing public grievances. He

reiterated that Block Diwas serves as an important platform for direct interaction between the administration and citizens, helping bridge gaps and improve service delivery.

During the Block Diwas, the ADDC listened patiently to issues and demands raised by the public pertaining to developmental works, rural infrastructure, water supply, power, health services, education, road connectivity, installation of mobile tower for enhancing network facility in the

area, irrigation pump shed, upgradation of PHC, renovation of Primary School building, widening of Sedow Shopian road, construction of Springs, functioning of Check Saidapora water supply scheme, disilting of Khudpora to Amshipora irrigation khul, completion of languishing project (famous Shah Khul), PMAY cases, lifting of garbage, etc.

Officers concerned were directed to examine the issues on priority and ensure time-bound

redressal in a transparent and accountable manner.

On the occasion, Chief Horticulture Officer apprised the people about some welfare schemes of Horticulture and asked for availing of benefits of these schemes meant for the well-being of the people.

The programme witnessed active participation of DDC Member, Ramnagri; BDO, Ramnagri, officers from various departments, officials and local residents.

HT EDITORIAL

Don't make kiosks to rust, hand them over to roadside vendors

Under the smart city project, Srinagar city is witnessing inauguration of various projects with Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday inaugurating the refurbished Amira Kadal bridge. It is a good thing that more and more civic amenities are coming up in Srinagar, the summer capital of the union territory of Jammu & Kashmir. The inauguration of projects under the Smart City Project is a welcome step and it is bound to provide facilities to the common masses.

At the same time, it is important that there is no wastage of money in this regard and all the amenities are dedicated to the people. Some years back the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) constructed kiosks for the people selling merchandise on the busy roads and streets of the Srinagar city. As on date these kiosks have been placed on a huge expanse of land opposite to the Khalsa School adjacent to the Exhibition market.

Ideally these kiosks should have been allotted to the beneficiaries at the earliest so that there is minimum disruption of the public movement in the Lal Chowk and the adjoining areas. These kiosks have been left to rust and dust by the authorities with a good amount spent on their construction going down the drain. In other words, we can say that the state exchequer has suffered a loss of lakhs of rupees since the kiosks have not been used properly.

For years the authorities have been claiming that they are serious in decongesting the Srinagar city from encroachments. Since the kiosks were to be placed in the Batmaloo area the Lal Chowk area and the adjoining ones would have been made from the encroachments. Roadside vendors have virtually choked many areas of the city centre and there is a dire need to provide fresh air to the people moving in and around the city centre areas. The same would provide a refreshing look to Lal Chowk, considered to be the heart of Srinagar.

The time is opportune to hand over the kiosks to the identified roadside vendors and shift them to the Batmaloo area. Once the kiosks are allotted to the roadside vendors there would be life in the Batmaloo area with the hustle and bustle being witnessed all along the day. Sooner this is done better it will be for both the people as well as the government. Hope the better sense prevails upon the people at helm.

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Cold without Snow: Kashmir Faces a New Winter Reality



■ MOHAMMAD HANIEF

Winter has always been the defining season of the Kashmir Valley. For centuries, heavy snowfall, prolonged cold and frozen landscapes shaped the rhythm of life, influencing agriculture, water availability, tourism and daily routines. Snow-laden winters were not only visually iconic but ecologically essential, replenishing rivers, nourishing orchards and sustaining fragile mountain ecosystems. In recent years, however, the character of winter in Kashmir has undergone a visible transformation. The current season reflects a growing pattern of climatic instability, where intense cold exists alongside dryness, reduced snowfall and unpredictable weather behavior.

This winter, large parts of the Valley have experienced extended dry spells during what is traditionally the snowiest period of the year. Chillai Kalan, the coldest phase of winter, passed with little to no snowfall in many low-lying areas, while higher reaches received only brief and uneven snow events. Instead of continuous snow cover, the Valley witnessed fluctuating temperatures, clear skies and sharp frost. This shift marks a departure from historical winter norms and points toward deeper changes in the region's climate system.

One of the most striking aspects of this changing pattern is the steady decline in snowfall. In earlier decades, snow arrived in regular cycles, gradually building a thick snowpack that lasted well into spring. Today, snowfall is sporadic and often delayed. When it does occur, it tends to melt quickly due to slightly warmer daytime temperatures. In many cases, precipitation that would earlier fall as snow now comes as rain, particularly in the plains. The absence of sustained snow cover has altered the winter landscape and weakened the Valley's natural capacity to store water for the months ahead.

These changes are closely linked to rising regional temperatures and altered atmospheric circulation. Western Disturbances, which traditionally bring winter precipitation to Kashmir, have become irregular in both timing and intensity. Their weakened impact has resulted in prolonged dry spells interrupted by short-lived weather systems. Clear skies following these disturbances intensify nighttime cooling, leading to severe frost despite the lack of snow. This combination of dryness and cold has made winters feel harsher in daily life, even as snowfall becomes less reliable.

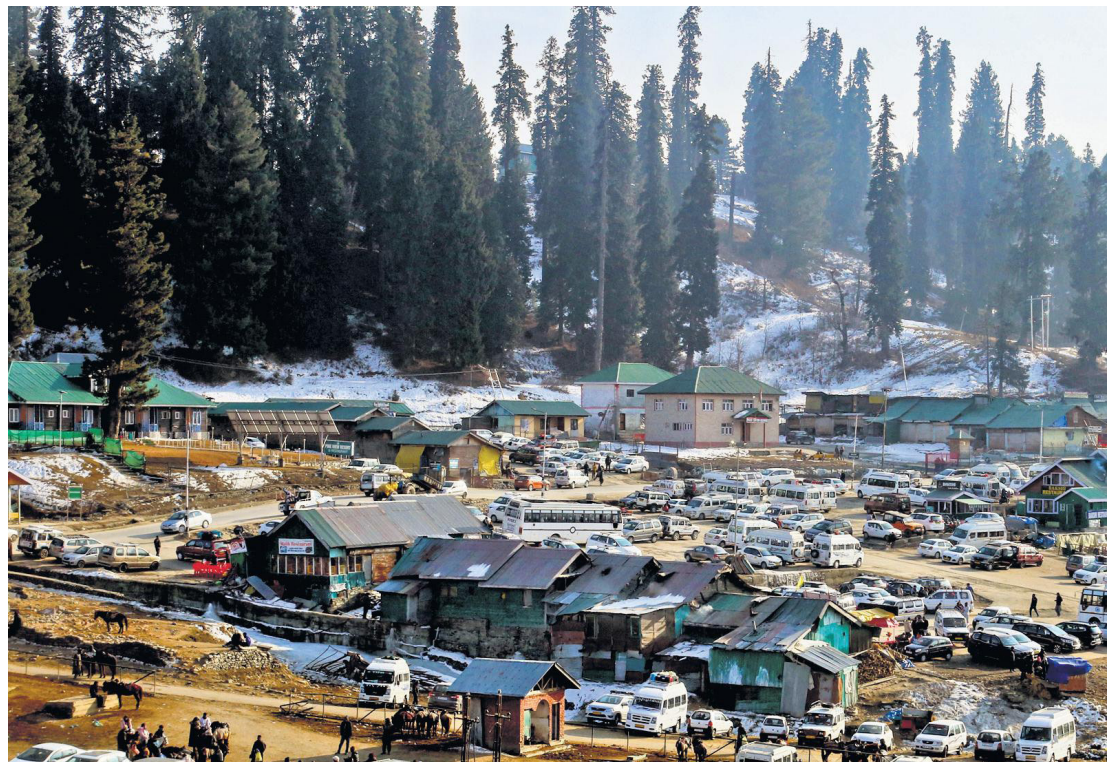
The consequences of these shifts extend far beyond the winter months. Snow acts as a natural reservoir, releasing water gradually into rivers, lakes and groundwater systems. Reduced snowfall means less water stored in this natural system, increasing the risk of shortages during spring and summer. The Jhelum river system, wetlands and thousands of natural springs that supply drinking water to communities across the Valley depend heavily on winter snowpack. With declining snow accumulation, early signs of water stress are already visible, raising concerns about future availability for households, agriculture and hydropower generation.

