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J&K Throws Open More Tourist Gems After Security Review

LG Manoj Sinha Clears 14 Scenic Destinations for Immediate Reopening; Snowbound Spots to Follow Soon

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEB 16: In a significant boost to the tourism sector, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday ordered the reopening of several prominent tourist destinations across Jammu and Kashmir after a comprehensive security review.

A total of 11 tourist spots in the Kashmir Division and three in the Jammu Division have been cleared for immediate reopening. The destinations had been temporarily closed as a precautionary measure.

In the Kashmir Division, the sites reopened include Yousmarg and Doodhpathri in Budgam; Dandipora Park, Koker-



nag in Anantnag; Peer Ki Gali, Dubjan, and Padpawan in Shopian; Astanpora and the iconic Tulip Garden in Srinagar; Thajwas Glacier and Hung Park in Ganderbal; and Wular/Watlab in Baramulla.

In the Jammu Division, Devi Pindi in Reasi, Mahu Mangat in Ramtan, and Mughal Maidan in Kishtwar have also been reopened for visitors with immediate effect.

Meanwhile, authorities said that Gurez and Athwato in Bandipora, Bangus in Kupwara, and Ramkund in Ramtan will be reopened once snow clearance operations are completed.

Officials stated that the decision

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Security Environment in J&K Has Steadily Improved Post Abrogation of Article 370

Shah Sets 2029 Deadline for Violence-Free J&K, Home Minister Cites 80% Drop in Terror Incidents, Announces Expanded Safe City push

■ HT NEWS DESK / AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, FEB 16: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday asserted that Jammu & Kashmir is firmly on the path to lasting peace and would be rendered violence-free by 2029, crediting the turnaround to sustained security measures undertaken after the abrogation of Article 370.

Addressing the 79th Raising Day celebrations of the Delhi Police in the national capital, Shah said nearly 80 per cent of the country's internal security challenges that existed prior to 2014, particularly in Jammu & Kashmir, the North-East and Maoist-affected regions have now been effectively contained.

"In Jammu & Kashmir, the security environment has steadily improved following the abrogation of Article 370. I assure the country that J&K and the North-East will be free from violence



by 2029," Shah said.

He maintained that terror-related incidents, including targeted killings, gun violence and attacks on security forces, have declined sharply since the constitutional changes of August 2019. Describing the period between 2014 and 2026 as a "golden era" for internal security.

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Tulip Garden Likely to Open Around March 15; Weather to Decide Final Date

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 16: The iconic Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden is likely to open to visitors around March 15, subject to favourable weather conditions, officials said on Sunday.

Located at the foothills of the Zabarwan Range and overlooking the picturesque Dal Lake, the garden is currently in the final phase of preparations, with authorities closely monitoring climatic conditions before confirming the opening date.

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Cancer Burden Mounts in J&K as 10,000 Patients Register at Government Medical College Srinagar Since 2017

PET Scan Facility Likely This Year; Doctors Push for Proton Beam Therapy Amid Rising Lung and Breast Cancer Cases

■ HT NEWS DESK / KNO

SRINAGAR, FEB 16: The escalating incidence of cancer in Jammu and Kashmir has emerged as a major public health challenge, with nearly 10,000 patients registered at the Department of Radiation Oncology at Government Medical College (GMC) Srinagar since 2017.

According to official figures accessed by KNO, 1,558 new cancer cases were recorded in 2025 alone, reflecting a sustained rise in patient inflow over the years. Hospital data indicates a consistent upward trend, barring a dip in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The year-wise registrations include 491 cases in 2017, 1,032



in 2018, 801 in 2019, 650 in 2020, 1,010 in 2021, 1,169 in 2022, 1,640 in 2023, 1,659 in 2024 and 1,558 in 2025. On average, four to five new patients are being registered daily, significantly increasing the pressure on oncology services in the Valley.

An oncologist at the Radiation Oncology Department of SMHS Hospital termed the situation "deeply concerning."

noting a sharp rise in fresh cases across the Union Territory.

Lung cancer continues to be the most common malignancy among men, while breast cancer tops the list among women. Doctors attribute the high incidence of lung cancer primarily to tobacco consumption.

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CS Chairs 4th SEC meeting of DMRR&R

Pushes for institutionalized and time-bound disaster relief mechanism

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEB 16: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo today underscored the need for timely and effective relief to disaster-affected families while chairing the 4th meeting of the State

Executive Committee (SEC) of the Department of Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation & Reconstruction (DMRR&R).

Emphasizing the vulnerability of disaster-hit communities in Jammu & Kashmir, the Chief Secretary

observed that families impacted by natural calamities often have no recourse except the support extended by the government. He stressed that relief assistance must reach the affected households without any delay and directed officers to always

ensure prompt disbursement of assistance to the affected populations.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, Home; Special Director General, Coordination; Special Secretary, Finance; senior

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NH-444 Bonura-Gudoora Link Opens, Bringing Traffic Relief to Pulwama

■ HT NEWS DESK / KNO

PULWAMA, FEB 16: In a major boost to infrastructure and urban mobility in South Kashmir, the much-anticipated Bonura-Gudoora link on National Highway 444 was formally opened for traffic on Monday, offering significant relief to commuters and residents of Pulwama town.

According to Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the newly operational stretch is expected to substantially decongest Pulwama's busy town centre by providing an alternative corridor for vehicles that earlier had to navigate through overcrowded internal roads.

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Top Army Commanders Review Counter-Terror Grid in Kishtwar, Stress Robust Area Domination

Lt Gen P K Mishra Assesses Operational Preparedness Amid Intensified Anti-Terror Operations in Chenab Valley



■ HT NEWS DESK / KNO

JAMMU, FEB 16: Senior Army commanders on Monday visited the general area of Kishtwar to review the Counter Terrorism Grid and assess the operational preparedness of troops deployed in the region.

According to details available with news agency Kashmir News Observ-

er (KNO), the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the White Knight Corps (16 Corps), P K Mishra, accompanied by the GOC of Counter-Insurgency Force (Delta), undertook a comprehensive review of the prevailing security situation.

During the visit, the commanders were briefed on the existing security scenario, operational challenges and

measures being taken to further strengthen the counter-terror framework. Officials said special emphasis was laid on improving inter-agency coordination among the Army, Jammu & Kashmir Police and the Central Reserve Police Force in the hilly districts.

"The focus of deliberations was on enhancing vigilance, accelerating intelligence-driven operations and sustaining a robust security posture in the Chenab Valley and adjoining areas," an official said.

The visit assumes significance against the backdrop of intensified counter-terror operations in Kishtwar and neighbouring Udhampur districts. In recent weeks, joint operations by the Army, J&K Police and CRPF have led to multiple engagements with terrorists affiliated with banned outfits, resulting in the neutralisation of suspected operatives.

Security forces have been conducting sustained search and cordon operations in dense forests and mountainous terrain despite challenging weather conditions. Enhanced surveillance measures, aviation support and reinforcement of forward positions are being employed to maintain area dominance and disrupt terrorist movement routes in the region.

New Modern Jammu Assembly Complex to be ready by Oct 2027: Deputy Chief Minister



■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEB 16: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today said that the new Modern Assembly Complex in Jammu would be ready for functioning by October 2027.

The Deputy Chief Minister stated this while inspecting the progress of works on the under-construction Assembly Complex. He reviewed the pace and quality of execution and directed the concerned officers to expedite the remaining works to ensure timely completion.

He said that the multi-storeyed Legislative Assembly Complex has been designed to provide state-of-the-art infrastructure, enhanced functionality and improved public convenience. The building has been thoughtfully planned to integrate administrative efficiency, public access, media facilitation, healthcare support and adequate parking infrastructure, thereby strengthening institutional functioning and ensuring smooth conduct of House proceedings.

Asserting the need for strict adher-

ence to timelines, the Deputy Chief Minister said, "The project is expected to be completed by October 2027 and we are hopeful that the Budget Session 2028 will be conducted in the new House."

He cautioned the officers and the contractor against any laxity or failure in meeting the set deadlines for completion of the project. "There is no scope for delay, and the quality of work must be ensured," he added.

During the inspection, the Deputy Chief Minister visited the Assembly Hall, Press and Guest Galleries, basements, and offices designated for dignitaries. He reviewed the seating capacity, meeting hall facilities and other arrangements essential for smooth functioning of the Legislative Assembly. He also directed that seating capacity in the House besides the guest, Speaker's and press galleries be strengthened, keeping in view future requirements, including possible delimitation.

Briefing the Deputy Chief Minister on the progress and facilities, Chief

Engineer, PWD Jammu, Er. Rajesh Kumar Agastam informed that the lower basement has been earmarked for parking and essential services. The upper basement will have two separate canteens, a 10-bedded Health & Wellness Centre, an Allied Services Block and additional parking space.

He further informed that the ground floor houses the main Assembly Hall with a seating capacity of 130 persons. It also accommodates the Office/Accommodation of the Speaker, the Office/Accommodation of the Law & Parliamentary Affairs functionary and the Office of the Secretary, Legislative Assembly.

The first floor comprises of a spacious Press/Visitors Gallery with a capacity of over 450 persons, a Committee Room and all allied offices of the Legislative Assembly Secretariat.

Among others present during the inspection were the Chief Engineer, PWD Jammu, concerned Superintending Engineer, Executive Engineer and other senior officers.

CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

J&K Throws.....

follows an in-depth assessment of the prevailing security scenario and improving ground conditions. The reopening of these picturesque destinations is expected to further energise the tourism sector, a key pillar of the Union Territory's economy.

Security Environment.....

Shah said decades-old challenges in three major conflict zones are now nearing resolution.

Highlighting progress in the North-East, the Home Minister said over 20 peace accords have been signed with insurgent groups, while more than 10,000 youths have laid down arms and joined the mainstream. He added that Maoist violence is also on track to be eliminated by March 2026.

"I am pleased to state that incidents of violence have declined by up to 80 per cent in Jammu & Kashmir, the North-East and Maoist-affected areas. The day is not far when these regions will be completely free from violence," he said.

Safe City Expansion, Criminal Justice Reforms

Shah also unveiled ten new initiatives under the "Safe City" project in Delhi, aimed at strengthening surveillance and urban security. Around 2,100 AI-enabled cameras will soon be deployed as part of a larger network of 10,000 cameras under the project, supplementing the 15,000 already installed across the capital.

He said the Special Cell's integrated headquarters would further bolster counter-terror capabilities.

The Home Minister underscored reforms in the criminal justice system, including the roll-out of three new criminal laws designed to raise conviction rates to 75-80 per cent. States such as Assam, Haryana and Gujarat have already recorded conviction rate improvements exceeding 20 per cent, he noted.

Emphasising broader priorities, Shah said the Centre is committed to building a "drug-free India," tackling cyber terrorism and dismantling organised crime networks. He revealed that nine gangsters were neutralised in encounters in 2025, while 32 fugitives operating from abroad are under surveillance by Delhi Police's Special Cell in coordination with central agencies.

Acknowledging persistent challenges, Shah said the Ministry of Home Affairs is working toward a nationwide security framework, including an integrated CCTV network to combat narcotics trafficking and enhanced border management systems to prevent infiltration.

Reiterating his confidence in the government's security strategy, the Home Minister said the remaining challenges in Jammu & Kashmir, the North-East and Maoist-affected areas would be comprehensively addressed before 2029—(KNO).

Tulip Garden.....

Assistant Floriculture Officer Imran Ahmad said the department has completed the plantation of tulip bulbs and is now focusing on finishing works across the sprawling garden. "Everything now depends on the weather. If conditions remain favourable, the garden is expected to open around March 15," he said.

Officials informed that repair and maintenance works are underway, including strength-

ening railings, reshaping and increasing flower beds, upgrading pathways, repainting infrastructure and improving public amenities to ensure a smooth experience for visitors.

In a significant enhancement this year, the Floriculture Department has increased the density of flower beds to create a more vibrant and visually impactful display. Earlier, 30 to 35 beds were accommodated in a particular patch; this season, more than 42 beds have been fitted into the same space to intensify the bloom effect.

The garden is expected to showcase nearly 1.8 million tulips spanning 70 to 75 varieties, offering an expansive spectrum of colours during the upcoming bloom season.

Last year, the Tulip Garden recorded an unprecedented footfall of 8,55,125 visitors during its 30-day opening period from March 26 to April 24, 2025. The record-breaking turnout included locals, domestic tourists and international visitors who thronged the garden to witness more than 1.7 million tulips in full bloom.

With preparations nearing completion, officials said the department is optimistic about another successful season, provided weather conditions remain conducive for the flowers to blossom on schedule.

Cancer Burden.....

between tobacco use and lung cancer reflects the urgent need for aggressive awareness campaigns and preventive strategies," the doctor said.

In women, breast cancer cases are being linked to sedentary lifestyles and increasing obesity levels. However, medical experts stressed that both lung and breast cancers are largely preventable through lifestyle modifications, early screening, and timely intervention.

"Early detection remains the key to better survival rates and improved treatment outcomes. Public awareness about warning signs and routine check-ups must be strengthened," the oncologist added.

Despite the rising caseload, the department is equipped with advanced radiation technologies, including Intensity-Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT), Image-Guided Radiation Therapy (IGRT), Stereotactic Body Radiation Therapy (SBRT), Volumetric Modulated Arc Therapy (VMAT), brachytherapy, and CT simulation services. Dedicated inpatient wards, day-care chemotherapy units, blood transfusion facilities, and palliative care services are also operational.

In a significant development, officials confirmed that the installation of a PET Scan machine is underway and is expected to be commissioned later this year. The facility is anticipated to substantially improve cancer detection, staging, and treatment planning.

Doctors have also advocated for the introduction of Proton Beam Therapy in the region – a highly advanced form of radiotherapy that precisely targets tumours while sparing surrounding healthy tissue. Currently available at only a handful of centres in India, experts believe its introduction in Jammu and Kashmir would mark a major leap in cancer care infrastructure.

With the patient load steadily increasing, healthcare professionals underline the urgent need for strengthened preventive strategies, expanded diagnostic facilities, and the intro-

duction of cutting-edge treatment options to effectively tackle the growing cancer burden in the region.

— (KNO)

CS Chairs.....

representatives from concerned departments and officers of DMRR&R.

Taking serious note of pending relief claims, the Chief Secretary unequivocally directed the immediate clearance of outstanding amounts in favour of Deputy Commissioners of districts affected by last year's flash floods. He sought a detailed compliance report to ensure that funds had been released strictly as per the assessed requirements of each district.

Highlighting the unpredictable nature of disasters, the Chief Secretary called for establishing a robust and clearly defined mechanism to respond to such emergencies. He directed the departments to strengthen preparedness measures, undertake mitigation efforts in advance, and institutionalize a standardized framework delineating roles and responsibilities of officers to ensure swift, coordinated, and effective action on the ground.

Earlier, Principal Secretary, Home, Chandraker Bharti, briefed the Committee on the Action Taken Reports (ATRs) following previous SEC meetings. He informed that the process for constituting Urban Disaster Management Authorities for both Jammu and Srinagar is currently underway. He further disclosed that engagement of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as a technical partner for Disaster Risk Management in J&K is in progress to facilitate formulation of a comprehensive and forward-looking disaster mitigation plan for the Union Territory.

