

Jobs, Growth and Good Governance Will be The Ambitious Vision for J&K's Future : LG Manoj Sinha

Highlights Economic Surge, Infrastructure Expansion and Renewed Push For Inclusive Development

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEB 2: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday outlined an ambitious development roadmap for Jammu and Kashmir, reaffirming his government's resolve to tackle unemployment, bridge infrastructure deficits and strengthen social welfare, while anchoring governance in transparency, accountability and public participation.

Addressing the Members of the Legislative Assembly in the Central Hall of the Assembly complex, Sinha said the return to elected governance in 2024 marked a defining chapter in the Union Territory's democratic journey, restoring people's faith in institutions and reinforcing participatory decision-



making.

He said the government's first year in office has focused on har-

monising development with dignity, economic growth with

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LG Addresses NCC Cadets at R-Day Camp

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JAMMU, FEB 02: "The true meaning of a developed society and a developed nation, extends far beyond infrastructure, modern technology, or economic progress alone. A developed society and nation also signifies a place where people possess strong character, where social values stand firm, and where the social fabric remains bound together in unity," the Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha said on Monday.

He said that the nation's true identity emerges from the thinking, conduct, and mutual trust of its citizens and it is

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7-8% Growth Is Non-Negotiable for Jobs, Inclusion and India's Future: FM Sitharaman

Says Sustaining High Growth Will Ensure Prosperity For All

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, FEB 2: Reiterating that sustaining a 7-8 per cent economic growth rate is the government's foremost priority, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said strong growth is essential to generate employment, enhance productivity, and ensure that the benefits of development reach every citizen.



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Addressing college students from different parts of the country after presenting the Union Budget 2026-27, Sitharaman said that maintaining high growth is crucial for keeping India among the world's fastest-growing major economies. "Growth is the primary priority. Sustaining it at 7 to 8 per cent is essential, and everything we do is aimed at achieving this objective," she said.

The Finance Minister underlined that higher economic growth leads to increased job creation, greater workforce

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Budget Session-2026 House Must Deliver Results: Speaker Rather

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEB 02: Speaker Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather today remarked that it is collective responsibility of the House to ensure productive outcomes during the session.

The Speaker said that people expect solutions to their problems and reminded members that significant public resources are invested in conducting legislative sessions, and it is the collective responsibility of the House to ensure productive outcomes.

Earlier, welcoming the members of the House, Speaker said that this institution represents the hopes, expectations and aspirations of the people who have elected us. "Serving the people is both privilege and profound responsibility upon all the members of the House," he said.

The Speaker highlighted that time utilised in the House is precious, adding that every minute spent here belongs to the people. He urged upon the members that the judicious use of time is essential to live up to the expectations of the people.

The Speaker observed that democracy allows space for disagreements, but it must be expressed in a dignified manner, with mutual respect for one another. He cautioned that the proceedings of the House are closely watched by the public and even a single mistake does not go unnoticed.

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Budget 2026 Backs AI-Led Reforms: Dr Jitendra

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI, FEB 2: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, and Minister of State for PMO, Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Dr Jitendra

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Night temperatures record marginal increase in Kashmir

Met forecasts cloudy weather from February 4 to 6; light rain, snow on Feb 7

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, FEB 02: Night temperatures across Kashmir recorded a marginal rise, with Srinagar recording a minimum of 2.6 degrees Celsius, about three degrees above the seasonal average.

An official from the Meteorological Department told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the minimum temperature in the city has seen



gradual increase over the past few days, though cold conditions continue to persist across large parts of Jammu and Kashmir.

Gulmarg, the ski resort in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, was the coldest recorded place in the Union Territory, registering a minimum temperature of minus 8 degrees Celsius. Pahalgam, a tourist resort in south Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 5.5 degrees Celsius.

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J&K 'Crown of India' needs financial support to shine: Minister Sharma

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, FEB 02: Describing Jammu and Kashmir as the "crown of India," Cabinet minister Satish Sharma on Monday called for financial support to help the region flourish.

He said the region has faced extreme challenges in recent months, including unprecedented

rainfall, war and the Pahalgam terror attack.

Speaking to reporters after the Assembly session in Jammu, Minister Sharma said J&K has witnessed the heaviest rainfall of this century, endured a war in the past seven months and also suffered the Pahalgam incident.

"If you say that J&K is the crown of India, then to make this crown

shine, we need some financial support," he said, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

The minister also further said drug addiction remains one of the biggest challenges in the Union Territory and called for a collective effort to combat the menace.

"We need to fight this

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JKBOSE declares Class-11 results, 83% qualify exams

■ HT NEWS NETWORK / KNO

SRINAGAR, FEB 02: The Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (JKBOSE) Monday announced annual regular results of 11th standard with at least 83 percent qualifying the exams.

JKBOSE officials informed the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that 83 percent students qualify the exams.

The board official also said that the pass percentage of

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Hope in the Budget: Duty Cut on 17 Cancer Drugs Brings Big Relief to Patients

Families, Doctors Hail Decision, Urge Rollout of Comprehensive Cancer Care Policy

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, FEB 02: In a major relief to cancer patients and their families, the Union Budget has announced the removal of basic customs duty on 17 cancer drugs, a move expected to significantly reduce treatment costs and improve access

to life-saving medicines.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that, to ease the financial burden on patients suffering from cancer, customs duty has been reduced not only for cancer medicines but also for drugs, medicines, and specialised medical food imported for the treatment of seven additional



al rare diseases.

Cancer treatment in Kashmir often runs into lakhs, with imported medicines accounting for a large share of the expense, making therapy unaffordable for many middle- and low-income families.

Abdul Qayoom Dar, whose wife

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White Knight GOC Visits Kishtwar

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEB 2: The General Officer Commanding of the Army's White Knight Corps, Lieutenant General P K Mishra, on Monday visited Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district and urged all ranks to remain vigilant and mission-ready at all times, officials said.

Lt Gen Mishra was accompanied by General Officer Commanding, Counter-Insurgency Force (Delta), Major General A P S Bal, they said.

The visit came amid an ongoing operation in the snow-bound higher reaches of the Chatroo forest belt to hunt down a group of Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terrorists, who had four encounters

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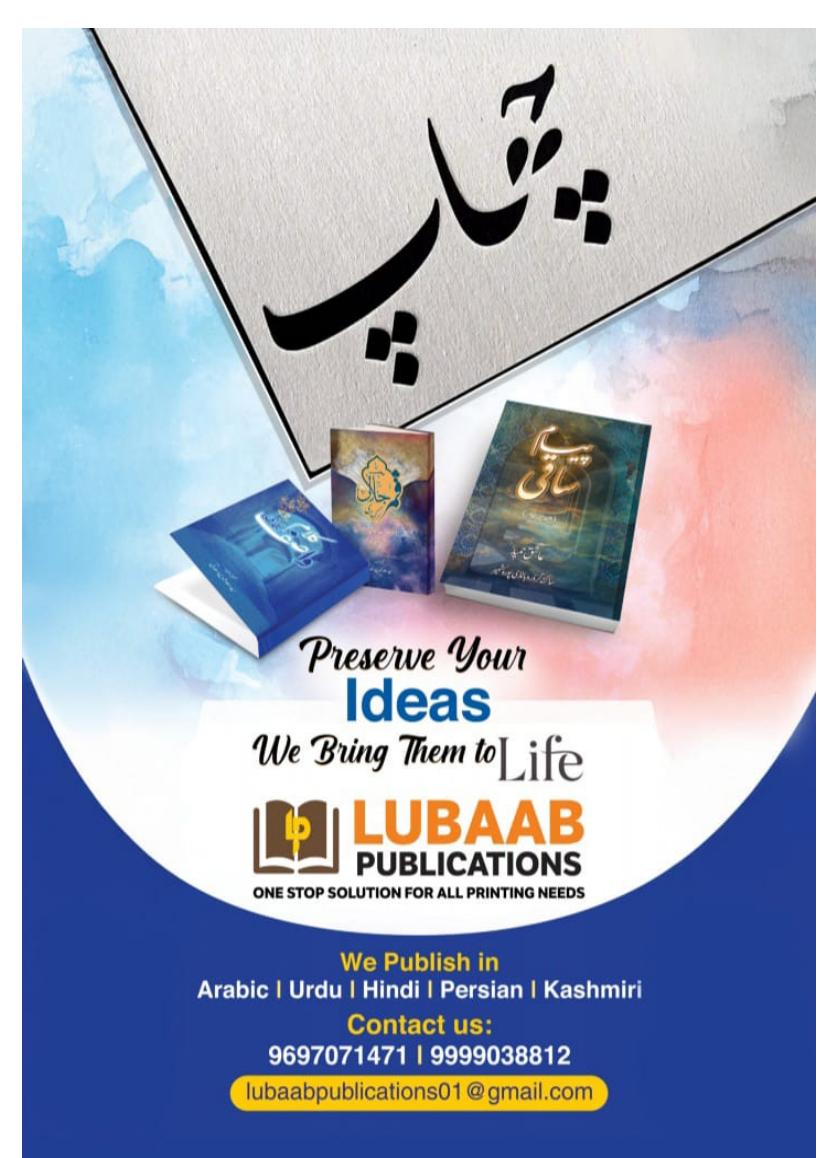
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CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

Jobs, Growth.....

social justice, and progress with peace, guided by the principles of inclusive and humane governance.

"Fairness, empathy and sensitivity have been at the core of our administrative approach, especially while dealing with issues concerning employees, daily wagers, contractual workers and marginalised sections," the LG said, adding that corrective measures have been initiated wherever necessary to address long-pending grievances.

Highlighting economic performance, Sinha said Jammu and Kashmir is among the fastest-growing States and Union Territories, recording an annual nominal growth rate of around 11 per cent in 2024-25. He noted that GST collections have risen steadily to Rs 8,586 crore, while revenue from the power sector has increased by 16 per cent, reflecting strengthening fiscal health and improved governance.

The LG said significant financial support under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Infusion (SASI) has been extended to J&K, enabling accelerated execution of capital projects across key sectors, including roads, power, health and urban infrastructure.

Detailing infrastructure progress, he said the road sector has witnessed historic investment exceeding Rs 61,500 crore, leading to the construction of expressways, highways, tunnels and ring roads that are transforming connectivity across the region. Major projects such as the Sonamarg Tunnel have been completed, while strategic links like the Zojila Tunnel are nearing completion, promising all-weather access to remote areas.

He also highlighted the integration of the Kashmir Valley with the national railway network, the creation of a dedicated railway division, and the ongoing modernisation of Jammu Tawi Railway Station, terming them game-changers for trade, tourism and mobility.

In the power sector, the LG said large hydro-power projects with a combined capacity of over 3,000 MW are under execution, alongside rapid expansion of transmission and distribution networks. The rollout of smart prepaid meters has significantly reduced losses and improved revenue realisation, while a new scheme will soon provide 200 free electricity units to over two lakh economically vulnerable families.

On the social front, Sinha said the government has prioritised compassionate appointments, providing jobs to 910 individuals, including kin of terror-affected families, to ensure dignity and financial security for those impacted by violence and tragedy.

He further underscored the role of tourism as a key economic driver, revealing that the Union Territory recorded 1.78 crore tourist visits in 2025 despite security and climatic challenges. Granting industry status to tourism, he said, will help attract investment, generate employment and promote balanced regional development through pilgrim, adventure and eco-tourism initiatives.

Reaffirming his government's commitment to democratic deepening, the LG said strengthening local self-governance, improving grievance redressal, and expanding digital governance will remain priorities to ensure transparent, accountable and citizen-centric administration.

Concluding his address, Sinha said the government is determined to sustain economic momentum, expand employment opportunities—especially for youth and women—and steer Jammu and Kashmir towards a future of peace, prosperity and inclusive growth.

LG Addresses.....

the youth who create this wealth of thought and conduct.

"At the heart of a developed nation stands youth power. Young people constitute the most energetic, creative, and transformative force of any country. Youth are the drivers of change," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He was addressing the NCC cadets of NCC Directorate, Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh, who returned from New Delhi after attending the Republic Day Camp.

The Lieutenant Governor lauded the contribution of National Cadets Corps (NCC) in nurturing youth, promoting self-less service and building a developed society and the nation.

He stated that the NCC has inspired generations of youth with the understanding that national interest stands above personal gain, and that working together for society's welfare represents the true leadership.

"Since 1948, the NCC has provided the country's youth with a platform where young people from diverse backgrounds unite with a shared purpose. Through camps, training, cultural programs, and social campaigns, the NCC has brought values like discipline, leadership, teamwork, and service into the lives of millions of young people. The NCC has inspired generations of youth with the understanding that national interest stands above personal gain, and that working together for society's welfare represents true leadership," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasized that only when young people choose duty over convenience and prioritize society's welfare over their own interests can a developed society and nation truly take shape.

"When honesty, hard work, and the spirit of service become integral to young people's lives in society, development ceases to remain

confined to statistics—it becomes connected to life values," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor asked the NCC cadets to focus on self-development.

"Your self-development connects directly to the country's progress. When NCC cadets and young people in society advance toward excellence in any field with newfound confidence, they not only secure their own future but also contribute to the nation's progress," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted that the NCC cadets in Jammu Kashmir bear the significant responsibility of strengthening brotherhood.

"I want cadets of the Jammu Kashmir Ladakh NCC Directorate to eliminate walls of region, language, caste, and religion through their collective work."

The development is not limited to "I" but is truly connected to "we." In giving concrete form to this collective spirit, no other organization in India has contributed more than the NCC.

I want you to create feelings of respect and trust in every district's social fabric through national and international exposure, shared experiences, and common goals. Always remember that mutual brotherhood develops through cooperation, sensitivity, and collective responsibility. All NCC cadets must together create an atmosphere where unity is practiced daily and diversity is transformed into society's strength," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor observed that, for contributing to different sectors of developed India, we need leadership founded on ethics and social responsibility. He said, whether in IT, industry, education, armed forces, or culture, work must be done with accountability in all fields.

The Lieutenant Governor commended the Jammu Kashmir Ladakh NCC Directorate for incorporating the drone technology into training, in line with today's global changes. "I am fully confident that such initiatives will become not merely the nation's future but its present strength," he further said.

The Lieutenant Governor also felicitated the Cadets with the Certificates of Excellence for their significant contributions to the success of the contingent. He complimented the Cadets and NCC Officers for their excellent performance on Kartavya Path and at various other competitions. The Cadets also shared their experience at the Republic Day camp.

A total of 128 cadets of Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh NCC Directorate had participated in this year's Republic Day celebration.

SUO Arpundee Kour of 3 J&K Battalion NCC, Baramulla, was conferred with the prestigious Raksha Mantri Padak for her outstanding leadership and service during Op SINDOOR, while Lieutenant Rukhsana Kousar was honoured with the Chief of Army Staff Commendation for her dedication and devotion to duty.

In addition, the Directorate secured an impressive 11 DG NCC Medallions and Commendation Cards, reflecting excellence across multiple disciplines. Cadet Tawheed Altaf of 7 J&K Battalion NCC, Baramulla, was appointed Parade Commander of the All India NCC Boys Contingent at Kartavya Path. Adding further distinction, Cadet Samriti Kalhuria of 8 J&K BN NCC had the rare honour of serving as pilot to the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India during the PM Rally, underscoring the trust and confidence placed in NCC cadets of the Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.

In recognition of its consistent performance, rapid transformation and outstanding achievements, NCC Directorate Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh was awarded the Director General's Most Improved Directorate Award and secured an impressive position at the All-India level during Republic Day 2026.

Maj Gen A. Bevli, VSM, Additional Director General of the J&K and Ladakh Directorate, senior Officers and Instructors of J&K and Ladakh NCC Directorate, officials of Lok Bhawan were also present on the occasion.

7-8% Growth Is.....

participation, and improved productivity, strengthening the overall economy.

Highlighting the changing workplace dynamics, Sitharaman said employers are increasingly recognising the contribution of women, particularly in semi-skilled roles, due to their efficiency and precision. However, she expressed concern over the limited presence of women in leadership positions and boardrooms, stressing the need for more women to rise to decision-making roles to inspire others and shape policies.

She also pointed to the government's consistent policy support and funding for the Orange Economy—including animation, visual effects, gaming, and comics—describing it as a rapidly expanding sector with significant career opportunities. "This is a bright sector where creativity is constantly challenged, and young people with aptitude should seriously consider it," she said.

Explaining the budget formulation process, Sitharaman said preparations begin in late October or November, with wide-ranging consultations involving industry bodies, businesses, economists, trade unions, state governments, and public stakeholders, including inputs through social media. These suggestions are carefully shortlisted, discussed with concerned ministries and states, and refined through multiple reviews before the final budget speech is prepared.