Agriculture and horticulture, the backbone of the Valley's rural economy, are particularly sensitive to these changing conditions. Apple orchards and other fruit crops rely on sufficient winter chill to regulate dormancy and ensure healthy flowering. Snow cover also maintains soil moisture, protects roots from extreme cold and suppresses pests. Warmer and drier winters disturb this balance. Reduced chilling hours can affect fruit quality and yield, while the lack of sustained snow allows pests and diseases to survive through winter. Farmers increasingly face uncertainty as traditional farming calendars tied to predictable seasons become less dependable.

The tourism sector, especially winter tourism, continues to play a crucial role in the Valley's economy, even as changing weather patterns introduce new challenges. Despite irregular snowfall, destinations like Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Sonamarg remain major winter attractions, drawing visitors with their natural beauty, alpine landscapes and seasonal activities.

Gulmarg, often referred to as the winter capital of Kashmir, continues to be the most prominent hub for winter tourism. Its high altitude allows it to receive comparatively better snowfall than the plains, making it a center for skiing and other snow-based activities. During winter, Gulmarg's snow-covered meadows, gondola rides and pine forests offer visitors a classic alpine experience. Even in years of reduced snowfall, the charm of the landscape, combined with occasional snow spells, keeps Gulmarg relevant as a winter destination. However, the unpredictability of snow has shortened ski seasons and increased dependence on precise weather windows, affecting event planning and tourist inflow.

Pahalgam, known for its serene valleys and forested landscapes, offers a different kind of winter attraction. During colder months, the town transforms into a quiet retreat, with frost-covered



Agriculture and horticulture, the backbone of the Valley's rural economy, are particularly sensitive to these changing conditions. Apple orchards and other fruit crops rely on sufficient winter chill to regulate dormancy and ensure healthy flowering. Snow cover also maintains soil moisture, protects roots from extreme cold and suppresses pests. Warmer and drier winters disturb this balance. Reduced chilling hours can affect fruit quality and yield, while the lack of sustained snow allows pests and diseases to survive through winter. Farmers increasingly face uncertainty as traditional farming calendars tied to predictable seasons become less dependable.

meadows, frozen streams and snow-dusted pine forests. Winter in Pahalgam appeals to visitors seeking tranquility rather than adventure, with opportunities for leisurely walks, photography and experiencing traditional winter life in the mountains. Reduced snowfall has altered the visual intensity of winter here, yet the crisp air and stark beauty continue to attract tourists, particularly those looking for peaceful escapes.

Sonamarg, located at a higher altitude, remains one of the Valley's most dramatic winter landscapes. Often buried under deep snow, it serves as a gateway to some of the region's highest passes. In winter, Sonamarg's rugged terrain, frozen rivers and towering snow-covered peaks create a striking scene. Snow activities, winter treks in safer zones and short snow experiences attract adventure enthu-

siasts when conditions allow. However, heavy snowfall combined with sudden weather changes can also lead to road closures, highlighting the increasing unpredictability of winter travel in high-altitude areas.

While these destinations continue to draw visitors, the changing nature of winter has made tourism more uncertain. Shorter snow seasons, fluctuating temperatures and delayed snowfall affect bookings, employment and long-term planning. Tourism operators must now adapt to narrower operational windows, while local workers face income instability linked to weather variability.

Beyond environmental and economic impacts, the current dry winter has significant implications for public health. Cold, dry air increases the risk of respiratory problems, and this season has seen a noticeable rise in respiratory complaints across the Valley. Low humidity dries out the airways, making people more susceptible to infections and worsening conditions such as asthma and chronic bronchitis. Elderly individuals and those with existing health issues are particularly vulnerable during prolonged dry spells combined with sub-zero temperatures.

Skin-related ailments have also become more common during this dry winter. Reduced moisture levels strip the skin of its natural oils, leading to dryness, cracking, itching and flare-ups of eczema. Eye irritation and throat discomfort are frequently reported as well, especially in urban areas where indoor heating further reduces humidity levels.

Water-related health concerns are emerging alongside declining winter precipitation. Reduced snowmelt affects the reliability of water supply systems, forcing some households to depend on stored or alternative sources. Limited water availability can compromise hygiene and increase the risk of infections, particularly in rural areas where springs serve as primary water sources.

Mental health challenges are also becoming more visible. Winter in Kashmir has always been demanding, but uncertainty surrounding weather, water resources and livelihoods adds psychological stress. Farmers worried about crops, tourism workers facing irregular incomes and families coping with prolonged cold and dry conditions experience heightened anxiety. The absence of consistent snowfall, which traditionally symbolized winter continuity, also affects emotional well-being during the long, cold months.

The ecological consequences of changing winter patterns are equally serious. Snow plays a vital role in regulating mountain ecosystems, influencing plant growth cycles and providing insulation for alpine flora and fauna. Reduced snow cover disrupts these processes, alters habitats and increases vulnerability to erosion. When winter precipitation falls as rain instead of snow, it can destabilize soil and raise the risk of landslides in mountainous terrain.

As the climate continues to evolve, the Kashmir Valley stands at a critical crossroads. Adapting to these changes will require thoughtful planning, community awareness and sustainable resource management. Strengthening water conservation, supporting climate-resilient agriculture, improving healthcare preparedness and promoting adaptive tourism strategies are becoming essential priorities. Better weather monitoring and early warning systems can help communities respond more effectively to extreme conditions.

Winter in Kashmir has always been more than a season; it is a defining force that shapes identity, culture and survival. As snowfall becomes uncertain and dry cold more common, the challenge lies in preserving the Valley's ecological balance and social resilience. The changing winter landscape calls for informed action and collective responsibility to ensure that Kashmir's winters, though transformed, remain sustainable for generations to come.

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BOOK REVIEW

Faizan-e-Nazar by Majeed Masroor



■ RAYEES AHMAD KUMAR

Central Kashmir's Budgam district has produced scores of poets, litterateurs, authors, critics and philosophers whose dedication and commitment to the promotion of language and literature have always won appreciation from all walks of life. Majeed Masroor, a household name across the Valley due to some of his celebrated songs, is not merely a poet and author, but also a truly down-to-earth person. Apart from composing refined poetry and thoughtful essays, he also acts as a literary coordinator for several news channels where mushairas and literary sessions are held on a regular basis. Recently, he has come out with a new collection of essays, Faizan-e-Nazar, a treasure of 21 artfully composed articles. Spanning 164 pages, the book carries an attractive cover and has been published by the renowned Meezan Publishers, Srinagar. The author has dedicated this book to his loving parents and esteemed readers, requesting them to pray for his parents, sister, aunt and friends who have departed from this mortal world. In its foreword, Majeed Masroor expresses the view that social issues, whether small or large, affect the entire society, as society is formed by the people who live in it. Therefore, it is the collective responsibility of all to work for social reform and to eradicate social evils. Akhter Meraj has written a well-articulated proem to this book. Accord-