The Principal Secretary also provided details regarding the release of approximately 96 crore to districts under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) in the wake of recent disasters. He highlighted various capacity-building initiatives undertaken by the department to enhance preparedness and response capabilities across districts.

He further apprised the Committee about the Post Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNA) carried out in the Union Territory with the support of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), in accordance with guidelines of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). The assessments aim to comprehensively evaluate losses and damages and formulate a structured reconstruction and recovery strategy.

To strengthen disaster response at the divisional and district levels and operationalize the Incident Response System (IRS) at the grassroots, the Committee approved a standardized IRS notification for both divisions and districts. This step is expected to ensure a coordinated, coherent, and prompt response during emergencies.

The meeting also deliberated on further strengthening the District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs). It was informed that the Finance Department will provide necessary funds for hiring consultants to enhance the technical and institutional capacity of DDMAs across the Union Territory.

Reiterating the government's commitment to safeguarding lives and livelihoods, the Chief Secretary directed the departments to work

for building a resilient and responsive disaster management framework for Jammu & Kashmir for the times to come.

NH-444 Bonura.....

The link connects key routes, including Rajpora Road, Shopian Road, Pakherpora Road and Rohmoo Road, creating seamless connectivity for motorists traveling within the district and towards adjoining areas. With traffic now being diverted to the new highway stretch, authorities anticipate smoother vehicular flow, particularly during peak hours when long traffic snarls were a routine occurrence.

Residents described the opening as a transformative step for the town's daily life. Mohammad Yousaf, a trader at Bonura crossing, said the improvement in traffic flow was visible from day one. "For years, congestion disrupted business and daily commuting. The new link has already made movement easier and more organized," he said.

Locals also highlighted the road's importance for emergency services. Mudassir Ahmad, a resident of Newa, noted that ambulances previously faced delays due to heavy congestion in the town centre.

"With this alternate route, response time has improved, which can make a critical difference in emergencies," he said.

Women commuters and office-goers expressed satisfaction over reduced travel time. Rehana Jan, a school teacher, said the new corridor has shortened her daily commute by nearly 15 minutes. "For regular travellers, that is a significant saving of time and fuel," she added.

Beyond easing traffic pressure, traders believe the improved connectivity will positively impact local commerce. Direct access to the highway is expected to facilitate quicker transportation of horticultural produce and other goods, benefitting farmers, transporters and business establishments across the district.

Residents, while welcoming the development, urged authorities to ensure proper maintenance, installation of signage and adequate safety measures, especially during adverse weather conditions.

The opening of the NH-444 Bonura-Gudoor link is being seen as a key infrastructural milestone for Pulwama, poised to enhance traffic management, strengthen regional connectivity and stimulate economic activity in South Kashmir. — (KNO)



District Administration Srinagar saturates 114 Govt Schools with Computer systems, IT equipments under District Capex

Initiative aimed to equip students with technological competencies & create technology-enabled learning environment in Govt Schools: DC Srinagar

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 16: With an aim to enhance digital learning facilities, improve classroom environments and provide better resources to students and teachers, the District Administration Srinagar on Monday distributed computer systems along with necessary furniture to 114 Government Schools of District under the District Capex Budget to strengthen educational infrastructure and enhance access to information technology across the district.

In this connection, Deputy Commissioner(DC) Srinagar, Akshay Labroo, today presided over a programme, organized by the Chief Education Office Srinagar at Government Higher Secondary School, Kothibagh.

Chief Planning Officer, Fayaz Ahmad Dar; District Statistics & Evaluation Officer, Shah Ismail Bangroo; Chief Education Officer, Ghulam Mohi-U-Din; Deputy CEO, Anjum Raja; Principal



are effectively used for digital classrooms, e-learning modules and project-based learning.

On the occasion, the DC assured all possible support from the District Administration for further strengthening infrastructure, improving quality of education and ensuring modern technological learning facilities for students across the district.

During the programme, the DC congratulated the Chief Education Officer, his team and the Heads of Schools who received the computers and allied infrastructure. He also lauded the efforts of the Chief Planning Officer, Srinagar, District Statistics & Evaluation Officer and their respective teams for their dedicated efforts in successfully implementing the initiative.

Later, the DC handed over appreciation letters to the concerned Officers and Officials for their contribution towards successful execution of various government schemes and educational programmes in the district.

GRGI Chairman Sanjay Jindal & Vice Chairperson Mrs. Indu Jindal Meet Kashmir Dignitaries in Srinagar

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 16: Chairman and Vice Chairperson of the Global Research Group of Institutions (GRGI), Sanjay Jindal and Indu Jindal, held an important interaction meeting with leading educationists, corporate representatives, and prominent dignitaries of the Kashmir Division at Ahdoos Hotel, Lal Chowk, Srinagar.

The meeting focused on sharing the academic vision and opportunities offered by the reputed institutions functioning under the banner of GRGI, based in Yamuna Nagar, Haryana. Special emphasis was laid on facilitating admissions for a wide range of professional and career-oriented programmes including M.Tech, B.Tech, BBA, BCA, Diploma Engineering, B.Pharmacy, D.Pharmacy, and DMU, offered at affordable fee structures.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Sanjay Jindal highlighted GRGI's strong academic framework, experienced faculty, modern infrastructure, and a consistent placement record with reputed national companies. He reiterated the institution's commitment to 100% placement assistance, industry-oriented education, and maintaining a disciplined, student-friendly learning environment. He also expressed keen interest in strengthening academic collaboration and outreach with students and institutions from the Union Territory of Jammu &



Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by several prominent personalities, including Rouf Ahmad Kachroo, Director, Rouf Infrastructures Pvt. Ltd. / Jammy Agitech Industries, Pulwama Lassipora; Nazir Ahmed Reshi, Retired Chief Education Officer; Sajad Hussain Shah, Senior Academic Officer, Department of School Education; Tariq Ahmad Mir, Senior Academic Officer, Department of School Education; Er. Abid Hussain Khan, Civil Engineer, Hiend Print & Pack Pvt. Ltd, Kathua; Mohammad Muzaffar Dar, Managing Director, M.S. Agro, Nowpora Sopore; and Hilal Ahmad Lone, Sales Manager, Hiend Print & Pack Pvt. Ltd, Kathua; Zeeshan Pervaiz, noted educationist, sports promoter, President of Affarwat-XI Sports Club Baramulla, and social worker, appreciated the initiative and warmly welcomed the opportunities being extended to the students of Jammu & Kashmir, describing the interaction as a positive step toward academic and professional empowerment of youth in the region.

All J&K RDA and FPDA Expresses Grief Over Renowned Actor Rajinder Tikoo's Demise

■ GULFAM BARJI

SRINAGAR, FEB 16: All J&K Radio, Doordarshan Artists and Freelance Producers Directors Association has expressed profound grief and sorrow over the tragic accidental demise of noted radio, television and stage actor and broadcaster Pandit Rajinder Tikoo. In his condolence message the President of the Association Sheikh Tariq Javed, described the late Rajinder Tikoo as a highly talented versatile and multi-dimensional personality who made remarkable contributions to the promotion of art and culture through radio, television and theatre.



He said that the void created by his untimely passing will be difficult to fill for years to come. The Association conveyed its heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul. It further stated that all members of the Association stand in solidarity with the family during this hour of grief.

Meanwhile Mehak Dramatic Club Srinagar and Inder Cultural Forum Sumbal also expressed deep sorrow over the accidental death of Pandit Rajinder Tikoo, terming it an irreparable loss to the artistic and cultural fraternity.

Chronic Stunt Biker Intercepted in Vehicle Seized During Traffic Crackdown

■ FAROOQ RATHER

PULWAMA, FEB 16: Continuing its intensified drive against rash and stunt driving, the Special Enforcement Team of Traffic Rural Kashmir on Sunday intercepted a chronic stunt biker in Pulwama district and seized his motorcycle under relevant provisions of law.

The operation was carried out under the supervision of Ravinder Pal Singh, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Traffic Rural Kashmir, along with the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) Traffic Pulwama-Shopian. Acting on specific inputs, the team apprehended Adil Ahmad Rather, a resident of Chandara Pampore, who was allegedly involved in repeated instances of stunt riding on public roads.

Officials said the motorcycle used for performing dangerous stunts was seized on the spot in accordance with the applicable legal provisions. The action forms part of an ongoing campaign by Traffic Rural Kashmir to curb reckless and negligent driving practices that pose serious risks to public safety. Following the interception, the accused rider was counselled by traffic officials and sensitized about the grave consequences of stunt driving. During the counselling session, officers highlighted the potential for fatal road accidents and the broader negative influence such activities can have on students and youth, especially when videos of such stunts are uploaded on social networking platforms.

SSP Traffic Rural Kashmir has already issued strict directions to field officers to adopt a zero-tolerance approach towards rash, negligent, and stunt driving across rural areas. The department reiterated its commitment to ensuring safer roads and preventing avoidable mishaps.

Through this message, the Traffic Police once again appealed to motorists and parents not to hand over vehicles to minors, unlicensed individuals, or those known for reckless driving. Authorities emphasized that responsible vehicle ownership and adherence to traffic laws are crucial in preventing road accidents and saving lives.

The Traffic Rural Kashmir unit has warned that similar strict action will continue against violators as part of its sustained enforcement and awareness campaign.

National School of Drama TIE Centre Srinagar Stages Children's Theatre Showcase at Bharat Rang Mahotsav 2026

Young performers mesmerise audience with two workshop productions at 25th Bharat Rang Mahotsav

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 16: As part of the 25th edition of Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM) 2026 – regarded as the world's largest international theatre festival – the Theatre in Education (TIE) Centre, Srinagar, of the National School of Drama, presented two vibrant Children's Theatre Workshop productions at the NSD TIE Theatre Studio, Cultural Academy Campus, Lal Mandi. The young participants from two age groups (8-12 and 12-16 years) staged the plays "Qissa Kala Pahad Ka" and "Waai Woff", drawing warm appreciation from a packed audience comprising eminent personalities from the cultural fraternity, parents, and theatre enthusiasts.

The inaugural session commenced with the Bharat Rang Mahotsav anthem, resonating through the studio and setting the tone for the evening's celebrations.

In his welcome address, Mr. Gulzar Ganaie, Coordinator, NSD TIE Centre Srinagar, highlighted that this is the third time the Centre has hosted Bharat Rang Mahotsav in Srinagar, marking the festival's silver jubilee year. He underlined the significance of BRM as a platform that celebrates theatre's transformative power in education, social awareness, and community building.

He emphasised that the objective of the workshops is not merely to train children as actors, but to familiarise them with theatrical techniques



and provide a nurturing environment to develop their inherent aptitudes, creativity, confidence, and essential life skills. He credited the successful productions to the collective efforts of NSD authorities and dedicated facilitators who regularly conduct acting, direction, and technical workshops at the Centre.

The performances were lauded for their creativity, coordination, and confidence, earning immense admiration from the audience.

Shri Lal Chand (JKAS), Additional Secretary, J&K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages, graced the occasion as Chief Guest, while Shri Satish Vimal attended as Guest of Honour. Both were felicitated with bouquets and traditional shawls. Prominent theatre personalities of the Valley, including Mushtaque Ali Ahmad Khan and Shakeel-Ur-Rehman, were also present.

In his address, Chief Guest Shri Lal

Chand commended the children for their enthralling performances and underscored the importance of contemporary theatre in education and everyday life.

All facilitators who devised and directed the plays – Mr. Khursheed Ahmad Mir, Mr. Shah Nawaz Bhat, Mr. Tahir Ahmad Najar, Mr. Abdul Basit Rather, Mr. Shahid Malik, and Mr. Bilal Bhagat – were felicitated for their contribution. Mr. Javed Ahmad Khan (lighting and technical support) and Mr. Nasir Ahmad Khan (set design) were also honoured. Mr. Sandeep Chaudhary, Coordinator and Group Leader, was felicitated in recognition of his efforts.

The programme concluded with a formal vote of thanks delivered by Mr. Sandeep Chaudhary, expressing gratitude to the distinguished guests, parents of participants, and all attendees for making the event a grand success.

FRESH AVALANCHE SNAPS KEY BHADARWAH-PATHANKOT LINK A DAY AFTER REOPENING; DOZENS RESCUED

■ AMIR IQBAL KHAN

BHADARWAH, FEB 15: A fresh avalanche struck the vital interstate Bhadarwah-Bani-Basoli-Pathankot road on Sunday evening, blocking traffic and leaving dozens of tourists stranded just a day after the stretch was thrown open for

vehicular movement, officials said.

The administration, however, confirmed that a prompt rescue operation was launched and all stranded passengers have been evacuated to safety. No casualties were reported in the incident.

According to officials, the snow-slide triggered around 5 pm

between Guldanda and Thanthera, approximately 18 kilometers from Bhadarwah town.

The sudden slide brought traffic to a grinding halt, trapping several tourist and passenger vehicles in the high-altitude zone.

The administration at Bhadarwah swung into action immedi-

ately following the incident. All the stranded vehicles were rescued," an official said.

"No casualty was reported in the incident," the official clarified.

The blockage comes as a setback to connectivity in the region as the road was declared open only yesterday by the 118 Road Construc-

tion Company (RCC) of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).

The RCC had worked for over a week to clear heavy snow accumulation to restore the link. Authorities have advised commuters to exercise caution and check for traffic updates before venturing on the avalanche-prone stretch.

DC Baramulla inaugurates Drug De-Addiction Centre at Sopore

Facility to provide Comprehensive Treatment, Rehabilitation, and Awareness Services to combat Substance Abuse

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA, FEB 16: In a significant step towards strengthening healthcare infrastructure and addressing the growing challenge of substance abuse, Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, today inaugurated the newly constructed Drug De-Addiction Centre at Sopore.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Senior Superintendent of Police Sopore, Iftikhar Talib; Additional Deputy Commissioner Sopore; Assistant Commissioner Development Baramulla; Chief Planning Officer Baramulla; Chief Medical Officer Baramulla; Sub Divisional Police Officer Sopore; Block Development Officer Sopore; Block Medical Officer Sopore, among other officers.

While inaugurating the facility constructed at the cost of Rs



44 Lakh, the DC appreciated the efforts of the Rural Development Department (RDD) and RDD Block Sopore for completing the project in a record time.

The DC further added that establishing such a centre was a long-pending demand of the people of Sub Division Sopore, which has now been fulfilled by

RDD Block Sopore. Speaking on the occasion, the DC stated that the Drug De-Addiction Centre at Sopore is the first of its kind in Sub Division Sopore

which will provide a comprehensive range of community-based services including identification, motivation, counselling, de-addiction treatment, aftercare, and rehabilitation.

The DC further said that the facility will be expanded in a phased manner to cater to the increasing needs of the district informing that proposal for additional staff has already been submitted to ensure smooth and effective functioning of the centre.

Meanwhile, the DC emphasized that the facility was the need of the hour and will significantly help in combating drug abuse in the region.