The Finance Minister said the consultative approach ensures that the budget reflects diverse perspectives while remaining focused on sustaining growth and economic stability. (AGENCIES)

House Must.....

He assured members that during the Budget Session, ample opportunities would be provided to accommodate all voices.

The Speaker also said that Business Advisory Committee of House has decided that two sittings will be held during current session so that every member can raise issues related to their constituency, ensure accountability of the government, and effectively represent public concerns.

He called upon members to set an example through their conduct and expressed hope that the House would fulfil the purpose for which people have elected their representatives.

Earlier, the Speaker tabled the Lieutenant Governor's address before the house.

Budget 2026.....

Singh today said that the Union Budget 2026-27 pushes technology-driven AI-integrated structural reforms to shape India's future and lays down a forward-looking roadmap for the next quarter century.

Addressing the media in a post-Budget interaction organised by the Ministry of Science & Technology, the Minister said the Budget may take time to be fully appreciated, but it reflects a clear, sequential vision where structural reforms are powered by cutting-edge technologies, and cutting-edge technologies are increasingly driven by AI. He said this makes the Budget inherently futuristic and places a responsibility on informed stakeholders, including the media, to communicate its long-term benefits to citizens.

Dr Jitendra Singh addressed concerns regarding benefits for the middle class, stating that the Budget's true impact lies in long-term relief from rising healthcare and living costs, rather than short-term income calculations. He said large-scale investment in biopharma, diagnostics, vaccines, and gene-based therapies would significantly reduce the financial burden on families dealing with chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and metabolic disorders.

Highlighting India's growing health challenges, the Minister noted that the country has over 11-12 crore diabetics, nearly 14 crore pre-diabetics, and a rapidly increasing incidence of cancer, with projections touching two million cases annually by 2030. He said affordable drugs, vaccines, and diagnostics, supported by domestic biomanufacturing, would be a major social and economic support, especially for the middle class and vulnerable sections.

Referring to the Rs. 10,000 crore Biopharma Shakti initiative, Dr Jitendra Singh said India has already emerged as a global bio-manufacturing hub, ranking among the top bio-economies globally and within the Indo-Pacific region. He said the new outlay will further strengthen this position by expanding capabilities in biologics, biosimilars, vaccines, medical devices, and gene-based technologies.

The Minister described biotechnology as the next major industrial driver, comparable to the role played by IT in previous decades, and said the upcoming industrial revolution will be a bio-revolution, encompassing recycling, regeneration, circular economy, and advanced life-science innovations.

Dr Jitendra Singh said the Budget also addresses non-communicable diseases and mental health, areas that were neglected in earlier decades. He announced that new super-specialty academic and clinical institutes for mental health will be established in North India, ensuring wider and more equitable access to care.

He also highlighted the decision to establish new institutes of Ayurveda and pharmaceutical education, saying these initiatives will strengthen traditional medicine systems while integrating them with modern research and healthcare delivery.

The Minister said the extension of customs duty exemptions on imported components for nuclear power plants till 2035 will improve project efficiency and attract credible domestic and international investment. He said this aligns with recent reforms aimed at expanding private sector participation in the nuclear ecosystem.

Dr Jitendra Singh also referred to the development of rare earth corridors and critical mineral initiatives, stating these will support clean energy technologies, electronics manufacturing, and strategic industries, while reducing import dependence.

Calling the National Geospatial Mission a foundational reform, the Minister said it will play a decisive role in planned urbanisation, infrastructure design, and land management, especially as India witnesses rapid rural-to-urban migration. Implemented through the PM Gati Shakti platform, the Mission will enable evidence-based planning using satellites, drones, and advanced mapping tools.

Dr Jitendra Singh highlighted the Rs. 20,000 crore allocation for Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) as a critical step towards industrial decarbonisation, circular economy, and environmental sustainability. He also announced structured deployment of AI in agriculture, ensuring farmers benefit from technology while being safeguarded from its unintended effects.

The Minister said, the Budget ensures inclusivity, with measures that directly benefit the poorest sections, including improved healthcare access, affordable medicines, district-level cancer care facilities, women-led entrepreneurship programmes, and livelihood generation through science-based interventions.

Secretary, Department of Science & Technology, Prof. Abhay Karandikar, said the Budget places strong emphasis on science, technology, and innovation, with the term "technology" appearing repeatedly in the Finance Minister's speech. He announced the creation of two mega science R&D infrastructure facilities, a 30-metre National Large Optical Telescope and a National Large Solar Telescope near Pangong Lake, which will complement India's space and solar missions and significantly enhance global scientific collaboration.

Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, Dr Rajesh S. Gokhale, said the Bio-pharma Shakti programme builds on the successful National Biopharma Mission and will accelerate translation of research into manufacturing. He said the initiative strengthens industry-academia partnerships, shared infrastructure, clinical trial networks, and vaccine development, while also integrating biotechnology-based carbon utilisation technologies.

Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Dr M. Ravichandran, outlined key initiatives under the Blue Economy, including expansion of national waterways, coastal tourism, offshore and deep-sea fisheries, and sustainable shipping. He said new policies permitting fishing beyond territorial waters and in high seas will open significant economic opportunities while ensuring environmental responsibility.

Director General, CSIR and Secretary, DSIR, Dr N. Kalaiselvi, said CSIR will play a central role across multiple Budget initiatives, including CCUS, semiconductors, critical minerals, rare earth magnets, clean energy and advanced manufacturing. She said CSIR laboratories have been designated as centres of excellence for critical metals and minerals, aligning national research capabilities with industrial and strategic needs.

Concluding the interaction, Dr Jitendra Singh said the Budget reflects a mission-oriented approach, where research, manufacturing and deployment move together. He said science-led reforms announced after the Budget underline India's readiness to compete in technology-intensive global sectors, while ensuring that growth remains inclusive, sustainable, and citizen-centric.

Night temperatures.....

Among other places, Qazigund recorded a minimum temperature of 0.7 degrees Celsius, Kokernag settled at minus 0.6 degrees, while Kupwara in north Kashmir registered a low of minus 1.3 degrees Celsius, officials said.

The Meteorological Department has forecast light rain and snowfall at many places. Weather is expected to remain partly cloudy from February 4 to February 6.

On February 7, light rain or snowfall is likely at a few places, while conditions are expected to remain partly cloudy again from February 8 to February 10.

Travellers and transporters have been advised to check road and highway conditions before undertaking journeys, particularly in snow-bound areas.

People living in higher reaches have also been cautioned against venturing into avalanche-prone areas, officials added.

An avalanche with a low danger level is likely to occur at elevations above 2,400 metres in Bandipora district over the next 24 hours, the Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory Disaster Management Authority (JKUTDMA) said.

Authorities have advised people to avoid avalanche-prone areas and strictly follow official advisories. In case of any emergency, residents have been asked to dial 112—(AGENCIES)

J&K 'Crown.....

epidemic, this disease of drugs, whether it involves political figures, some police officials, or others. Many people are involved these days. When they are caught, they must face the law, with support from the community, religion and society," he said.

Sharma highlighted other pressing issues, including unemployment and limited development resources, drawing a comparison with past parliamentary leadership: "During Sardar Manmohan Singh's time, MPs used to bring significant funds for development. Today, resources are limited, but I hope Delhi will support J&K in the same way," he said.

Hailing India's diversity, unity and achievements, the minister said J&K's youth and teams have the potential to excel in sports and other fields with proper leadership and support.

"Every community, every religion, every

region contributes to India's beauty. With the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, we will make great progress in sports and aim to be among the top in the country," he said.

The minister also underscored the importance of collective action, law enforcement and national support to address social and developmental challenges in Jammu and Kashmir—(KNO)

JKBOSE declares.....

girls is 86 percent and 81 percent among the male students.

BOSE said that a total of 81,573 candidates were enrolled for the exams out of which 67,932 successfully qualified it.

In the exams, a total of 37,997 students have registered distinctions, 25,694 secured first divisions, 4216 bagged second division and 25 candidates registered third division.

BOSE further said that in the examination, 608 students couldn't qualify the exams while 13,032 have been asked to reappear in the exams.

Pertinently, BOSE had announced syllabus relaxation of 15 percent for 10th, 11th and 12th standard examination.

Director Academics of BOSE in a notification said that the decision was taken upon the recommendations received from the DSEK and DSEJ and pleas received from other stakeholders regarding reduction in syllabus due to delayed commencement of academic session this year coupled with disruptions in academic calendar due to heat wave, torrential rains, cloudbursts and floods.

"As approved by the competent authority, it is notified that the prospective eligible students appearing in class 10th, 11th and 12th in the ensuing annual regular, 2025 examination in Kashmir Division and winter zone areas of Jammu Division including UT of Ladakh, shall attempt 85 percent marks which will correspond to 100 percent marks, availing thus 15 percent relaxation in syllabus," reads the notification.

Pertinently, on January-14, JKBOSE declared results of both 10th and 12th standard on the same day with at least 84 percent qualifying the exam of 12th standard and 85 percent in 10th standard respectively—(KNO)

Hope in the.....

has been undergoing treatment for blood cancer for two years, said the announcement has brought hope to families battling the disease. "Every month, we spend around 50,000 rupees on medicines alone. We sold our land and borrowed from relatives. Even a small reduction in prices will help families like ours survive this struggle," he told Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

Fareeda Akhter, a 35-year-old cancer survivor from South Kashmir, said the decision could be life-changing for countless patients. "I had to stop one course of treatment midway because we couldn't afford the imported drug. Cheaper medicines mean patients won't have to choose between health and financial ruin," she said.

Dr Ashraf Dar, an oncologist, said the removal of customs duty would have a direct impact on drug pricing. "While this is not a complete solution, it is certainly a positive step toward making cancer care more accessible," he said.

Families affected by cancer said the announcement made them feel recognised and supported by the government. Mohammad Irfan, whose 10-year-old daughter is undergoing chemotherapy, said, "Cancer doesn't just attack the body; it destroys savings and peace of mind. Any relief means hope."



Div Com Kmr reviews IWAI's Envisaged Project of Water Transport in River Jhelum

Directs joint inspection of agencies for evaluation of interventions

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 2: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg, along with Secretary Transport, Avny Lavasa today chaired a meeting to review the removal of bottlenecks for water transport of the Inland Waterways Authority of India's (IWAI) envisaged project of River Jhelum.

The meeting was participated in by Deputy Commissioners of Srinagar, Budgam, Baramulla and Ganderbal; RTO Kashmir; Chief Engineers KPDCL & PWD; engineer from I&FC and PWD departments; and the IWAI Coordinator.

At the outset, the IWAI Coordinator gave a detailed presentation on the bottlenecks of the project and highlighted the required interventions.

Addressing the meeting, the



Divisional Commissioner directed IWAI to take possession of land at two identified locations and to



conduct a joint inspection to identify land for the third location.

It was informed that out of

eight proposed locations, four have already been taken over by IWAI. Regarding issues related to HT and LT power lines, the Divisional Commissioner instructed IWAI to share a detailed list of site-specific issues with the Chief Engineer, KPDCL, for preparation of removal estimates. Similarly, the PWD was directed to assess removal of coffer-dams under bridges and to facilitate necessary clearances.

The Divisional Commissioner also appointed RTO Kashmir as the nodal officer to ensure close coordination and effective communication among all concerned departments.

While directing for joint inspection of agencies for assessing site interventions, he emphasized that a consolidated report outlining all required interventions be compiled and submitted within one week.

Drug Awareness Drive Held at Rafiabad Public School, Dangiwacha

Experts, Police Officials and Civil Society Members Urge Students to Adopt Healthy, Drug-Free Lifestyles

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

DANGIWACHA, FEB 2: A comprehensive drug awareness programme was organised at Rafiabad Public School, Dangiwacha, by Rafiabad Youth Welfare to educate students about the dangers of substance abuse and promote a healthy, responsible way of life. Around 100 students actively participated in the event, which witnessed the presence of Islamic scholars, a medical professional, a legal expert, civil society members and police officers. The speakers shared valuable insights into the social, legal, medical and moral consequences of drug addiction, stressing the urgent need to curb the growing menace among youth.

Addressing the gathering, the speakers underlined that drug abuse is severely impacting young generations and called for collective efforts involving families, educational institutions and the wider community to counter the threat. Police officials briefed students on the stringent legal provisions and serious consequences associated with drug-related offences, while the doctor highlighted the severe health risks posed by substance abuse, including long-term physical and psychological damage.

Er. Aamir also addressed the students, motivating them to remain focused on their education, set positive life goals and act as ambassadors of awareness within their communities.

All members of Rafiabad Youth Welfare were present on the occasion, including Fida Hussain, Ulfat Mushtaq, Molvi Parvaiz Amin, Mehraj Ahmad, Mohsin Bashir, Umer Ganie, Basit Ahmad, Tariq Ahmad, Faizal Nazir and others, who played an active role in organising the programme.

The event concluded with students taking a pledge to stay away from drugs and spread awareness among their peers, making the programme both informative and inspiring.

Farhan Kitab, Altaf bhat Congratulate Ahmad Altaf Bhat of Ellahibagh, Srinagar, and Aiydah Nazir of Shopian for Success in JKBOSE Class 11 Exams

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 02: Farhan Kitab, Prominent social activist and Altaf Bhat, coordinator of an international human rights organization in North India, have extended their warm congratulations to Ahmad Altaf Bhat of Ellahibagh, Srinagar, and Aiydah Nazir of Shopian for successfully qualifying the Jammu and Kashmir Board of School Education (JKBOSE) Class 11 examination.

This achievement marks



a significant milestone in the academic journeys of these students, highlighting their dedication and hard work in overcoming the challenges posed by the regional educational environment.

Farhan Kitab praised the students' perseverance and commitment to education, emphasizing that their success serves as an inspiration to many young learners in

the region. Altaf Bhat also expressed his admiration, noting the importance of supporting youth in their academic and personal growth to build a brighter future.

The recognition of these students' accomplishments by respected social and human rights figures underscores the value placed on education and empowerment within the community. Their success is a hopeful reminder of the potential for progress through education in Jammu and Kashmir.

Senior Trade Union Leader Ali Mohammad Malik Passes Away; NGEA J&K Expresses Deep Grief

■ FAROOQ RATHER

ANANTNAG, FEB 2: The Non Gazzeted Electrical Employees Association (NGEEA) Jammu and Kashmir has expressed profound grief and sorrow over the untimely demise of senior trade union leader Ali Mohammad Malik of Mehmood Abad, Doru, Anantnag, who breathed his last at SMHS Hospital, Srinagar, today. Late Ali Mohammad Malik was a veteran employee of the Electricity Department and remained actively associated with trade union activities throughout his life. He was widely respected for his unwavering commitment to the cause of electricity employees, workers, and the broader working class. His relentless struggle for employees' rights and welfare has left an indel-



ible mark on the trade union movement in the region. In a condolence message, the NGEA J&K described his demise as an irreparable loss to the organization and the working community at large. The association pledged to carry forward the mission and ideals for which the late leader dedicated his entire life, stating that his services and sacrifices will always be remembered. Meanwhile, a delegation of NGEA J&K, led by its representative Abdul Rashid Najar, visited the residence of the deceased at Mehmood Abad, Doru, Anantnag, to personally express condolences and solidarity with the bereaved family. The delegation prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul and for strength to the family to bear the irreparable loss.

KU felicitates Padma Shri Awardee Prof Shafi Shauq

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 02: The University of Kashmir (KU) on Monday organised a felicitation ceremony to honour its former Professor and eminent Kashmiri litterateur, Prof Shafi Shauq, who was recently conferred the prestigious Padma Shri by the Government of India on the eve of the 77th Republic Day in recognition of his outstanding contribution to education and literature especially for preservation and promotion of Kashmiri language. The ceremony, held at the Main University campus, witnessed the presence of senior University functionaries and faculty members who gathered to celebrate the illustrious academic and

literary journey of Prof Shauq, an alumnus of the University and one of its most distinguished faculty members. The Padma Shri, one of the highest civilian honours of the country, acknowledges his decades-long dedication to education and literature including preservation, promotion and enrichment of the Kashmiri language.

Vice-Chancellor, KU Prof Nilofer Khan, while presiding over the felicitation ceremony, remarked that Prof Shauq had embodied the spirit of interdisciplinary education much before it found articulation in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. "Prof. Shauq has made a great contribution to the promotion and enrichment of the Kashmiri language and literature. His

academic work and teaching reflected the multidisciplinary spirit that the NEP 2020 talks about today, much before it formally came into place," she observed.