ing to him, Majeed Masroor is a well-known writer who writes in both Urdu and Kashmiri, has authored many books, and possesses a deep love for Urdu. Wehshi Syed, editor of the quarterly magazine Nagina International, has also written about the book, stating that its simple prose and comprehensive language have made it truly splendid. Before its opening write-up, the reader comes across the translation of Surah Fatiha, the first Surah of the Glorious Qur'an, and Darood-e-Ibrahim. "Kitabon ke Baghair Insaan Adhoora Hai," the opening article, beautifully highlights the importance of books and shows how a reader can enhance knowledge, vocabulary and wisdom through reading. Books are the storehouse of knowledge and guidance; they broaden our mental horizons and give direction to our aims and ambitions. "Zameer Murda Ho To Insaan Gunah Karta Hai" is another thought-provoking piece. According to the author, conscience is the powerful inner voice that reproaches a person when he commits an unlawful or evil act. Avarice, greed, hatred and scandal-mongering are satanic traits, yet they are often found in human beings as well. In "Darakht Zameen Ka Zewar," the author discusses the vital role of plants in maintaining ecological balance, regulating the planet's temperature and providing a healthy environment. Besides supplying oxygen—the currency of life—fruits, vegetables and medicines, trees also offer soothing shade during the scorching summer. He further strengthens his argument with quotations from saints, including the famous saying of Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Noorani: "An posha teli yeli wan posha." "Baap Ki Narazgi Allah Ki Narazgi" highlights the lofty status of parents in Islam. Quoting Abdullah bin Umar (RA), the



Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said that Allah's pleasure lies in the father's pleasure, and His displeasure lies in the father's displeasure. A father toils hard, often enduring severe hardships, only to see a smile on the face of his children. Children must love, respect and care for their parents, especially in old age. "Sehat Aik Azeem Naimat" rightly reminds the reader that health is the greatest blessing from the Almighty, enabling one to enjoy the colours of life. Its true value is best realised by the sick, who, instead of enjoying life, feel its burdens. "Touba" explains the importance of repentance in Islam. Since humans commit mistakes knowingly or unknowingly, they are commanded to seek forgiveness regularly to avoid the wrath of the Almighty. Even the Prophets and saints repented frequently to please their Lord. "Zubaan Ko Apne Qaboo Mein Rakho" is a finely written article emphasising the power of the tongue, which can win hearts or create enmity. The author rightly observes that words can be sharper than the edge of a sword. "Noujawan Qoum Ka Asasa Hote Hain" underlines the role of youth as the backbone of a nation. Allama Iqbal compared the youth to the Shaheen for its lofty vision and strength of character. Well-guided youth can bring revolution and ensure a bright and prosperous future. Majeed Masroor, besides being a distinguished Kashmiri poet, is an equally impressive prose writer. He feels the pain of society and, through his pen, strives to uproot the evils embedded in it. Faizan-e-Nazar is indeed a valuable and meaningful collection. Readers should certainly go through it and offer the appreciation it truly deserves.

Writer is a columnist based in Qazigund Kashmir

Kunchouth-The Festival Of Love And Affection

■ MOOL RAJ

Kunchouth is a historical festival of Bhaderkashi is being celebrated with great zeal & enthusiasm around Jammu and Kashmir.

Like Karvachouth in other parts of the country, Kunchouth and Gauri -Tritya a local festival of Women is celebrated with enthusiasm and Religious Fervour in three Hilly Districts Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban of Jammu Province and District Chamba of Himachal Pradesh every year During the Shukla Paksha of Magh Month in January/February praying for long life of their husband's.

The style of both festivals almost same ,the only difference is the timing, where as the kunchouth falls in winter and the karwa- chouth is celebrated during summer. Also that on "karwa-Chouth" women breaks their fast when moon appears ,while in case of "kunchouth" the fast is broken after 'Gouri pooja' during the day. Ladies clad in their best suits ornaments gather at near by water body (water chashma), reform Pooja and the sing "Gouri" song and dance one by one. To celebrate marriage of Lord Shiva with Goddess Parvati, ancient Kanchoth festival was observed across erstwhile district Doda. The festival is revered as one of the most religious and colourful events for the followers of Nag Culture.

The age-old festival is celebrated as locals mainly Nag followers believe that on this day of Gouri tritiya, Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati got married and the latter insisted on a throne made of snow as her wedding gift. Thus, snow during the festival is considered a good omen.

Like Karvachouth in other parts of the country, Kanchoth or Gauri-Tritya a local festival of women is celebrated with enthusiasm and religious fervour in erstwhile Doda district every year during the Shukla Paksha of Magh month in January and February.

Karwachouth is celebrated mostly in wider geographical area in plains, Kanchoth and Gauri-Tritya is celebrated in hilly areas of Bhaderwah, Kishtwar, Ramban and Doda districts of Jammu Province.

Both the festivals are celebrated by women to pray for long life of their husbands. On the festival day women clad in



crisp new elegant bridal suit, donning matching jewellery with henna painted hands pray for the long lives of their spouses. The occasion has great significance in the life of every married woman. The day is considered pious for women when they can pray to Goddess Gauri for the long and healthy lives of their husbands.

The festival though is of one day yet the festivity remains for three days. During the three day , women's go in the neighbourhood to offer the "respect" to one and all irrespective of Creed colour and caste, age and sex and get in turn their blessing "SUHAAGAN BHO" means (live long your husband).

The women are supposed to take food in every house the visit. In some cases it so happens that they have to take their meals in scores of houses each day. In the night ladies gather, sing "Gouri" and dance at their tune.

During three days the "Chull" (kitchen) is managed by husband's. On hilly terrain covered by snow when ladies dressed in colourful traditional dresses and ornaments moves in a line from one village to another, it gives a feeling as if fairies from sky had descended on the earth.

Latest Positive Change : Even Many Husband's Fast on this auspicious day To celebrate marriage of Lord Shiva with

Goddess Parvati, ancient Kanchoth festival was observed across erstwhile district Doda. The festival is revered as one of the most religious and colourful events for the followers of Nag Culture.

The age-old festival is celebrated as locals mainly Nag followers believe that on this day of Gouri tritiya, Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati got married and the latter insisted on a throne made of snow as her wedding gift. Thus, snow during the festival is considered a good omen.

Like Karvachouth in other parts of the country, Kanchoth or Gauri-Tritya a local festival of women is celebrated with enthusiasm and religious fervour in erstwhile

Both the festivals are celebrated by women to pray for long life of their husbands. On the festival day women clad in crisp new elegant bridal suit, donning matching jewellery with henna painted hands pray for the long lives of their spouses. The occasion has great significance in the life of every married woman. The day is considered pious for women when they can pray to Goddess Gauri for the long and healthy lives of their husbands

Doda district every year during the Shukla Paksha of Magh month in January and February.

Karwachouth is celebrated mostly in wider geographical area in plains, Kanchoth and Gauri-Tritya is celebrated in hilly areas of Bhaderwah, Kishtwar, Ramban and Doda districts of Jammu Province.

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The author is a regular columnist and freelance writer

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Nail Care in Winters



■ SHAHNAZ HUSAIN

Do you have dry, cracked, splitting, brittle finger-nails during the winter months?

It's not just your skin that dries out during the winter months; your nails do too! As soon as there's even a hint of chill in the air, your nails start to chip and flake.

If you are experiencing slow nail growth, brittle nails, nail breakage, nail splitting, and other nail problems nowadays, winter is to blame here as well. People often take special care of their hair and skin during chilling weather, but forget to take care of their nails.

Nails are part of the integumentary system (skin) of your body and they develop from the outer layer of your skin called the epidermis. The exact same cells that form the outer layer of your skin also form your nails. These cells harden more in your nails, but structurally they share many common features and needs.