He highlighted that the centre will also serve as a nodal hub for awareness generation and preventive education campaigns across the district to sensitize youth and the community about the ill effects of substance abuse.

DC Bandipora chairs meeting on Environment Management Plan of KGHEP

Reviews Rainwater Harvesting under 'Catch the Rain' Programme

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, FEB 16: Deputy Commissioner Bandipora, Indu Kanwal Chib, today chaired a meeting to review and deliberate upon the Environment Management Plan (EMP) of KGHEP and to discuss related measures, DPRs, and inter-departmental coordination mechanisms.

During the meeting, detailed deliberations were held on the Site Sustainability Analysis of Rainwater Harvesting (RWH) structures in District Bandipora under the 'Catch the Rain' programme, which forms a crucial component of environmental management and water resource conservation.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasized the importance of rainwater harvesting in addressing water scarcity affecting people, livestock, and the agriculture sector. She stressed the need for optimal utilization of available funds and directed concerned departments to ensure timely execution of works so that identified projects are completed well before the onset of the monsoon season.

The meeting reviewed the inventory of existing rainwater harvesting structures, including farm ponds, field bunds, and other water conservation assets across the district.

Threadbare discussions were also held on land use and land cover classification of the district, covering agricultural cropland, plantation areas, built-up areas, fallow land, forests, grasslands, scrubland, snow-covered areas, wastelands, and waterbodies.

It was informed that a total of 220 sites have been proposed for the creation of new water harvesting structures in accordance with IMSD guidelines.

The Deputy Commissioner directed that proper ground-truthing of all proposed sites be undertaken to ensure technical feasibility, suitability, and long-term sustainability. She further instructed the Department of Ecology, Environment and Remote Sensing (DEERS) to submit relevant data from the NRSC Bhuvan portal for comprehensive analysis and monitoring.

Extensive discussions were held on the types of structures to be constructed, site selection criteria, estimated costs, community participation, implementation methodology, timelines, and the role of the Groundwater Board.

The Soil and Water Conservation Department, in coordination with DEERS, SKUAST-Kashmir, and the Forest Department, was tasked with providing technical inputs and ensuring effective inter-departmental convergence. Emphasis was laid on systematic data analysis, regular monitoring of existing and proposed structures, and timely submission of updated information by all concerned departments.

Five new FPOs receive Registration Certificates at SKUAST-K Conclave

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 16: In a major boost to farmer collectivisation in Jammu & Kashmir, five newly formed Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) were formally provided registration certificates during a high-level Farmer Organisations Conclave hosted at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K), Shalimar campus.

The conclave was organised under the Competitive Improvement of Agriculture and Allied Sectors Project in Jammu & Kashmir (JKCIP), an initiative supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), reaffirming the project's commitment to strengthening farmer institutions and rural entrepreneurship across the Union Territory.

Held on the second day of the AgriTech Mela (Gon'gul), the event brought together over 200 delegates, including more than 100 FPO representatives, national financial institutions, government agencies, and agri-marketing stakeholders.

A major highlight of the event was a comprehensive panel discussion featuring senior officials including representatives from NABARD, NCDC, crop insurance experts, and university leadership. Discussions focused on institutional convergence, financial inclusion, infrastructure gaps, branding frameworks, value chain development, and expanding market access for farmer collectives.

Vice Chancellor, SKUAST-K, Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganai emphasized the critical role of FPOs as engines of rural transformation and stressed the integration of technology and data-driven systems for ensuring fair price realization for farmers. He also directed the creation of an FPO data portal to further strengthen governance and coordination.

The interactive session allowed nearly 100 FPO CEOs and Directors to directly voice grassroots-level challenges related to credit access, value addition facilities, and market integration. Experts responded with strategic recommendations to build resilient and professionally managed farmer institutions.

The event concluded with a felicitation ceremony recognising newly formed and high-performing FPOs, including the distribution of registration certificates to five new FPOs, marking another milestone in the collectivisation drive under IFAD-funded JKCIP.

Through sustained institutional support, capacity building, and convergence with financial and marketing agencies, JKCIP continues to accelerate the transition from fragmented farming to organised, market-oriented collective enterprises in Jammu & Kashmir.

District Admin Baramulla signs MoU with NHPC to upgrade Sports Infrastructure in district

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BARAMULLA, FEB 16: In a step towards improving sports infrastructure in Baramulla, the District Administration Baramulla today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) at the office chamber of Deputy Commissioner Baramulla.

The MoU signing ceremony was held in the presence of Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, SDM Uri, Prince Kumar; Chief Planning Officer, Nisar Ahmad, and Officers from NHPC including GGM (Hep) and GGM (CSR) Uri Power Station, and Head of CSR & Sustainable Development, Uri Power Station.

This collaboration, under NHPC's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, aims to enhance sports infrastructure facilities in the district.

As part of this agreement, NHPC has committed to upgradation of Mini Stadium at Uri and installation of High



Mast Lights at General Bipin Rawat Stadium, Baramulla.

The projects are being funded by NHPC under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, with a total financial outlay of Rs. 1 crore. An amount of Rs. 65 lakh has been allocated for the financial year 2025-26.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC expressed his appreciation for NHPC's proactive role in enhancing the district's sports infrastructure and highlighted the importance of such collaborative efforts in addressing challenges in shared commitment to improving sports facilities in Baramulla.

District Admin Bandipora conducts IEC Awareness Programmes under NMBA across Panchayats

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

BANDIPORA, FEB 16: Continuing its sustained efforts under the Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA), the District Administration Bandipora today organized a series of IEC (Information, Education, and Communication) awareness programmes across various Panchayats of the district.

The programmes were conducted in Panchayat Halqas including Ganastan-B (Block 23), Badhbootu (Block 22), Ayathmal (Block 21), Balhama Arin (Block 20), Aloosa Ghat (Block 19), Kawapora (Block 27), Nowgam-A (Block 26), Gundjehangir-B (Block 25), and Ajas-C (Block 24) on Monday.

The IEC activities were coordinated by the respective Panchayat Secretaries and designated nodal officers at each location. A multi-departmental team comprising officials from Health, Police, Education, Social Welfare (DDAC/Palaash/CHL), Youth Services & Sports, JKNRML, and Excise & Taxation departments participated in the programmes to ensure effective outreach at the grassroots level.

During the awareness sessions, doctors and medical officers highlighted the physical and psychological ill-effects of substance abuse, while police officials sensitized participants about legal consequences and preventive



measures.

Representatives from Education and Social Welfare departments emphasized early intervention, counselling support, and the importance of community vigilance. Youth Services & Sports and JKNRML functionaries encouraged youth engagement in constructive activities and self-reliance initiatives as preventive strategies against drug abuse.

The programmes witnessed active participation from local residents, youth, and community members, who engaged in interactive discussions and pledged to contribute towards building a drug-free society.

NPSS Training Programme conducted at Ganderbal to strengthen pest surveillance

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

GANDERBAL, FEB 16: A training programme on the National Pest Surveillance System (NPSS) was successfully organized by the Chief Agriculture Officer, Ganderbal, in collaboration with the Central Integrated Pest Management Centre, Srinagar at the Meeting Hall of the Sub-Divisional Agriculture Office, Ganderbal.

The programme aimed at enhancing the technical knowledge and practical skills of field functionaries engaged in pest surveillance and management activities in the district.

Agriculture Extension Officers of the Agriculture Department, District

Ganderbal, actively participated in the training. The sessions focused on the significance of systematic pest surveillance, timely and accurate data reporting, and the use of digital tools for effective pest monitoring and management under the NPSS framework.

Dr. Haroon Rashid Hakla, Assistant Plant Protection Officer (PP), CIPMC Srinagar, under the Directorate of Plant Protection, Quarantine & Storage, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, conducted the hands-on training session. He demonstrated practical methods of pest identification, surveillance techniques, and digital data entry on the NPSS platform, highlighting its importance in generating early warnings and issuing

timely advisories to farmers.

The programme was conducted in the presence of Arif Khurshid, SDAO Ganderbal; Zahoor Ahmad Dar, SMS (SDL), and Nazir Ahmad Dar, SMS (SDL), who underscored the pivotal role of well-trained field functionaries in protecting crops and providing timely advisory services to farmers through effective pest management strategies. Abir Shankhari, APPO (Weed Science), CIPMC Srinagar, also shared valuable technical insights.

The training concluded with an interactive session, and participants appreciated the practical orientation, which is expected to further strengthen pest surveillance and crop protection efforts in the district.

Director Tourism Kashmir visits TRC Nowgam to oversee its Operation

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEB 16: Director Tourism Kashmir, Syed Qamar Sajjad today conducted a surprise visit to the Tourist Reception Centre, Nowgam Srinagar to oversee facilities for the general tourists including Yatris of upcoming Shri Amaranth Ji Yatra 2026.

Joint Director Tourism Kashmir, Waseem Raja and AD Tourism, Nisar Ahmed accompanied the Director during the on spot appraisal visit.

The Director took a detailed tour of the Tourism estate cum Facilitation Centre and reviewed the various facilities available for tourists and



Yatris arriving in Srinagar via trains. He issued on spot instructions to concerned officers to ensure every facility and convenience to the incom-

ing tourists and yatris at Nowgam. Special directions were given on account of immediate establishment of Information cum Facilitation Counter at the entrance of the TRC Nowgam for tourists and pilgrims of Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra so that they receive proper information and guidance about various tourism related facilities and services available across the valley.

The Director enjoined upon the recreation wing of the Directorate to ensure proper upkeep of the Climbing Wall at the TRC and organise tournaments for the youth in the coming days and make it a regular feature henceforth.

Satish Sharma meets delegations; reaffirms efforts for public welfare, sports empowerment in J&K

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 16: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Transport, Youth Services and Sports, and Science and Technology, Satish Sharma, today met several delegations and individuals who called on him to apprise him of various public and sector-specific concerns.

Among those who met the Minister were NYC volunteers and delegations from different areas, who projected a wide range of issues relating to the Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Department, transport services and promotion and development of sports infrastructure.

The delegations raised matters concerning strengthening public distribution mechanisms, improving transport facilities, enhancing accessibility and efficiency of services, and expanding opportunities for youth engagement in sports and allied



activities. The Minister gave a patient hearing to all delegations and assured them that their genuine concerns would be examined in

detail and addressed in a time-bound manner.

He reiterated that responsive governance and effective public service delivery remain top priorities and emphasised that departments under his charge are committed to ensure transparency, efficiency, and accountability in their functioning. A group of prominent athletes and sportspersons also called on the Minister and expressed their happiness and appreciation over the recent notification of the order providing for appointment of outstanding sportspersons in Government service. They described the decision as a progressive and motivating step that would encourage young talent to pursue excellence in sports while ensuring recognition and career security for achievers.

Interacting with the sportspersons, the Minister said that the Government is committed to creating a conducive environment

for nurturing sporting talent and strengthening sports infrastructure across regions. He highlighted that sustained efforts are underway to promote grassroots participation, provide modern facilities, and support athletes through structured policies and initiatives.

Reaffirming his commitment to youth empowerment and inclusive development, the Minister stated that regular interactions with stakeholders and public representatives will continue to ensure that policies remain responsive to people's needs. He assured that necessary directions would be issued to the concerned departments for prompt follow-up on the issues raised during the meetings. The Minister emphasized that collective participation of citizens, youth, and stakeholders plays a vital role in shaping effective governance, and reiterated the Government's resolve to work tirelessly for the welfare and progress of the people.

SKUAST-K organises 'Academia-Industry Trade Dialogue' to discuss inclusive growth, resilience

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 16: In a significant stride toward fortifying the regional economy against both global and local headwinds, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, Kashmir hosted a landmark Academia-Industry Trade Dialogue during its 11th annual Technology-cum-Trade Fair, Gon'gul 2026.

The meet saw an overwhelming response from a diverse spectrum of society, bringing together prominent trade body members, leading industrialists, influential civil society members, academicians, and senior bankers to collectively chart a roadmap for Jammu & Kashmir's economic resilience and environmental sustainability.

The dialogue was set against a challenging global landscape characterized by geopolitical tensions, trade volatility, and segmented supply chains, with SKUAST-K leading the effort to identify actionable insights for a more diversified regional economy.

Vice-Chancellor SKUAST-K, Prof. Nazir A. Ganai, while speaking on the occasion, shared the success of the university's unique education model, which has transitioned from traditional academics toward a Skill-Innovation-Entrepreneurship-oriented framework in line with NEP-2020. He noted that while universities are not the sole solution to regional challenges, they serve as vital platforms where industry experts and policymakers can mediate on sustainable solutions, further highlighting the university's strategic collaborations with premier institutions like IIT Mandi, IIT Bombay, and IISc Bengaluru. He emphasized that building a truly resilient community requires leadership characterized by integrity and character, which will ultimately guide Jammu & Kashmir toward the national goal of becoming a developed region by 2047.

Prof. Farhat Shaheen gave a comprehensive overview of the meeting's objectives, emphasizing the urgent need for a collaborative approach to create a resilient ecosystem. He flagged critical issues such as the sensitivity of the tourism sector and existing infrastructural deficits, calling for a policy-oriented framework to address structural gaps.

Meanwhile, during the panel discussion, moderated by Prof. F.A. Shaheen, experts tackled sector-specific challenges and proposed immediate solutions. A primary focus of the deliberation was the identification of unique selling propositions for domestic products and the enhancement of both productivity and quality to meet global standards. Panelists lauded the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) as a transformative milestone that has significantly bridged developmental gaps, though they stressed the need to push these initiatives further to harness the region's full potential beyond the current baseline. Environmental concerns were also at the forefront, with experts calling for the restoration of natural springs and the promotion of responsible tourism to preserve delicate ecological services.

The discussion further explored required reforms in Health Education Policy to position Kashmir as a global hub for health and education tourism, leveraging the burgeoning bioeconomy. Delegates emphasized the importance of developing stronger linkages to attract donors and high-net-worth individuals to support the scaling of local startups.

Health Department organizes NRCP sensitization programme for Intersectoral Coordination

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

DODA, FEBRUARY 16: A one-day Capacity Building Training-cum-Sensitization Programme for intersectoral departments under the One Health Programme on the National Rabies Control Programme (NRCP) was held today at Government Nursing College Doda. The programme was organized by the District Surveillance Unit (DSU) Doda under the banner of the District Health Society, Doda, attended by participants from the Health Department, Animal Husbandry Department and Municipal Committees of the district, reflecting a coordinated interdepartmental approach under the One Health framework.

The primary objective of the programme was to strengthen coordination among various stakeholders and ensure the effective implementation of the National Rabies Control Programme across the district. The event was graced by the presence of Assistant Commissioner Revenue Doda, Ashraf Parvez, Incharge

Principal Govt Medical College Doda, Dr. Garima Charak and Dy Chief Medical Officer Doda, Dr. Sat Lal Manhas Rather.