Congratulating the awardee, the Vice-Chancellor said the University takes immense pride in having produced such stalwarts who have brought laurels not only to the institution and Jammu & Kashmir but to the nation at large.

She added that the honour felt like recognition of the University itself and reflected the collective efforts bearing fruit, be it in NIRF rankings or the recent A++ grade awarded by NAAC. Prof Khan further expressed the University's keen interest in engaging Prof Shauq in some capacity as a men-

tor to guide students and scholars, particularly in the School of Arts, Culture and Languages.

In his remarks Prof Shafi Shauq expressed deep gratitude to the University administration, describing the University of Kashmir as a family that has always nurtured and acknowledged his hard work and dedication. "I never worked with the expectation of awards or recognition; I wrote because I loved to write," he said, adding that his passion for literature had always been his greatest motivation.

Sharing personal anecdotes from his long association with the University, Prof Shauq recalled his appointment in 1978 in KU and spoke about continuing the legacy of hard work, particularly in lexi-

cographical pursuits such as dictionary writing.

He credited noted scholar, Linquist and writer George Abraham Grierson as his inspiration, saying he consciously followed in his footsteps while shaping his academic and literary journey.

Various speakers including Dean Academic Affairs KU Prof Shariefuddin Pirzada, Registrar Prof Naseer Iqbal and Dean, School of Arts, Culture and Languages Prof Ajeez Mohammad Sheikh in their remarks, highlighted Prof Shauq's profound literary and academic contributions, particularly his role in strengthening Kashmiri language studies which they said left a lasting impact on generations of learners and researchers.

Secretary RDD inaugurates regional workshop on Quality GPDP formulation at IMPARD

Planning at the grassroots defines development outcomes: Ajiaz Asad

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEB 02: Secretary, Rural Development Department and Panchayati Raj, Mohammad Ajiaz Asad, today said that democracy finds its most authentic expression at the level of the Gram Panchayat, emphasizing that meaningful and inclusive development is possible only through sound, participatory, and evidence-based planning at the grassroots.

He was speaking at the inauguration of a three-day Regional Workshop on Capacity



Building and Handholding Support for the Formulation of Quality Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) at IMPARD, J&K, being organized in collaboration with the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad.

The event was attended by Director General, IMPARD, Rehana Batul; Director, Panchayati Raj, J&K, Sham Lal; Project Head, NIRDPR, Dr. A. K. Banja; experts from NIRDPR; Master Trainers; and senior officers of the department. Panchayat Secretaries, Account Assistants, and other field functionaries are participating in the workshop.

The Secretary said the initiative aims to facilitate the formulation of quality GPDPs in 285 Gram Panchayats—one from each Block of the Union Territory which will serve as model plans for replication across other Panchayats. He described the partnership with NIRDPR as a significant milestone and expressed confidence that it would usher in a new era of participatory, data-driven, and outcome-oriented planning in line with the vision of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India.

Highlighting the importance of quality planning, Ajiaz Asad said a well-formulated GPDP strengthens local governance by addressing social, economic, and infrastructural needs in a balanced manner. He underlined the pivotal role of the Gram Sabha, stressing that meaningful public participation is essential to ensure plans truly reflect community aspirations. He emphasized that GPDPs must be scientific, evidence-based, and oriented towards long-term, sustainable development.

He appreciated the efforts of the Director Panchayati Raj and directed that similar capacity-building programmes be organized across districts to bring tangible improvements in GPDP formulation and implementation.

Director General, IMPARD, Rehana Batul, highlighted the role of GPDPs in holistic rural development and emphasized the need for structured capacity-building initiatives to strengthen planning and execution at the Panchayat level.

Director Panchayati Raj, Sham Lal, said that innovative initiatives and large-scale capacity-building programmes are transforming rural governance in Jammu & Kashmir. He stated that the project would result in 285 Model GPDPs, supported through mentoring and handholding, and serve as valuable templates for the entire UT. Emphasizing the role of Master Trainers, he said empowered Panchayats lead to empowered people and a more self-reliant rural Jammu & Kashmir.

Div Com Kashmir, Dir Sericulture unveil SILK KASH-Quarterly Journal 2026

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 02: Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, Anshul Garg along with Director Sericulture J&K, Ajaz Ahmad Bhat today unveiled the Quarterly Journal 2026 of the Sericulture Development Department, J&K in the presence of senior officers & officials.

Speaking on the occasion, the Div Com highlighted that the Sericulture sector being a viable component of the region's economy, provides livelihood to a sizable population across the Union Territory of J&K.

He lauded the department's efforts in adopting a multipronged approach to disseminate awareness about various schemes, facilities, and activities aimed at harnessing the full potential of the sector.

The Div Com further commended the initiative of publishing the quarterly journal for the first time. He emphasized that silkworm rearing is a cost-effective activity with high returns and stressed the need for an aggressive publicity



campaign to educate people about its benefits by utilizing every available medium.

He congratulated the Director Sericulture J&K for the successful publication of the journal and expressed hope that this initiative will significantly contribute to

improving the economic conditions of people in the region.

Addressing the gathering, the Director stated that the quarterly journal, being launched for the first time will henceforth be a regular feature.

Conceived as a dedicated

platform, the publication aims to highlight best practices, share success stories of progressive silkworm rearers and create awareness about Centrally Sponsored Schemes and initiatives such as Silk Samagra-2 and the Holistic Agriculture Development

Programme (HADP) which are being proactively implemented by the Department for the benefit of stakeholders at the grassroots level.

He further emphasized that through this publication, the Department seeks to ensure that silkworm rearers, farmers, silk reeling and weaving unit holders, educated youth, women and tribal communities are well informed about schemes, subsidies, training programmes, facilities, and technical support, thereby enabling them to fully leverage the opportunities available.

On the occasion, the Director Sericulture also apprised the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir about various initiatives and programmes of the Department. He informed that special emphasis is being laid on strengthening capacity building of stakeholders through skill upgradation programmes for departmental field functionaries, exposure tours for silkworm rearers and farmers and awareness camps for educated youth, women, and tribal communities.

Bandipora launches Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0 to accelerate socio-economic saturation

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, FEBRUARY 02: Bandipora district on Monday launched Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0, a flagship initiative of NITI Aayog, aimed at achieving saturation of key socio-economic indicators across aspirational districts and blocks, including Tulail, the Aspirational Block of Bandipora.

The three-month Abhiyan focuses on accelerating outcomes in priority sectors such as health, nutrition, education, sanitation and animal husbandry, with special emphasis on last-mile service delivery in remote and underserved areas.

As part of the launch, officers and officials of the district administration reaffirmed their collective commitment towards achieving complete saturation of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) under the Aspirational Block Programme.

Officials and stakeholders from Tulail block participated in the launch programme virtually, which was live-connected with the Conference Hall of the Mini Secretariat, Bandipora.

The participants were briefed on the targets, timelines and monitoring framework of Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0.

Highlighting earlier achievements, it was recalled that during Sampoornata Abhiyan Phase-I, Tulail Block secured 2nd rank at the national level under the Aspirational Blocks Programme by achieving saturation in key indicators including maternal and child health services, full immunisation, institutional deliveries, nutrition outcomes, foundational literacy and household tap water connections. In recognition of this performance, Bandipora district received national-level recognition from NITI Aayog.

During the programme, the Deputy Commissioner held a doubt-clearing interactive session with the local public of Tulail. Issues, particularly related to the winter season and service delivery, were raised and the Deputy Commissioner assured timely redressal through the concerned departments.

Under Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0, the district administration will intensify efforts to ensure 100 percent coverage of supplementary nutrition, regular growth monitoring of children, functional Anganwadi infrastructure, availability of girls' toilets in schools, TB notification, animal vaccination, and other targeted indicators.

Reiterating the district's commitment to sustained progress, the Deputy Commissioner directed all concerned departments to strengthen inter-departmental coordination, field-level monitoring and active involvement of frontline workers, ensuring that the benefits of government schemes reach every eligible household across Bandipora.

JKEDI District Centre Shopian concludes MDP-VII at GHSS Kanjiullar

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN, FEBRUARY 02: The Jammu & Kashmir Entrepreneurship Development Institute (JKEDI), District Centre Shopian, successfully concluded the Management Development Programme (MDP) - Batch VII today at Government Higher Secondary School (GHSS), Kanjiullar, Shopian, aimed at strengthening the managerial and entrepreneurial competencies of existing entrepreneurs of the district.

A total of 22 candidates were enrolled in the programme, out of which 21 participants successfully completed the training.

The batch comprised 20 female and 1 male participant, reflecting strong women participation in entrepreneurial activities in the area.

The MDP-VII focused on enhancing participant's understanding of advanced business and management practices, including business planning, financial management, marketing strategies, digital awareness, government support schemes and essential soft skills required for sustaining and scaling existing enterprises.

The sessions were delivered through interactive discussions, practical examples and activity-based learning for effective real-time application.

On the concluding day, Sayeem Rafiq, District Nodal Officer, JKEDI Shopian, interacted with the participants and emphasized the importance of adopting improved management practices to strengthen and expand their existing business ventures. He assured continued mentoring and handholding support from JKEDI.

Rayees Manzoor, Faculty JKEDI, served as the reviewer for the programme and interacted online with the participants.

He reviewed the training process, appreciated the active engagement of the entrepreneurs, and encouraged them to implement the learnings in their business operations.

ADC Kulgam reviews annual Urs arrangements of Hazrat

Syed Noor Shah Wali Bagdadi (RA) Kund

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM, FEBRUARY 02: Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Kulgam, Vigar Ahmad Giri today chaired a meeting to review arrangements for annual urs of sufi saint Hazrat Syed Noor Shah Saheb Wali Bagdadi (RA) at Waltengo and Oriel Shrines of Kund Valley.

During the review meeting, the ADC directed the officers to ensure uninterrupted power supply, safe drinking water supply, proper sanitation measures besides healthcare facilities and security arrangements at shrine



during Urs days.

He instructed KPDCL to ensure uninterrupted power supply during the festival days in entire Kund area.

The concerned Mechanical

department was asked to keep men and machinery available and in ready mode to clear roads in case of snowfall during these days to ensure hassle-free movement of devotees.

The ADC stressed upon the officers to work in coordination and to put in place all the requisite arrangements in advance to avoid any inconvenience to the people and smooth celebrations of the Urs.

Transport department was directed to ensure hassle-free movement of devotees besides availability of late evening public transport services to Kund area during the festival days.

CEO, JKERA inspects progress on construction of new Infertility and Oncology Block at Lal Ded Hospital

Directs expeditious execution, parallel works and strict monitoring to meet timelines

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 02: Chief Executive Officer, J&K Economic Reconstruction Agency (ERA)/JTFRP, Shreya Singh, today inspected the progress of work on the construction of the state-of-the-art 108-bed additional block for specialised Infertility and Gynaec Oncology at Lal Ded Hospital, Srinagar.

The project is being executed under the World Bank funded Jhelum Tawi Flood Recovery Project (JTFRP) implemented by PWD (R&B), which is being constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 118 crore

using seismic-resistant base isolation technology.

During the inspection, the concerned officers briefed the Chief Executive Officer about the salient features of the project, highlighting that the building is being constructed as per modern hospital architectural standards being adopted nationally and internationally.

The G+5 structure with attic and stilt parking will have specialised zones including modular operation theatres, ICUs, High Dependency Units (HDUs), LDR suites, pre- and post-natal care wards, recovery wards and

dedicated patient waiting lounges, with a total built-up area of 11,640 square metres.

The CEO was informed that foundation works of the building have been completed and that the project is entering a crucial phase, with planning and design nearing completion and prefabricated structural components being manufactured off-site and expected to reach the project location shortly.

Emphasising the importance of timely completion of this critical healthcare infrastructure, the CEO directed that the project be expedited and completed well

before 31st August, with multiple activities taken up in parallel to avoid any time overruns.

She instructed the Project Implementation Unit (R&B) and Project Management Support (PMS) teams to conduct weekly site visits to closely monitor progress and ensure adherence to timelines.

The CEO further stressed the need for streamlined coordination with key stakeholder departments, particularly the Health Department, to ensure seamless execution of works and timely integration of services.

Additionally, the CEO

instructed the PIU to expedite procurement of medical, electrical and mechanical equipment, so that installation can proceed in sync with civil works as part of the integrated health sector project.

Senior officers including the Chief Engineer, PWD (R&B) (Central) Superintendent Engineer, PWD (R&B) Central, Project Manager J&KERA Kashmir, Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Central, Deputy Project Manager J&KERA Kashmir and other officials from PWD (R&B) and J&KERA accompanied the CEO during the site inspection.

DC Anantnag directs for time-bound, quality-checked redressal of Public Grievances

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

ANANTNAG, FEBRUARY 02: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anantnag, SF Hamid, today directed all concerned officers to ensure time-bound and quality-checked redressal of public grievances received through the JK Samadhan and CGRAMS portals, emphasizing that responses must be substantive, fact-based, and outcome-oriented.

He underscored that prompt and quality grievance disposal by line departments is critical to improving public service delivery and maintaining public trust.

The DC also stressed the need for expeditious disposal of offline grievances, particularly those pertaining to the Revenue, Public Health Engineering (PHE), Rural Development Department (RDD), Power Development Department (PDD), and other departments, with a clear focus on clearing pendency in the district.

These directions were issued while chairing a comprehensive review meeting of all departments at Dak Bungalow, Khanabal.

Taking note of the limited time remaining in the current financial year, the DC directed all departments to expedite ongoing works and expenditure under all Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSSS) and other development programmes.

He emphasized timely completion of physical works, including SASCI and other priority government initiatives, to ensure effective and optimal utilization of approved funds within the current financial year.

The meeting was attended by the Principal, Government Medical College Anantnag; Additional District Development Commissioner; Additional Deputy Commissioner; Superintending Engineers of PWD, Jal Shakti/PHE and KPDCL; General Manager, DIC; Chief Planning Officer; Sub-Divisional Magistrates;

Executive Engineers of R&B, Jal Shakti/PHE, PDD and I&FC; Assistant Commissioner Development, all district and sectoral officers, and District Coordinators and Programme Managers of various Central and UT-sponsored schemes and projects.

84 Bn CRPF observes 18th Martyrdom Anniversary of Shaheed Constable Mushtaq Ahmed at Maitra

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

RAMBAN, FEBRUARY 2: The 84 Battalion of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) today paid rich tributes to Shaheed Constable Mushtaq Ahmed on his 18th Martyrdom Anniversary here at Parnote.

Shaheed Constable Mushtaq Ahmed laid down his life in the line of duty on February 2, 2008, during an anti-Maoist operation in the Maoist-affected Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh. At the time of the incident, a column of the 63 Battalion CRPF personnel was returning after a major operation when it was ambushed by a heavily armed group of Maoists. Displaying exceptional courage and tactical skill, the CRPF personnel retaliated effectively. The force tactically split into two teams and launched a counter-offensive, forcing the Maoists to flee after sustaining casualties and injuries.



During the intense encounter, Constable (Driver) Mushtaq Ahmed, a resident of Maitra, Ramtan, fought valiantly and attained martyrdom while defending the nation. He is survived by his wife, Veer Nari

Smt. Rubina Begum and two sons. To commemorate his supreme sacrifice, the 84 Bn CRPF organized a solemn function at Oakfield International School, Parnote Maitra. The ceremony was attended

by Commandant 84 Bn CRPF N. Ranbir Singh, Second-in-Command Vikram Singh, Assistant Commandants R. Meena and Vikash Kumar, along with over 100 CRPF personnel, family members of the martyr, prominent local residents and students.

Floral tributes were paid to the martyr and his courage, dedication and selfless service were remembered with deep respect and pride.

The Commandant expressed heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and reaffirmed the CRPF's commitment to stand by the families of martyrs, stating that the nation would always remain indebted to their supreme sacrifices.

The ceremony concluded with a moment of silence and prayers for eternal peace, followed by the presentation of a shawl and memento to the Veer Nari by the Commandant.

Rana reviews UT CAPEX works of Jal Shakti Department

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 2: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana, today reviewed progress on UT CAPEX works of the Jal Shakti Department, with special focus on execution status of Water Supply Schemes (WSS) and Irrigation & Flood Control (I&FC) works targeted for 2025-26.

The Minister undertook a comprehensive review of projects being executed in Jammu division, analysing the physical and financial progress, bottlenecks and timelines. He issued clear instructions for expediting execution and ensuring timely completion of all targeted



deadlines.