Natural oils hold together the different layers of your nails, so cold and dry winter months and lots of hand washing with harsh soaps will dry out this natural "glue." It's very similar to the dry skin you experience during the winter months.

The same concept to fix dry skin can be used for dry nails, but different formulations are recommended because of the unique structural properties of your nails.

Here, are easy winter nail care tricks to make sure your nails stay long and strong.

One easy way to counteract cold weather? With a nice warm pair of gloves

Protect your nails by wearing a nice warm pair of rubber gloves for your washing chores. This is when you are gardening, house cleaning, washing dishes, or using harsh chemicals.

When you wear gloves, you protect your nails from getting dry and at the same time, keep dirt out of your nails. Massage a cream, oils, or ointments to damp nails and the skin around the nails after washing chores

Doing so can protect your nails from breakage and help locking in moisture to help preserve the cuticle seal and strengthen the nail itself.

For dry hands and nails, massage almond oil on the hands and around the nails too, in order to soften the cuticles. The cuticle (skin surrounding the nail) should be kept soft and smooth. Otherwise, it sticks to the nail and gets dragged as the nail grows. This causes the skin to get stretched and torn. The skin can even become

infected if this happens. Daily massage is even more important during the dry winter season.

For moisturizing your nail, take 1 tablespoon of almond and castor oil, and mix a little hand cream in it. Massage the mixture into your hands. Follow up with moisturizer and treat yourself to a weekly hand at-home treatment mask.

Never cut, push back, or try to get rid of cuticles altogether. In fact, the cuticle is the nail's natural protective seal. Moisturizing the cuticles with cream or oil helps protect and strengthen your nails helping stimulate nail growth, and bringing blood and nutrients to maintain healthy nails.

Cuticle oils will penetrate into the deeper layers of the skin and hydrate the cuticle, skin, and nail area, and help in preventing breakage of the nails.

Once a week soak the nails in lukewarm water for a few minutes and afterwards apply the cream to the nails. Massage them, so that it helps to soften the skin and lock in the moisture by wearing cotton gloves for at least an hour. Then push the cuticles back gently using a cotton bud. Never use sharp instruments to clean under the nails.

For strong and healthy nails, include adequate protein and calcium in your diet. Take skimmed milk, yoghurt, cottage cheese (paneer), fish eggs and sprouts. Follow a ten-day programme of taking gelatin. Dissolve one teaspoon of gelatin in a little boiling water. Cool the water and add it to fruit juice. Have this daily for ten days.

A weekly manicure keeps nails in good condition. For a home manicure, first, remove old nail varnish. To cut nails, use a nail clipper. Then shape them with an emery board. File in one direction only. Soak the hands in lukewarm water for 5 minutes after adding a few drops of shampoo. Use a soft brush to clean your nails.

If you have nails which break easily, avoid frosted nail polish. If there is any infection or pain, avoid filing the nails and using nail polish. Get medical attention first. Fungal infection of the nails is quite common.

Sometimes, the nails acquire a yellowish tinge, due to wearing nail polish constantly. Sun exposure and some pastel colours can leave a yellowish tinge. For protection, use clear, transparent nail polish as a top coat. UV-resistant top coats are also available. To protect the nails apply a transparent base coat first and then apply the colour of your choice.

To get rid of the yellowish tint on the nails, scrape the surface of the nail with the finest-grain side of an emery board so that the nail is not damaged. Then apply UV-resistant or clear polish for protection. The nails can also be "buffed" or rubbed with a piece of chamois leather.

The author is an internationally famous beauty expert and is called the herbal queen of India



ACCEPTANCE OF ALMIGHTY'S ORDERS

■ DR. SURINDERPAL SINGH

Acceptance of God's order is often described in spiritual traditions as surrender to the Divine Will, and it has remained a central theme across religions, philosophies, and contemplative sciences. In recent decades, medical science, neuroscience, and psychology have begun to explore acceptance and surrender as measurable mental states associated with improved health outcomes, emotional stability, and resilience.

Acceptance of God's order does not imply passivity or fatalism; rather, it represents a conscious alignment with reality as it unfolds. Across spiritual traditions—whether termed Hukam, Divine Will, Providence, or Cosmic Order—acceptance is regarded as the foundation of inner peace. Modern psychology defines acceptance as the ability to experience thoughts, emotions, and events without resistance or avoidance. Medical science now recognizes acceptance as a key component of mental well-being, stress regulation, and psychosomatic health.

Chronic resistance to reality, which may manifest as regret about the past, anxiety about the future, or dissatisfaction with the present, activates the body's stress response. Persistent stimulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis leads to elevated cortisol levels, contributing to hypertension, immune suppression, metabolic disorders, depression, and anxiety. Acceptance-based psychological models such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy have demonstrated that acknowledging reality without judgment reduces psychological distress and enhances emotional regulation. Neuroimaging studies reveal that acceptance practices decrease hyperactivity in the amygdala, the brain's fear center, while strengthening prefrontal cortex networks responsible for rational thought and emotional balance. Thus, acceptance of God's order is not merely a spiritual virtue but also a neurobiologically beneficial state.

Training oneself for acceptance involves learning to relate wisely to the past, the present, and the future. The past cannot be altered, yet unresolved emotional attachment to it fuels guilt, anger, and grief. Medically, rumination is closely associated with depression and impaired cognitive flexibility. Acceptance of the past is cultivated by reframing experi-

ences as lessons rather than punishments, engaging in forgiveness practices that reduce emotional burden, and mindfully observing memories without emotional reactivation. This process allows the nervous system to disengage from chronic stress loops and fosters psychological healing.

Acceptance of the present is equally vital, as the present moment is the only domain of direct experience. Resistance to the present, expressed through wishing reality were different, creates inner conflict. Scientific studies show that present-moment awareness enhances parasympathetic or rest-and-digest activity, improving heart rate variability and emotional stability. Accepting the present involves non-judgmental awareness of sensations, thoughts, and emotions, trust in the unfolding of events as part of a larger order, and the cultivation of gratitude, which has been linked to improved immune and cardiovascular health.

Acceptance of the future addresses fear rooted in uncertainty. Neuroscience suggests that the brain seeks predictability, and uncertainty activates anxiety pathways. Acceptance of the future does not negate planning or effort; rather, it releases excessive attachment to outcomes. This form of acceptance is developed through trust in divine wisdom beyond human comprehension, a shift from rigid control to thoughtful preparedness, and the practice of hope without obsession. Such acceptance reduces anticipatory anxiety and strengthens psychological resilience.

Surrender to the Supreme Power is often misunderstood as weakness, whereas from a scientific perspective it represents the relinquishment of maladaptive control. Excessive control-seeking is closely linked with anxiety disorders and burnout. Surrender activates humility, trust, and cognitive flexibility, traits associated with mental strength. Spiritual surrender can be understood as accepting the limits of human knowledge, allowing emotions to arise and pass without suppression, and acting ethically while accepting uncertainty in results. This state reduces ego-driven stress and enhances psychological coherence.

From both medical and philosophical standpoints, human beings possess relative agency rather than absolute authority over their future. Lifestyle choices such as nutrition, exercise, sleep, thought patterns, and

ethical conduct clearly influence health outcomes and life trajectories. Epigenetic research further demonstrates that environmental and behavioral factors can modulate gene expression, indicating that humans actively participate in shaping their future. However, absolute control remains beyond human capacity due to unpredictable events, genetic predispositions, and external circumstances. Spiritual wisdom complements science by emphasizing a balanced view in which humans are responsible for sincere effort, while outcomes rest with the Supreme Order. Acceptance harmonizes personal responsibility with divine trust.