Addressing the gathering, ACR Doda, Ashraf Parvez, appreciated the initiative of the Health Department in bringing all stakeholders on a common platform under the One Health approach. He emphasized that rabies prevention is not solely the responsibility of the Health Department but requires coordinated efforts from the Revenue, Animal Husbandry, Municipal authorities and community representatives. He stressed the importance of effective field-level implementation, timely reporting of animal bite cases, proper waste management to control stray dog populations and enhanced public awareness to achieve the goal of a rabies-free district. Incharge Principal, GMC Doda, Dr. Garima Charak, highlighted the clinical and public health significance of rabies prevention and underscored the need for strengthening Anti-Rabies Clinics. Dy CMO Doda, Dr. Sat Lal Manhas

Rather, emphasized the importance of collective efforts in preventing and controlling rabies through awareness, timely reporting, vaccination and robust intersectoral collaboration.

The technical sessions were conducted by Mr. Umar Anayat (Epidemiologist), Dr. Anzar Majeed (Incharge Anti-Rabies Clinic, GMC Doda), Dr. Naveed Anjum (Animal Husbandry Department Doda) and Mr. Sajid Malik from MC Bhaderwah. The resource persons delivered detailed presentations on various components of NRCP including surveillance, case management, prevention strategies, community awareness initiatives and the specific roles of their respective departments. The proceedings of the programme were conducted by Mr. Faizan A. Tramboo, who served as Stage Secretary. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Tahir Muneeb Zargar and a renewed commitment from all participating departments to work collectively towards effective rabies prevention and control in the district.

State-of-the-Art Laparoscopic Technology installed at Government Hospital Ghagwal

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

SAMBA, FEBRUARY 16: In a moment that eloquently captures the promise of purposeful public-private partnership, Deputy Commissioner Samba, Ms. Ayushi Sudan, today inaugurated a state-of-the-art laparoscopic machine at Government Hospital, Ghagwal - a transformative addition to the district's public healthcare infrastructure that brings the precision and safety of minimally invasive surgical technology within reach of citizens availing government facilities for their medical needs. The equipment, generously contributed by Sun Pharma under its Corporate Social Responsibility initiative and implemented by ELFA International, stands as an inspiring testament to what governance, corporate conscience and community commitment can achieve in concert.

The introduction of laparoscopic technology at Government Hospital Ghagwal marks a significant qualitative leap in the standard of surgical care available to the people of the region. Laparoscopic

procedures, known for their minimally invasive nature, offer patients substantially reduced surgical risk, shorter recovery periods, lesser post-operative pain and lower chances of complications compared to conventional open surgeries. By making this advanced technology accessible at a government facility, the initiative ensures that the benefits of modern medical science are no longer the exclusive privilege of those who can afford private healthcare - a defining principle of equitable and inclusive governance.

Deputy Commissioner Ms. Ayushi Sudan, in her address, underscored that the mere availability of infrastructure is insufficient unless it is matched by the competence and preparedness of those who operate it. She called upon the medical and technical staff of the hospital to pursue rigorous skill upgradation and more intensive, focused training, so that the facility's enhanced capabilities are translated into the best possible outcomes for every patient who walks through its doors. Her emphasis on



maximising the utility of existing resources through human capital development reflects a vision of governance that is as attentive to institutional capacity as it is to physical infrastructure.

In a demonstration of her administration's deeply participatory and people-first approach to governance, Deputy

Commissioner Sudan engaged in a wide-ranging and candid interaction with doctors, medical staff, ASHA workers and Primary Health Centre personnel - patiently listening to their on-ground challenges, requirements and experiences. Special focus was accorded to the critical issue of tuberculosis treatment, with the

Deputy Commissioner taking stock of progress and gaps in TB care delivery across the district. This direct and empathetic engagement with frontline healthcare workers exemplifies an administrative ethos that values the voices of those at the grassroots as indispensable to effective policymaking and service delivery.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by SDM Ghagwal, Mr. KJS Bali, Chief Medical Officer Samba, Dr. Vidhi Bhatia, Mr. Nawab Mehran Malik representing ELFA International and representatives of Sun Pharma Ms. Priyanka Talwar and Mr. Ajay Kaul - a gathering that embodied the collaborative spirit of administration, healthcare and corporate citizenship working in unison toward a shared goal.

This initiative reaffirms District Samba's steady and determined march towards a healthcare ecosystem that is modern in its technology, inclusive in its reach and humane in its values - where geography and economic circumstance are no longer determinants of the quality of care a citizen can access.

Deputy Chief Minister meets delegations; assures people centric governance

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 16: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, today reiterated government's determination towards ensuring people-centric governance in Jammu and Kashmir. The Deputy Chief Minister was interacting with various public and individual delegations at the Civil Secretariat, Jammu.

During the interaction, the Deputy Chief Minister said that all efforts are

being made to ensure timely completion of developmental projects and prompt service delivery across all government offices. The delegations who called on the Deputy Chief Minister hailed from Kishtwar, Rajouri, Jammu, Kathua, Baramulla, Srinagar, Ganderbal and other districts of Jammu and Kashmir. They raised issues pertaining to construction of roads, bridges and culverts, mining-related matters, concerns of the labour class, employee-related issues and other public demands.

The Deputy Chief Minister assured the delegations that all their genuine issues would be taken up with the concerned departments for prompt redressal. "Our agenda is to ensure time-bound grievance redressal and seamless relief to the people," he said. He added that the officers have been directed to give a compassionate hearing to public issues and adopt a positive approach for their timely resolution.

DC Kathua reviews progress under Capex, MLA-CDS and SASCI schemes

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

KATHUA, FEBRUARY 16: Deputy Commissioner Kathua, Rajesh Sharma, today chaired a meeting to review the progress of works being executed across the district under the District Capex Budget (DCB) 2025-26, MLA-CDS and SASCI.

The Deputy Commissioner undertook a detailed department-wise assessment of the ongoing projects

and directed the executing agencies to expedite the pace of work to ensure completion within stipulated timelines. He stressed that emphasis must be laid on creation of durable and quality assets for larger public benefit.

During the meeting, the DC instructed the officers to refrain from taking up any new physical and financial liabilities at the fag end of the financial year. He fixed March 15 as the cut-off date so that sufficient time remains

available for processing of bills and to avoid any last-minute rush in treasuries.

The Deputy Commissioner further made it clear that any liability carried forward to the next financial year on account of delay or non-adherence to instructions shall be borne by the concerned officers. He directed all departments to plan expenditure prudently, ensure timely completion of works and strictly avoid commitments beyond the prescribed timelines.

HT EDITORIAL

Reimagining Higher Education :
Skill development is the
need of the hour

Higher education in Jammu & Kashmir is facing a silent but serious crisis. With a substantial percentage of seats lying vacant in government degree colleges across the Union Territory, the message from the youth is clear: the existing academic framework is failing to inspire confidence. The growing disinterest in conventional courses is not merely an admission issue it is a reflection of a deeper mismatch between education and employability.

Today's students are no longer satisfied with degrees that offer limited practical value. The modern generation seeks skills, exposure, and industry relevance. They want to graduate not just with certificates, but with competence. In a competitive and rapidly evolving job market, theoretical knowledge alone is insufficient. What young people need is the ability to apply knowledge, innovate, and create opportunities for themselves.

Across the country, the Government of India has recognized this paradigm shift. Through the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, skill-based initiatives have gained prominence, focusing on empowering youth with hands-on training in various sectors. These efforts underline a crucial truth: employability and skill acquisition must go hand in hand with formal education.

J&K cannot afford to lag behind in this transformation. The Higher Education Department must urgently re-evaluate its academic offerings. Introducing skill-oriented and vocational courses within government degree colleges is not an experiment, it is a necessity. Courses aligned with local strengths such as tourism, horticulture, handicrafts, information technology, renewable energy, and entrepreneurship can create meaningful pathways for employment and self-reliance.

However, curriculum reform alone will not suffice. Infrastructure remains a significant concern. While the past decade has witnessed the establishment of numerous degree colleges across the region, many of these institutions continue to struggle with inadequate facilities. In the absence of proper laboratories, workshops, digital infrastructure, and trained faculty, the vision of skill-based education will remain unrealized.

The way forward demands a comprehensive strategy. Partnerships with industry, apprenticeship models, internship linkages, and faculty upskilling must become integral components of higher education. Colleges must evolve into hubs of innovation and training rather than mere examination centers.

The admission crisis confronting J&K's colleges should serve as a wake-up call. The youth of the Union Territory aspire to compete at the national and global levels. It is the responsibility of policy-makers and academic administrators to equip them accordingly. By integrating skill development into mainstream higher education, J&K can transform its challenge into an opportunity building a generation that is not only educated, but empowered.

Let Children Ask Questions Before Forcing Them to Memorize Answers



■ SAHIL BILAL

We've all seen the look. An Indian child stands on a balcony, watching the monsoon clouds roll in or staring at a trail of ants on a veranda. Their eyes are wide with a silent, buzzing electricity. Then comes the inevitable: "Mummy, why do ants follow each other?" or "Papa, where does the light go when it gets dark?"

In that moment, we have a choice. We can lean into that spark, or we can extinguish it with a dry, textbook definition to "finish the syllabus." Unfortunately, in our current coaching-center culture and competitive school environments, we tend to choose the latter. We are so obsessed with our children having the right answers for the board exams that we've forgotten the soul of learning is found in the wrong questions.

If we want to raise the next generation of pioneers, we have to stop treating our children like empty hard drives waiting to be formatted. We need to let them ask the questions before we ever dream of handing them the answers.

■ The Spark of Curiosity: Lessons from the Greats

When C.V. Raman was a young boy, no one handed him a thick binder of formulas about light scattering and told him to memorize them for a Sunday test. What fascinated him was a simple, visceral question: Why is the sea blue? That question wasn't a distraction from his "studies"; it was the engine of his life. It was that specific itch of curiosity—not a rote-learning session in a cramped classroom—that eventually led to the discovery of the Raman Effect. Had he been forced to simply memorize the optical theories of his time, he might have become a brilliant clerk, but the world would have lost a Nobel Laureate. We must realize that every great Indian mind began not with a "To-Do" list, but with a "Why?"

■ The Psychology of "Why" vs. the "Ratta" Culture

In many Indian households, the "Why" is often seen as a sign of defiance or a waste of time. "Don't ask questions, just learn the theorem," is a phrase echoed across millions of study tables. But when

we bypass the question, we bypass the brain's natural reward system.

Curiosity is the "itch" that the answer scratches. If you provide the scratch before the itch exists, it isn't satisfying; it's just irritating. Jagadish Chandra Bose didn't begin his journey as a man chasing degrees or rankings. He began as a boy obsessed with asking whether plants could feel, respond, and communicate. At a time when such questions were dismissed as "non-syllabus" or foolish, his refusal to stop asking opened entirely new scientific pathways.

When a child asks a question, they are building a map of the world. Each "Why" is a bridge. When we force them to memorize without questioning, we are essentially asking them to walk across a bridge they haven't built yet. They might cross it, but they'll never understand the depth of the river beneath.

■ Why We Are Afraid of the Questions

So, if questioning is the DNA of genius, why do our schools and coaching cultures shut it down?

1. The "Syllabus" Trap

Let's be honest: questioning is messy and time-consuming. It's much faster for a teacher to dictate that $A^2 + B^2 = C^2$ and move on, than it is to let thirty kids play with shapes until they notice the pattern themselves. We have sacrificed deep understanding at the altar of "covering the portion."

2. The Fear of Not Knowing

In Indian culture, there is immense pressure on parents and teachers to be omniscient. If a child asks, "How does the sun stay on fire if there's no oxygen in space?" and we don't know the answer, we feel vulnerable. We often shut the child down to save face, saying, "This won't come in the exam."

3. The Freedom of Rameswaram

Contrast this with the upbringing of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. He often spoke about his school days in Rameswaram, where his teachers encouraged curiosity over fear. He wasn't raised under the crushing pressure of "perfection through memorization," but on the freedom to inquire about the birds flying over the sea. That environment produced more than just a scientist; it produced a "People's President." He was a product of an environment that valued the learner over the lesson.

■ The Cost of a "Memorization-First" Culture

When we prioritize the answer over the inquiry, we produce a specific type of adult: the Compliant Specialist. These are students who can score 99% in Physics but cannot fix a simple fuse at home. They are excellent at following instructions but crumble when faced with a problem that doesn't have a manual.

Homi J. Bhabha built India's scientific institutions not by training obedient exam-takers, but by nurturing thinkers who dared to question global assumptions about nuclear energy. A memorization-first system could never have produced a visionary like Bhabha. If we continue to prioritize Ratta (rote learning) over Research, we will continue to export our brightest minds to countries that value their questions more than their test scores.

■ Flipping the Script in the Indian Home

We don't need a total overhaul of the education system to start making a difference today. We can start within our own four walls by shifting the "Indian Heartbeat" of our parenting:

Value the "Out of Syllabus" Question: If your child asks something that won't be on the board exam, don't dismiss it. Celebrate it! It means their brain is still alive and not just acting as a recording device.

The "I Don't Know" Strength: Show your children that it is okay to not have the answer. Say, "I don't know the answer to that, beta. Let's find out together." This teaches them that learning is a lifelong hunt, not a destination.

Model Curiosity: When you're driving or cooking, wonder out loud. "I wonder why the pressure cooker whistles exactly like that." You are showing them that the world is a giant puzzle, and it's okay to look for the pieces.

■ Conclusion: A Collective Tribute to the "Why"

Every great Indian scientist we celebrate today—Raman, Bose, Kalam, Bhabha—shared one thing in common. It wasn't perfect marks. It wasn't rote brilliance. It was an early, protected permission to ask questions. They were children whose "Whys" were met with encouragement rather than a shut-up call.

If we want the next generation of innovators who can solve our water crises, lead our space missions, or cure diseases, we must stop silencing curiosity in the name of efficiency. We must realize that a child's question is not an interruption of the lesson—it is the lesson.

Let them ask. Let them wonder. Let them be "wrong" a thousand times until they find the path that is right. The answers will always be available in a book or on a screen, but the spirit of inquiry, once extinguished, is very hard to relight.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Childhood Foundations Are Strengthened by Children's Magazines



■ DR VIJAY GARG

Childhood is the most formative stage of life. The habits, values, imagination, and intellectual abilities developed during these early years shape an individual's future personality and success. Among the many tools that support holistic development, children's magazines hold a special place. Combining knowledge with entertainment, they nurture curiosity, creativity, language skills, and emotional growth in ways that textbooks alone cannot. Children's magazines create a print-rich environment that helps young readers develop language and literacy skills. Their short stories, poems, and engaging articles encourage children to read without feeling overwhelmed. Educators observe that magazines often motivate reluctant readers to engage with printed material, making reading feel less intimidating and more enjoyable.

Regular exposure to such content strengthens vocabulary, comprehension, and writing skills. Because magazines present content in varied formats—stories, rhymes, puzzles, and nonfiction—they help children understand different writing styles and



improve reading fluency.

Magazines are filled with colorful illustrations, creative stories, and interactive activities that inspire imagination. Creative engagement in childhood is closely linked to confidence and problem-solving ability; studies indicate that creative expression helps children recognize their talents and build self-confidence. Through storytelling, drawing prompts, and craft ideas, magazines encourage children to think beyond the obvious and explore new possibilities.