The Minister stressed that timely and transparent completion of WSS and I&FC works is crucial for improving service delivery, strengthening irrigation infrastructure and ensuring drinking water security across sub-regions.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Jal Shakti Department, Shaleen Kabra; Chief Engineer, I&FC Jammu, Manoj Gupta; Chief Engineer, Jal Shakti Jammu, Hanif Choudhary; Director Planning, Intiaz; and Director Finance, Lateef Poswal, besides other senior officers.

DLSA Ganderbal initiates Publicity Drive for "Mediation For the Nation 2.0"

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

GANDERBAL, FEBRUARY 02: District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Ganderbal has initiated a publicity drive to spread awareness about the nationwide initiative "Mediation For The Nation 2.0" pursuant to the directions from the Jammu & Kashmir Legal Services Authority.

The campaign undertaken under the Chairmanship of Abdul Nasir, Chairman District Legal Services Authority (Pr. District and Sessions Judge), Ganderbal and guided by Sheikh Babar Hussain, Secretary District Legal Services Authority, Ganderbal aims to sensitize the public, particularly litigants, about the benefits and advantages of mediation as an effective Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism.



As part of campaign, Para Legal Volunteers (Adhikar Mitras) were deputed to various locations for the purpose of disseminating information regarding the "Mediation For The Nation 2.0 Campaign" and affix banners and posters at prominent locations across the district, including markets, educational institutions, bus stops, court complexes and other areas of public interaction, so as to ensure wide publicity and outreach.

The initiative seeks to promote a culture of amicable settlement, mutual understanding and peaceful conflict resolution promoting access to justice.

The publicity drive is designed to strengthen the institutional framework of Mediation 2.0, encouraging parties to adopt mediation at the earliest stage, and providing speedy and cost-effective justice to the people of Ganderbal. By creating awareness about the importance of ADR mechanisms, the DLSA Ganderbal aims to promote a culture of peace and harmony in the district.

The authority is confident that "Mediation For The Nation 2.0" will be successful in achieving its objectives, and is committed to ensuring that the benefits of mediation reach the grassroots level.

ADC Kupwara chairs meeting of DAC on Food Safety

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KUPWARA, FEBRUARY 2: On the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Kupwara, Gulzar Ahmad Khan today chaired a meeting of the District Advisory Committee on Safe Food and Healthy Diets under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

The meeting held a detailed discussion on a wide range of issues related to food safety across the district.

Key areas of deliberation included the establishment and regulation of

slaughterhouses, inspection of meat shops, hotels and dhabas; authorization of street food vendors, strengthening the food safety emergency response framework; relocation of high-risk manufacturing units from industrial estates, timely disposal of adjudication cases, implementation of Eat Right initiatives, and IEC activities.

Besides, enforcement measures such as inspections, sampling, prosecution and adjudication related to food safety, along with mechanisms for redressal of food safety incidents, were also reviewed in detail.

Speaking on the occasion, the Director emphasized the government's commitment to farmer welfare and modernization of agriculture in Kashmir.

"This mobile air-conditioned van is a practical intervention under HADP to reduce post-harvest losses, preserve the freshness and quality of our farmers' produce such as fruits, vegetables, and other perishables and enable better market access", he added.

"It will empower growers to transport their harvest reliably to distant markets, fetch remunerative prices, and contribute to the overall growth of the agricultural economy in the region," he said.

The van features advanced air-conditioning and cooling systems to maintain



optimal temperature and humidity levels during transportation, ensuring minimal damage to delicate crops. It is expected to benefit small and marginal farmers, cooperatives, and producer groups by providing an affordable, on-demand transport solution.

This initiative aligns with the broader objectives of HADP, which focuses on holistic development through infrastructure enhancement, value addition, market linkages, and sustainability in agriculture and allied sectors across Jammu & Kashmir.

The Directorate of Agriculture Kashmir remains dedicated to implementing innovative schemes that directly uplift farmers and promote resilient, profitable farming practices.

On the occasion Chief Agriculture Officer Srinagar, Ajaz Hussain Dar and other senior officers of the department were also present.

GDC Ramkote organizes maiden NSS winter camp

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KATHUA, FEBRUARY 02: A maiden Special Winter Camp was inaugurated today at Government Degree College (GDC)-Ramkote with great enthusiasm and a sense of social commitment.

The weeklong camp (February 2 to February 9, 2026) has been organized by the National Service Scheme (NSS) unit.

The programme commenced with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp by the Principal of the

college, Dr Rakesh Kumar Koul, followed by Sarasvati Vandana by Taniya, Reeta, Pallavi and Reenu Devi.

NSS volunteer from BA Semester II Bhawani Gupta delivered the welcome address. She extended greetings to the guests, NSS volunteers, faculty members and students.

NSS Convener Prof. Suresh Chander congratulated all the volunteers for showing the true spirit of Service before Self. NSS Programme Officer, Prof Anu

Sharma highlighted the objectives of the NSS Winter Camp and encouraged volunteers to actively participate in community-oriented programmes with dedication and discipline.

A brief schedule of activities was shared with the participating volunteers.

The programme also featured insightful speeches by NSS student volunteers Kriti Devi, Priya Devi, Tanya Sharma and Hiritika Maski.

The students spoke in detail about the history and background

of the National Service Scheme, explaining its origin and purpose. They elaborated on the NSS logo and motto, highlighting their significance and relevance in promoting social awareness and national integration.

Minakshi Devi spoke on the National Awards through NSS, motivating volunteers to strive for excellence in service and commitment.

The inaugural ceremony concluded with a formal and inspiring address by the Principal of the college. He underlined the role of NSS in fostering leadership, teamwork and a spirit of selfless service.

He also highlighted the essential qualities required to become an ideal citizen, such as integrity, spirituality, empathy, social responsibility and active community engagement.

The Principal encouraged students to utilize the NSS platform to connect with society, understand grassroots issues and contribute meaningfully to nation-building.

Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0 launched in Aspirational Block Khawas

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

RAJOURI, FEBRUARY 2: Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0 was formally launched in the Aspirational Block Khawas-Rajouri by the District Development Commissioner (DDC) Abhishek Sharma, here today.

A special awareness vehicle was flagged off from DC complex to block Khawas to promote the objectives of the Abhiyan and ensure mass public participation. The launch event was attended by Additional District Development Commissioner (ADD), Chief Planning Officer (CPO), District Statistics & Evaluation Officer (DSEO), Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD), Programme Officer ICDS, Chief Agriculture Officer (CAO), Chief Animal Husbandry Officer (CAHO), Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and other officials from line departments.

The Sampoornata Abhiyan shall



continue till April 14, 2026, with a focused goal of achieving saturation of 06 (six) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to ICDS, Education and Animal Husbandry sectors.

DDC Member, Shazia Kousar has been nominated as the Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0 Brand Ambassador for the Block Khawas.

The awareness vehicle flagged off from Rajouri was received by the Additional Deputy Commissioner

Koteranka in Block Khawas in the presence of all sectoral officers, officials and frontline workers. The vehicle shall travel to each panchayat as per predefined roster to spread awareness about the Abhiyan and mobilize community participation.

The concerned departments were directed to work in coordination to ensure 100% saturation of all six indicators well before the target date of 14 April 2026.

MLA, DC launch Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0 in Aspirational Block Marwah

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KISHHTWAR, FEBRUARY 02:

Member Legislative Assembly Inderwal, Pyare Lal Sharma (virtually) and Deputy Commissioner, Pankaj Kumar Sharma today launched Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0 in Aspirational Block Marwah, with the aim of achieving 100 percent saturation of 06 key indicators of the Abhiyan within the prescribed timeline. The launch event was held under the directions of NITI Aayog, Government of India and the UT Administration.

The launch programme was held in the Conference Hall, Mini Secretariat (New DC Office), under the chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner, Pankaj Kumar Sharma and in the presence of officers from the line departments.

The campaign shall continue from 28 January 2026 to 14 April 2026. The Calendar of Activities has already been issued by the District Administration to all concerned departments. Details regarding the required departmental interventions during the campaign have also been shared with all departments for timely and effective implementation.

The programme commenced with a virtual inaugural address by the Member Legislative Assembly Inderwal, Pyare Lal Sharma. He emphasized inclusive development, effective service delivery and effective public governance redressal in the Aspirational Block.

Chief Planning Officer, Akhil Thakur presented a PowerPoint presentation on the key targets and shared detailed insights into the campaign.

Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0 is a national-level initiative aimed at achieving complete saturation of key developmental indicators across 05 sectors, including Health and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture, Basic Infrastructure and Social Development in the Aspirational Blocks.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the Heads of Departments of the line departments to strictly adhere to the scheduled activities on the notified dates.

Recalling the district's outstanding performance under Sampoornata Abhiyan 1.0, the Deputy Commissioner stated that Aspirational Block Marwah has successfully achieved saturation of five out of six targeted indicators, earning a Silver Medal in Sampoornata Abhiyan 1.0.

He directed all departments

to work in close coordination to saturate all six key indicators so that this time the Aspirational Block secures a Gold Medal. "That will be possible only through strong inter-departmental convergence, sustained field engagement and result-oriented governance," he added.

Building upon this success, the DC announced that regular review meetings at both district and block levels will be conducted to monitor progress, identify gaps and implement timely corrective measures. He directed all district officers as well as sectoral heads to conduct frequent field visits to Aspirational Block Marwah to maintain momentum and ensure timely achievement of targets.

DDC Member Marwah, Sheikh Zafarullah, while addressing the gathering, emphasized the

importance of close coordination among all departments and stakeholders.

Later, the participants, led by DC took the Sampoornata Pledge, reaffirming the collective commitment of the district administration and line departments toward achieving complete saturation of key developmental indicators.

The event was attended by ADDC, Vinod Kumar Behnai; CPO, Akhil Thakur; PO ICDS, Dr. Rishi Kumar Sharma; ACD, Manoj Kumar; ACP, Neeraj Sharma; DSWO, Tariq Parvez Qazi; CEO, Municipal Council, Mirza Mumtaz Iqbal; CDPO Marwah, Dr. Kuldeep Kumar; ARTO, Tasleem Wani; ALC, Mamta Sudershan; CAO, Kushal Chandhel; CEO, ExEnJPDC; DNO Ayush; BDO Marwah, besides other officers and concerned staff.

ADDI Rajouri reviews progress of Catch the Rain initiative

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

RAJOURI, FEBRUARY 02: Additional District Development Commissioner Rajouri, Malikzada Sheraz Ul Haq today chaired a meeting to review the progress of the Catch the Rain initiative in the district. The meeting focused on assessing the implementation strategy and accelerating efforts towards water conservation and rainwater harvesting.

A Senior Scientist from the Government of India briefed the officers about the strategy for the successful implementation of the mission in the district. The meeting was also apprised of the progress achieved so far and directions were issued for timely uploading of the progress details on the designated portal.



The ADDC underscored the urgency of intensifying efforts towards water conservation and rainwater harvesting across the district. He stressed the need for a proactive approach in implementing the initiative, emphasizing meticulous planning.

To ensure effective implementation of the initiative, the ADDC directed all stakeholder departments to work in close coordination and collaboration, channeling focused efforts towards conservation and safeguarding of water resources.

The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioner Development Augil Nuvaid, besides DFO Rajouri, DFO Nowshera, Block Development Officers and other concerned officers.

HT EDITORIAL

Many a slip between a cup and the lip

More than 10 days have passed ever since the Kashmir valley, especially the higher reaches received heavy snowfall. By this time the administration should have ideally cleared the roads from snow so that these are fit for traffic. The snow may have been cleared from some of the roads but it is not true for all the areas. Snow is yet to be cleared from many roads falling in the far flung areas of Central, South and North Kashmir.

This got proved when disturbing images of people carrying dead bodies and patients flashed on social media. People could be seen moving through huge mounds of snow while making their way so as to ferry the patients from one place to another or to take a dead body for the burial. The flashing of such images is no less than a slap on the face of people at helm who claim that the situation has returned to normal after the recent moderate to heavy snowfall.

A little boy of a far flung village in South Kashmir's Shopian district fell ill and had to be shifted to Srinagar for treatment. The boy could not get well and as such passed away at the hospital. Following this his body was taken to the district headquarter to Shopian and later his village. The shifting of the body from the Srinagar hospital to Shopian did not take much time but what followed was quite unthinkable.

The relatives of the little boy had to brave odds and walk through five feet of snow from Shopian onwards to their native village. Since the incident was caught on camera by some people it got access to the social media and as such people could know about the same. There may be similar incidents across the Kashmir valley but those did not get noticed as these were not caught on camera. In such a manner one cannot rule miseries of scores of people on this front.

In yet another incident in North Kashmir a pregnant woman could be seen carried by her relatives on a cot while braving the vagaries of weather. In this video clip the relatives of the woman could be seen traversing through snow in order to ferry the patient to the hospital. This video also proves that many a slip between cup and the lip when it comes to restoring normalcy after snowfall.

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How Reels Affect Learning



■ DR. AQIB

The rise of reels and short-form content is reshaping attention spans, study patterns, and classroom engagement.

In today's digital age, students are learning in a world very different from that of previous generations. Between school assignments and extracurricular activities, many young people spend hours each day scrolling through short videos on platforms like Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and similar apps. These clips, often just seconds long, deliver entertainment, trends, and information at lightning speed. While they may seem harmless, educators and parents are increasingly asking: How do these short videos affect students' ability to learn?

The answer is complex. Reels are not entirely negative, but their growing presence in students' daily lives is changing how they focus, process information, and engage with education.

Teachers across schools and colleges are noticing a shift in how students behave in classrooms. Many report that students are more restless and less willing to engage in long explanations. Some struggle to listen without checking their phones, even for short periods.

Earlier, distractions in class might have been limited to whispering with friends or daydreaming. Now, a device in a pocket offers constant digital stimulation. Even when students are not actively watching reels, the urge to check notifications can occupy their thoughts, reducing their ability to fully engage in lessons.

This change does not mean students are less intelligent or less capable. Instead, it reflects how their brains are adapting to a fast-moving digital environment. However, traditional education still depends heavily on sustained attention, creating a growing mismatch between learning styles and learning environments.

Interestingly, reels have a mixed effect on creativity. On one hand, short videos encourage students to create content editing clips, adding music, storytelling in short formats, and learning digital skills. Many students become more confident in expressing themselves visually and creatively.

On the other hand, constant consumption leaves less time for boredom and boredom is often where creativity begins. When students fill every free moment with scrolling, they have fewer opportunities to daydream, reflect, or think deeply, which are important parts of the creative process.

True creativity often requires quiet time, patience, and sustained effort qualities that fast-paced digital habits can quietly reduce.

Short videos also influence how students communicate. Online content often relies on slang, abbreviations, and quick reactions. While this builds a sense of digital belonging, it may affect formal communication skills.

Teachers report that some students struggle with structured writing, formal vocabulary, and detailed explanations. When most daily communication happens through short captions and comments, writing long essays or detailed answers can feel unfamiliar.

This does not mean reels directly "damage" language skills, but excessive reliance on ultra-short communication may limit practice in more formal and academic forms of expression.

Another area affected by short-form video culture is reading. Long-form reading, whether textbooks, novels, or detailed articles builds vocabulary, imagination, and analytical thinking. It trains the brain to follow complex ideas and arguments.



Students who spend large amounts of time on short videos may find reading more tiring or less enjoyable. They may prefer summaries, bullet points, or quick explanations rather than full chapters. Over time, this can weaken comprehension skills and reduce the ability to engage with in-depth material, which is essential for higher education and competitive exams.

Short videos are designed for quick consumption. Bright visuals, fast editing, music, and constant variety make them highly engaging. Unlike textbooks, lectures, or long-form videos, reels demand very little sustained attention. A swipe instantly replaces one clip with another, creating a continuous stream of stimulation.

Over time, this habit can influence how students respond to slower-paced learning environments. Reading a chapter, solving math problems, or listening to a 40-minute lesson may begin to feel unusually difficult. Teachers are observing that students often struggle to stay focused for extended periods, frequently reaching for their phones even during study time.

One of the biggest concerns linked to short-form content is its potential effect on attention span. Learning often requires deep concentration — the ability to sit with a problem, analyze information, and think critically. Reels, however, train the brain to expect constant novelty and rapid rewards.

When students become used to high-speed content, traditional learning methods may feel less stimulating. As a result, they may lose focus more easily, switch between tasks frequently, and find it harder to complete assignments without distractions. This constant shifting of attention reduces the brain's ability to retain information effectively.

Short videos are not just entertaining; they are designed to keep users engaged. Each new clip brings something different: humor, surprise, or emotion triggering the brain's reward system. This creates a loop where users feel compelled to keep scrolling.