Meditation serves as a scientifically validated pathway for cultivating acceptance and surrender. Regular meditation induces structural and functional changes in the brain, including increased cortical thickness in regions associated with attention, empathy, and self-regulation. Through meditation, ego-driven rumination decreases, emotional regulation improves, and a deeper sense of interconnectedness emerges. In this way, surrender becomes experiential rather than merely conceptual, manifesting as inner peace, trust, and silence.

Numerous studies associate acceptance-based practices with reduced anxiety and depression, lower blood pressure, improved cardiovascular health, enhanced immune function, better pain tolerance in chronic illness, and increased life satisfaction and spiritual well-being. These outcomes demonstrate that acceptance of God's order yields tangible medical and psychological benefits.

Acceptance of God's order ultimately represents a profound integration of spirituality, medicine, and science. Training oneself to accept the past, remain grounded in the present, and trust the future aligns the mind with biological harmony and emotional balance. Surrender to the Supreme Power does not negate human effort but refines it by removing ego-driven resistance. Meditation bridges scientific self-regulation and spiritual submission. In an era marked by stress, uncertainty, and control-seeking, acceptance emerges as both a healing principle and a path to inner liberation.

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Satish Sharma meets Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh

Pushes for enhanced infrastructure, sports, transport, human resource development in J&K

HT NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI, JAN 21: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Transport, Information Technology, Youth Services & Sports, Satish Sharma, today met Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Dr. Jitendra Singh and held comprehensive discussion on a wide range of developmental issues pertaining to Jammu and Kashmir.

Satish Sharma apprised the Union Minister of the ongoing development initiatives being undertaken by the UT administration. He highlighted the requirement for enhanced coordination and central support to further accelerate the pace of growth across key sectors in the region.

A detailed discussion was held on infrastructure development, wherein Satish Sharma emphasized the need to expedite major



projects related to road connectivity, public utilities and urban infrastructure. He underlined that strengthened infrastructure is vital for economic growth, improved service delivery and balanced regional development, particularly in rural, border and far-flung areas of the Union Territory.

The Minister also raised issues concerning the sports sector, stressing the importance of developing modern sports infrastructure, upgrading existing stadiums and playgrounds besides expanding training and coaching facilities at

the grassroots level. He enumerated that focused investment in sports is essential for harnessing youth potential, promoting fitness and enabling young sports persons from Jammu and Kashmir to compete at national and international platforms. Likewise, matters related to the transport sector formed an important part of the discussion. Satish Sharma highlighted the need for strengthening the public transport services, modernising transport infrastructure and improving inter-district and inter-regional connectivity. He emphasized that

enhanced transport facilities are crucial for public convenience, tourism promotion and economic activity, especially in remote and hilly regions. The Minister further discussed issues pertaining to human resource development, underscoring the importance of capacity building, manpower augmentation and skill upgradation across departments.

Satish Sharma also highlighted the role of information technology in governance and called for greater integration of digital platforms to enhance transparency, efficiency and citizen-centric service delivery.

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh, while responding to the issues projected during the meeting, assured full cooperation and appropriate support from the Government of India for addressing the developmental requirements of Jammu and Kashmir. He reiterated the Centre's commitment towards the holistic and inclusive development of Jammu and Kashmir.

Monthly NCORD Meeting Held in Ganderbal

HT NEWS NETWORK

GANDERBAL, JAN 21: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore, today chaired a meeting of the District Level Committee of the Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) to review ongoing measures aimed at curbing drug abuse and strengthening action against drug peddling in the district.

The Additional Deputy Commissioner briefed the meeting regarding compliance on directions issued earlier, highlighting department-wise initiatives such as cancellation and suspension of licences of erring medical establishments, installation of CCTV cameras in educational institutions, conduct of awareness programmes, registration of cases under the NDPS Act, and suspension of driving licences of drug peddlers. The ADC also informed the meeting about training of counsellors, and progress in uploading activities under the Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan on the designated portal.

Addressing the officers, the Deputy Commissioner underscored the importance of coordinated and sustained efforts to prevent youth from falling prey to substance abuse. He directed the Drug Control Department to intensify inspections of

medical shops and ensure strict adherence to norms governing the sale of psychotropic substances, including proper functioning of Computerised Billing Systems and CCTV cameras.

To prevent misuse of courier services for drug trafficking, the DC instructed the concerned department to furnish details of warehouses and undertake joint inspections and random scanning exercises.

For early detection of substance use, the Health Department was instructed to conduct testing at vulnerable and high-footfall locations. He also stressed completion of CCTV installation in remaining educational institutions.

Highlighting awareness as a crucial preventive measure, the DC called upon all departments to intensify outreach programmes to educate the public on the ill effects of drug abuse.

The meeting was attended by the Senior Superintendent of Police, Khalil Ahmed Poswal, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Deputy Director Prosecution, Assistant Commissioner (Panchayats), Sub-Divisional Magistrate Kangan, Chief Education Officer, Chief Agriculture Officer, Chief Executive Officer Municipal Council Ganderbal, Assistant Controller Drugs, and other district officers and officials.

One-Day Workshop organised for Registrars, Sub-Registrars of Jammu Province

HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, JANUARY 21: The Department of Registration, Jammu & Kashmir organized a one-day workshop today here at the Convention Centre for Registrars, Sub-Registrars and supporting staff from across the Jammu Province. Inspector General of Registration, J&K Dr. Bashir Ahmed Bhat was the Chief Guest.

The programme was designed to refresh professional knowledge, familiarize officers with recent legal developments, procedural clarifications and best practices besides providing a platform for sharing practical field-level experiences.

The workshop which was attended by about 60 officials, including Registrars, Sub Registrars, Tehsildars, State Taxes Officer and others. The sessions focused on registration of documents, stamp duty, paperless registration, digital processes and allied revenue laws, highlighting the importance of accuracy, transparency and citizen-centric service delivery.

Additional Inspector General of Registration Jammu, Pankaj Gupta welcomed the participants and underscored the significance of continuous skill upgradation and legal orientation for registration personnel. In his inaugural address, Inspector General of Registration, J&K, Dr. Bashir Ahmed Bhat, emphasized the multifaceted responsibilities of Registrars and Sub-Registrars in ensuring lawful registration, proper revenue collection and efficient public service delivery. He further informed that the Department would shortly initiate the paperless registration module in various Sub-Registrar Offices across the Jammu Division, with the objective of enhancing transparency, efficiency and ease of service delivery.

The sessions were conducted by experienced and knowledgeable resource persons, including Mohan Singh Parihar, Retired District & Sessions Judge, representatives from Stock Holding Corporation of India Limited (SHCIL), the Revenue Department and the Commissioner of Stamps, J&K. Participants were encouraged to actively engage in discussions, share field experiences and seek clarifications, ensuring an interactive and practical learning environment.

Key Highlights of the Workshop included understanding the duties, legal powers and quasi-judicial responsibilities of Registrars and Sub-Registrars, updates on stamp duty provisions, common errors and best practices for field-level implementation, Hands-on exposure to SHCIL e-Stamping and digital platforms for secure and efficient registration, Introduction to paperless registration and NGDRS functionalities, promoting transparency and faster service delivery, Application of revenue laws, property valuation norms and compliance procedures to improve accuracy in document registration.

DC Baramulla chairs District Road Safety Committee Meeting

Issues stringent directions to enhance Road Safety

BARAMULLA, JAN 21: Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, today chaired a meeting of the District Road Safety Committee (DRSC) at Baramulla to review the status of road safety measures and enforcement across the district.