Unlike textbooks limited to syllabus content, children's magazines expose readers to diverse subjects such as science, environment, history, space, and culture. For example, India's Children's World magazine was created to broaden children's horizons and enhance imagination, empathy, and

logical thinking through varied educational content.

This wide exposure nurtures curiosity and develops general awareness, helping children understand the world around them.

Many magazines invite children to submit stories, poems, artwork, and answers to puzzles. Such participation gives young readers a sense of achievement and ownership. Teachers often use magazine content as models for writing exercises, helping children develop expression and storytelling skills. When children see their contributions published, their confidence and motivation grow significantly.

Children's magazines often include problem-solving puzzles, quizzes, and thought-provoking articles. These features sharpen analytical thinking and encourage children to ask ques-

tions and form opinions. Exposure to different viewpoints also builds media literacy, helping them become thoughtful consumers of information.

In an era dominated by screens and fast-paced digital content, children's magazines offer a healthy alternative. Their tactile experience, vibrant visuals, and interactive elements promote focused attention and mindful reading habits. They transform learning into a pleasurable activity rather than a compulsory task. Stories in magazines frequently explore friendship, kindness, courage, and empathy. By identifying with characters and situations, children learn emotional intelligence and social values. Such narratives help them understand feelings, relationships, and moral choices in a safe and imaginative context.

Conclusion

Children's magazines are more than recreational reading material; they are powerful developmental tools. They cultivate reading habits, ignite creativity, expand knowledge, and foster emotional intelligence. By making learning enjoyable and accessible, they strengthen the foundations of childhood and help shape confident, curious, and compassionate individuals. Encouraging children to read magazines regularly is a simple yet meaningful step toward building a lifelong love of learning and a well-rounded personality.

Dr. Vijay Garg Retired Principal
Educational columnist Eminent
Educationist street kour Chand
MHR Malout Punjab - 152101

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Rajinder Ji Tikoo: The Deep Voice That Will Stay

A theatre stalwart whose presence was felt before he spoke, and remembered long after the curtains fell



■ BY ARSHAD M

It was the winter of 1993 at Abhinav Theatre. During the tea break on the opening day of a theatre workshop, a lean man with large, searching eyes walked up to me and sat across—unannounced, yet somehow already familiar. His voice was deep and steady, one of those rare voices that seem to arrive before the person does.

He introduced himself simply as Rajinder. He said he was happy to see a young boy from Kashmir selected for the

workshop. When I asked about him, he chose instead to speak of theatre—not as a profession, but as a necessity, a way of breathing.

A few days later, when roles were announced for the final production, Rajinder Ji was cast as Rai Das—the singing poet—in Kabir Khada Bazaar Mein. On the evening of the performance, something rare unfolded. His voice, his singing, the clarity of his diction, and the stillness of his presence held the audience in a quiet spell. Applause followed, but what lingered was something deeper—the sense that Rai Das had not been performed; he had briefly appeared.

I never called him Raju Bhai, though he insisted. Rajinder Ji felt more truthful. There was a natural gravity about him that commanded respect without creating distance. From the very beginning, he treated me like a younger brother—long before time

and work gave us reason to earn that closeness.

Our association deepened after I returned to Kashmir post-2000. Rajinder Ji became an essential part of my creative life—not only as an actor of rare calibre, but as a steady counsel on set. He guided younger actors quietly, never intruding, and stood his ground with seniors without ego or aggression. He possessed the unusual ability to strengthen a room simply by being present.

When I was casting Rishtan Hind Aiem Pann in 2007—a ten-episode series centred on a young father fighting a custody battle—I did not consider anyone else for the lead. The role demanded a man torn between dignity and desperation, love and restraint. Rajinder Ji walked that emotional tightrope with remarkable precision. His performance never pleaded for sympathy; it earned it.

In WatePead (2011), he transformed again—this time into a cruel, feminine king of ancient Kashmir, a ruler whose softness concealed brutality. His posture alone sent a chill through audiences. At an international theatre festival the following year, and later in Kolkata, he reprised the role with the ease that only deep internal work can sustain. The fire in him never dimmed.

Selective and meticulous, Rajinder Ji was known to ask directors and producers searching questions—about intent, about text, about truth. With me, he never asked. He simply came. Perhaps it was affection, perhaps loyalty—or perhaps it was his quiet way of honouring that young boy he had once met during a winter workshop. Over the years, the relationship grew beyond work into one of deep respect and enduring love.

We worked together on more than eleven productions across mediums. In

each, his preparation was quiet, almost invisible, yet layered and exact. He never treated a role lightly. He listened more than he spoke. He believed lines were not to be delivered, but inhabited.

After the floods of 2014, he returned to Jammu and went on to portray the iconic Ladishah, carrying forward the satirical folk tradition with dignity and restraint—never caricature, always conscience.

It is difficult to accept that Rajinder Ji is gone. I still find myself waiting to hear that deep voice call my name, with its unmistakable stress and perfect tone. On stage and before the camera, he was always whole—never performing, always being.

We will miss an actor who embodied his characters and a counsel who spoke less and meant more. He will be remembered not only for the roles he played, but for the quiet integrity with which he lived them.

Robotics In Cottage Industry of South Korea: Kashmir Can Follow



■ DR. RATAN BHATTACHARJEE

The image of industry has long been associated with smoke-filled factories, heavy machines, assembly lines, and thousands of workers repeating the same movements day after day. For more than a century, industrial production depended on scale, centralised capital, and large corporations. Yet in the twenty-first century a quiet transformation is taking place in South Korea. Robots, once symbols of massive automobile plants and high-end research laboratories, are now entering homes, small workshops, classrooms, neighborhood repair centers, and even village-like suburban communities. In a striking reversal of historical experience, robotics in Korea is no longer confined to big industry; it is gradually becoming something close to a cottage industry.

South Korea's story with technology is unique. After the devastation of the Korean War, the country was among the poorest in the world. Within a few decades it transformed itself into one of the most technologically advanced economies. Electronics, shipbuilding, automobiles, and semiconductors became its pillars. Companies like Samsung, Hyundai, and LG led export-driven growth. However, behind this corporate success lay a national philosophy: technology must become part of everyday life, not merely an industrial tool. The government invested heavily in education, research, and digital infrastructure. By the early 2000s, Korea had one of the highest broadband penetration rates in the world. This environment prepared society for a future in which ordinary citizens could interact with advanced technologies comfortably.

Robotics followed this path. Initially robots were confined to automobile manufacturing plants, especially in welding and assembly. Korean factories were among the earliest adopters of industrial robots, motivated by both efficiency and labor shortages. South Korea today consistently ranks among the top countries in robot density, meaning the number of robots per human worker in manufacturing is exceptionally high. But the real revolution began when robotics started leaving the factory floor and entering daily social life. Thinking of robots as a cottage industry in Kashmir opens up a fascinating possibility: blending high technology with local entrepreneurship in a region that has traditionally relied on handicrafts, horticulture, and tourism. The idea is not about giant factories or industrial corridors, but about small, community-based workshops where young innovators, artisans, and students can design, assemble, and adapt robotic tools for everyday use.

Kashmir's geography and economy make this vision particularly relevant. Remote

villages often face challenges in healthcare delivery, agriculture, and logistics. Small-scale robotics—like drones for monitoring apple orchards, robotic arms for handicraft precision, or automated weaving tools—could empower local industries while reducing physical strain. If government schools and colleges in Kashmir integrate robotics into vocational training, students could begin experimenting with low-cost kits, eventually setting up micro-enterprises. These cottage industries would not only generate employment but also keep talent rooted in the valley, reducing the need for migration. Robotics as cottage industry also aligns with Kashmir's tradition of craftsmanship. Imagine artisans using robotic assistance to carve wood or embroider shawls with greater efficiency, while still preserving the human touch. Robots could become collaborators rather than replacements, enhancing productivity without erasing cultural identity. Similarly, in agriculture, small robotic devices could help with irrigation, pest control, or harvesting, tailored to the terrain of Kashmir's orchards and fields.

The government's role would be crucial: providing seed funding, training centers, and incubation hubs in rural districts. Partnerships with universities and technical institutes could ensure that robotics is not seen as an elite pursuit but as a practical tool for everyday livelihoods. In this way, robotics could become part of Kashmir's cottage industry ecosystem, much like papier-mâché, carpet weaving, or saffron cultivation—only this time, with circuits and sensors alongside threads and dyes. This vision is ambitious, but it is also deeply practical. By localizing robotics into cottage industries, Kashmir could create a unique model of technological empowerment rooted in community, culture, and sustainability.

Several forces inspired robotics in South Korea. First was demography. South Korea faces one of the lowest birth rates in the world and a rapidly aging population. Elderly citizens increasingly live alone, and caregiving has become a national concern. Robots began to appear as companions, assistants, and safety monitors in private homes. Small companies, university startups, and even local technical high school graduates began designing simple service robots—machines that remind elderly people to take medicine, detect falls, or connect them with family through video communication. These robots are not massive industrial machines; they are compact devices often assembled in small workshops, sometimes even in converted garages. Thus robotics began resembling a cottage craft supported by digital components.

Second was education. Korea introduced robotics kits in schools, encouraging children to learn coding and hardware assembly early. Students began building robots as part of school projects. Parents supported these initiatives enthusiastically because technological skill promised future employment. Small neighborhood academies, known as "hagwons," started robotics classes. Teachers, hobbyists, and retired engineers opened small labs where students designed line-following robots, delivery bots,

and home automation systems. Many of these projects evolved into startups. A teenager who once assembled a robot for a competition could later sell customized devices to local restaurants or households. Innovation was no longer restricted to corporate research centers.

Third was the maker movement and affordable components. The global availability of microcontrollers, sensors, 3D printers, and open-source software dramatically reduced the cost of robotics development. In earlier decades, building a robot required heavy investment. Now, a small team could design a functional machine with modest capital. Korean entrepreneurs embraced this opportunity. Online marketplaces allowed them to sell products directly to customers. Small robotics firms appeared in apartment complexes and shared workspaces. Some specialized in delivery robots for cafes; others in cleaning robots for small shops; others in agricultural automation for greenhouse farmers. Production volumes were modest but customized, exactly the characteristics of cottage industry.

Restaurants in Seoul provide a vivid example. Many eateries now use small serving robots that carry food from kitchen to table. Large companies manufacture some models, but local startups increasingly customize robots for specific restaurant layouts. A small engineering group may design navigation software suited to narrow corridors, local language voice responses, and aesthetic features matching a restaurant's theme. The robots are assembled in compact workshops, sometimes employing fewer than ten people. Instead of a giant assembly plant, robotics manufacturing can occur in a small urban unit, much like handcrafted furniture once did.

Agriculture has also adopted this model. Korean farmers face labor shortages as younger generations move to cities. Small robotics companies now produce automated watering systems, greenhouse monitoring robots, and fruit-picking assistants. These are not mass-produced identical machines; they are tailored to individual farms. A strawberry greenhouse may require humidity sensors and disease detection cameras, while a ginseng farm needs soil monitoring devices. Engineers visit farms, adjust designs, and assemble units locally. Robotics here resembles the traditional village blacksmith—technology adapted personally to each client.

Another important area is delivery robotics. Korea's dense urban neighborhoods and advanced digital payment systems create ideal conditions for small autonomous delivery machines. Some apartment complexes use robots to carry parcels from entrance to doorstep. Small startups design and maintain these robots within the community itself. Maintenance, software updates, and customization happen locally. Residents know the technicians personally. The relationship between user and producer becomes direct, reducing dependence on large corporations. Government policy played a crucial role in encouraging this decentralization. South

Korea established robotics innovation centers, startup grants, and regulatory sandboxes allowing small firms to test autonomous machines in public spaces. Instead of concentrating support only on major conglomerates, policies encouraged university spin-offs and local enterprises. Municipal governments purchased service robots from small suppliers for libraries, tourist centers, and public offices. When a public library uses a locally produced guide robot to help visitors find books, robotics becomes part of community life rather than an abstract national project.

Social acceptance also contributed. Korean society generally shows openness to technology. People are accustomed to automated subway systems, digital kiosks, and smart homes. Therefore, when robots appeared in cafés or hospitals, they were seen less as threats and more as helpful tools. Elderly citizens often show affection toward companion robots that greet them, play music, or remind them of appointments. Emotional acceptance is crucial because cottage industries depend on community trust.

Economically, this shift reflects a broader transformation of production itself. The twentieth century emphasized mass production—identical products manufactured in enormous numbers. The twenty-first century emphasizes customization and services. Robots are ideal for this new economy because they can be programmed differently for each task. A small company can design a robot specifically for a dental clinic, a daycare center, or a small hotel. Instead of competing with multinational corporations, these firms operate in niche markets. Each robot becomes a tailored solution rather than a generic machine. However, the rise of robotics as a cottage industry also raises concerns. Employment patterns are changing. Service workers worry about job displacement when robots deliver food or clean floors. Yet the reality is complex. While some repetitive tasks disappear, new jobs emerge in maintenance, programming, design, and supervision. A restaurant that employs fewer servers may now hire a technician to manage robotic operations. The nature of work shifts from physical labor to technical skill. Korea's education system is gradually adapting by emphasizing coding, electronics, and problem solving.

Ethical questions also appear. Companion robots for the elderly provide safety and comfort, but critics worry about emotional dependence on machines. Can a robot replace human companionship? Supporters argue that robots supplement rather than replace human care, especially in societies where family structures are shrinking. In many cases robots simply ensure that elderly individuals remain connected with relatives and medical services. Culturally, robotics is influencing art and imagination. Korean designers give robots friendly faces, soft voices, and culturally familiar gestures such as bowing greetings. Children treat them almost like pets. Television programs and online videos showcase everyday interactions with robots, reinforcing the idea that technology belongs

inside ordinary life. The robot is no longer a futuristic character; it is a neighborly presence.

International observers are watching closely because Korea may represent a model for other aging and technologically advanced societies. Countries facing labor shortages and urban density could replicate this decentralized robotics ecosystem. Instead of importing expensive machines, communities could support local innovators who design affordable solutions. The concept echoes earlier economic history when cottage industries produced textiles or handicrafts within households. Today the product is not cloth but code and circuitry.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of this transformation is psychological. Industrialization once separated production from daily life; factories were distant spaces where specialized workers created goods for anonymous consumers. Robotics in Korea reverses that distance. A child may design a robot in school, a neighbor may assemble it, a local shop may use it, and the same community maintains it. Production and consumption reconnect at the community level. Technology becomes human-scaled.

In the coming decades artificial intelligence will further empower this trend. As software becomes easier to program through visual interfaces and voice commands, even non-engineers may configure robots. A café owner might adjust a robot's route personally without hiring a programmer. Farmers may analyze crop data through simple mobile applications connected to robotic sensors. When advanced technology becomes accessible to ordinary users, the distinction between professional engineer and skilled hobbyist begins to blur. South Korea's experience suggests that the future of industry may not lie solely in gigantic factories or global corporations but in networks of small innovators linked by digital platforms. Robotics, ironically, may revive the spirit of craftsmanship. Each machine embodies local needs, personal creativity, and community participation. Instead of replacing human initiative, robots in this context extend it.