Short videos often present information in simplified, entertaining ways. While this can make content accessible, it may also encourage surface-level understanding. Subjects like literature, science, and history require deeper engagement, analysis, and reflection skills that develop through sustained focus.

Teachers report that some students now prefer quick summaries over detailed explanations. Writ-

ing long answers, reading complex passages, and engaging in thoughtful discussions can feel more challenging. Over time, this may affect critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

Another important concern is sleep. Because reels are short and endlessly available, students often scroll late into the night without realizing how much time has passed. Screen exposure and mental stimulation before bed can delay sleep and reduce sleep quality.

Lack of proper rest directly affects memory, concentration, and mood all essential for learning. Tired students may find it harder to pay attention in class and retain information.

Additionally, reels frequently portray idealized lifestyles and achievements. Constant exposure to such content can lead to unhealthy comparisons, affecting self-esteem and increasing anxiety. Emotional stress further reduces a student's ability to focus and learn effectively.

Despite these challenges, short videos are not entirely harmful. When used thoughtfully, they can support learning.

Many educators and content creators use short videos to explain concepts in creative ways. Visual demonstrations, quick science experiments, language tips, and educational facts can spark curiosity. For visual learners, short clips can make difficult ideas easier to grasp.

Reels can also expose students to global issues, new career paths, and innovative technologies. In moderation, they can serve as both educational tools and sources of relaxation.

About the Author

Driven by a deep commitment to advancing innovation and excellence in education and professional growth, Dr. Aqib continues to leave a lasting mark through coaching, training, and written work. Their comprehensive approach to learning empowers individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in an ever-evolving world, while also nurturing a strong appreciation for the life-changing value of education. By encouraging others to pursue lifelong learning, Dr. Aqib serves as a source of inspiration for those striving to realize their full potential and make meaningful contributions to society.

A Son's Letter to his Father from India



■ SIDHARTH P K

I was only born when you came to my small world of dreams. It was a cold evening when you arrived in my life to guide me in the journey. Father had strength and his mind was filled with knowledge to express with

my young world. I was born like a child who knew nothing, as he gave food, shelter and clothing to support me. It was destiny that had selected you as my guardian to be.

Father remained with me in my journey, he shared the world of tomorrow. He is the strength that nourished me without much hesitation. The ocean is wide, where my father had anchored his memories upon my heart. I had discipline in life, obedience in care, shaped by your lines in meaning.

Father spoke the language of a god who came to me. You gleamed upon my life, to know, to focus in the many goodness of life's hope.



Child Labour: A Blot on Society That Demands Urgent Action



■ **IMRAN RAINA**

Child labour remains one of the gravest social evils affecting developing societies, robbing millions of children of their childhood, education, and basic human dignity. Despite constitutional safeguards, laws, and awareness campaigns, the practice continues to exist in various forms across the country, often hidden in plain sight. From roadside eateries and workshops to construction sites and tourist destinations, children are still being forced into labour to support their families or exploitative employers.

The effects of child labour are devastating and long-lasting. Children engaged in labour are deprived of education, which severely limits their future opportunities and perpetuates the cycle of poverty. Many of these children work in hazardous conditions that expose them to physical injuries, health issues, and psychological trauma. Long working hours, poor nutrition, and

lack of medical care hinder their physical and mental development. Instead of classrooms and playgrounds, their world becomes one of hardship and survival at an age meant for learning and growth.

A particularly disturbing example can be observed at the popular tourist destination Sonamarg, where hundreds of underage children are reportedly working as labourers. These children are engaged in activities such as operating sledge rides, assisting pony owners, working as informal camera operators for tourists, and performing other menial tasks. While tourism brings economic benefits to the region, it is deeply concerning that these gains are coming at the cost of children's rights. Many of these children should be in schools, yet they spend their days catering to tourists, often in harsh weather conditions, exposed to exploitation and abuse.

Child labour also weakens society as a whole. When children are denied education and proper upbringing, society loses responsible citizens, skilled professionals, and ethical leaders of tomorrow. Instead of contributing positively to nation-building, such children often remain marginalized, vulnerable to crime, abuse, and exploitation.

The persistence of child labour is driven by multiple factors, including poverty, unemployment, lack of awareness, and



weak enforcement of existing laws. Families struggling to meet basic needs often see child labour as a means of survival. Employers, on the other hand, exploit children for cheap labour, knowing that they are less likely to demand fair wages or humane working conditions.

To effectively control and eradicate

child labour, a multi-pronged approach is essential. Strict enforcement of child labour laws, such as the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, must be ensured, particularly in tourist hubs and informal sectors. Regular inspections, penalties for violators, and accountability of local author-

ties are crucial. At the same time, providing quality education, mid-day meals, scholarships, and financial assistance to poor families can reduce their dependence on children's income.

Public awareness also plays a vital role. Tourists, local communities, and employers must be sensitized to understand that encouraging child labour, even indirectly, is a punishable offence and a moral failure. Choosing not to employ or engage services provided by underage children can make a significant difference.

In conclusion, child labour is not merely a legal issue but a moral challenge and a humanitarian crisis. Every child deserves a safe, healthy, and dignified childhood. Eliminating child labour is essential for building a just, educated, and progressive society. The responsibility lies with all of us to protect children today so that they can shape a better tomorrow. A society that allows its children to toil instead of learn compromises its own future. It is time for collective responsibility to ensure that every child, whether in cities or scenic places like Sonamarg, grows up with education, safety, and hope—not labour in their hands.

Writer is a Teacher by profession and hails from Kangan Ganderbal emraan199@gmail.com

Showket Sakib Poshpora an emerging litterateur of North- Kashmir



■ **RAYEES AHMAD KUMAR**

Showket Sajad Bhat, known by his pen name Sakib Poshpora, is a distinguished poet, writer, and cultural activist from Poshpora, Trehgam, Kupwara, Jammu & Kashmir. He belongs to the esteemed family of Late Al-Haj Haji Habibullah Bhat, whose values of faith and integrity deeply influenced his literary journey. Academically accomplished, Sakib Poshpora holds Master's degrees in Urdu and Education, along with B.Ed, a Computer Diploma, and a Diploma in Hotel Management. His poetic journey began during his 12th grade, and since then he has steadily emerged as a powerful and sensitive voice in contemporary literary era. He writes in Urdu, Kashmiri, and English, and his creative expression spans poetry (especially Ghazal) and prose. His written work includes approximately 250 Urdu poems and 300 Kashmiri poems, reflecting remarkable depth, linguistic command, and emotional intensity. His poetry addresses a wide range of themes including romantic love, religion, spirituality, social issues, poverty, education, humanity, and contemporary realities. His Kashmiri poems vividly portray societal struggles such as floods, displacement, ignorance, and moral decay, while his Urdu poetry reflects refined classical sensibilities blended with modern consciousness. His religious compositions, Hamud, Naat, and Manqabat demonstrate profound devotion and spiritual insight. Sakib Poshpora received poetic guidance from renowned literary figures. In Urdu poetry, he was mentored by Shah Dil Shams, Sanjay Kumar Rahgir, Nisar Sopori, and Abu Zuhra Tariq. In Kashmiri literature, he benefited from the guidance of Abdul Rasheed Sarshar, Abu Zuhra Tariq, Bashir Zahir, and Iqbal Dalgeet. His literary works have been published in various national and international journals and magazines, earning him national and international accolades for his contribution to literature and culture. Beyond



writing, he plays an active role in cultural preservation and promotion. He is the Founder and President of the Cultural Forum Kupwara Kashmir, a well-known literary and cultural organization dedicated to nurturing talent, promoting Kashmiri heritage, and strengthening literary discourse in the region.

Through his pen, Sakib Poshpora continues to illuminate hearts, awaken social conscience, and uphold the values of knowledge, compassion, faith, and humanity making him a respected and influential figure in contemporary Kashmiri and Urdu literature.

Apart from being a writer, Showket Sakib Poshpora remains at the forefront of organizing literary events in and around his home district, Kupwara. His unwavering focus is on the promotion of language and literature, alongside the preservation of local culture. Last year, he organized a literary event at Dream World Educational Institution, Allachizzeb, Kupwara, which brought together poets and litterateurs from across the Valley. The event proved to be truly mesmerizing and was widely hailed for its uniqueness and meaningful purpose.

Writer is a columnist based in Qazigund Kashmir

Echo Of Life In Dark Night And Shining Days



■ **MOOL RAJ**

I am not a think tank but simply a person who would like to express his opinion what is going in our houses in remote areas where life of the people starts in love affection and exchange of sweets but after passage of time the occur U turn in their life. In this article I would like to express the life of Raju and Pinki for the readers. I hope space is given to my article on most humanitarian ground.

In a world where truth is often trampled, Raju's life was turned upside down by a relentless campaign of harassment and manipulation orchestrated by his partner, Pinki. Her ultimate goal was to secure a divorce and a hefty alimony, but with a twisted plan: to manipulate Raju into initiating the divorce.

Behind the façade of a happy family, a toxic environment festered. Raju, a God-fearing, humble and honest officer, suffered in silence. His simplicity, clean-heartedness, and honesty had become his downfall in his marriage to Pinki, whose narcissistic personality had created a living hell. Behind closed doors, Raju wept and wiped away his tears, hiding his pain from the world. Pinki would taunt him, criticize him, and manipulate the children into turning against him.

She would often humiliate Raju in front of his relatives and of course, their children, making him feel worthless and insignificant. Pinki tightened the noose, declaring an open war on Raju. She no longer bothered seeking permission or consent before doing anything or going anywhere, a fundamental aspect of a trusting married life. Instead, she began making outrageous demands for huge sums of money, knowing Raju earned a handsome salary and had adequate savings, but ignoring the fact, that he was drowning in loans and debts, which he had incurred for the renovation of his ancestral property. Raju had a great emotional attachment to his ancestral home, where his fathers' and grandparents' memories, coupled with his own sweet and sour childhood memories, resonated. Actually, Raju wanted to preserve the same for his dear children, hardly thinking that his wife was having contrary designs and plans.

As Pinki's plans unfolded, Raju's world began to crumble. The first step she took was to feed lies and concocted tales to their children, just to cultivate and harness

hatred among them for their loving father. The children, under Pinki's influence, turned against Raju. They would ignore his calls, dismiss his messages, and even refuse to meet him. Raju felt like he was losing everything that mattered to him, although temporarily. He was left alone, with no one to turn to, no one to confide in.

For years, Pinki surreptitiously compiled a dossier on Raju, meticulously copying his phone contacts and closely monitoring his interactions with friends, colleagues, neighbors and acquaintances. Her clandestine efforts were a precursor to a campaign of manipulation and harassment, designed to exploit Raju. Despite being subjected to torture, incitement, denial, and constant provocation, Raju remained calm and composed. Pinki's strategy was to push him to the brink, hoping he would lash out and give her the divorce she wanted. But Raju refused to take the bait.

As the day turned into nights, Raju's tears fell like rain with his heart heavy with sorrow. He felt like a prisoner in his own home, trapped in a loveless marriage, with no escape from the torment. But Pinki had other plans. She decided to break their home without giving a second thought to the children's future, and Raju's love for her. With a calculating smile, she executed her nefarious plans, feeling a twisted sense of joy in destroying the life they had built together.

Actually, Raju thought he had found his soulmate in Pinki, but he discovered a self-centered and manipulative narcissist in her. She consistently belittled him, making him feel insignificant and eroding his self-worth. Conversations revolved around her accomplishments, needs, and desires, with any disagreement or non-compliance triggering her rage. Despite his efforts to please her, Pinki was never satisfied, leaving Raju feeling trapped and walking on eggshells to avoid her wrath. Her fragile ego and superiority complex made her incapable of empathy or understanding. But one day, Raju found the strength to break free from Raju's toxic grasp. He set boundaries, refusing to engage in her games, and rediscovered his passion for writing. He reconnected with friends and family, slowly rebuilding his shattered confidence. However, Pinki couldn't accept Raju's newfound independence. She unleashed her fury and manipulation, desperate to pull him back into her web. Yet, Raju stood firm, knowing he deserved a life free from narcissistic abuse.

When Pinki created a scene, hoping to manufacture evidence of violence, her lies didn't work as planned. Undeterred, she reached out to the police, courts, and various forums, spinning a web of fabricated stories and lies. She even approached Raju's colleagues, friends, relatives, and acquaintances hoping to infuriate him into a divorce. But Raju remained resolute, refus-

ing to give in to her tactics. The battle of wills continued, with Raju determined to withstand the onslaught and protect his rights.

As Raju reflects on the darkest chapters of his life, he realizes that his quest for love and connection was mercilessly manipulated and distorted. Every day brought a fresh wave of torment: relentless arguments, crushing criticisms, and a relationship twisted beyond recognition. Pinki, the person he trusted most, turned against him, and his own flesh and blood were brainwashed and turned against him. As the truth began to unravel, Raju realized with horror that he was betrayed in the most heinous way imaginable. Yet, he finds the strength to break free from this toxic web of lies and manipulation. His heart-wrenching true story is a testament to the resilience of the human heart and the power of truth to overcome even the darkest of evils.

Her motive throughout the long years was to oppose Raju in every manner driven by a deep-seated hatred for him. Whatever Raju earned, he spent on his children and Pinki, and tried to keep everything available for his family, even beyond his means and reach. But there was a huge difference, since Pinki had a lot of hatred for Raju. All Raju's genuine efforts, love, and hard work were met with disapproval. Pinki's desire and aim were to be the head and controlling authority in Raju's family, which he resisted. Her behavior with Raju was such that no other person could have tolerated, but Raju believed he was chosen by God to bear all the disrespect and arrogance.

Raju, having full faith in the mercy of God, watched all the hostile events and the whole scenario, solely eyeing on Almighty's justice, and believes that a day will come soon when the truth will be manifested. The closed room, full of dullness, stood as a silent witness to Raju's suffering for all these long years. It saw the silent sobs and sighs, the trickle of thick tears from Raju's eyes, and the mental and emotional torture, atrocities, coupled with severe denial inflicted by Pinki upon him. The room held a thousand heart-wrenching tales, each one a testament to the anguish and pain that Samer endured behind closed doors. His love for Pinki, for which she later proved worthless, prevented him from dissolving the sacred institution of marriage. In the end, Raju's story became a haunting reminder that behind closed doors, the truth is often hidden, and the suffering is often silenced. But his resilience and refusal to give in serve as a beacon of hope for those trapped in similar situations, a reminder that even in the darkest moments, there is always a way forward.

THE AUTHOR IS A REGULAR COLUMNIST AND FREELANCE WRITER

The Importance Of Communication In The Digital Age

■ DR. SURINDERPAL SINGH

Communication is a fundamental biological, psychological and social process that is essential for human survival and overall well-being. In the digital age, unprecedented technological advancements, particularly social media and instant messaging platforms, have transformed the way individuals connect, exchange information and build relationships. While digital communication has expanded reach and speed, it has simultaneously altered the depth, quality and authenticity of human interaction. As a result, understanding communication today has become more complex and critically important.

Human communication predates written language and is deeply rooted in neurobiology and evolution. Facial expressions, vocal tones, gestures and spoken language enabled early humans to cooperate, survive and form complex societies. In the twenty-first century, communication has shifted dramatically from face-to-face interaction to screen-mediated exchanges. Emails, social media posts, emojis and video calls now dominate interpersonal contact. Although these tools have revolutionized connectivity, growing concerns exist regarding their impact on mental health, emotional intelligence and social cohesion. Communication in the digital age is therefore not merely a social issue but a medical and scientific necessity.

From a biological and neuroscientific perspective, communication activates multiple regions of the brain, including the prefrontal cortex responsible for decision-making and social judgment, the limbic system governing emotions, and mirror neuron networks that facilitate empathy and social learning. Face-to-face communication stimulates the release of oxytocin, often referred to as the bonding hormone, which promotes trust, emotional security and stress reduction. Verbal expression also assists in emotional regulation by enabling cortical control over limbic reac-



tivity, a mechanism well documented in affective neuroscience. Psychologically, communication allows individuals to externalize thoughts, process emotions and seek validation. In contrast, suppressed or inadequate communication has been linked to increased sympathetic nervous system activity, elevated cortisol levels and a higher risk of anxiety disorders, depression, hypertension and psychosomatic illnesses.

Digital communication has redefined social interaction through speed, convenience and global reach. Social media platforms enable the instant sharing of ideas, emotions and experiences across geographical boundaries. Telemedicine, online education and digital collaboration have improved access to healthcare, knowledge and professional opportunities. Despite these benefits, digital communication often lacks essential non-verbal cues such as eye contact, body language and tone modulation, which together account for a significant portion of human communication. The absence of these cues increases the likelihood of misunderstandings, emotional detachment and reduced empathy.