During the meeting, the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), Traffic gave a comprehensive briefing to the chair on various initiatives undertaken to strengthen road safety, including enforcement drives, challans issued, and fines collected to curb traffic violations.

The DC held detailed deliberations with the concerned departments and emphasized the need for a coordinated, proactive approach to reduce road accidents and ensure safer commuting for the public.

Highlighting the importance of preventive infrastructure, the DC directed that proper road signage and reflectors be installed on the Sangrama-Delina stretch



of NH-01 to facilitate smooth and safe movement of commuters, especially during night hours and adverse weather conditions.

Minga Sherpa instructed the concerned authorities to submit Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for the installation of crash barriers,

road dividers, and reflective stickers carrying emergency contact numbers on vehicles.

Meanwhile, the DC directed for strict enforcement of Supreme Court guidelines for school buses, including the mandatory availability of safety kits, fire extinguishers,

and first-aid boxes, and adherence to other prescribed norms.

Taking a firm stand against drug-related offences, the DC also directed that driving licences be suspended in cases involving NDPS violations, as per rules. He also called for intensified checking and

awareness to curb the practice of minor driving two wheelers.

The DC stressed accountability and instructed all concerned officers to submit an Action Taken Report (ATR) by 27th of this month, reflecting compliance with the directions issued during the meeting.

Area Marketing Office Udhampur organises awareness-cum-sensitization camp under Vande Mataram Phase-II campaign

HT NEWS NETWORK

UDHAMPUR, JANUARY 21: As part of the ongoing Vande Mataram Phase-II campaign, the Area Marketing Office Udhampur today organised an awareness-cum-sensitization programme at Panchayat Ghar Roun-I.

The programme was held under the overall supervision of Deputy Commissioner Udhampur, Saloni Rai to educate farmers, self-help groups and other stakeholders about the employment-generation and livelihood enhancement schemes, including PMFME and HADP.

During the camp, the participants were sensitised to the benefits, eligibility criteria and registration procedure of these schemes to



encourage entrepreneurship and sustainable income generation in the rural sector.

Besides, a plantation drive was also conducted in the area. Citrus fruit plants were distributed among the participants to promote environmental

sustainability and horticulture development.

Former PRI members of the area were also present and actively participated in the programme, ensuring community involvement and outreach at the grassroots level.

Grand rally organized at Samba

HT NEWS NETWORK

SAMBA, JANUARY 21: As part of the nationwide commemoration of 150 years of "Vande Mataram", a grand rally was organized today at Samba under the Phase-II of the anniversary celebrations.

The rally was flagged off by the District Magistrate, Ayushi Sudan from Rani Suchet Singh Stadium. The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from students of the government and private schools, who marched with patriotic fervour and discipline.



The rally culminated at the historic Samba Fort, symbolizing the region's rich cultural and historical legacy. The students displayed banners and raised slogans reflecting national unity, patriotism and respect for the motherland.

Senior officers from the district administration were present on the occasion to encourage and support the participants. Prominent among them was Additional Deputy Commissioner, Jagdish Singh along with district and departmental officers.

The event was organized smoothly under the supervision of the district administration with all necessary arrangements and security measures in place. The rally aimed to instill a sense of patriotism and national pride among the younger generation while honoring the legacy and spirit of Vande Mataram.

BJP holds VB-G RAM G workshop in Jammu Border, highlights 1430 Crore relief package for rain-hit areas

HT NEWS NETWORK

SUCHETGARH, JANUARY 21: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Jammu & Kashmir, organized a workshop on Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) in Suchetgarh under District Jammu Border, while also highlighting the Central Government's 1430 crore relief package announced to address the extensive damage caused by incessant rains and flash floods in several districts of the Jammu region.

The workshop aimed at creating awareness about the flagship rural employment mission and reaffirming the BJP-led government's commitment to both long-term development and immediate disaster relief.

J&K BJP General Secretary Baldev Singh Billawaria accompanied by MLA Suchetgarh Prof. Gharu Ram, District President Jammu Border Rinku Choudhary, Prabhari Jammu Border Rajinder Singh Chib, Seh Prabhari Arti Jasrotia, addressed the workshop, which was attended by party

workers, and other prominent.

Addressing the party leaders, Baldev Singh Billawaria described VB-G RAM G as a historic initiative under the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047. He stated that the mission guarantees dignified employment and sustainable livelihood opportunities for rural households, ensuring economic security, skill development, and creation of durable community assets. He said that the VB-G RAM G is not merely a welfare scheme, it is a strong guarantee of self-reliance, social justice, and inclusive growth for

rural India. It reflects Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resolve to take development to the last mile and empower villages as engines of national progress, he said.

He further highlighted that in Jammu & Kashmir, where rural development was long neglected due to policy paralysis and dynastic politics, VB G RAM G will usher in a new era of balanced and sustainable development, ensuring that rural areas in remote border belts receive focused attention and opportunities.

Prof. Gharu Ram hailed the Centre's 1430 crore relief package announced to compensate losses caused by recent floods and heavy rains. He stated that the liberal assistance clearly reflects the Modi government's deep sensitivity and commitment to healing the wounds of affected families. He emphasized that timely financial support will accelerate restoration of infrastructure, livelihoods, and normalcy in the affected areas of Jammu region, assuring that the Modi government stands firmly with the people in times of distress.



LG inaugurates fountains at Dwarka and a fifth 'Aarambh' library at Vikaspuri

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JAN 21 : Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Wednesday inaugurated state-of-the-art column fountains at prominent road junctions at sub-city Dwarka. The fountains have been installed at Sector 6/7 and Sector 5/6 crossings, the two busy junctions that witness heavy traffic.

The project is executed by the Delhi Development Authority, DDA officials stated that the installations are expected to offer a refreshing break for thousands of motorists and pedestrians passing through the area each day.

The LG said Dwarka has witnessed significant development in recent years and the momentum would continue. He reiterated the administration's commitment to holistic development of the national Capital, with planning aligned to the needs of residents.

The newly inaugurated column fountains blend contemporary design with environmental sensitivity. Each fountain rises to 2.8 metres and is set within a 4.5-metre-diameter sandstone tub crafted from Teak and Rainbow



sandstone.

During the day, the sleek column structures act as striking visual features, while at night, dynamic LED lighting transforms them into vibrant focal points along the streetscape.

The installations are complemented by carefully developed floral landscaping, which

also helps in cooling the surrounding micro-environment.

DDA officials said that several new projects are also in the pipeline, including the upcoming Bharat Vandana Park, envisioned as a major cultural and recreational destination for the Dwarka city.

At another event, the LG inaugurated 'Aarambh' Library in

Vikaspuri developed by the DDA, the fifth in the series under the 'Aarambh' initiative.

Speaking on the occasion, the LG said Delhi is an education hub. "Aarambh has been created with the purpose to provide state-of-the-art infrastructure to students at affordable prices," he added. "It is a noble initiative and I

congratulate DDA for this. It is DDA's service to the students with limited resources and we will continue to take measures for the overall development of the youth," he added.

Located at M-Block Vikaspuri, the library will operate round-the-clock in three shifts of eight hours each and has the capacity to accommodate over 180 students per day. Access will be available at a nominal fee of Rs. 1,000 per month per shift.

The library is equipped with modular study tables with integrated power points, high-speed internet connectivity, secure lockers, CCTV surveillance, air-conditioned and well-lit interiors, and separate washroom facilities for male and female students.

An accessible toilet has also been provided. To support extended study hours, 'Café Vardaan' has been introduced within the premises to provide students with light refreshments.