Thus the phrase "robot as cottage industry" captures more than an economic phenomenon; it reflects a social evolution. Technology is moving from centralized power toward distributed capability. The workshop, the classroom, the small business, and even the household become sites of innovation. Korea, once rebuilding from ruins, now experiments with a future where advanced machines coexist with human intimacy. The humbling of a small service robot in a neighborhood café symbolizes not cold automation but a new form of livelihood, where circuits and sensors quietly support everyday life while ordinary people remain the true creators behind the machines.

International Dickens Medal Awardee Multi-lingual fiction writer and poet Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee is a former Affiliate Faculty Virginia Commonwealth University who writes both fiction and non-fiction writings profratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com

INSPIRE MANAK Exhibition Held at BHSS Pampore; Six Advance to State Level

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

PAMPORE, FEB 16: The District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) Pulwama on Monday successfully organised the District Level Exhibition and Project Competition (DLEPC) under the INSPIRE Awards MANAK Scheme 2024-25 at the Government Boys Higher Secondary School Pampore, showcasing innovative scientific models developed by young minds from across the district.

A total of 44 government and private schools participated in the exhibition, with each student presenting a prototype model reflecting creativity, problem-solving skills, and scientific thinking.

The event witnessed the presence of expert teams from the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) Jammu and Kashmir and the National Innovation Foundation, along with senior officials include Ghulam Mohi ud Din Bhat,

Principal DIET, Pampore, Firdous Akhter, HOD, DIET, Pampore, Mukhtar Ahmad Malik, District Nodal Officer, INSPIRE MANAK, Pulwama, Dr. Shaheed, Assistant Coordinator, Qmrul Nissa, HOD, DIET, Pampore, Mohammad Altaf Qadri, HOD, DIET, Pampore, Tasleemajan, HOD, DIET Pampore, Qeyasr,



Sr. Lecturer, DIET Pampore.

Special Guests and Jury members Dr. Sajad Ahmad Mir, Principal HSS Qaimoh Kulgam, Dr. Sajad Hussain Mir, Sr. Lecturer, BHSS, Pulwama, Javid Ahmad Dar, Divisional Nodal Officer, INSPIRE MANAK, SCERT, Kashmir.

A special felicitation was accorded to a Kashmiri Pandit girl student who has secured a place among the top 30 INSPIRE MANAK awardees at the national level – a remarkable achievement and a proud moment for the district.

Throughout the day, officers and jury members interacted with participating students and teachers to assess the originality, utility, and social relevance of the showcased models, with the objective of nurturing a culture of innovation and scientific temperament among school children.

Out of the 44 participating schools, six students were selected to represent the district at the state-level competition.

Organised under the supervision of the District Nodal Officer, the event concluded with a renewed commitment to promote grassroots innovation and provide young inventors a platform to progress to higher levels, further strengthening scientific curiosity among the youth of the district.

Public Notice

My Parentage has been wrongly written in my J&K Police Service Book records as Manzoor Ahmad Dar S/o Abdul Ahad Dar. While my actual Name is Manzoor Ahmad Dar S/o Haji Ab Ahad Dar Now I want to correct It.

If anyone has any objection regarding this change of My Parentage they may submit their objection in writing to the concerned authority within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. After that, no objection shall be entertained.

Name: Manzoor Ahmad Dar
S/o: Haji Ab Ahad Dar
R/o: Rahmoo Pulwama
Pincode:- 192301

Public Notice

This is certify that the orginal name in my school records is Devender Singh S/o S Sarab Singh. But in my service book there is incorrect name Davindar Singh mentioned. Presently performing their duty as halwadar at budgam police. The correct name is Devender Singh. If any body has any objection regarding it, they will budgam police within the period of seven, after completion of said period, no objection will be entertained.

Devender Singh
S/o S Sarab Singh
Designation : Hawaldar at budgam police

Public Notice

I, Sharid Ahmad Raina, S/o Mohd Yousuf Raina, Resident of Mandan, Pahalgam, hereby inform the general public that I have applied for registration of my Tour Operator Company under the name and style of: Wandering Alpine Adventure Tour Operator Company with the Tourism Department, Pahalgam. If anybody has any objection regarding the name or registration of the above-mentioned company, he/she may file the same before the Assistant Director Tourism, Pahalgam within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. After that, no objection shall be entertained.

Sd/- Sharid Ahmad Raina
Contact: 9103126100, 9797895530

Public Notice

I, Mohammad Ishaq, S/o Ghulam Ahmad Dar R/o Puhrpath, Langate, Kupwara, Jammu and Kashmir 193302, hereby declare that I am the father of Mohammad Haziq Dar, Date of Birth: 28/05/2021. This is to inform the general public and concerned authorities that I am applying for the issuance/registration of Date of Birth certificate of my son Mohammad Haziq Dar from the Block Office Langate. If any person has any objection regarding the above-mentioned particulars, he/she may submit the same before the concerned Block Office Langate within the stipulated period. Otherwise, no objection shall be entertained later.

NOTICE

The Electricity connection with consumer ID 0203050011128 & Installation No. 3190-R1 registered in the name of Ghulam Mohammad Bhat of P.C. Depot Parimpura, Srinagar is to be transferred in favour of Mubarik Hussain Bhat of P.C. Depot Parimpura, Srinagar. Objections, if any, to the same must reach concerned authority within a week at the most.

Public Notice

This is to notify the general public that the name recorded in the Aadhaar database is incorrect. Name shown in Aadhaar: Sufiya Farooq. Correct name: Sufiya Farooq, D/o, Farooq Ahmad Ganie R/o: Glura Langate Handwara Kupwara Jammu and Kashmir 193302. The above-mentioned person (Sufiya Farooq) hereby declares that the name printed on the Aadhaar is incorrect and that her correct and legal name is Sufiya Farooq. Any objection to this correction should be brought to the attention of the UIDAI Aadhaar Seva Kendra, Office Srinagar within 7 (seven) days from the date of publication of this notice. If no objection is received within the stipulated period, the necessary correction procedures may be undertaken.

Name Sufiya Farooq.
D/o, Farooq Ahmad Ganie
R/o: Glura Langate Handwara Kupwara

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir OFFICE OF THE TEHSILDAR KALANTRA / KREERI

Subject: Application of GHULAM HASSAN DEADER S/O SARDAR MOHD DEADER for the issuance of R/O..BANDI BALA (SCHEDULE TRIBE Gujar and Bakerwal) in favour of TAHIR HASSAN DEADER, YASMEENA HASSAN, GHULAM HASSAN DEADER R/O BANDI BALA

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the subject cited above, the applicant has submitted the file in the office of the undersigned for the issuance of ST. In this connection a report of patwari halqa concerned has been sought which reveals that the applicant is currently residing in village BANDI BALA and belongs to the ST caste and GOJERR DEADER community, having annual income is 350000 the details of the family of the applicant are as follows

1...GHULAM HASSAN DEADER Head of family 53 years Labour
2.... SHAMSHADA BEGUM wife 45 years H/W
3... ZAHID HASSAN Son 21 years Labour
4... TAHIR HASSAN son 19 years student
5... YASMEENA HASSAN daughter 12 years student
The applicant has applied for Issuance of ST (SCHEDULE TRIBE Gujar & Bakerwal) 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 KALANTRA

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir OFFICE OF THE TEHSILDAR KALANTRA / KREERI

Subject: Application ABDUL HAMEED PARRY S/O GH RASOOL PARRY R/O KOHLINA for issuance of RBA certificate in favour of his son YASIR HAMEED PARRY Tehsil KREERI for the issuance of RBA in his / her / their favor

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the subject cited above the file in the office of the undersigned for the issuance of RBA in this connection a report of patwari halqa concerned has been sought which reveals that the applicant is currently residing in the village of KOHLINA of Tehsil KREERI and belongs to the PARRY community having annual income 180000// the details of family of the applicant are as follows

1...AB HAMEED PARRY Father 50 years Labour
2...SHAMEEMA BAGUM Mother 45 years H/W
3...YASIR HAMEED self 19 years student
4... MOHD ASIF Brother 17 years do
5...INSHA HAMEED sister 16 years do
6....SABAT HAMEED // 14 years do
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 KALANTRA

Public Notice

This is to notify the general public that the name recorded in the Aadhaar database is incorrect. Name shown in Aadhaar: Sufiya Farooq. Correct name: Sufiya Farooq, Father's Name: Farooq Ahmad Ganie Address: Glura Langate Handwara Kupwara Jammu and Kashmir 193302. The above-mentioned person (Sufiya Farooq) hereby declares that the name printed on the Aadhaar is incorrect and that her correct and legal name is Sufiya Farooq. Any objection to this correction should be brought to the attention of the UIDAI Aadhaar Seva Kendra, Office Srinagar within 7 (seven) days from the date of publication of this notice. If no objection is received within the stipulated period, the necessary correction procedures may be undertaken.

GOWHAR NABI SHAH DOB 20/04/1995 S/O GH NABI SHAH R/O SAFALPORA QAZIABAD DISTRICT KUPWARA

Public Notice

It is hereby notified that my Name parentage spelling has been wrongly mentioned in my Driving license bearing Driving Licence no JK 09 2015 0079405 Gowhar Nabi Shah Peerzada S/O Ghulam Nabi Shah Peerzada instead of Gowhar Nabi Shah S/O Gh Nabi Shah as for regards now I have applying for it's correction of the same if any person have any objection in this regards may file the same to the office of the ARTO office Drugmulla Kupwara within the period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice After that no objection shall be entertained.

GOWHAR NABI SHAH DOB 20/04/1995 S/O GH NABI SHAH R/O SAFALPORA QAZIABAD DISTRICT KUPWARA

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeri

Subject: Application MUSHTAQ AHMAD SOFI S/O ABDUL GANI SOFI R/O SHEIKHPORA for issuance of RBA certificate in favour of SEERAT MUSHTAQ 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 SOFI community having annual income 560000// the details of family of the applicant are as follows

1...MUSHTAQ AHMAD SOFI self 49 years Farmer
2...GULSHANA BEGUM wife 46 years H/W
3... SEERAT MUSHTAQ applicant 16 years student
4...MOHSIN MUSHTAQ son 12 years student
5...MASROOR MUSHTAQ son 07 years student

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, Rayees Ahmad Wani, S/O Ghulam Mohammad Wani, Resident of Dudipora, hereby declare that I am applying for the Licence for dealing in Pesticides, as per the rules and regulations of the concerned Department. If any person, authority, or organization has any objection regarding the issuance of the said licence in my favour, they may submit their objection in writing to the concerned Licensing Authority within 7 days from the publication of this notice.

If no objections are received within the stipulated time, the licence shall be processed further in accordance with the rules.

Name: Rayees Ahmad Wani , S/O: Ghulam Mohammad Wani , R/O: Dudipora Tehsil Handwara District Kupwara , Purpose: Licence for Pesticides,

Public Notice

My name has been wrongly written as KAMRAN S/O UMAR ASADULLAH GANAIE in my Date of Birth certificate while my correct name is AHMAD BIN UMAR S/O UMAR ASSADULLAH GANAIE which needs to be corrected if anybody having any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of concerned authorities within seven days from the publication of this notice after that no objection will be entertained.

Name....AHMAD BIN UMAR
S/O ...UMAR ASSADULLA GANAIE
R/O...SHRAKWARA WAGOORA

Government Of Jammu & Kashmir Office Of The Tehsildar Kreeri

Subject: Application Momin Mohi ud din & Shazia Mohi ud din D/o Ghulam Mohi ud din Haja M R/o Dolipora Tehsil Kreeri for the issuance of OBC (Other Backward classes in favor of applications

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding the subject cited above the file in the office of the undersigned for the issuance of OBC in this connection a report of patwari halqa concerned has been sought which reveals that the applicant is currently residing in the village of Dolipora of Tehsil Kreeri and belongs to the Haja M community having annual income 116000 // (One lack sixteen thousand) the details of family of the applicant are as follows

1...GHULAM MOHI UD DIN Father 42 years Labour
2...MEHMOODA BEGAM Mother 38 years Housewife
3... SHAZIA MOHI UD DIN applicant 19 years student
4... Momin MOHI UD DIN applicant 18 years student
5...QURAT UL AIN 10 years student

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

GOVT. OF JAMMU & KASHMIR (U.T)

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PWD(R&B) DIVISION VAILOO

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

NIT No.112/9613-22 of R&B/Vailoo/2025-2026/e-tendering DATED:14/02/2026

For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory J&K e-tenders (In Single cover system) are invited on %age basis from approved and eligible Contractors registered with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the following works.

S.No	Name of Work	Approved Amount (Rs. In Lacs)	Cost of T/Doc.in form of Treasury challan / Receipt (in Rs.)	Earne st Mone y (2% of Adv.Cost) (in Rs.)	Time	Class
1	Construction of Boundary wall at Boys High School Gopalpora	09.421	600	18842	90 Days	CEE/DEE Class
2	Construction of Boundary wall at Boys Middle School Sahibabad	0.760	300	1520	90 Days	CEE/DEE Class
3	Construction fo ACR at Middle School Nunwani	20.541	800	41082	180 Days	BEE/CEE Class
4	Construction of ACR at Middle School Tailwani	20.244	800	40488	180 Days	CEE/DEE Class
5	Major repair of Higher Secondary School Kharpora	04.184	200	8368	20 Days	DEE Class
6	Major Repair of Higher Secondary School Lessu	04.180	200	8360	20 Days	CEE/DEE Class
7	Construction of ACR at Middle School Rather Check	10.052	600	20104	90 Days	BEE/CEE/ DEE Class
8	Construction of Boundary wall at High School Lissner	09.222	600	18444	90 Days	CEE/DEE Class

Project Intending Department: Education

Position of AA: Accorded

Major Head of account: PAB

Position of TS: Accorded

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

1.	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	14.02.2026

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Mega Youth Engagement Drive to engage over 80,000 students

CS assesses the plans of the Culture and Education Departments

■ **HT NEWS NETWORK**

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 16: In a significant move to institutionalize structured youth engagement and promote holistic development among students, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo today chaired a high-level meeting of key stakeholders, during which the School Education Department and the Department of Culture unveiled a comprehensive and integrated Youth Engagement Drive across the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

The ambitious initiatives lay out a structured roadmap to engage more than 80,000 students and youth annually through school-based platforms, grassroots cultural institutions and national-level exchange programmes, thereby strengthening experiential learning, cultural preservation and talent development across JK&K.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, Culture; Commissioner Secretary, Youth Services & Sports; Commissioner Secretary, School Education; Secretary, Culture; Managing Director, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan; Secretary, Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages; and other senior officers.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Secretary emphasized that co-curricular and cultural initiatives are as vital as academic curricula in shaping well-rounded individuals. He underscored the need for inter-departmental convergence, structured implementation and continuous monitoring at every level to ensure effective stakeholder engagement and measurable outcomes.