Although social media increases the quantity of interactions, it often dimin-

ishes their quality. Superficial connectivity through likes, shares and brief comments replaces meaningful dialogue, creating an illusion of connection without emotional depth. Excessive screen time reduces face-to-face interactions, weakening interpersonal skills and emotional attunement. Constant notifications fragment attention and impair active listening, which is essential for effective communication. Additionally, curated online personas encourage social comparison and validation seeking, leading to envy, reduced self-worth and reluctance toward authentic self-expression. Algorithm-driven echo chambers further limit open dialogue and constructive disagreement. From a mental health perspective, these patterns are associated with loneliness, social anxiety and depressive symptoms, particularly among adolescents and young adults.

Communication in the digital era presents both advantages and challenges. On the positive side, it enables rapid information exchange, global connectivity, enhanced access to social support networks, improved healthcare delivery through telecommunication, opportunities for marginalized voices to be heard and continuity of relationships across distance

and time. Conversely, it contributes to a decline in deep and empathetic conversations, increased misinterpretation and conflict, digital addiction, reduced attention span, emotional detachment, social isolation and heightened stress due to constant connectivity. Thus, digital communication is neither inherently beneficial nor harmful; its impact depends largely on balance, intentionality and context.

Promoting healthy and effective communication in the digital age requires a multi-level approach. Digital literacy and awareness are essential to educate individuals about mindful technology use and the psychological consequences of excessive screen time. Encouraging face-to-face interaction within families, schools and workplaces helps restore emotional connection and interpersonal competence. Training in active listening, empathy and non-judgmental communication improves relational quality. Structured communication practices such as group discussions, counseling sessions and peer-support meetings provide safe spaces for emotional expression. Healthy social media habits, including time limits, thoughtful content curation and periodic digital detox practices, help re-establish balance.

Increasingly, healthcare professionals recognize communication skills as preventive tools against mental illness and advocate for their inclusion in public health strategies.

Effective communication also plays a crucial role in reducing stress and depression. Expressing emotions lowers physiological stress responses by reducing cortisol levels and sympathetic nervous system activation. Meaningful social support, facilitated through open communication, enhances psychological resilience by activating reward pathways and reinforcing a sense of belonging. Clinical studies have demonstrated that individuals who communicate their feelings openly are less likely to develop chronic stress disorders and major depression. Psychotherapeutic approaches such as cognitive behavioral therapy, group therapy and supportive counseling are fundamentally communication-based interventions. Even informal conversations with trusted individuals can provide emotional catharsis, cognitive reframing and hope.

In the digital age, communication remains the cornerstone of human health, relationships and societal stability. While technological advancements have transformed how people connect, they have also challenged the depth and authenticity of human interaction. From a medical and scientific perspective, inadequate or superficial communication contributes to stress, loneliness and mental illness, whereas meaningful communication fosters emotional regulation, resilience and psychological well-being. The challenge is not to reject digital communication but to humanize it by promoting empathy, presence and balance. Reinvesting in effective communication is not merely a cultural or social imperative; it is a public health necessity essential for mental well-being in an increasingly connected yet emotionally fragmented world.

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

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Ehsaas Foundation Organises Historic Mehfil-e-Mushaira on Habba Khatoon in Anantnag

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

ANANTNAG FEB 02: Ehsaas Foundation on Sunday organised a historic Mehfil-e-Mushaira dedicated to the legendary Kashmiri poetess Habba Khatoon at Al-Sufra Restaurant, Anantnag, marking the first-ever Mushaira on Habba Khatoon in the history of the town. The literary evening witnessed an impressive gathering of poets, scholars, media persons, and lovers of Kashmiri literature.



Renowned poet Suhail Ahmad urf Raj Saeb presided over the event as the Chief Guest, while noted poets Sagar Nazir and Riyaz Anzoo graced the occasion as Guests of Honour. The programme commenced with a soulful Tilawat-e-Quran by Haziq Hyderi, setting a spiritual tone for the evening.

Several prominent poets from across the Valley recited their poetry, paying rich tribute to the life, legacy, and literary contribution of Habba Khatoon. The poets who presented their kalam included Atiqा Sidiqi, Mashru Naseebabadi, Yahya Tawseef, Parvaiz Gulshan, Mysar Nashaad, Rida Mudasir, Irshad Ahmad Irshad, Tanha Iqbal, Sagar Salam, Azam Farooq, Javed Sagar, Shah Meem, Azhar Muqaami, and Zeeshan Afaaq.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Guest Raj Saeb shared an insightful message highlighting Habba Khatoon's timeless poetry and her profound influence on Kashmiri language and culture. Guest of Honour Riyaz Anzoo spoke about Habba Khatoon's emotional depth and cultural relevance, while Sagar Nazir emphasised the need to reconnect younger generations with classical Kashmiri poets through such literary initiatives.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Ehsaas Foundation Zahoor Ahmad Malik expressed gratitude to all poets, chief guest, guests of honour, participants, and attendees for making the event memorable. He also thanked the press and media fraternity, journalists, and Khalid Muntazir from Radio Rabita for their support and coverage. Special appreciation was extended to Venue Partner Al-Sufra Restaurant, Printing Partner Media Line, and Saadat Mohideen (Aapa Foods) for supporting the successful organisation of the event.

The Mehfil-e-Mushaira concluded with a renewed commitment by Ehsaas Foundation to continue promoting poetry, culture, and literary heritage across the Kashmir Valley.

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

PUBLIC NOTICE

Subject: Application of Aubaid Nazir Dar S/o Nazir Ahmad Dar, R/o Kawarigam for issuance of RBA Certificate.

Whereas, the above named applicant has applied in this office for issuance of RBA (Resident of Backward Area) Certificate in his favour. In this connection, report from the concerned Patwari Halqa has been sought, which reveals that the applicant is a resident of Village Kawarigam and falls under the notified backward area as per records.

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

Issued under my hand and seal of this office.

By Order
Naib Tehsildar, Achabal

Laptop Care House

Wholesale Dealer Of New And Pre Used Laptops

DEALS IN ALL KINDS OF LAPTOPS AND ACCESSORIES

REPAIRING OF: ALL TYPES OF LAPTOPS & DESKTOPS



Government Of Jammu & Kashmir Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeri

Subject: Application MUSLIM SHAFI MIR S/O MOHD SHAFI MIR R/O SHEIKHPORA for issuance of RBA certificate in favour of self for the issuance of RBA in his/her / their favor

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

1...MOHD SHAFI MIR Father 51 years Labour
2...FARIDA BEGUM Mother 45 years H/W
3... TABASUM SHAFI sister ,22 years student
4...MASRAT SHAFI sister 20 years //

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

Naib Tehsildar Kreeri

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeri

Subject: Application SAFI MANZOOR D/O MANZOOR AHMAD MIR R/O KAKOTHAL for issuance of RBA certificate in favour of self for the issuance of RBA in his/her / their favor

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the subject cited above the file in the office of the undersigned for the issuance of RBA in this connection a report of patwari halqa concerned has been sought which reveals that the applicant is currently residing in the village of KAKOTHAL of Tehsil KREERI and belongs to the MIR community having annual income 450000// the details of family of the applicant are as follows

1...MANZOOR AHMAD MIR Father 45 years driver
2...ZAINA BEGUM Mother 40 years H/W
3... SAFI MANZOOR self 17 years student
4...SAHIL MANZOOR Brother 18 years //
5...ZAIIKA MANZOOR Sister 15 years //

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

Naib Tehsildar Kreeri

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeri

Subject: Application of NISAR AHMAD MIR S/O Lt GH MOHD MIR R/O SALOOSA for the issuance of Dependent certificate.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the subject cited above in this context a report sought from patwari halqa concerned and the Death certificate issued by the competent authority reveals that GH MOHD MIR S/O AB AHAD MIR R/O SALOOSA has passed away on 29/10/1993 .The report of the patwari further depicts that the deceased has left behind following dependent as tabulated below

1... SARWA BEGUM wife 58 years house wife widow
2....NAYEM AH MIR SON 35 Years Labour married
3....GULSHANA BANO daughter 40 years H/W married
4....SALEEM AH MIR Son 32 years Labour married
5....NISAR AH MIR Son 38 years Business un married

The applicant has applied for Issuance of Dependent certificate in favour of Self.

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

Naib Tehsildar Kreeri

Public Notice

I have cleared my loan from J&K Bank Drass of the vehicle bearing registration number JK07 3463. Anybody having any objection may contact Manager, J&K Bank, Drass within the period of 7 days from the publication of this notice.

Name- Mohd Ismail
S/O- Ghulam Hussain
R/O- Chokwyal, Drass

Public Notice

It is to inform the general public that I, Mohd Ismail S/O- Abdul Rehman R/O- Chokwyal , Drass wants to transfer my vehicle bearing registration number JK07 3463 to Mohd Jaffar S/O- Ghulam Hussain R/O- Hardass. Anybody having any objection may contact ARTO Drass within the seven days of this notice.

Mohd Ismail
S/O- Abdul Rehman
R/O- Chokwyal , Drass

Public Notice

My daughter's name & her Mother's name has been wrongly written as KULSOOMA JAN & her Mother's name is SHERAZA BEGUM bearing id no 101002501928 in her Date of Birth certificate issued by SDH KREERI while her correct name is AIZA MAROOF & her Mother's correct name is SHEERAZA MAROOF which needs to be corrected if anybody having any objection in this regard he / she may file his/her objection in the office of BMO / SDH KREERI within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained.

Name...MAROOF AHMAD CHOPAN
F/O ...AIZA MAROOF
Mother's...SHEERAZA MAROOF
R/O ...AUTHOORA RESHIPORA
TEHSIL....KREERI

Public Notice

This is for information of general public that the (Electric bill) power connection is registered on my Fathers name HABIBULLAH SIRAJ R/O WATERGAM Now this Connection bearing Consumer ID NO 0212040001003 wants to be registered on my MOHAMMAD ABDULLAH SIRAJ S/O HABIBULLAH SIRAJ R/O WATERGAM .If anybody have any objection in this regard He/She may file his/her objection in the concerned PDD office within seven days from the date of publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained.

Name..MOHAMMAD HABIBULLAH
S/O ... HABIBULLAH SIRAJ
R/O ...WATERGAM

Public Notice

This is for general information of the public that Ms. Nuzhat Bano expired on 06/08/2024. An application for issuance of her Death Certificate is being submitted to the Block Office, Langate.

If any person has any objection regarding the issuance of the said Death Certificate, he/she may submit the same in writing with valid proof to the concerned office or contact the undersigned within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. After that, no objection shall be entertained.

Name,Abdul Qayoom Lone
R/o,Wahipora ,Langate,Kupwara
Contact No: 7780930701

Public Notice

My daughter's name has been wrongly mentioned as HANIYA MUSHTAQ in her Date of Birth certificate while her correct name is ZAINAB MUSHTAQ which needs to be corrected if anybody having any objection in this regard He/she may file his/her objection in the office of TEHSIL OFFICE WAGOORA / BDO WAGOORA within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained.

Name...MUSHTAQ AHMAD RATHER
F/O...ZAINAB MUSHTAQ

Public Notice

IT is hereby notified that my son applying for Birth certificate in Block Development office handwara namely Waris Farooq DOB 16/03/2022 S/O Farooq Ahmad Ganie

R/o Baderkal District:kupwara.if anybody having any objection in this regards he/she may file his /her objection in the office of the Block Development Office handwara within 07 days .After that no objection shall be entertained.

Name,WARIS FAROOQ
DOB 16/03/2022 S/O
R/o.FAROOQ AHMAD GANIE
R/o BADERKAL TEHSIL HANDWARA
DISTRICT KUPWARA

Public Notice

It is hereby notified for the information of the general public that Mr. Ishfaq Ahmad Mir, S/o Abdul Gani Mir, R/o Bangdara Reshipora, has applied for registration of D-Class Contractor in his favour in the office of the Superintendent, R&B Division Baramulla.

If any person has any objection regarding the above, the same may be submitted in writing to the undersigned within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. After expiry of the stipulated period, no objection shall be entertained.

Superintendent
R&B Division Baramulla
Date: 31/02/2026
Place: Baramulla

Public Notice

This is to inform the general public that Yasir Mohammad Dar s/o Ghulam Mohammad Dar R/o Kohru has applied for issuance of his Birth Certificate from the BDO Office, Langate. It is hereby mentioned that his birth has taken place at Home. If any person has any objection regarding this matter, they may visit the BDO Office, Langate within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. After the expiry of the said period, no objection shall be entertained.

Name: Yasir Mohammad Dar
S/o: Ghulam Mohammad Dar
R/o: Kohru, Langate, Kupwara

Public Notice

This is to inform the general public that Zubair Nabi Ganie s/o Gulam Nabi Ganie R/o Yaaro Langate has applied for issuance of his Birth Certificate from the BDO Office, Langate. His Date of birth as per school record is 20/01/2008.

It is hereby mentioned that his birth has taken place at Home. If any person has any objection regarding this matter, they may visit the BDO Office, Langate within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. After the expiry of the said period, no objection shall be entertained.

Name: Zubair Nabi Ganie
S/o: Gulam Nabi Ganie
R/o: Yaaro Langate, Kupwara

Public Notice

This is to inform the general public that Zeeshan Ahmad Dar s/o Ghulam Mohammad Dar R/o Kohru has applied for issuance of his Birth Certificate from the BDO Office, Langate. It is hereby mentioned that his birth has taken place at Home. If any person has any objection regarding this matter, they may visit the BDO Office, Langate within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. After the expiry of the said period, no objection shall be entertained.

Name: Zeeshan Ahmad Dar
S/o: Ghulam Mohammad Dar
R/o: Kohru, Langate, Kupwara

Government Of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir Office Of the Executive Engineer, Mechanical Irrigation Division, Khoja Bagh, Baramulla

Email ID: amitabhman.721013@jk.gov.in

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

e-NIT No: MIDB/29 OF 2025-26 | Dated: 02-02-2026

For and on behalf of Lieutenant Governor of J&K UT, Executive Engineer, Mechanical Irrigation Division, Baramulla, invites tenders on item rate basis by e-tendering mode for the following items of work from the reputed Original Equipment Manufacturers or their Authorized contractors/fabricators/firms/Joint Ventures having relevant experience. The bidding process shall be completed online in two covers viz Cover '1st' –Tender fee and Earnest Money details. Deposit, fulfillment of prequalification criteria, technical specifications and acceptance to terms and conditions of the tender & Cover '2nd' - Financial Bid in the prescribed BOQ.

S.No	Particulars of the work	Name of Division	Advt. Cost (in Lacs)	T.D Cost (In Rs.)	E/M	Validity of Rates
1	Construction of Lift Irrigation Scheme Reban	MID Baramulla	Rs. 50.47	Rs. 1,00,000/-	90 Days	

Position of funds: Awaited

Head of Account: CDF of Hon'ble MLA Rafiabadd (Jenab Javid Ahmad Dar).

AAA: Order No: 388/DDC of 2026 Dated:02-01-2026

TS: Accorded vide no:07 TS of 2025-26 Dated:31-01-2026

Key/critical Dates:

01	Date of issue of Tender Notice	02/02/2026
02	Date of downloading of bidding documents	02/02/2026 from 04.00 PM
03	Date, Time & Venue of Pre-bid meeting	11/02/2026 at 11.00 AM in the office of Executive Engineer, MID Baramulla.
04	Bid submission start date	02/02/2026 from 04.00 PM
05	Bid Submission end date	23/02/2026 up to 04.00 PM
06	Date & time of opening Technical Bids (online)	24/02/2026 at 01.00 PM in the office

DC Budgam reviews RGSA, SBM-G implementation, Stresses timely completion of Panchayat Infrastructure

Emphasizes strengthening of Sanitation & Waste Management Systems

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BUDGAM, FEBRUARY 02: A meeting on the implementation of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) and Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin (SBM-G) was held today under the chairmanship of District Development Commissioner Budgam, Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat.

The meeting was convened by the Assistant Commissioner Panchayat Budgam, who briefed the meeting about the agenda and overall status of implementation.

The meeting was held to review physical and financial progress, assess infrastructure development, sanitation coverage, solid and liquid waste management components, and to identify constraints affecting the implementation of the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) 2025-26.

Under RGSA, a detailed review was conducted on the progress of Panchayat Ghars for the financial years 2023-24 and 2024-25. The status of construction, completion, and operationalisation of Panchayat Ghars was assessed.

On the occasion, the DC emphasised that timely completion of Panchayat Ghars is essential for strengthening the institutional infrastructure of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and for improving grassroots governance.