The 24x7 Aarambh Library is designed to cater to students, researchers, and lifelong learners, offering a well-equipped and student-friendly environment. UNI

ED attaches properties worth Rs 57.78 crore in West Bengal Teacher Recruitment Scam

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JAN 21 : The Enforcement Directorate (ED), Kolkata Zonal Office, today stated that it has attached immovable properties worth approximately Rs 57.78 crore in connection with the West Bengal Central School Service Commission (SSC) Assistant Teacher Recruitment Scam (Classes IX to XII).

The attached properties belong to Jiban Krishna Saha, MLA; Prasanna Kumar Roy; and others.

The properties consist of multiple residential apartments, villas, and land parcels located in Rajarhat, New Town, Patharghata, Garagari, and other adjoining areas in North 24 Parganas district, as well as in Murshidabad and Purba Bardhaman districts, including HIDCO-developed areas of Kolkata. These properties were found to have been acquired from the Proceeds of Crime generated through the illegal appointment of Assistant Teachers in Classes IX to XII.

The ED initiated its PMLA investigation based on



CBI FIRs that were registered on the directions of the High Court of Calcutta. The investigation pertains to large-scale manipulation in the recruitment process conducted by the West Bengal Central School Service Commission, wherein OMR sheets and personality test scores were tampered with, and appointments were made after the expiry of panels to accommodate undeserving candidates in exchange for illegal gratification.

The ED investigation revealed that Prasanna Kumar Roy acted as the main middleman in the scam and, along with his associates, collected huge amounts of cash from undeserving candidates to secure illegal appointments. The Proceeds of Crime, amounting to hundreds of crores of rupees, were laundered through a complex network of companies, LLPs, and bank accounts and were ultimately used to acquire immovable properties. The investigation further revealed that Jiban Krishna Saha, MLA (TMC), a key accused in the Assistant Teacher recruitment scam, was actively involved in the collection and handling of Proceeds of Crime obtained from undeserving candidates to secure their appointments to posts of Group C, D, and Assistant Teachers.

Saha was arrested on August 25, 2025, by the ED after he attempted to flee from the search premises at his home in Murshidabad. The investigation established that the Proceeds of Crime were used to acquire immovable properties in the name of Jiban Krishna Saha and his family members, primarily located in Murshidabad and Purba Bardhaman districts of West Bengal. These properties, worth approximately Rs 3.01 crore, were found to have been acquired from the laundered proceeds generated through the illegal recruitment process.

The investigation also revealed that a large number of properties were acquired in the name of Smt. Nilima Mangal, a close associate and ex-wife of Prasanna Kumar Roy. It was established that substantial funds used for the acquisition of these properties were sourced from the illegal recruitment scams.

Earlier, the ED had arrested Prasanna Kumar Roy in this case and filed a Prosecution Complaint before the Special Court, which has taken cognizance of the offence of money laundering.

The ED had previously attached properties worth Rs 247.2 crore in the case of the Group C & D staff SSC Recruitment Scam in West Bengal. In the SSC Assistant Teacher Recruitment Scam (Classes IX to XII), the ED had earlier attached properties worth Rs 238.78 crore. In another case concerning the Primary Teachers Recruitment Scam in West Bengal, the ED has already attached/seized properties worth approximately Rs 154 crore. Thus, the total attachments by ED Kolkata in the recruitment scam cases now stand at Rs 698 crore.

AAP Councillors accuse BJP of corruption in Delhi civic body during Committee meeting

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JAN 21 : The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) today raised allegations of large-scale corruption in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) during a meeting of the Standing Committee.

AAP members, who are in the opposition in the MCD, stated that they highlighted fundamental issues concerning health, sanitation, civic amenities and administrative accountability during the proceedings. They demanded concrete answers, time-bound action, and transparency from the concerned officials.

Ankush Narang, Leader of the Opposition in the MCD, claimed that while BJP councillors are not receiving budgets to carry out works in their wards, officers are allegedly engaged in corruption through BJP leaders. He said AAP members forcefully brought the administration's attention to public welfare issues.

AAP Standing Committee member Praveen Kumar specifically alleged a Rs 30 crore scam in the Health department. He stated that unnecessary medical supplies were purchased without a tender process. He claimed that when questions were raised, officers hastily dispatched all the materials to hospitals overnight. Kumar also referenced recent tragic incidents, including a restaurant fire in Goa and the drowning of an engineer in Noida, to criticize administrative preparedness. He linked these to a broader failure of governance under BJP-led systems.

Another issue raised was regarding the operation of a banquet hall, Rajwada Banquet Hall, in Wazirabad Industrial Area on a property that Kumar claimed had been sealed by the MCD. He alleged it continues to operate due to the involvement of senior BJP leaders and officials. The meeting also saw a discussion on a proposed amendment to the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act. Kumar alleged that the Chief Town Planner, in coordination with the BJP, brought an agenda item seeking to bypass the requirement of sending building maps to the Standing Committee for approval. He stated that this would remove a layer of scrutiny and could facilitate corruption. Following opposition from AAP members, the proposal was reportedly rejected in the meeting.

The AAP councillors present included Praveen Kumar, Ravinder Kaur, Mohammad Aamil Malik, and Rafia Mahir. UNI

Yamuna Restoration Drive: Delhi CM announces monitoring, drone surveys and STP expansion

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JAN 21 : Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta held high-level review meeting on Wednesday at the Delhi Secretariat to review the current condition of the Yamuna, sewage treatment, drain cleaning, and the laying of sewer lines in unauthorised colonies.

After meeting, Rekha Gupta said that, at present, 37 sewage treatment plants (STPs) in Delhi together treat 814 million gallons per day (MGD) of wastewater, which meets current requirements. However, keeping future needs in mind, the government has set an ambitious target to increase this capacity to 1,500 MGD.

To achieve this, 56 MGD capacity will be added by upgrading existing machinery by December 2027, while 170 MGD additional capacity will be created through 35 new decentralised sewage treatment plants (DSTPs). Furthermore, by installing new large plants near drains, an additional 460 MGD capacity will be added by December 2028, ensuring a robust and future-ready sewage management system for Delhi.

CM explained that the biggest benefit of this expansion will be that untreated sewage will no longer flow into the Yamuna. As treatment capacity increases, more wastewater will be treated before being discharged into the river. This will gradually improve water quality, reduce foul odour and pollution, and help restore life of the river.

In the long term, this will safeguard drinking water sources, improve public health, and provide Delhi with a sustainable sewage system for its growing population.

Gupta informed that work on laying sewer lines in unauthorised colonies and JJ clusters is being expedited. Out of 675 JJ clusters, work has been

completed in 574, while arrangements for single-point sewage collection are being made in 65 clusters.

In addition, sewer network in all 1,799 unauthorised colonies will be completed in a phased manner between December 2026 and December 2028. This will prevent untreated wastewater from entering the Yamuna.

CM emphasised that unless every household in Delhi is connected to the sewer network, the inflow of untreated sewage into the Yamuna cannot be stopped and the river cannot be fully restored.

Delhi CM said that for the first time, a robust monitoring system has been put in place for Delhi's drains. Teams from the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) are conducting monthly water quality testing at 47 identified locations.

Drone surveys to identify and inspect all minor drains connected to the Najafgarh and Shahdara drains will be completed by January 2026, while surveys of the remaining drains will be completed by the Delhi Jal Board by June 2026. The objective is to accurately identify the sources and volume of pollution entering the river so that it can be effectively prevented.

Gupta stated that coordination with neighbouring states is essential to make the Yamuna clean.