Detailing the Department of



Culture's roadmap, Principal Secretary, Culture, Brij Mohan Sharma informed the meeting that a comprehensive Youth Engagement and Empowerment Plan has been formulated to extend structured cultural activities to schools while revitalizing grassroots cultural ecosystems.

As part of this plan, School Cultural Clubs will be established in 2,530 Government High and Higher Secondary Schools, engaging over 63,000 students annually. Each club, comprising 25 students, will function under the mentorship of the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages and serve as a platform for skill development, cultural training and nurturing of young cultural ambassadors.

To ensure deeper outreach at district and tehsil levels, District Cultural Committees will be constituted under the chairmanship of respective Additional District Development Commissioners, while Tehsil Cultural Clubs will be set up across 207 tehsils, engaging more than 10,000 youth annually. These bodies will curate

structured cultural calendars and organize workshops, exhibitions and heritage exposure visits to foster sustained participation and community involvement.

A major highlight of the initiative is the "One District - One Traditional Art Form" programme, under which 27 district-specific traditional art forms have been identified for revival through a structured Guru-Shishya model. Master trainers will mentor selected youth trainees for a period of one year, ensuring preservation of endangered traditions while creating professional pathways for emerging artists.

Further strengthening social outreach, the Department will organize 200 Nukkad Natak (street play) programmes annually—100 each in Jammu and Srinagar—addressing critical social issues such as drug abuse prevention, mental health awareness, gender sensitivity and civic responsibility. Nearly 4,000 youth artists are expected to participate in these grassroots awareness campaigns across schools, colleges and community spaces.

Additionally, two seven-day Youth Cultural Summits will be organized annually in Jammu and Srinagar under the banner of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat, providing a national platform for cultural exchange and creative collaboration among young artists.

In a landmark academic intervention, a two-year Diploma Course in Calligraphy has been formalized in collaboration with the University of Kashmir, offering structured training in multiple classical scripts along with stipendiary support to enrolled students.

Complementing these efforts, the School Education Department, through the Jammu and Kashmir State Council of Educational Research and Training, will launch a flagship programme titled "Display Your Talent - Excellence in Culture, Sports, Education & Learning," aligned with the vision of the National Education Policy 2020.

The initiative as elaborated by the Commissioner Secretary, School Education, Ram Niwas Sharma envisions holistic

student development by integrating academics with arts, sports, skills and cultural learning. Covering more than 24,000 schools across 20 districts and 188 educational zones, the programme follows a five-tier progression model—from school level to a grand UT-level finale—ensuring systematic talent identification and advancement.

The engagement framework, he added, has been carefully structured according to age groups. At the foundational stage, activities will focus on storytelling, rhymes and fun-based sports. Preparatory classes will participate in spell bee competitions, junior logic exercises, folk dance and mini-games. Middle-stage students will engage in science exhibitions, STEM challenges, kabaddi and classical or folk music competitions.

It was revealed that at the secondary level, students will participate in policy parliament simulations, coding competitions, pro-league sports and theatre activities, fostering leadership, innovation and civic awareness.

To ensure inclusivity, a dedicated 'Samarth' Inclusive Framework has been incorporated to facilitate meaningful participation of Children With Special Needs through Braille support, sign language interpretation, inclusive sports and tactile arts.

The integrated framework marks a transformative step toward positioning Jammu & Kashmir as a vibrant hub of educational excellence and cultural renaissance, while ensuring that the youth of the Union Territory are equipped with creativity, confidence and character to shape a progressive future.

GDC Kakryal Katra organizes awareness programme on drug abuse, HIV/AIDS

■ **HT NEWS NETWORK**

REASI, FEBRUARY 16: Government Degree College Kakryal Katra successfully organized an awareness programme on Drug Abuse, HIV/AIDS and Basic Life Support (BLS) in collaboration with National Service Scheme (NSS) and Red Ribbon Club and Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence. The programme was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Rajni Bhagat, Principal, to sensitize students to the growing challenges of substance abuse and communicable diseases while simultaneously equipping them with essential life-saving skills.

A distinguished medical team from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence delivered expert lectures and conducted practical demonstrations. Dr. Yashpal Sharma, Executive Director, SMVIMD underscored the critical importance of timely intervention in medical emergencies and emphasized that the ability to administer Basic Life Support can significantly enhance survival outcomes. He urged students to cultivate a humanitarian outlook and develop competence in life-saving techniques as responsible citizens.



DDC Member of Panthal, Rajinder Mengi addressed the gathering on the transformative role of youth in realizing the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. He highlighted that an informed, healthy and socially responsible youth population forms the cornerstone of national development. Dr. Anuj Kapoor, Assistant Professor conducted a detailed practical session on Basic Life Support including Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid techniques. The hands-on demonstration enabled students to gain experiential learning and confidence in responding to emergency situations.

Further enriching the programme, Dr. Abhimanyu Sharma, Associate Professor, Pathology elaborated on the medical dimensions of anemia and thalassemia, stressing early detection, preventive strategies and community awareness. As part of the outreach initiative, CPR practice sessions were conducted for students, followed by blood testing of students and faculty members. Free medicines were distributed to individuals diagnosed with anemia, reflecting the programme's commitment to preventive and promotive healthcare.

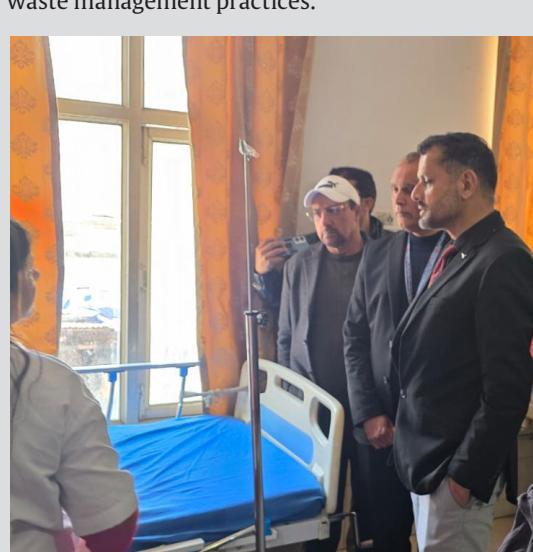
The event concluded with a collective pledge by students to act as ambassadors of awareness against drug abuse and HIV/AIDS and to disseminate knowledge of life-saving techniques within the community.

Director Health Services Jammu conducts a comprehensive visit to CHC Thathri

■ **HT NEWS NETWORK**

DODA, FEBRUARY 16: Director, Health Services Jammu (DHSJ), Dr. Abdul Hamid Zargar conducted a comprehensive visit to Community Health Centre (CHC) Thathri in District Doda to review healthcare delivery and assess infrastructure facilities.

During the visit, DHSJ inspected various sections of the hospital including OPD, IPD wards, Labour Room, Newborn Care Corner, Emergency Unit, Operation Theatre, Laboratory, Pharmacy and registration counters. He reviewed patient attendance registers, drug availability records, duty rosters and biomedical waste management practices.



DHSJ interacted with patients and attendants to obtain first-hand feedback regarding quality of services, behavior of staff, waiting time and availability of medicines. He stressed maintaining punctuality, discipline and patient-friendly services within the institution.

The Director also reviewed the status of manpower and directed the concerned authorities to address gaps wherever required. He instructed the Medical Officer Incharge to conduct regular internal reviews and ensure accountability at all levels.

The hospital administration briefed the Director about ongoing health initiatives, challenges faced due to geographical constraints and steps taken to improve service delivery in the region.

The Director appreciated the dedication of doctors, paramedics and support staff working in difficult terrain conditions and reiterated the commitment of the Directorate of Health Services Jammu to strengthen healthcare infrastructure in remote and underserved areas.

The visit concluded with directions for sustained monitoring and improved coordination to provide accessible, affordable and quality healthcare to the people of Thathri and adjoining areas.

SWD organises one day exposure tour for meritorious students under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao

■ **HT NEWS NETWORK**

UDHAMPUR, FEBRUARY 16: Department of Social Welfare, Udhampur organized a one-day exposure tour for meritorious girl students from various colleges, schools and CCI Parisha Udhampur to Deputy Commissioner Office/District Offices under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative.

The programme was conducted under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner Udhampur Saloni Rai and supervision of District Social Welfare Officer Udhampur, Kanika Gupta with the objective of nurturing leadership qualities among young girls and providing them with real-life exposure to administrative functioning and governance systems.

The primary objectives of the visit

were to develop leadership skills, enhance confidence, provide practical understanding of administrative work, expose students to real-life examples of governance and decision-making and bridge the gap between classroom learning and the real-world implementation of policies and welfare schemes.

The programme was graced by the Additional District Development Commissioner, Jugal Kishore, as the chief guest. While interacting with the students, he motivated them to aim high, work with dedication and actively participate in nation-building. He emphasized the importance of such exposure visits in shaping confident and responsible future leaders.

During the tour, the students visited the office of the Additional Deputy Commissioner, Prem Singh, where they

were briefed about district administration, developmental planning and inter-departmental coordination.

They also visited and interacted with officials at the CDPO Office Child Development Project Officer, Poshan Project, Udhampur with Meena Jamwal to understand the implementation of child welfare and nutrition programmes at the grassroots level.

Further, the students visited the District Hub for Empowerment of Women and the One Stop Centre, where officials explained various women-centric schemes and demonstrated the support mechanisms available for women in distress.

The visit provided students with valuable practical insights into administrative responsibilities and social welfare outreach systems.

Snow Marathon "Run for Martyrs" held from Chinta to Jai Ghati (Bhaderwah) Soldiers' Sacrifice honoured with patriotic fervour

■ **HT NEWS NETWORK**

DODA, FEBRUARY 16: A Snow Marathon titled "Run for Martyrs" was successfully organised today from Chinta to Jai Ghati (Bhaderwah) by Khoonkhar 4 Rashtriya Rifles (4 RR) in collaboration with the District Administration Doda and the Bhaderwah Development Authority, paying a heartfelt tribute to the brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives in the service of the nation.

The marathon was flagged off at Chinta by District Development Council (DDC) Chairperson Doda, Dhananter Singh Kotwal along with Commanding Officer 4 RR, Yogesh Chouhan amid enthusiastic participation from locals, youth, senior citizens and army personnel.

Among those present on the occasion were the Deputy Commissioner Doda, Harvinder Singh; Vice Chairperson DDC Doda, Sangeeta Bhagat; Additional Deputy Commissioner Bhaderwah, Sunil Kumar Bhutyal; ASP Bhaderwah, Vinod Kumar; CEO Bhaderwah Development Authority, Sanjeev Sharma; CEO Doda, Bhushan Kumar; Lt. Col. Jevitesh Rajora (Border Roads Organisation); District Information Officer Doda, Abhimanyu Singh; Tehsildar, BMO,



senior citizens, prominent citizens and officials from the Indian Army and civil administration. Cultural programme was also organised at Jai Ghati (Bhaderwah), adding vibrancy and patriotic fervour to the commemorative event.

DDC Chairperson, Dhananter Singh Kotwal lauded the District

honour of the martyrs. He emphasized that such initiatives strengthen national pride and unity. He further highlighted India's rapid developmental progress, stating that sustained growth is a key driving force towards achieving the vision of a Viksit Bharat.

Deputy Commissioner Doda, Harvinder Singh appreciated the enthusiastic participation of the

runners and paid solemn tribute to the soldiers who lost their lives in an unfortunate accident last month, remembering their supreme sacrifice with deep respect. He also commended the efforts of Rashtriya Rifles, the Bhaderwah Development Authority and all stakeholders for making the event impactful. The DC Doda acknowledged the bravery, dedication and patriotism of army

personnel, who continue to safeguard the nation and ensure public safety round the clock.

Commanding Officer 4 RR, Yogesh Chouhan appreciated all participants and expressed special gratitude to local residents who selflessly assisted in carrying injured army personnel for treatment following the recent accident. He noted that the relationship between the Army and the public has evolved significantly over time, transforming into one based on friendship, cooperation and mutual trust.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Bhaderwah, Sunil Kumar Bhutyal thanked participants for their dedication in making the event memorable and paid heartfelt tribute to the fallen soldiers. He emphasized the importance of such initiatives in promoting national development, unity and a strong sense of patriotism among citizens.

Certificates of appreciation were distributed among the participants of the Snow Marathon in recognition of their spirited participation and contribution to the tribute event.

J&K Horticulture Makes Big Market Push at National Buyer-Seller Meet in Delhi

80 farmers and traders from all 20 districts forge new trade ties with top mandi buyers, eye stronger exports and higher incomes

■ HT NEWS NETWORK

NEW DELHI, FEB 16: In a major push to expand market access for the Union Territory's farm produce, the Department of Horticulture Planning and Marketing, Jammu and Kashmir organized a high-impact Buyer-Seller Meet at Hotel Samrat, bringing together growers from J&K and leading national traders under one roof.

Nearly 80 progressive farmers, growers and traders representing all 20 districts of Jammu and Kashmir participated in the event. The delegation engaged in extensive business interactions with prominent buyers from key wholesale hubs such as Azadpur Mandi, Khari Baoli and Naya Bazaar, as well as traders from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Hyderabad dealing in fruits, vegetables, dry fruits, pulses and processed food products.

The meet facilitated direct



business negotiations, resulting in the establishment of fresh trade linkages and opening up new marketing avenues for horticultural

stakeholders of the UT. The initiative is expected to strengthen supply chains and improve price realization for farmers.

Director Horticulture Planning and Marketing, J&K, Ghulam Jeelani Zargar, welcomed the participants and presented a

comprehensive overview of Jammu and Kashmir's diverse horticultural wealth. He underlined the region's quality edge,

expanding production base and growing export potential across multiple commodities.

Senior officials from institutions including the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), National Horticulture Board (NHB), the Directorate of Marketing and Inspection (DMI), and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), along with representatives of CA store operators, addressed the gathering. They emphasized value-chain strengthening, export promotion and market expansion strategies for J&K produce.

Participants widely appreciated the Department's initiative and called for more such buyer-seller engagements in major markets across the country to further enhance income opportunities for farmers and entrepreneurs of Jammu and Kashmir.

NALCO signs MoU with NLCIL to boost thermal and renewable power projects

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

BHUBANESWAR, FEB 16: National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO), a Navratna CPSE under the Ministry of Mines, Government of India, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with NLC India Ltd. (NLCIL) to strengthen collaboration in its 1080 MW thermal captive power project and renewable energy development initiatives.



The MoU was signed on Saturday in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu, in the presence of Jagdish Arora, Director (Projects & Technical) of NALCO, Prasanna Kumar Motupalli, CMD of NLCIL, and other Directors of NLCIL.

The agreement aims to support NALCO's captive and long-term power requirements while promoting sustainable energy solutions.

It also provides a structured framework to explore long-term power tie-ups and coal supply arrangements.

The partnership envisions joint project development in the future to further strengthen collaboration between the two companies. UNI

India will continue to invest in renewable energy: Nirmala Sitharaman

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI/MUNICH, FEB 16: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said that India will continue to invest in renewable energy and have been steadily building on that commitment.