The DC reviewed the status of Co-location of Common Service Centres (CSCs) in Panchayat Ghars. He highlighted the importance of ensuring functional CSCs at Panchayat level for delivery of citizen-centric digital services and directions were issued to strengthen coordination for effective co-location.



The DC stressed the need for timely resolution of bottlenecks to ensure smooth execution of approved works.

Under SBM-G, comprehensive review was undertaken of all sanitation and waste management components.

The status of Individual Household Latrines (IHLs) was reviewed, with emphasis on coverage, functionality, and sustainability to ensure continued usage and universal sanitation. The progress of Community Sanitary Complexes was also reviewed.

The DC directed to ensure their timely completion and proper maintenance for public convenience.

While reviewing the status of Segregation Sheds, the DC underscored importance of segregation at source and establishment of proper segregation infrastructure.

The progress of Community Compost Pits was reviewed to strengthen biodegradable waste management at village level.

The status of Community Soak Pits was reviewed, with emphasis on improving liquid waste and grey water management.

The progress of Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Systems (DEWATS) was reviewed in detail. The DC emphasised the establishment of DEWATS as an important component for

decentralized treatment of wastewater and for improving overall village sanitation and environmental sustainability.

The status of Plastic Waste Management Units (PWMUs) was reviewed.

The establishment and operationalisation of PWMUs was emphasized as a key requirement for scientific handling and processing of plastic waste in the district.

The status of Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs) was also reviewed in detail. The importance of FSTPs for safe treatment and disposal of faecal sludge was highlighted by DC as a critical sanitation infrastructure

component.

The meeting discussed in detail the constraints affecting implementation of the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) 2025-26. The DC emphasized that all concerned departments and field functionaries must adopt a proactive, coordinated, and result-oriented approach to resolve land-related and legal issues at the earliest so that implementation of RGSA and SBM-G is not adversely impacted.

He stressed that focused efforts must be made to accelerate execution of approved works, ensure adherence to timelines, and maintain quality standards. The need for regular monitoring, timely reporting, and close supervision at field level was reiterated.

The DC further emphasized strengthening sanitation infrastructure, solid and liquid waste management systems, and institutional capacity of Panchayati Raj Institutions across the district. It was stressed that transparency, accountability, and effective implementation must be ensured to achieve the intended objectives of the flagship schemes.

The DC issued directions to all concerned officers to take immediate follow-up action on the identified constraints and to ensure that targets under Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan and Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin are achieved in a timely, effective, and sustainable manner.

Besides, GM DIC Budgam, CPO Budgam, SDM Beerwah, ACD Budgam, ACP Budgam, Exen REW, all BDOs, all Tehsildars and other concerned officers were present in the meeting.

DC Kulgam launches Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KULGAM, FEBRUARY 02: Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan today launched Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0, aimed at strengthening scheme saturation and ensuring last-mile delivery of essential services to all eligible beneficiaries in Aspirational Block Manzgam.



The programme was attended by the officers from line departments, field functionaries, and other stakeholders in attendance.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC highlighted that Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0 focuses on achieving full coverage of priority indicators and key welfare schemes through coordinated departmental efforts, real-time monitoring, and intensified grassroots outreach.

He stressed the need for inter-departmental convergence to identify gaps and ensure that no eligible beneficiary is left out.

He instructed officers to intensify field visits, conduct awareness campaigns, and organise special camps to facilitate on-the-spot registration and prompt grievance redressal. Emphasis was also laid on data-driven planning, regular reviews, and accountability at all levels.

Joint Director Planning, Malik Suhail on the occasion shared department-wise targets and implementation strategies were discussed, and a roadmap for accelerated execution under Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0 was outlined.

DLAC meeting on safe food & healthy diets held in Udhampur

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

UDHAMPUR, FEBRUARY 02: Deputy Commissioner Udhampur, Saloni Rai today chaired a meeting of the District Level Advisory Committee (DLAC) on safe food and healthy diets in the Mini Conference Hall, DC Office Complex. While chairing the meeting, the DC emphasized the need to generate maximum public



awareness regarding food safety, hygiene and adulteration through sustained and district-wide outreach activities. She directed the concerned departments to intensify market inspections across the district and enhance the collection of food samples by adopting scientific procedures. "Organize awareness programmes involving all stakeholders to educate people about the importance of safe food practices and maintaining a healthy diet" the DC instructed officers. She further stressed strict enforcement of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and directed the Food Safety Department to intensify inspection of food establishments and initiate compounding proceedings against defaulters.

Speaker JKLA releases "Kuliyat Janbaaz Kishtwari" at KL Saigal Hall

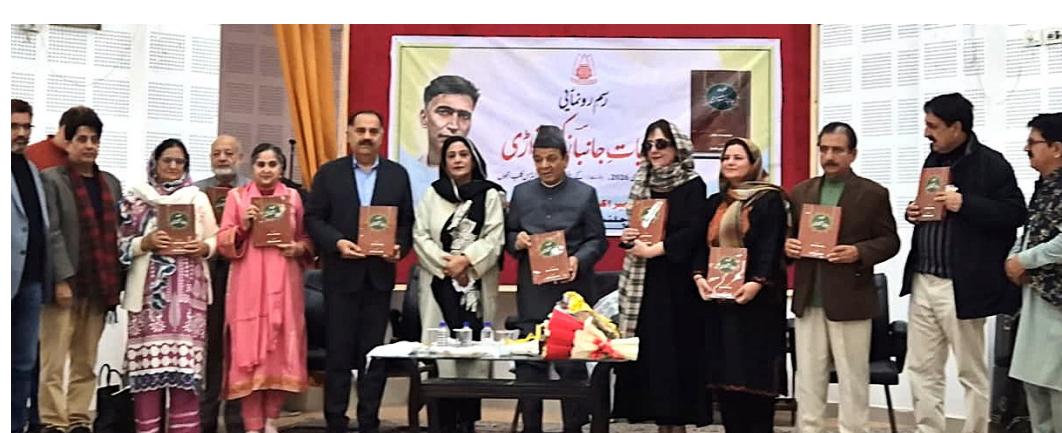
■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 02: Speaker, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Abdul Rahim Rather, today released the book "Kuliyat Janbaaz Kishtwari", a comprehensive collection of works by renowned Kashmiri poet Janbaaz Kishtwari at a literary function at KL Sahgal Hall, Jammu.

The function was organized by the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages (JKAACL), in collaboration with Chalant Cultural Forum, Kishtwari.

The Speaker lauded the contribution of Janbaaz Kishtwari to Kashmiri literature and emphasized the role of such literary initiatives in preserving and promoting the region's rich cultural heritage. He also shared fond memories and personal reflections associated with the late poet, highlighting his simplicity, depth of thought and commitment to literary excellence.

Rather said that Janbaaz Kishtwari was a prominent figure in the cultural landscape of J&K Known for his contribution to



Kashmiri culture, literature and distinct singing style. "Janbaaz Kishtwari is recognized as a cultural icon who brought the soul of the Chenab Valley to his art", he added.

Principal Secretary, Culture Department, BM Sharma, Secretary, JKAACL, Harvinder Kour, Zubair Ahmad Janbaaz (son of Janbaaz Kishtwari), along with a galaxy of eminent writers, poets, scholars and literary enthusiasts were present on the occasion.

In his address, Brij Mohan highlighted the significance of compiling the complete works of

Janbaaz Kishtwari, stating that the publication would serve as an important reference for researchers, students and lovers of Kashmiri literature, while also ensuring that the poet's legacy is preserved for future generations.

The book release session was presided over by Professor Shah Ramzan, who in his presidential remarks, termed Janbaaz Kishtwari as a towering figure of Kashmiri poetry whose creative expression reflected social realities, human emotions, and cultural consciousness.

A detailed paper on the book

was presented by Mansoor Banihal, who critically analyzed the poetic themes, linguistic richness and stylistic nuances of Janbaaz Kishtwari's work.

Earlier, Shamima Akhter, daughter of Janbaaz Kishtwari, expressed gratitude to JKAACL for honoring her father's literary contributions through the publication of his complete works.

A poetry session was also held during the event, in which noted poets Ali Mohammad Reshi, Muzaffar Hussain Dilbar, Shabir Hussain Brij, Nath Pandit (Betab),

Gulam Nabi Mir (Zahil Banihal), Sayed Akhtar Hussain (Mansoor) and Mushtaq Ahmad Kishtwari recited their poetic compositions, enthralled the audience with the depth and diversity of Kashmiri poetic expression.

A soulful musical tribute was paid to the legendary poet by renowned artists of Jammu and Kashmir, including Gulzar Ganaie and Party, Nisar Ahmad Doolwal and Party, Dr. Deepali Watal and Dr. Chanchal Sharma, which deeply moved the audience.

It was announced on the occasion that an All India Kashmiri Mushairah would be organized soon under the aegis of JKAACL, with the aim of providing a national platform to Kashmiri poets and promoting linguistic and cultural harmony.

The event concluded with rich literary discussions and appreciation of the timeless poetic legacy of Janbaaz Kishtwari.

The proceedings of the programme were conducted by Dr. Gulzar Ahmad Rather, Assistant Editor, JKAACL, Harvinder Kour, presented a vote of thanks.

Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0 launched in Aspirational Block Mankote to achieve saturation of key development indicators

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

POONCH, FEBRUARY 02: Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0 was launched today in Aspirational Block Mankote, marking a decisive step towards achieving 100 per cent saturation of key development indicators in accordance with the vision and guidelines of NITI Aayog.

The launch event was chaired by the Chief Guest, Choudhary Imran Zafar, District Development Councillor (DDC), Mankote.

The programme was graced by Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Mendar Imran Rashid, as Guest of Honour along with Tehsildar Mankote Maroof Qadri; Block Development Officer Mankote

Ijaz Ahmed and Nodal Officer for Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0, Aspirational Block Programme Fellow (ABPF) Ajaz Ahmed and officers and officials from all line departments.

Various activities followed focusing on development and grassroots governance. A Health Team deputed by the Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Pervaiz Ahmed Khan was present to support health-related activities under the Abhiyan.

The ASHA Workers, ANMs, Anganwadi Workers, field staff and grassroots functionaries have been roped in to ensure last-mile delivery and successful implementation of government initiatives at the community level during the campaign.

As Nodal Officer for Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0, local BDO Ijaz Ahmed will oversee the block-level planning, convergence among line departments, field-level execution and monitoring of saturation indicators, ensuring effective implementation of the Abhiyan at the grassroots level.

The programme was coordinated and facilitated by the Aspirational Block Programme Unit, Mankote. The formal proceedings began with the Rashtriya Gaan, followed by the administration of the Sampoornata Pledge, reaffirming collective commitment towards ensuring complete saturation through inter-departmental convergence and real-time monitoring.

In line with NITI Aayog's emphasis on behavioural change communication and community

engagement, the event featured thematic skit presentations by the Education Department and the Nutrition Department, highlighting issues related to learning outcomes, school retention, maternal and child nutrition and grassroots awareness.

The representatives of Education, Nutrition, Health, and Agriculture departments delivered lectures, outlining indicator-wise progress, identified gaps and shared action plans for achieving saturation through inter-departmental convergence and real-time monitoring.

Addressing the gathering, SDM, Imran Rashid emphasized accountability, coordinated

implementation and field-level ownership as critical for the successful execution of Sampoornata Abhiyan 2.0.

In his address, DDC Choudhary Imran Zafar appreciated the focused and result-oriented approach of the district administration under the leadership of District Development Commissioner Ashok Kumar Sharma. He urged all stakeholders to work in mission mode to transform Mankote from an aspirational to an inspirational block. The programme concluded with a musical concert, symbolizing unity, public enthusiasm and collective resolve towards inclusive and sustainable development.



Budget evokes mixed reaction in the tourism trade and industry

■ UNI

NEW DELHI, FEB 2 : The union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday evoked mixed response from the travel, tourism and hospitality industry in the country.

The reduction in TCS from five and 20 per cent to 2 per cent flat without cap has brought relief to travel agents and tour operators selling international travel packages. However, the proposals have nothing to offer on international marketing and promotions, industry sources said.

By not earmarking any budget under the overseas marketing and promotions head, the Finance Minister has poured cold water on the expectations of the inbound travel trade community, the flag-bearers of Incredible India, they added.

Deep Kalra, chairman of World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) India Initiative welcomed the "build first" approach in the Budget of creating right tourism infrastructure in terms of hiking and trekking trails, digital knowledge grid for heritage tourism and conservation and building iconic culture destinations.

Kalra said the proposal to reduce the TCS on overseas tour packages to 2 per cent will go a long way in "removing the unnecessary friction" from international travel planning of Indian travellers.

Kalra is also the founder and chairman of MakeMyTrip. He also appreciated the "strong focus on connectivity" in the Budget and the Viability Gap Funding for manufacturing and supplying seaplanes indigenously.

"The new baggage clearance reforms signal a more traveller-friendly framework, with clearer



rules on temporary personal goods and facilitation aligned to modern travel realities. While we need to read the fine print, this year's allocation for Ministry of Tourism is a clear "build-first" signal: most of the big increase is going to creating/upgrade of tourism infrastructure," Kalra said.

Jyotsna Suri, chairperson of LaLit Hotel Group and Vice Chairman of WTTCII, highlighted particularly the announcement to upgrade National Council for Hotel Management & Catering Technology (NCHMCT) into National Institute of Hospitality (NIH) to bridge the skill gap.

"These are forward-looking initiatives that will strengthen India's tourism value chain and elevate the visitor experience. The Budget's emphasis on building high-quality, sustainable tourism products—such as eco-trails and immersive heritage experiences—signals a commitment to long-term impact," Suri said.

"Targeted efforts in developing Purvodaya and Buddhist circuit

destinations in the North-East, Medical Value Tourism hubs and inclusive skilling programmes, including for Divyangjans in hospitality and F&B, are steps toward more equitable and regionally balanced growth," she said.

Sharing the concern of not having a "dedicated allocation for overseas tourism promotion", Ravi Gosain, president, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), the national body of inbound tour operators, said that there is "timely" focus on many areas such as guide skilling, National Institute of Hospitality, Digital Knowledge Grid, and push for ecotourism trails. However, a lack of a dedicated allocation for overseas tourism promotion remains a concern, Gosain said.

While appreciating the overall direction of the Budget, the hotel industry, a critical component of the tourism ecosystem, was disappointed as the government once again ignored the industry demand for infrastructure status.

"Despite the Budget's positive

thrust, a long-standing aspiration of the sector, comprehensive infrastructure recognition, remains unmet", said KB Kachru, president, Hotel Association of India (HAI).

"Realizing the sector's true potential requires key structural reforms such as expanding infrastructure recognition beyond the currently designated destinations to ensure equitable access to capital, and placing tourism on the concurrent list to strengthen Centre-state policy," said Kachru.

"These enablers will amplify the impact of current initiatives and provide a strong foundation for sustainable, long-term growth across the tourism sector," said Kachru.

Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) welcomed the focus of the budget to "place tourism at the centre of the growth strategy" linking it directly to job creation, foreign exchange earnings and local economic development.

"The proposal to create a national institute of hospitality and work closely with academia and industry is a timely step towards strengthening skills and service standards," said Surendra Kumar Jaiswal, president, FHRAI.

While the Budget talks about aspirational schemes to develop new ecotourism trails in the Himalayas and Buddhist heritage trails in the northeastern part, Destination Digital Knowledge Grids, there is no visible allocation for these new programmes in the annual budget.

The estimated budget allocation for the tourism ministry (Rs 2,438 crore) remained almost unchanged compared to the 2025-26 estimates, and nearly 88% of the estimated Budget is dedicated to two flagship programmes of 'Swadesh darshan' and 'PRASAD'.

Budget 2026: Govt. bets big on tax reforms, infra and manufacturing

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, FEB 2 : The union Budget 2026, presented in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, outlined the government's roadmap to accelerate economic growth, generate employment and strengthen social inclusion, while continuing on the path of fiscal consolidation.

Calling it a "Yuva Shakti-driven Budget", the Finance Minister said the proposals are anchored in three key responsibilities namely, sustaining high economic growth, fulfilling the aspirations of citizens by building their capacities, and ensuring inclusive development aligned with the vision of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas.

The Budget is also the first to be prepared in Kartavya Bhawan, symbolically reflecting the government's focus on duty and responsibility.

A major thrust has been placed on infrastructure, with public capital expenditure increased to Rs 12.2 lakh crore in FY 2026-27 from Rs 11.2 lakh crore in the previous year.

The government aims to use higher capex to crowd in private investment, boost productivity and create jobs. As part of sustainable mobility initiatives, seven high-speed rail corridors connecting major cities have been proposed as "growth connectors".