It was informed in the meeting that six drains from Haryana flow into the Najafgarh drain, accounting for 33 per cent of the total polluted water. Similarly, four major drains from Uttar Pradesh discharge into the Shahdara drain, contributing nearly 40 per cent of the total pollution.

Gupta said she would personally take up this issue with the Chief Ministers of both states to find a solution.

During the meeting, the Chief

Delhi farmers can now install solar plants on agriculture land without CLU approval

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, JAN 21 : Delhi Power Minister Ashish Sood on Wednesday announced the simplification of procedures for installing solar plants on agricultural land. The Department of Power has officially clarified that installing elevated solar systems does not violate the Delhi Land Reforms Act, 1954, effectively removing the requirement for 'Change in Land Use' (CLU) for green energy projects.

Earlier, Delhi's solar installation were restricted by complex land regulations. Under the new framework, landholders no longer need Change of Land Use (CLU) approvals, with the Revenue Department accepting a standardised undertaking instead, cutting through months of bureaucracy. Farmers can continue cultivation beneath elevated solar structures, ensuring

food security while contributing to energy goals. The initiative aligns with the union government's vision for a Net Zero future and the national renewable energy agenda.

Additionally, projects will benefit from DERC's Virtual and Group Net Metering regulations, enabling farmers to earn revenue from power supplied to the grid.

Sood emphasised that under the new directive, farmers can now earn double income. He said the era of "no objection" hurdles ends because every farm in Delhi should not just grow crops, but also produce the clean energy that powers the city's future.

Targeting AAP, Sood said that previous administrations spent years in "consultations" with no output. "We have delivered a solution that respects the farmer's right to his land while embracing 21st-century technology," he added. UNI





Suryakumar, A Pioneer In Search Of His Legacy

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

CHANDIGARH: When he captains India in Nagpur, Suryakumar Yadav will become the 53rd man to have played 100 T20 internationals; 44 of them have done so for Full Member nations. Mark Chapman, who has played 81 for New Zealand and 19 for Hong Kong, is not one of them. Of the 44, Suryakumar will be the only one who has neither played ten Tests nor 40 ODIs. He is the most enduring T20I specialist from a Full Member nation.

This is just a small milestone in the rapidly evolving landscape of professional cricket, but it is interesting that Suryakumar becomes the first one to get there. There are many T20 specialists, a number that will keep growing, but the first one to play such a volume never set out to be one. He still goes to play first-class and List A cricket for Mumbai every chance he gets. He is 35; when he started out, being a T20 specialist wasn't even a fantasy, forget it becoming a viable career option.

It speaks to how the landscape of limited-overs cricket has changed. Since the 2023 ODI World Cup final, also the last of Suryakumar's 37 ODIs,

India have played just 23 ODIs and as many as 54 T20Is. Despite playing only one format, Suryakumar is India's fourth-most-capped player in this period.

Behind this rise of T20 specialists is a possible realisation that adjusting from ODIs to T20s is not quite the same as adjusting from Tests to ODIs. That T20 is closer to being a different sport than just a different format of the sport. Suryakumar happened to work his way to a game that works in this format, youngsters are now training for it. Six of eight batters in India's regular T20I XI play only that format internationally: Sanju Samson, Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube and Rinku Singh, apart from Suryakumar.

However, this sport called T20 doesn't have a different fanbase. It results in unique challenges for those who play only T20. In Indian players' case, it gets compounded because they can't play any league other than the IPL. Suryakumar has quickly gone from comparisons with AB de Villiers to someone who hasn't scored a single international fifty in a year. Teams are bowling better at him, and the only competitive environment he gets to work his way back in is top-level cricket.

When Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli went into the 2024 T20 World Cup, they were desperate for an ICC title, but their legacy as cricketers was secure. For Suryakumar, the World Cup starting in three weeks could mean it all.

Yes, he was part of the winning side last year, and yes, he took a special catch in the last over of the final, but it seems like a distant memory given his recent struggles.

The upcoming two months will bring a touch of desperation for Suryakumar. In the wretched year that he has had with the bat, he has been getting out to full balls, something batters generally love when looking to hit. He has been saying that he knows what is going wrong, and that he has been working on it. There is a school of thought that wonders if a niggles is holding back his hitting ability. Being the captain, he can't sit out. He has to work his way back in amid the glare.

It is unlikely Suryakumar will be around for the 2028 T20 World Cup. If he doesn't win this one as the captain, he will end his career with IPL titles but no instantly memorable big trophy in T20I cricket. The next two months could be legacy-defining for a pioneer of sorts.



Bracewell in doubt for India T20Is after picking up calf strain

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

INDORE: Michael Bracewell could be in doubt for New Zealand's five-match T20I series against India, starting on Wednesday in Nagpur, after picking up what New Zealand Cricket (NZC) called "a minor left calf strain" during the third and final ODI on Sunday in Indore.

Bracewell, who led New Zealand to a 2-1 ODI series win over India, "will be treated and monitored over the coming days before a decision on his further involvement in the tour is confirmed," a board statement said. He has travelled with the rest of the T20I squad to Nagpur, head coach Rob Walter confirmed.

Meanwhile, Kristian Clarke, the fast-bowling allrounder from Northern Districts, has been added to the T20I squad for the first three matches of the series.



Clarke, making his international debut in the ODI series against India, picked up seven wickets, including two three-fors, and chipped in with useful lower-order runs in New Zealand's win.

"We've got a fair bit of player movement at the moment with some guys returning from injury for this series, others joining us immediately from franchise cricket and the rest coming off the India ODI series and Super Smash," Walter said. "We want to ensure we've got enough pace-bowling options for the first three games of this series and it's a great opportunity for Kristian to stay on with the group a little longer on his first tour of India."

"He certainly showcased his talent in the ODI series, but what was particularly impressive was his calmness and ability to perform under pressure."

The touring party has Matt Henry, Jacob Duffy, Zak Foulkes and Kyle Jamieson as the frontline fast bowlers in their squad, with James Neesham as the batting allrounder.

New Zealand arrived for the T20Is after winning an ODI series in India for the first time.

"It was incredibly special to win the ODI series and create some history," Walter said. "There were lots of special performances combined with fantastic team work to achieve something that hadn't been done before."

South Africa women to host India for five T20Is in April

■ ESPNCRICINFO

MUMBAI: South Africa's last T20I assignment before the 2026 women's T20 World Cup will be a five-game home series against India in April. Durban will host the first two matches on April 17 and 19 and Johannesburg will host the next two on April 22 and 25. Benoni will host the last game of the series on April 27.

"Facing a team of India's quality so close to a World Cup is exactly what the Proteas Women need at this stage of the preparation," Enoch Nkwe, CSA director of national teams and high performance, said in a statement. "It gives them an opportunity to test themselves against a top-level opponent, fine-tune their combinations and ensure they are executing their plans under pressure. This series will play a key role in sharpening the team's readiness ahead of the



T20 World Cup."

This series will follow South Africa's T20I and ODI series against Pakistan in February-March. South Africa will also tour New Zealand in March-April before returning home for the T20Is against India. India, meanwhile, will be touring Australia for a multi-format series in February-March before travelling to South Africa. After that, they will play a three T20I series in England starting May.

The 2026 women's T20 World Cup, to be held in England, starts on June 12. South Africa and India are both in Group 1 of the tournament, alongside Australia, Pakistan and two qualifiers.

South Africa are losing finalists in the last two editions of the T20 World Cup, apart from being the runners-up at the 2025 ODI World Cup. India's best finish at the T20 World Cup was as losing finalists in 2020. In 2024, they were knocked out in the first round.

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