She was addressing the Munich Security Conference in Germany.

Emphasising on the government's commitment on renewable energy, she said, "Carbon capture strategies have been

funded in the union Budget 2026-27 so that they can be implemented across the country."

"Furthermore, we have achieved two-thirds of our nationally determined commitments in the renewable sector and that too four years ahead of the target date" she added.

"As much attention as we give to emission control, we need to look at resilience and adaptation. Otherwise, you're going to sacrifice a lot."

She said that scientists will have to talk to each other and



no one can say they've created a perfect system to counter climate conditions.

FM also informed that India has increased its commitment to climate action.

Highlighting certain data, she said, "Six years ago, we were spending approximately 3.7pc of our GDP on climate action. Today, that figure close to 5.6pc."

"We have invested the funds. We are not waiting for financing and technology to come from elsewhere but they must come" she added. UNI

IT giants lead market slump, top firms lose Rs 3 lakh crore in a week

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

MUMBAI, FEB 16: The combined market valuation of six of the top 10 valued firms fell by over Rs 3 lakh crore last week, with IT majors Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys emerging as the biggest laggards amid a bearish trend in equities.

The BSE benchmark declined by 953.64 points, or 1.14 per cent, over the past week. TCS, Infosys, HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), and Bharti Airtel saw erosion in their valuation, while State Bank of India, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, and ICICI Bank were among the gainers.

TCS's market valuation tumbled Rs 90,198.92 crore to Rs 9,74,043.43 crore, while Infosys' valuation fell by Rs 70,780.23 crore to Rs 5,55,287.72 crore. HDFC Bank's valuation declined by Rs 54,627.71 crore to Rs 13,93,621.92



crore, and Reliance Industries dropped Rs 41,883 crore to Rs 19,21,475.79 crore. Life Insurance Corporation of India's market capitalisation decreased by Rs 23,971.74 crore to Rs 54,226.80 crore, and Bharti Airtel's valuation fell by Rs 19,244.61 crore to Rs 11,43,044.03 crore.

On the upside, the market valuation of State Bank of India (SBI) rose Rs 1,22,213.38 crore to Rs 11,06,566.44 crore. Bajaj Finance's mcap climbed

Rs 26,414.44 crore to Rs 6,37,244.64 crore, Larsen & Toubro increased by Rs 14,483.9 crore to Rs 5,74,028.93 crore, and ICICI Bank's valuation rose Rs 5,719.95 crore to Rs 10,11,978.77 crore. Reliance Industries remained the most valued firm, followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, Infosys, and Life Insurance Corporation of India.

Adani completes Indamer Technologies acquisition to expand MRO Footprint

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

MUMBAI, FEB 16: The Adani Group has officially announced that it has completed the acquisition of Indamer Technologies Pvt Ltd (ITPL) to expand its footprint in the aircraft services and MRO industry. The Adani Group-owned Horizon Aero Solutions Ltd, which is a step-down subsidiary of Adani Enterprises Ltd, has acquired 100 per cent shareholding in ITPL through a share purchase agreement, according to a stock exchange filing made late Friday.

The enterprise value of Indamer Technologies is Rs 330 crore and the deal was first announced in August 2025, the statement mentioned. "ITPL is one of India's leading private sector MRO companies. It operates a state-of-the-art 30-acre facility in the MIHAN SEZ in Nagpur and offers a comprehensive suite of MRO services to leading Indian and global customers," according to the statement.

Horizon Aero, which is a private-sector Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) provider, is a 50-50 partnership between Adani Defence & Prime Aero, a company owned by Prajat Patel, the director of Indamer Technologies. Prajat Patel happens to be the son of Ajit Pawar-led NCP leader and former civil aviation minister Praful Patel.

Indamer's Nagpur facility has the capacity to accommodate 15 aircraft bays across 10 hangars. It has received approvals from Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Federal Aviation Administration (USA) and other global civil aviation regulators. The Adani Group, which runs eight domestic airports, entered the MRO space in December 2025 after it acquired Air Works for Rs 400 crore (USD 44 million). Air Works has a strong presence in India, particularly in the line and base maintenance categories.

The acquisition of Airworks was followed by the purchase of Indamer Technologies through Adani Defense Systems and Technologies Ltd (ADSTL), which strengthened the Adani Group's capabilities in commercial and defence aircraft maintenance. ADSTL, in partnership with Prime Aero Services LLP, acquired a 100 per cent stake in Indamer Technologies, creating the foundation for a consolidated MRO platform. UNI

TAI calls for Minimum Sustainable Price for tea to ensure industry viability

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

SILIGURI, FEB 16: The Tea Association of India (TAI), predominantly a platform for producers of the beverage, has called for the introduction of a Minimum Sustainable Price (MSP) mechanism for made tea, linking it to production costs and quality parameters to ensure fair returns for all stakeholders in the tea industry.

Addressing the 54th Annual General Meeting of the North Bengal Branch of the Tea Association of India in Jalpaiguri, TAI president Shailja Mehta urged the Tea Board to

establish an effective pricing framework.

"We appeal to the Tea Board to work out an effective mechanism to implement a Minimum Sustainable Price for made tea based on cost of production with defined quality parameters," Mehta said.

She noted that such a mechanism, if properly enforced, would improve green leaf quality, ensure fair wages for workers in the small grower segment, provide consumers with better-quality tea, and enable estates to receive sustainable and remunerative prices.

She clarified that the pro-

posed mechanism would differ from existing government support systems such as the Minimum Support Price, Price Stabilisation Fund, and Fair and Remunerative Price for sugarcane, as it would not involve government procurement or direct financial intervention.

Instead, the Minimum Sustainable Price would ensure that tea sold in the domestic market fetches at least the cost of production plus a 50 per cent margin, in line with the vision of an "Atmanirbhar Bharat."

Highlighting production trends, TAI North Bengal

Branch chairman Uttam Chakraborty said tea production in the region has increased significantly over the past 15 years, rising by 78 per cent from 230 million kilograms in 2010 to 411 million kilograms in 2025. India's overall tea production has also grown by 35 per cent during the same period, with total output estimated at 1,369.98 million kilograms in 2025—about five per cent higher than the previous year.

North Bengal's production alone rose by 29 million kilograms, or eight per cent, in 2025 compared to 2024. However, while small growers re-

corded a 13 per cent increase in production, organised estates saw a decline of two per cent, reflecting structural challenges within the sector.

Chakraborty noted that small growers now account for about 67 per cent of North Bengal's tea output, compared to just 25 per cent in 2006, while the organised sector contributes around 45 per cent of production in North India. He stressed that this shift underscores the need for policy reassessment to ensure sustainability, competitiveness, and balanced growth across the tea industry. UNI

Rashid: Ahmedabad Pain Like 2023 Australia Loss

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

CHENNAI: After almost snatching victory twice from South Africa before losing off the last ball of the second Super Over - which has all but taken away their chances of advancing to the Super Eight - who could blame Afghanistan for engaging in a little comfort eating?

"We were in Ahmedabad and we told the manager to order food. Peshawari food: their dal bukhara, dal makhani, I told him to order that and bring some tandoori chicken so that we can vent our anger on that," avowed Rashid Khan in Delhi, where his team will play UAE in their third T20 World Cup 2026 match.

Among the rich, buttery flavours of their dinner, Afghanistan were reminded not to lay blame on anyone for what happened in one of the tensest matches the format has ever seen and rather be proud of the part they played in it. "No one should say that he did this or he did that because it brings negativity in the team," he said. "No one has lost, just our team has lost. We put in a lot of effort, but we never blame any player for being in a Super Over. I always tell ev-

eryone that as a captain I don't want to hear any of these things. It disappoints me more than the game when you're blaming the players. We all put in the effort."

But that doesn't mean Rashid has got over the loss and likened it to losing to Australia at the 2023 ODI World Cup in Mumbai.

"To be honest, it's pretty hard," he said. "It's very, very hard to lose that game where we had it in our hand a couple of times and then it just slips off your hand and it disappoints you. It doesn't go away from your mind. Like, the game we played against Australia in the 2023 World Cup at Wankhede, it never goes out of the mind, until we won against them in the 2024 World Cup. And then slowly it got out of the mind."

In that match in Mumbai, Afghanistan were on track to reach the semi-finals - they scored 291 for 5 and had Australia 91 for 7 before Glenn Maxwell's once-in-a-lifetime double-century knocked them out. And guess what they did?

"After the game that night, we all gathered in the manager's room, called all the players to come up there," Rashid said. "We had a good dinner and just talked positively,

just to keep supporting each other. I feel like this is so important.

"The only message I was giving to the players is, this is the time we have to stick together and we have to keep our heads up. If we don't let ourselves down, we can achieve bigger things. But if we let ourselves down, it's going to disappoint us. It's going to just push us one or two years back, and that's something which we don't want.

"So we learn from it, we keep moving, we keep our heads up and we put effort. We haven't got the result, but the effort was there, which was more pleasing than anything else."

In the immediate term, Afghanistan will have to deal with the likelihood of exiting this tournament at the group stage. Given that they lost to both New Zealand and South Africa, they have to beat both UAE and Canada and then hope UAE beat South Africa and Canada beat New Zealand, which will leave them relying on net run-rate. That means, barring a string of upsets, 2024's semi-finalists will fail to reach the next round, which hurts Rashid because it undoes so much of what the team have done to ensure they could compete here.



Rahul, Padikkal hit tons for Karnataka; Gharami rescues Bengal

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

AHMEDABAD: KL Rahul and Devdutt Padikkal added a mammoth 278 for the second wicket to deflate Uttarakhand in Lucknow. While Rahul fell for 141 just before the final hour of day one of the Ranji Trophy semi-final, Padikkal headed to stumps undefeated on 148. Karnataka finished on 355 for 2, looking set for a huge total.

In the morning, after Uttarakhand had opted to bowl, their quicks got the new ball to move. Eighteen-year-old Aditya Rawat dismissed Mayank Agarwal for 5, as Karnataka managed just 18 runs in nine overs. But that was as good as it got for Uttarakhand on Sunday.

Once Rahul and Padikkal settled, though, it was all Karnataka. The pair targeted left-arm spinner Mayank Mishra, pumping sixes down the ground. Uttarakhand also started leaking extras in the second half of the morning session as Rahul and Padikkal started to find their feet.

With Rahul on 99, Uttarakhand brought on part-timer Avneesh Sudha in the 28th over to try and distract him. But Rahul got to his second successive century this season when he calmly flicked the offspinner for a single to fine leg.

Padikkal, meanwhile, reached the landmark by stepping out and heaving former Karnataka left-arm spinner Jagadeesa Suchith for six over long-on. By tea, his stand with Rahul was at 245. But Rawat finally broke through when he had Rahul caught and bowled off a leading edge to end what was Karnataka's second-highest partnership for the second wicket since 2005-06.

But Karun Nair arrived, and started aggressively. He had 29 runs off his first 31 balls, including four fours and a six. Nair, however, slowed down as stumps approached, scoring just eight runs off his next 34 deliveries. His partnership with Padikkal grew to 59, as Karnataka threatened to bat Uttarakhand out of the game.

Sudip Kumar Gharami followed up a career-best 299 with an unbeaten 136, recusing Bengal for the second game in a row. Against Jammu & Kashmir on day one of the Ranji Trophy semi-final in Kalyani, Gharami walked out to bat in the second over, and took Bengal from 89 for 3 at one stage to 249 for 5 by stumps.

Gharami added 85 with captain Abhimanyu Easwaran for the second wicket after Sunil Kumar struck early. After J&K had opted to bowl, their quicks Sunil, Augib Nabi and Yudhvir Singh tested Bengal with swing and seam movement.

But Gharami rode his luck, and then found his touch. He overturned a caught-behind decision, and then survived when J&K reviewed a not-out call for lbw - both while he was yet to get off the mark. It took Gharami 19 balls to score his first runs, but he did that stylishly. He walked down the pitch at Sunil in the eighth over, and lofted him for six over cover.

T20WC: England eye Super Eights spot as fierce football rivals Italy stand in way

■ UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

on Saturday.

The 'Bazballers' come into the game with momentum after a pressure win over Scotland as they seem to be slowly finding their mojo in the tournament.

The biggest positive for England was Tom Banton's composed half-century at No.4 during a tricky 153-run chase. On a pitch that offered bounce and carry -- where six batters were dismissed attempting sweep shots -- Banton showed maturity by curbing his trademark reverse flicks. He instead targeted straight boundaries, playing in the V-zone to produce one of the finest knocks of his career and keep England's campaign alive.

Despite being known for their aggressive 'Bazball' style, England have looked cautious so far, as was also admitted by captain Harry Brook after the defeat to West Indies.

Eden Gardens during Kolkata Knight Riders' IPL triumph, Salt will hope familiar conditions help him rediscover his explosive batting.

"We haven't quite made it as easy as we'd have liked so far in this comp, but hopefully we can have a slightly easier run, starting with Italy on Monday," Brook said after the Scotland win.

"You don't want to start that too early in competitions like this, and hopefully that can be the start of it against Italy."

Phil Salt, Jos Buttler and Brook himself are yet to fire consistently. Salt gave England a flying start with a quick 30 against West Indies but has managed only scores of 1 and 2 against Nepal and Scotland.

Having enjoyed success at

Eden Gardens during Kolkata Knight Riders' IPL triumph, Salt will hope familiar conditions help him rediscover his explosive batting.

Buttler also got starts (26, 21 and 3) without converting them into big scores, while Brook will want to lead from the front after modest returns in the last two games.

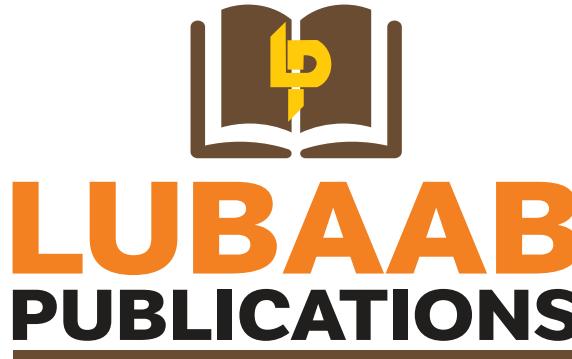
In bowling, England looked sharp against Scotland with Jofra Archer using pace and bounce effectively in the powerplay, while the spin twins Adil Rashid and Liam Dawson choked the runs in the middle overs and they will aim to follow the same template against Italy.

Italy on the other hand bring the unknown factor.

The debutants are high on confidence after a commanding 10-wicket win over Nepal, their maiden victory of the tournament.

The win came in the absence of their regular skipper Wayne Madsen who dislocated his shoulder in their debut match against Scotland here. But Madsen is "optimistic" of his return and it remains to be seen if the 42-year-old makes a return for their clash against England.

The Mosca brothers -- Justin and Anthony -- struck unbeaten fifties in that game against Nepal and have been key to Italy's batting. The Mancini brothers -- Harry and Ben -- have also played important roles both with the bat and ball.



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