To strengthen manufacturing and emerging sectors, the Budget announced Biopharma SHAKTI, a Rs 10,000 crore initiative to build a robust ecosystem for domestic production of biologics and biosimilars.

The programme will include new and upgraded national pharmaceutical institutes, expanded clinical trial infrastructure and faster regulatory approvals.

In addition, a Rs 10,000 crore SME Growth Fund has been proposed to nurture MSMEs into globally competitive enterprises.

On the taxation front, the Finance Minister announced that the New Income Tax Act, 2025 will come into effect from April 2026, accompanied by simplified tax rules and redesigned forms to improve ease of compliance.

Measures have been proposed to reduce litigation by integrating assessment and penalty proceedings, lowering pre-deposit requirements and decriminalising certain



minor offences.

The threshold for availing safe harbour provisions for IT services has been raised significantly, while foreign cloud service providers operating from India will be eligible for tax holidays until 2047.

The Budget also includes several social and human capital initiatives. To support women in education, one girls' hostel will be established in every district for students in higher education STEM institutions.

The government will set up AVGC content creator labs in 15,000 secondary schools and 500 colleges to prepare youth for careers in animation, gaming and digital media.

A Kholo India Mission has been announced to transform the sports sector over the next decade through talent development, coaching and infrastructure.

Healthcare and mental well-being received attention with proposals to establish NIMHANS-2 and upgrade regional mental health institutes, while tourism and cultural development will be supported through medical tourism hubs and Buddhist circuit projects in the North-East and Purvodaya states.

From a fiscal perspective, the government reaffirmed its commitment to prudence. The fiscal deficit is estimated at 4.3% of GDP for FY 2026-27, slightly lower than the revised estimate of 4.4% for FY 2025-26, while the debt-to-GDP ratio is projected to decline to 55.6%.

Sitharaman said the improving fiscal metrics will gradually free up resources for priority sectors by reducing interest burdens.

Overall, the union Budget 2026-27 seeks to balance ambition with inclusion, focusing on long-term growth, youth empowerment and economic resilience amid global uncertainties. UNI

'This isn't over': Global gold prices plunge after biggest drop in a decade as rally unwinds

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, FEB 2 : Gold prices fell, following its biggest plunge in more than a decade, and silver whipsawed in choppy trading after a dramatic pullback from record highs.

Spot gold fell as much as 6.3% on Monday. Silver swung sharply, dropping to around \$75 an ounce having earlier climbed as much as 3.2%. The white metal recorded its biggest ever intraday loss in the previous session.

"This isn't over," said Robert Gottlieb, a former precious metals trader at JPMorgan Chase & Co. and now an independent market commentator, adding that a reluctance to take further risk would constrain market liquidity.



"We've got to see if it's going to find support. The bottom line is that the trade was way too crowded." Over the last year,

precious metals have risen to all-time highs that have shocked even seasoned traders. The rally accelerated sharply in January, as

investors piled into gold and silver on renewed concerns about geopolitical upheaval, currency debasement and the independence of the Federal Reserve. A wave of buying from Chinese speculators added froth to the rally.

The trigger for Friday's dramatic selloff was the news that US President Donald Trump would nominate Kevin Warsh to lead the Fed, which sent the dollar higher and undercut sentiment among investors who had bet on Trump's willingness to let the currency weaken. Traders regard Warsh as the toughest inflation fighter among the final candidates, raising expectations of monetary policy that would underpin the dollar and weaken greenback-priced bullion. But precious metals had

already been primed for extreme moves, as soaring prices and volatility strained traders' risk models and balance sheets. A record wave of purchases of call options—contracts which give holders the right to buy at a pre-determined price—were "mechanically reinforcing upward price momentum," Goldman Sachs Group Inc. said in a note, as the sellers of the options hedged their exposure to rising prices by buying more.

Gold fell 4.4% to \$4,680.76 an ounce as of 9:21 a.m. Singapore time. Silver declined 2.2% to \$83.2965. Platinum and palladium declined.

The Bloomberg Dollar Spot Index, a gauge of the US currency, rose 0.1% after gaining 0.9% in the previous session. UNI

Maruti Suzuki weighs a price hike even as demand for its cars outstrips supply

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, FEB 2 : Maruti Suzuki India Ltd. is weighing a price hike to offset higher commodity costs, even as demand for its cars outstrips supply.

"On the commodity front, prices are going up... We are keeping a close watch due to the geopolitical scenario..." Partha Banerjee, senior executive officer (sales & marketing) at India's largest carmaker, said during a virtual presser. "But yes, in times to come, we are going to review the price increase."

"Our endeavour as a market leader has always been to minimise the price rise" but "after a certain extent, if we are unable to somehow accommodate the cost increase, we need to pass it on to our customers."

Banerjee didn't disclose the timeline for the price hike.

Car sales in India have been on a tear since the festive season last year, after the government reduced GST rate on small cars and SUVs to a flat 18% and 40%, respectively, as part of a wider rationalisation of the indirect tax.

Maruti Suzuki has led the charge, clocking ~20% sequential growth in monthly sales since October 2025. In fact, the New Delhi-based carmaker had reduced prices of entry-level cars (SPresso, Alto K10, WagonR and Celerio) at that time to make the most of the incoming demand.

Such has been the demand that it has outstripped supply, so much so that MSIL has had to initiate a "price protection scheme in January" for bookings.

"We were seeing first-time customers, who are coming to the four-wheeler segment, and we need to give them the opportunity to upgrade," Banerjee said. "Hence, we have given a price protection scheme (for those who have booked their vehicles)... There will be no price increase (for those customers)."

Maruti Suzuki is currently saddled with 1.75 lakh pending orders due to its production constraints, which are likely to persist for "a few more months". The waiting period for mass-market cars, like the Wagon R, has stretched to beyond a month. Its plants are operating even on Sundays and public holidays to catch up with the demand, Banerjee said.

"This production constraint will stay for a few more months. Our production team is working, and very soon maybe we will be able to add some more capacity and serve our customers in a shorter period," he said.

Maruti Suzuki's second plant at its Kharkhoda, Haryana facility is scheduled to be operational by April 2026, followed by a fourth assembly line at the Gujarat. That'll unlock additional production capacity of up to 5 lakh units annually.

At 2,36,963 units, Maruti Suzuki clocked its highest ever monthly sales in January 2026, largely on the back of exports—also at a record.

"We got bookings of over 2.78 lakh units, a 25% YoY growth... That market is giving us around 9,000 to 10,000 bookings every day," Banerjee said.

According to Maruti Suzuki, the wider car industry in India is expected to clock a compounded annual growth rate of 6-7% in FY26. UNI

Xiaomi 17 Ultra By Leica edition rebels against AI-overwhelmed photography

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, FEB 2 : There is a very clear direction of this flagship phone that puts it at odds with the general approach by most cutting edge smartphone imaging systems at this moment in time.

While the rest inevitably chase the sharpest details, best accuracy and most realistic artificial intelligence (AI) intervention, the Xiaomi 17 Ultra By Leica is going for something that has typically been its partner Leica's forte—realism, the essence of the moment photographed, and the emotion of it all.

It is absolutely not to say that Xiaomi isn't chasing the best dynamic range, shadow representation and accurate night photography, but for once, the imperfections of a human in the frame or the creases in the world we photograph, are allowed to shine. To not be ironed by an algorithm. A logical successor for the very impressive Xiaomi 15 Ultra?

In the meantime, Xiaomi India shared a Xiaomi 17 Ultra By Leica with Hindustan Times, for an early experience with the camera.

This is the Chinese version of the smartphone, powered by the Qualcomm Snapdragon 8 Elite Gen 5 chip, with HyperOS 3 that is tailored for the Chinese market. UNI

SBI, LIC emerge as key sellers in \$2.5-billion NSE IPO, DRHP likely in 3 months

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, FEB 2 : State Bank of India and Life Insurance Corporation of India Ltd. are likely to be key sellers in the potential \$2.5-billion initial public offering of the National Stock Exchange of India.

The NSE IPO is likely to be a pure offer-for-sale, wherein existing shareholders are likely to offer 4%-4.5% of the company's equity, a person aware of the deal told Bloomberg News on the condition of anonymity because the information is private. All 190,000 shareholders of the exchange will be given the option to participate in the IPO, this person said.

LIC holds a 10.72% stake in NSE and Temasek Holdings has 4.5%, according to data published on the exchange's website. SBI Capital also held roughly 4.5% as of 31 December 2025, while SBI's stake is about 3.2%, the data show.

NSE shares are trading at 2,150 in the grey market, implying a valuation of about 5.3 lakh crore, making the National Stock Exchange the world's fourth most valuable exchange among

listed peers, according to Bloomberg data.

The stock had climbed to a peak of about 2,420 on the unlisted market in June 2025 before sliding nearly 20% to about 1,920 November, according to data from IncredMoney.com. The decline was largely attributed to a drop in F&O volumes following a regulatory ban on New York-based quantitative trading firm Jane Street over alleged market manipulation.

The shares have since stabilised, tracking a recovery in derivatives activity and improving sentiment around the exchange's long-awaited IPO.

NSE's board is likely to form a committee comprising its top executives and the representatives of major shareholders including LIC and SBI in a few days to oversee the NSE IPO process, the person said. The board is scheduled to meet on 6 February to approve the financial results for the quarter ended December 2025 and is also likely to decide on the formation of the committee.

The mandate is expected to include

assisting the board in appointing investment bankers, negotiating fees, determining the amount of shares to be sold by existing investors, and filing the draft red-herring prospectus. NSE is targeting a timeline of about three months for the filing.

Deliberations are ongoing and key details could still change, the person said. Spokespeople for NSE, LIC, SBI, and SBI Capital Market didn't respond to requests for comment. Temasek declined to comment.

NSE, which commands more than 75% of India's derivatives market, reported a 15% increase in revenue to 17,100 crore in FY25, even as net profit surged 44% to 12,188 crore, delivering a net margin of about 71%.

On Friday, NSE said it had received regulatory clearance to begin preparations for an IPO. The approval comes nearly a decade after it first filed for a listing in 2016—a plan that stalled following allegations of corporate governance lapses and unfair market access raised by the Securities and Exchange Board of India. UNI

Kishan walks the talk to make a compelling case for the T20 World Cup



UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI: Ishan Kishan didn't answer what he was asked, but what he said revealed a lot about his mindset. Before the fifth T20I against New Zealand in Thiruvananthapuram, Murali Kartik asked him who his sounding board was. Kishan might have misunderstood the question, and said, "When it comes to batting, I actually like Nicky P [Nicholas Pooran]. I love his batting; you want to bat like him. When left-arm spinners are bowling, you know he is going to take them down nine times out of ten. That is the level of consistency he has got. I felt I was lacking that and I am trying to get better at it."

Later in the match, Kishan walked the talk. Having missed India's previous game with a niggle, Kishan came out in the third over as Sanju Samson endured another failure, a run-a-ball 6. Kishan, after his 76 off 32 balls in the second T20I, had said it didn't feel like he could get out even to a good ball. Saturday night was no different.

There was some early help for fast bowlers but when Lockie Ferguson bowled two slower deliveries back-to-back in the fifth over, Kishan dispatched them for a four and a six. He had moved to 15 off 12 when New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner, a left-arm fingerspinner, the type of bowler Pooran takes down routinely, brought himself on.

Santner, though, is one of the wiliest around. He bowled a flatter trajectory and conceded only three singles off four balls to Kishan. But when he returned for his second over, Kishan knew he had to make amends.

Bowling around the wicket, Santner tossed one up and slanted it across to stay away from the batter's hitting arc. Kishan stepped out, reached for the ball and hit it over extra cover.

Santner's next ball was in line with the stumps. Kishan was quick to go down on his knee and slog-sweep it over square leg for a six.

He was looking so dangerous that Ish Sodhi, a legspinner whose stock delivery turns into a left-hand batter's hitting arc, started the 12th over with two offbreaks. The first was a wide, the second was put away for four. Kishan hit four fours and two sixes in that Sodhi over. Before the over began, he was on 47 off 27; by the end of it, he had raced to 5.

He got a life on 84 when Glenn Phillips, arguably the best fielder in the world, put down a regulation chance off Kyle Jamieson at deep midwicket. The ball burst through his hands and went for six.

When Kishan faced Santner again, he was on 91 off 40. Even though he was approaching his maiden T20I hundred, he did not want to slow down, especially against a left-arm spinner. Santner once again angled the ball across him. Kishan moved outside the off stump and pulled it over deep midwicket. The next delivery was again wide but fuller. Kishan slog-swept it for another six to bring up his hundred.

In all, he scored 30 off 12 balls against Santner and 37 off 11 against Sodhi. Never before has a batter scored these many off either of them in a T20I. Not even Pooran.

After the match, Kishan was asked if it was a conscious effort to keep hitting even when the milestone was in sight. "I think that's the plan nowadays for each and every player in our team," he said. "Even if you are close to your milestone, it doesn't matter. If we start taking singles and in the end, we feel we could have gone big in those overs, it makes a huge difference [to the final total]. So the important thing is if the ball is there, you just have to go for it. You don't think about the milestone, but about winning the match."

Scotland players granted visas in time to play T20 World Cup warm-ups

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

SYDNEY: Scotland will be able to fulfil their first T20 World Cup warm-up match against Afghanistan in Bengaluru on Monday after their players' Indian visas were expedited.

Scotland were invited to the World Cup as late-notice replacements for Bangladesh and named their 15-man squad on January 26. Visas for two of their players - Safyaan Sharif, who has Pakistani heritage, and Zainullah Ihsan, who was born in Afghanistan - were briefly delayed, but they have now arrived in India and trained with their teammates in Bengaluru on Sunday.

"It has been one hell of a week," Sharif said before travelling, in a video on Cricket Scotland's Instagram account. "Once we found out we were going to the World Cup, obviously I couldn't believe it. For myself, I'm pretty excited, and just can't wait to get on that park and put in a performance for Scotland."

"Thanks to the Scotland team and the efforts that they've put in just to get us on this flight. I'm



pretty excited. I'm just glad that the first hurdle is over and we're just going to get on this plane, enjoy the flight and see the boys in India."

Tom Bruce is the only Scotland player yet to arrive in India, as he completes his domestic commitments with Central Stags in New Zealand.

Scotland replaced Bangladesh in Group C and will play fixtures against West Indies, Italy, England and Nepal. The top two teams from each group will progress to the Super Eights stage, which Scotland narrowly missed in 2024 after a no-result against England and a tight defeat to Australia.

Scotland initially missed out on the upcoming World Cup after defeats to Jersey and Italy at last year's European Qualifiers, and their chief executive Trudy Lindblade conceded last week: "This is not how we wanted to go to a World Cup."

Max O'Dowd turns up the volume on Netherlands' World Cup hopes

The record-breaker, DJ and late-blooming opener enters his prime in time to hit the big stage again

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

LONDON: Max O'Dowd can pump up the tempo - both on and off the field. He is Netherlands' top run-getter in ODIs and T20Is. He has also been DJing since he was a teenager. Music runs in O'Dowd's family. His grandmother was a pianist, his grandfather played some musical instruments too, and his uncle was an opera singer.

Even on the cricket field, he didn't have to look too far for inspiration. His father, Alex O'Dowd,

represented Auckland and Northern Districts in New Zealand domestic cricket. Max was born in Auckland and lived in Campbells Bay until he was five and then moved to The Hague, where his mother Christine is from, in the Netherlands. When he was around 13, he came back to New Zealand and participated in local development tournaments there, dreaming of becoming a Black Cap. That didn't come to pass, but he did get an opportunity to play for Netherlands when he was 21, thanks to his mother's Dutch heritage,



and hasn't looked back since. O'Dowd started in the middle

order for Netherlands before sliding up and finding his feet at the top. He is strong down the ground and through the off side, and has learnt to harness those strengths in the powerplay.

He will turn 32 in March and seems to be entering his peak as a batter. In his most recent ODI innings, in June 2025, he cracked an unbeaten 158, spearheading Netherlands' successful chase of 370 against Scotland - the third-highest chase in the format. O'Dowd was also Netherlands' top run-getter in the

men's T20 World Cup Europe region competition, which his team won last year.

"Definitely that 150 against Scotland was crucial, and it was a way I haven't batted before in one-day cricket - I just had to bat a certain way in order to chase these runs," O'Dowd says. "That showed me that I can do it [at the top level]. I knew I could always do it but I just hadn't done it. So it was nice to kind of tick that off the list, and hopefully I can do something like that in this T20 World Cup."

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